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An Exploration of the Perceived Friendship, Social Support and Understanding of Empathy among the Membership of Four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs.

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD to National University of Ireland, Galway.

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November 2020
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Abstract
Based on the premise that little is known about the social benefits of sport to youth, this study explores the perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership of four Gaelic Athletic Association juvenile clubs. The study is underpinned by a review of the literature relating to youth development, formal and non-formal education, friendships, social support, and empathy. The study utilises a mixed methods approach including the use of reliable and validated instruments comprising measurements for perceived sources and quality of supportive relationships; amounts and types of support and understanding of empathy. In total, 130 respondents completed all questionnaires, while 20 youth participated in one to one interviews, with the researcher completing a further 64 individualised observations of respondents.

Key results indicate that participants perceived high levels of social support as available to them from family, friends and within their local GAA Clubs. Furthermore, respondents perceived themselves as capable of making and sustaining friendships and see having fun as a core medium for building relationships through sport. Respondents understand the concept of empathy and can give examples of compassion within a sporting context. Respondents do not see online friendships as being ‘real-life’ friends when compared to face to face alliances through sport. Respondents perceive adult coaches as friends and important sources of support. Based on findings, recommendations are made for youth work and social services as well as sporting organisations.


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To my family, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being there for me with each step of the way. As has been proven from this study, social groups require guidance and my most heartfelt personal thanks in this regard go to my mother Mary and my father Michael. For me, to attempt any study with the themes of friendship and empathy at its core I knew I had to understand them intricately and not just intellectually, but interpersonally also. These two wonderful people have embedded within me a deep understanding of these topics and I am forever grateful for this as I feel it is the richest gift to have as a human being.

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**Statement of Originality:**

I, Conor Hogan, hereby certify that all the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author. Any published (or unpublished) ideas and/or techniques from work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with standard referencing practices.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction
Many young people play a sport in Ireland and gain many benefits because of this participation. The benefits for adolescents can involve fitness and physical health. However, little is known about the social benefits that partaking in sport has for Irish adolescents. In Ireland, because physical education is part of the schools’ curriculum, many young people partake in physical education weekly in primary or post-primary schools (NCCA Statutory Office, 2019). Yet, many other adolescents choose to participate in community sport outside of school hours. This thesis will address a specific cohort of adolescents who choose to partake in community sport in Ireland to establish their perceptions of how it affects their young lives as a social space perspective.

Other than benefiting adolescents’ fitness and physical health, choosing to participate in out-of-school activities can affect young people’s lifestyles regarding their psychological health (Shapiro & Malone, 2016). Other ways that sports participation can affect adolescents include their social connections and relationships. This includes their friendships, their abilities to empathise with others and the social support that they perceive as available to them during this time of life.

Importantly, this research involves a general ‘normative’ population of youth rather than a specific subset experiencing adversity in their lives. As with the ‘Growing Up In Ireland’ Study (2011), this study is unique as it differs from many other studies that typically occur in youth development research, in that it provides a representative sample of the whole population (Greene & Harris, 2011), rather than examining those that have problems. Thus, none of the respondents to the study had any known or reported caseness. ‘Caseness’ is defined as whether or not a person has a condition of interest (Burger & Neeleman, 2007). From this sample of young people drawn from a general urban community and participating in sport, this study explores the perceptions of adolescents on friendships, social support, and empathy.
Friendship is important for human beings as it develops social cognition and helps people to learn. By understanding what it takes to partake in friendship, a sense of fairness and justice are learned and understood. For adolescents, friendships allow them to develop the ability to be more intimate, promote their values and it positively affects their identities (Rawlins, 2017). Rawlins (2017) noted that by the late 1970s it was clear that little open attention had been given by social scientists to the topic of friendship. However, much research in the past two decades has followed from Willard W. Hartup`s (Hartup, 1996) useful taxonomy on friendship which looked at the quality and characteristics of having friends. Friendships can involve relationships between two people or a greater peer network and it may involve understanding the cultural norms within the context that these relationships exist (Bagwell & Bukowski, 2018). By having friends, it lessens a person`s feelings of loneliness, depression and benefits their perceptions of happiness (Bagwell, Kochel, & Schmidt, 2015). By people having things in common with one another and sharing a resemblance, friendships blossom as the possibility of compatibility increases. Friends even avoid altering themselves to sustain their friendships with their existing friends and this is especially so during the time of adolescence (Laursen, 2017). According to the Self-determination Theory by Ryan, Kuhl, and Deci (1997), if certain needs are met for people, they will function and grow optimally. These psychological needs pertain to an individual`s social context. If a young person`s desire towards being responsible for their behaviour is met and they perceive they control the outcome of their context much of their needs are looked after. Another important element is a young person`s ability to relate to others. This deals with how an individual perceives they fit in within a social group. Once these three needs are met it helps motivate people in feeling responsible for a shared social goal (Menéndez-Santurio, & Fernández-Río, 2016).

There is a human need to belong and this motivates the choice to participate in group activities. It will be argued in this thesis that membership in a sporting club (specifically Irish GAA clubs) is a very suitable site for gaining such belonging. In turn, this belonging can also build friendships and networks that promote positive youth development (PYD). PYD promotes a healthy and successful adolescent development built on competence, confidence, character, and connection (Lerner, Lerner, et al, 2015). The familiarity of another promotes friendships and this also helps sustain them through mutual social support. Sport allows for youth to positively develop as it
propels interaction with young people of the same age-group and with their coaches. However, in spite of adolescents partaking in sport, there is an increase in sedentary activities such as spending time in front of screens which has decreased the amount of time spent being physically active and being in the actual presence of others, within the present adolescent generation (Herbison, Benson, & Martin, 2017).

Apart from friendship through sport, this study focuses on empathy attainment as the second key positive factor for youth. By empathising with another it can build deeper ways of relating and caring. Empathy is extremely important in young people’s social development. The initial experience of empathy comes from an infant’s attachment with their mother and so empathy is central to a child’s first learning about being interactive with another (Stern, & Cassidy, 2018). As adolescence is a time of rapid change, empathy has strong links with close and positive human interaction (Silke et al, 2018). Emotional awareness is pivotal to building empathetic behaviours during adolescence. By recognising one’s own emotions and those others who need help, empathy can be exercised at this time of youth development (Rieffe, & Camodeca, 2016). Empathy inhibits anti-social behaviour. It can increase effort, commitment, performance, and overall enjoyment when young people partake in a team sport and allow others to show good behaviours that are beneficial to all involved. This can be experienced when players congratulate or commiserate with one another. On the other hand, sport can also have negative social consequences such as when cheating occurs (Kavussanu, & Stanger, 2017), or worse still on-pitch violence or through hate speech (Young, 2019).

As far back as the early 1970s, many social science researchers established positive social support as key to social relationships, a buffer to stress and an enabler of coping (Pinkerton, & Dolan, 2007). These positive relationships which provide tangible and emotional support rely off interpersonal interactions for adolescents for them to overcome external stresses (Camara, Bacigalupe, & Padilla, 2017).

Sport can give a greater sense of belonging which aids the feeling of being part of a community and having available support in daily living and in times of crisis. Many sporting schemes have been put into place for adolescents that allow them to feel a greater sense of community and
connectedness. These perceptions of having support among youth have decreased the amount of delinquent behaviour substance abuse. By its ability to be educational for adolescents, sport helps build young people's relationships in life. In so doing, it enhances communities and benefits society also (Warner, & Leierer, 2015).

Some Irish adolescents have personal problems that can affect their perception of their lifestyle. As almost three quarters of Irish adolescents believe that their body image produces difficulties for them and 43% of them feel social media give them challenging issues in their lives, sport can be beneficial for young people for not just their physical health but because it gives them respite and affords them a break away from screen time (Mayo be well, 2017). By partaking in sport, youth improve their perceived health and this then aids other educational outcomes (Cabane, Hille, & Lechner, 2016).

However, sports participation has other underlying benefits for young people also. Mental health can be transformed by sport. Given that 14% of all young people aged 12 to 17 years can experience a mental illness, the integration of mental health awareness through youth sport participation is important (Liddle, Deane, & Vella, 2017). For young females, identity development can occur within the framework of sport. By females participating in sport their emotional, intellectual, social, and physical development can be positively promoted (MacPherson, Kerr, & Stirling, 2016). Through being involved in sport, young males can also develop positivity. They can interact better with females, teammates and others, outside of their sporting networks (Fuller et al, 2016). By having caring climates that surround young people, it can increase their commitment levels within the sport. Adult coaches' input can also develop young people’s team sport (Hall, Newland, et al, 2017).

So while the physical benefits that accrue from sports participation are known, less has been established about the role of friendship, social support, and empathy as benefits to Irish adolescents. This includes the general population of youth participating in the sports of the Irish Gaelic games through the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which are the most popular games played nationally (Riordan, 2018), the site of this research. Therefore, the key purpose of this
study is to explore the value of sports participation in Irish Gaelic games for a general population of young people in terms of friendship, social support, and empathy.

In its current format, the GAA is an organisation that is an ‘…engine for social cohesion’ (Conlon, 2017). It has retained the trust of the Irish people in the past few decades when other national social organisations have failed people including church and state politics. Its strong presence is integrated into parishes and communities all over Ireland (Conlon, 2017). This presence has unified clubs of the GAA throughout the country and fosters community spirit. Although, amateur in ethos, in recent years the GAA has signed a lucrative deal with the privately-owned Sky Sports television company which has sometimes excluded the ordinary GAA supporter from watching the games on a free-to-air channel (Sheridan, 2014).

The remainder of this chapter deals with a more specific background to the study before the aims and objectives are described. This is then followed by a detailed outline of the whole thesis.

1.1 Background to the Study – A Subjectivity Statement

The personal and professional rationale underpinning the choice of this topic area arises from the author having two decades of direct contact with adolescents in a professional teaching and coaching capacity and from voluntary youth work and sports’ coaching experience. He has also completed a post-graduate Masters Degree in researching young peoples’ behaviour in a non-formal community setting.

The author worked with young people in various capacities including teaching, coaching, and mentoring young people as well as setting up and running youth cafes.

On the sporting front, he represented both his club and county in both hurling and Gaelic football and in doing so, found that sport was a great source of friendship for him personally. From his own playing days he knew that the commitment to these sports demanded a lot of time and his experience was that the friendships made whilst being involved in sport were more sustainable than those in his schools days. This motivated him to query whether he was not just a sample of one, but that this was the same for other youth involved in the GAA.
In embarking on a ‘fit for purpose’ review of the literature for this thesis, seven different sections of interest were chosen to best reflect the background required to provide a balanced understanding of the ensuing study’s results. The first section of the review describes and profiles normative and non-normative adolescent development. A review of formal and informal education systems for young people then follows. The third section comprises an exploration of coaching, mentoring, role models and leadership. Then the next section will examine youth work generally, while media and technology are studied in the fifth section. These five opening sections underpin the review and are further linked to the final two key sections, social support, and empathy. Importantly, the core concept of friendship during adolescence is defined and covered within the literature review across a number of sections.

This background leading to the literature review culminates in the construction of a tentative model for the study. It has an accompanying rationale that brings us to the following aims and objectives.

### 1.2 Overarching Aims and Objectives of the Study

The overarching aim of this study is to explore perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership (females and males) of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

The objectives are four-fold:

1. To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
2. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
3. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
4. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

The study examines the perceptions of 130 adolescents from a general youth population who are members of four GAA clubs on the east side of Galway city throughout one playing season. Each of the four clubs has distinctly different entities. Although two of the clubs are Gaelic football clubs, one is male and the other is female. However, both clubs come under the greater name of St. James’ GAA. There is also one hurling club and one camogie club. Each of these clubs caters for male and female members respectively and both are from the Castlegar GAA club. In the study, all of the young people (n=130) provide their perceptions of friendship, social support, and empathy accessed from family and community but more specifically from within their clubs.

There are many comparative aspects of this study and within the specific population of respondents. Two notable general comparisons are that of males and females and the age groups of the respondents. Firstly, the opinions of males and females within the GAA are compared. Apart from across gender and within overpopulation comparison, further comparisons will be made between the earlier years of adolescence and the older respondents. Key and core to the study, perceptions of respondents in respect of the availability of friendships, social support enlistment and the presence of empathy will be considered.

In relation to the presentation and analysis of all quantitative aspects of the study, the data is presented at the level of descriptive statistics in line with the advice of the student’s supervisor and Graduate Research Committee. This is on the assumption that it suffices and given that the research is a mixed-methods study. Findings are captured across quantitative and qualitative analysis collectively and through triangulation.
1.3 Choice of Theory

Having stated the aims and objectives of the study it is now important to examine the main theories underpinning the study. The underlining theory of this thesis stems from connection which is one of the characteristics of Positive Youth Development (PYD). Within this framework it is stated that youth need connection and belonging. Positive youth development is a developmental theory indicating the supports all young people need to have good outcomes in life (RhysIssues, 2019). Within a community setting, sport is a suitable outlet to exercise this development (Coakley, 2016). This indicates that by young people having a positive connection within their sporting GAA Club, it impacts positively upon their capacity for competence, confidence, caring and compassion (Lerner, et al; 2015). It functions on the premise that taking strengths based perspective is preferable to concentrating on the disadvantages or deficits that a young person may have. The four areas of PYD aim to facilitate the development of positive values within youth.

The main theoretical areas that will be explored in the Literature Review, include adolescent development theories of friendship, empathy, and social support. It is important to include these areas as a backdrop for adolescents’ social development given that adolescence is an ever-changing developmental period of life. Physical, emotional, social, intellectual and cognitive factors of adolescent development will also be addressed.

The site of this research takes place within a non-formal educational setting. However, there will also be a formal educational context provided as the research respondents attend school on a regular day by day basis and it remains a key part of their life. Young people require leadership through non-formal ‘out of school’ experiences in order to develop. As coaching, mentoring, and role modelling, are various facets of leadership, it is essential to include them under the greater umbrella of leadership as perceived by young people.

Young people experience their non-formal education under the remit of some form of youth work and so this domain serves as an important springboard from which the study’s objectives arise. Although social support through youth work has been present in non-formal Irish education for young people for decades (De Roiste, 2009) in more recent years, technological
advancements have motivated mass social media interest and usage among them. This can impact on young people’s development. Therefore, this potential influence will be explored in the following chapter also.

1.4 Structural Layout of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a fit for purpose seven section review of the literature as described earlier. Chapter 3 then illustrates the methodology utilised in this study. Here, the overarching aims and objectives of the study are discussed after the initial rationale of the study has been laid out. From here, the chosen design of the study is outlined. How the study will be implemented is then brought to the fore as are the ethical considerations throughout and the proposed method of analysis used. Lastly, chapter three concentrates on the study’s limitations and mitigations to surmount them. Chapter 4 provides an overall context for the study. Within this chapter, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), as the largest amateur sporting association in Ireland, and importantly the site of the study, examines its relationships to friendship, empathy and social attitudes and towards diversity and inclusion within the organisation. The geographical area which concerns this study is then outlined as is the community context and social support systems within the local environment that the respondents reside in. Finally, the educational settings in the locality of the study, as well as a background to the four individual clubs involved, are put into context.

Chapter 5 is the findings chapter. Within this chapter, the sample characteristics of the study are presented before each of the individual findings matched to all of the four objectives are addressed. While the author uses a primarily descriptive statistical analysis of what emerges from the various instruments used to gather quantitative data from the full sample (n=130), and standard analysis of observations (n=64) and interviews (n=20) from the qualitative data, a summative triangulation of results is also presented. Key findings that accrue from the study are also summarised at the end of the chapter. Chapter 6 deals with the discussion of the study in the light of key results identified. All of the four objectives will be addressed matching findings from the previous chapter with the literature and leading to a brief revisiting of the tentative
model developed from the literature earlier in Chapter 2 Recommendations for future policy and practice are also merged into this chapter. **Chapter 7** the conclusion chapter, revisits the purpose of the study and the description and thrust of earlier chapters. It will also focus further on the key findings that can impact future practice and policy, and identify further research on the domains youth friendships, empathy, and social support through sport.

### 1.5 Friendship, Empathy, and Social Support are Core Components of the Positive Youth Development Theory

Being connected, and developing competence, confidence, and caring and compassionate ways are promoted and accrue through the social support young people receive from being involved in community sport. By being connected it lends to friendships being made and positive friendly connections being sustained. Instances of empathy can occur throughout these friendships and motivate other caring and compassionate domains of youth relationships and increase an overall sense of belonging. The overall social support is encased by the close connections that arise from young peoples’ bonds with each other. Finally, as this study aims to explore the perceived social support, empathy and friendships through sport, these are the key factors in the positive development of young people. This all enables young peoples’ character to be developed positively.

All in all, this study is underpinned by and linked to Positive Youth Development as a positive key connector to belonging in adolescence. This in turn is explored in the study in the non-formal community setting of juvenile sports’ clubs as a key site for the attainment of empathy and social support through friendships.

Thus this thesis concentrates on the personal development of young people, through young people’s friendships, empathy, and social support as important ‘anchors’ in how a young person can ride the wave of his/her ever-changing journey through adolescence.
Summary

The overall aim of this opening chapter has been to introduce the reader to the study. By introducing the reader to the value of out-of-school sports participation and the psychological health benefits of sports membership for youth, it gave this study an opening framework. Specifically the researcher’s interest in exploring the human rather than physical benefits of a general population of youth’s participation in sport namely perceived friendship acquisition, social support enlistment, and increased empathy was introduced. Also in giving a brief outline of the GAA club system the site of the study, the intention here is to create a foundation for this study to commence. Based on this rationale and context, the aims and objectives of the study were then introduced. Finally, the overall structure and the choice of theory of this thesis was then provided.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is a scoping review of the literature which focuses on the key themes central to the objectives which included friendship (through social support), empathy and the broad functions of coaching and within a sporting context.

Following consultation and ongoing meetings with his supervisor, the researcher agreed on doing a fit for purpose literature review. The goal of any thorough literature review is to combine different concepts into common emergent themes and draw the results from dissimilar sources. Once this is completed the results need to be understood and integrated into summative conclusions.

Actions undertaken by the student in this literature review followed a series of six steps utilising an established method (See Higgins and Pinkerton, 1998) namely:

1. Clarification of its purpose,
2. The drawing up of a blueprint document,
3. The review of the individual items is carried out by the researcher,
4. A synthesis of the review of the blueprint,
5. A reassessment of the document in an appropriate way was completed.

The student began with a clarification of the purpose of this study. Then, he, along with the guidance of his supervisor, drew up a blueprint document. Once this was achieved, a focused review of the individual items was carried out by the researcher, for example, the researcher made certain that the topics that were reviewed addressed the aims and objectives of the study. Following this, a synthesis of the review of the blueprint occurred. Finally, a reassessment of the document in an appropriate way was completed (Higgins & Pinkerton, 1998).

More specifically, the first of these steps was undertaken by the researcher which involved linking the aims and objectives of the study. This was done following the agreements of both the
researcher and his supervisor. Then, he completed a comprehensive but, fit for purpose literature review based on the exploration of agreed key words and terms for exploration.

In planning the symmetric approach to the literature review, here, a successful search strategy with a combination of books, journals, and grey literature was mapped out, utilising in principle a 10 year rule for inclusion of books and readers, a five year period for peer reviewed journal papers and two years for government policy papers. Needless to say exceptions to this rule guide were accommodated.

In conducting the research search the researcher was aware that he needed to answer the research questions properly. An extensive and unbiased approach to this search was important. The researcher surmised that no one database was comprehensive enough to provide a perfect search strategy. Therefore, the researcher utilised several databases. Scopus was selected as one of the main databases as it is the largest abstract and citation base that contains peer-reviewed scientific books, journals, and conference proceedings and is used by over 3,000 corporate and government officials as well as international academics (Scopus, 2019). ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre) was another example of an expansive source of journals that was used as it has a comprehensive index (ERIC, 2019). Despite the search engines providing such range and depth, key youth work and applied social science journals were also explored to make sure that the search was fit for purpose.

In selecting and reviewing the specific items of literature, the researcher removed their own bias by referencing back to the earlier blueprint that included certain referenced material. By producing an integrated review of the literature, he decided upon specific themes that had been dictated by the overall rationale (at the onset), as well as his keeping the aims and objectives of the study as a focus for the search.

Finally, the review while not a full systematic exploration of the research and literature, it was deemed by his supervisor and graduate research committee to comply with the Higgins and Pinkerton model and was fit for purpose (Higgins & Pinkerton, 1998).
Before delving into the specific aims and objectives of this study a thorough and methodical review of the literature is completed within this chapter. Here, seven important areas are examined that pertain to the aforementioned aims and objectives.

Section 2.1 defines adolescence before the specific factors of adolescence are spoken about. These factors are the physical, emotional, social development and the intellectual or cognitive development of young people at this time of life.

The next Section 2.2 defines education before looking into the formal aspects of education before the informal areas of education are delved into. Once this has been spoken about, youth culture and informal learning, education and discipline and more specifically teaching in Ireland are scrutinised in relation to this study. This section is then completed by an in-depth look at Irish teachers and children’s behaviours within the overall international context.

Section 2.3 establishes a working definition of coaching before life coaching and coaching quality is then explored. After that, a similar area of mentoring is defined before the mentor-protégée relationship is then detailed which leads to the variables of mentoring being spoken about within this section. Role modeling is addressed and this is continued more specifically with an address of the differences between female and male role models. Immediately after, this then neatly leads to the conversation on leadership which is broken down further into democratic leadership and how coaches, mentors and role models are seen as leaders in their own right.

Section 2.4 begins by defining youth work before delving into the international history of youth work. Closer to home then, a history of youth work within an Irish context is then discussed. Once this has been exhausted, an examination of education to behaviour follows before Foróige and the Neighbourhood Youth Projects are brought into the dialogue. The changing economics of youth education, the present day issues in formal education and the changing schools of the future are then discussed. Societal change and social education continues thereafter before a look at how a holistic service of well-being in youth can occur. Finally, this section is completed with other variations of youth work being looked at.
Section 2.5 discusses the history of media before arriving at a definition of media. Its relationship with young people and the modern movements of media provide a backdrop to the advantages and disadvantages of social media followed by the history of technology being brought into the debate. Before closing this section, certain types of technology, its relationship with young people and education and overall socialisation are then moulded into the mix. These first five sections are then all taken into account with regard to two of the main themes of this study, that being, social support and empathy.

Section 2.6 then defines social support more specifically and this then links with social networking and the social support benefits and challenges that come into reality in the present day.

Finally, Section 2.7 deals with empathy. Here, empathy is defined and a more specific look at social empathy is presented to the reader before empathy’s interaction within formal education concludes this review of the literature.

This review is compiled on the rationale of ‘being fit for purpose’ and that key terms such as adolescent development, friendship, empathy, and social support are captured within the main exploration of the literature.

In the aforementioned opening chapter of this dissertation it was noted that little is known about the social benefits that partaking in sport has for Irish adolescents. Therefore, within this review of the literature the topics that are interwoven with friendships, social support and empathy are discussed in order to provide a solid review for this study to take place.

2.1 Adolescence Definition

Adolescence is a time of developmental change. It has been defined as the period of life between childhood and adulthood (Sawyer, & Azzoprdai, et al, 2018). During adolescence there are physical, intellectual, emotional, social developmental changes that absorb cultural adaptations. Greater independence from parental guidance allows for individual potential and identity to
develop, yet this phase of life is intertwined with vulnerability and apprehensive transitory adjustment from childhood into adulthood.

In eliciting this definition of adolescence, comprehensive research from a variety of notable sources has been acknowledged. By considering these respected sources` interpretations of adolescence, the universal acceptance includes that adolescence is a time of development. Adolescence involves pubertal and biological changes (Simmons, 2017) and scientists have in recent years stated that it is lasting longer owing to marketing and digital media which have impacted on well-being (Hennessy, 2017). However, not all cultures present the same challenges for adolescents. The length of the timeframe of adolescence has expanded due to the influence of shifting economic practices and the need for increased levels of education in young people (Mandarino, 2014).

Adolescence refers to the transition from childhood and adulthood. The term ‘adolescence’ was first used in the late 19th century. In the western society at this time the period of adolescence arose from the increase in urbanisation and industrialisation and its impact on young peoples’ increased anxiety owing to these changing pressures (Cox & Riordan, 2015).

Although adolescence occurs immediately after late childhood, it is more than a passage from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is a ruthless time that redefines a young person`s relationship with their parent. Conflicts over the child wanting increased freedom are part of the child’s evolution which eventually results in them leaving the home of origin. During this time of revolution, the parent or parents and the adolescent begin to understand the new independence that arises from their changing differences between each other, the distances that are growing ever larger and the disputes that epitomise this stage of the adolescent`s lessening parental dependence (Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, et al, 2017).

Though adolescence is a period of intermittent annoyance and unpleasantness there is still a realisation between the adolescent and parent and their original close bond will be present (Colten, 2017). When adolescents become independent decision makers, their behaviour can become problematic (Van Petegem, & Vansteenkiste, et al, 2015). As Erikson pointed out, adolescence is a "..turning point of increased vulnerability and heightened potential” (Erikson, 1968, p.96).
This stage between childhood and adulthood is a phase when negative stereotyping within the media of this age cohort prejudges adolescents’ behaviour to over indulge in irresponsible, criminal and yobbish behaviour. Yet adolescents can be passionate about making a positive change in society (News, 2014). Qu admits adolescence can be a time of risk, anticipation, and psychological adjustment (Qu, Fuligni et al, 2015). These observations are echoed by (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005) who believe the worry of an unknown future is intermingled with issues of identity and sexual development. Hy and Loevinger referred to Erikson and his thesis that there are a few consistent differences between the ego state of both the female and male sex during the period of identity. Erickson accepted that his theory on identity may be influenced by class or culture (Hy, & Loevinger, 2014).

The period of adolescence implicates physical, intellectual, social and emotional development in human beings. Adolescents grow bigger and stronger as they become older. During adolescence, puberty signals a more profound physical growth and a sexual maturation in size, shape and sexuality (Newman, & Newman, 2017). As children enter into adolescence they become more intellectually developed, yet they are still emotionally immature in many ways. Bjorklund and Causey indicate that adolescents cognition involves them thinking more abstractly and being able to think about real world problems and so can consider more situations in a hypothetical manner (Bjorklund, & Causey, 2017). Anxiety over changing family relationships can occur (Cummings, & Koss et al, 2015).

Adolescents’ ability to learn and their cognitive aptitude can be remarkable. Appreciation concerning social issues exist (Frydenberg, & Liang et al, 2017). Although adolescents’ active relationships are adapting, their social life is also maturing. New age social networking has brought about more modern ways of building social contacts. The new age digital social networking applications of Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin are populated by millions of young adolescents and it is this age cohort that can have greater mental health issues because of social media interaction (Sampasa-Kanyinga, & Lewis et al, 2015). This signifies the importance of socialising for the adolescent.
The Factors of Adolescence

As adolescence is a period of many changes and developments that have an impact on children’s transition to adulthood, there are four main factors that are important within this account of adolescence. These are the physical, emotional, social and the intellectual or cognitive developments of adolescence.

Physical

Boys typically will be in puberty or pre-pubescent from 9 to 14 years of age. Most boys will be almost complete puberty by 17 years of age (Health, 2017). Whereas for girls, a sign of growth shows that most females can almost double in height from ages 2 to 18 years of age (Years, 2017). A recent study of Czech children showed that boys between 12 and 15 years of age demonstrate hair growth especially in the areas of their eyebrows, ridge and their chin. In fact both genders’ eyes, mouths, nose and chin deviate during this age bracket (Koudelová, & Dupej et al, 2015).

There are many physical changes from the late teenage years to adulthood. These physical changes occur during a time period when many other social and psychological changes are also occurring. Many of these physical changes occur during the transition from school to vocational life. They can be subject to differing habits of exercise and an altering dietary intake (Diehl, & Hilger, 2015). Bone strength can increase in pubescent children when high loading and high impact exercise are partaken in regularly (Klentrou, 2016). Exercise can reduce fat in overweight male adolescents (Shih, & Kwok, 2018) whereas 30 minutes of exercise spread evenly over the week can aid musculoskeletal and metabolic outcomes in early-pubertal girls and it does not disrupt their academic schedule (Nogueira, Weeks et al, 2014).

For females going through puberty, three main areas of physical development occur. Firstly a female develops breasts under the guidance of hormones including oestrogen and progesterone. This is usually followed by the growth of pubic hair and underarm hair. Ovaries then develop in the body. Finally, menstruation begins at around 12 years of age and this reoccurs on average once a month thereafter (Virtual Medical Centre, 2018).
For males, the scrotum and testes enlarge and the penis also develops also. Pubic hair around the genitals grows and then in other areas of the body including the chest and face. Their body size increases as well as their arms, legs and feet (Turola, & Barbieri et al, 2016).

The media, which can target adolescents through advertising as well as the opinions of peers can create impressions in adolescents about their perceived body image and physical weight. Concepts such as ‘fat talk’ and bullying because of certain body shapes can greatly contribute to dissatisfaction in adolescents’ body image. These perceptions, such as these, can alter adolescents’ physical development as well as augment their emotional, social and intellectual velocity of change (Voelker, & Reel et al, 2015).

Actual physical changes are interlinked with other factors of adolescence also. The capacity to develop and mature can be dictated by differences and social interactions between the genders. Following from a ten year longitudinal study of Swedish adolescents the recent results discovered that there is a strong correlation between a 12 to 15 year old girl or boy’s self esteem and their actual physical strength, condition, and attractiveness. Whereas, being competent at sport influences a girl’s self esteem more between the ages of 17 and 22 years of age. However, boys are impacted by their physical attractiveness and strength during the same age bracket (Raustorp, & Lindwall, 2015).

Adolescents can have misperceptions of their body size. They can engage in unhealthy diets and are at a greater risk of being obese in the longer term. This is the similar for both female and male genders showing there is a need to address these misperceptions early on for even adolescents of normal body weight (Sutin, & Terracciano, 2015).

**Emotional**

The time of adolescence can be a time of deep change in a young person’s life. There are stages of transition that adolescents may encounter during this transitory phase of life. Emotional difficulties arising from the initial overwhelming feelings of immobilisation of a major transitional event are followed by an attempt to minimise or trivialise the new event which can lead to depression in some adolescents also. Other stages of transition are the “letting go” phase
that test out the new lifestyle that precedes the search for an understanding and meaning in this
new realm, before eventually, an internalisation occurs in an adolescent`s psyche (Herbert, &
Harper-Dorton et al, 2002). In fact, Susan Herbert later notes that the onset of adolescence
involves difficulties in physical, social, emotional, intellectual and cognitive issues that require
confidence in one`s development of independence (Herbert, 2005).

Roker & Shepherd (2007) in (Roker, & Coleman, 2007) cite that transitioning from primary to
post primary school can be a difficult and problematic time for some children. Literature on this
time of transition shows that in general, children have mixed positive and negative feelings.
Feelings can even range from nervousness to excitement for a large range of children.
Transitioning from primary to post primary school is an opportunity to develop and use
interventions that may impinge upon adolescents` psychological well being (Riglin,

Adolescence is a time of psychological development and emotional change. Social partners that
can help or hinder this time of development are vital for the altering feelings of young people.
Feeling happy at this stage of life can be linked with having good parents around a person
(Harold, & Leve, 2018). People of similar age groups can also be quite destructive even though
others of that age group may also be good friend material. Bullying is associated with depression
and suicidal tendencies. Girls are more likely than boys to report bullying which can occur in
real life situations or online although boys are more likely to report exclusive bullying before
psychological feelings of overall sadness overcomes a young person (Messias, Kindrick et al,
2014).

In the UK 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools partake in the Social
Emotional Aspects of Learning programme which develops five key areas for adolescence.
Developments in their self awareness, management of feelings, motivation, empathy and social
skills are promoted (Cowie, 2012). However, the same authors recommend that the Promoting
Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum is a better option. Disciplinary incidents
decreased when implementing the PATHS curriculum in schools at a "medium" or "high" level
(Osher, & Poirier et al, 2014). Yet teachers in the United Kingdom report that the PATHS
programme will only be successful if it is made a long term curriculum priority (Honess, &
Hunter, 2014).
As adolescence become less dependent, their behavior changes. Young people feel stress during puberty but how the genders feel the stress differs. These differences can impact on the sex-specific periods of vulnerability and risk of disease or level of resilience even across the human life span (Bale, & Epperson, 2015).

Puberty is influenced by genetics and if an adolescent experiences the onset of early puberty it may have implications for their behaviour and psychosocial development. In fact damage to genetic mutations can unravel neural networks and disrupt the normal development of puberty (Leka-Emiri, & Chrousos et al, 2017). An adolescent’s perception of stress deters negative impacts on their overall quality of diet (Tajik, & Latifah et al, 2016). There is a variation in self control within adolescence due to age, context, their individuality and the neurological factors (De Ridder, & Lensvelt-Mulders, 2018). Like the physical changes throughout adolescence, the emotional tempo of change differs in each individual.

**Social Development**

Informal social support from family and friends can act as a type of ‘central helping system’ for family members. Social support can be defined as acts of assistance between people (Tracy, & Whitaker, 1989). The family is a socialising agent for an adolescent (Dolan, & Canavan et al, 2006). As an adolescent, feelings of being left out of social groups can leave long lasting feelings of emotional rejection. Affective neuroscience is an emerging field and arises after there has been much spoken about the left brain. Rather the right brain is showing to represent unique emotional and social functions. This can affect the growing adolescent through their unconscious mind and it can have positive or negative effects on their socialisation (Schonert-Reichl, & Oberle et al, 2015).

During adolescence, boys tend to spend less time with their families and this is offset by them spending more times with their peers whereas, girls are more frequently in closer contact with their mother (Arnett 2002). Leavitt (1998) in (Arnett, 2002) feel that many traditional cultures expect boys to ‘achieve’ the recognition of manhood, whereas girls reach womanhood merely through biological changes. During adolescence hormones correlate with self reported changes such as an adolescent’s psychological development (Moffitt, 2017). Of course psychologically, adolescents are beginning to become more independent thinkers and this can influence their
choice of friendships and relationships. This new independence, which involves building new relationships, can entail stressful feelings and even dating abuse for adolescents (Chen, & Foshee, 2015).

Kehler and Atkinson (2010) suggest that school is an extremely powerful socialising continuum for children and adolescence. For boys elite youth sport and physical education in school are two social settings that are surrounded by high degrees of masculinity (Kehler, & Atkinson, 2010). For girls, the school bus can be a type of unnatural or informal social setting where a girl’s private home, family and even their household pets can be put under scrutiny by their peers (Bettis, & Adams, 2005).

From a study of 5,065 Canadian middle and high school students aged between 11-20 years of age in 2013 it discovered that nearly 25% of students reported bullying when traveling to school with peers. Females were more likely to experience this bullying overall but girls had less bullying in school buses than their male counterparts (Sampasa-Kanyinga, & Chaput et al, 2016). As there are developmental changes throughout adolescence and that social responsibility as a commitment to community and society declines with young people as they increase in age (Rhode, 2015) and due to increase of bullying on young people in the past decade the importance of positive peer to peer behaviour is extremely important (Goroshit and Hen 2016).

Adolescence is a time of intense emotions and potential impulsiveness. The maturation of the pre-frontal cortex is now being widely known as being related to the social decision making for this age cohort (Johnson, 2011). In fact, early adolescent development between the ages of 13 and 17 years of age are impacted by maternal and paternal psychological control which in turn can impact upon their indecisiveness (Lo Cascio, & Guzzo et al, 2015). By getting their children to partake in simple household tasks, parents can impart independent living skills to their adolescents (Padilla-Walker, & Carlo, 2014). Although adolescence is a time of social development, autonomous motivation can motivate peer-related loneliness during adolescence (Majorano, & Musetti et al, 2015). By developing one’s autonomy during this juvenile stage of life, a young person is exercising their independent thought.
Intellectual/ Cognitive Development

Cortical thickness in children and adolescents between 7 and 19 years of age has a bearing on their IQ intelligence levels (Johnson, 2011). Although throughout life generally intelligence is considered to be stable, there are developmental differences between males and females during early adolescence (Schnack, & van Haren et al, 2014). General verbal and non-verbal abilities are closely aligned to a person’s sensor motor skills involved in learning. It is possible for an adolescents’ intellectual capacity to increase or decrease during the teenage years in relation to their peers and this is similar across the lifespan of a human being (Burgaleta, & Johnson et al, 2014). Keating in (Elliott, & Feldman, 1993) state that cognitive changes occur during adolescence but they seldom occur without outside alterations in an adolescent’s life.

Also, school is not the only place that can influence the maturation of an adolescent’s cognitive ability. In the United States alone, an average adolescent will have seen 350,000 commercials by the time they reach 18 years of age (García-Lópe, & Gutiérrez, 2015). The advertising campaigns are designed to disentangle a youth’s rational thinking skills that are still in development. This is especially pertinent considering that television, marketing, media and technology have advanced abundantly in the past 30 years or so.

More recently this trend has continued with adolescents’ exposure to cigarette and alcohol advertising influencing their eventual consumption of these drugs. A decrease in the advertising exposure of cigarettes towards adolescents can prevent their consumption (Perks, & Armour et al, 2018). Similarly, less exposure to alcohol advertisements can limit the latent growth of alcohol use (Stockings, & Hall et al, 2016). Other such harmful behaviours fuelled by modern media and technological advancements are evident with the depth of pornography now obtainable by young people. Attempting to keep adolescents away from pornography can be extremely challenging and so greater education about pornography to develop adolescents’ critical thinking is required (Puglia, & Glowacz, 2015). Some pornography can include violence also. In Ireland newer and more disturbing cases of sexual assault are coming to light. The brutal sexual assault and murder of adolescent Ana Kriégel by two 13 year old boys is one such case in 2019 (Gallagher, 2019). Another case that came to the media in the same year was of three young boys who were only seven, eight and ten years of age but beat up and attempted to
sexually assault a five year old girl (Editors, 2019). Ireland has been delayed in discussing changing sexuality (McCloskey, & Iwanicki et al, 2015) and this needs to be addressed for the well-being of Irish adolescents.

Of course sex can be part of adult relationships. As adolescence is a time when young people format more complex human relationships than their earlier childhood years, a more efficient social cognition is required so as to appreciate the significance of these relationships. During this time period deepening of friendships from earlier childhood years and romantic relationships may develop (Laursen, & Adams et al, 2018).

Maternal interaction with adolescents impacts the brain’s structure of the adolescent. Male adolescents are particularly sensitive of maternal actions as a higher frequency of positive maternal behavior shows a volumetric growth in males’ right amygdale together with an accelerated cortical thinning in anterior cingulate of this same side. These areas of the brain are associated with emotions within humans (Whittle, Simmons et al, 2014). Studies suggest that brain activation is impacted by a female adolescent’s menstrual cycle and that learning and memory can fluctuate during menstruation (Lenroot, & Giedd, 2010). Gender and psychosocial factors can impact on an adolescent’s wellbeing as well as their physical obesity (Chang, & Halgunseth, 2015). In this way, all of the factors of adolescence are once again interrelated and provide a holistic range of actors that provide a catalyst towards the transition from childhood to adulthood.

### 2.2 Education and Teaching

Education is about gaining wisdom to defy one’s own ignorance so as to enhance self-knowledge. It is facilitated through the techniques of questioning (Socrates, 2019). It is a necessary formal and informal social process that involves a constructivist learning approach. In so being, it allows for learners to learn actively, in a contextualised process in order to construct knowledge rather than acquiring it. By advancing an individual, education encompasses simple mind turning techniques that can build character and virtues and free a human being. By being educated, a learner becomes influenced in such a way that they are not dictated to, but rather,
experience an awakening of their own natural abilities to become progressively empowered to learn.

The above definition surfaces from an in depth assessment of the appropriate literature. Here, many renowned educators` theories have been pondered upon. According to one of these educators, education is a necessity of life that involves socialisation (Dewey, 2014). John Dewey was influenced by the classical Greek philosophers. From ancient Greece there were many notable thinkers who spoke about the philosophy of education. Of these, Socrates believed that education was a constructivist learning approach that had four key steps. Firstly, the teacher elicits information or thoughts from the learner about the topic in question before a clarification of the preconceptions of this information is warranted. The testing of the learner`s hypotheses then follows, before the learner accepts or reject the realised outcome (Bećirović, 2016).

Plato was a student of Socrates. Plato`s views on education were that:

“... education should be ... the art of orientation. Educators should devise the simplest and most effective methods of turning minds around. It shouldn't be the art of implanting sight in the organ, but should proceed on the understanding that the organ already has the capacity, but is improperly aligned and isn't facing the right way”

- (Plato, & Lee, 1974).

In turn, Aristotle was a student of Plato. Regarding education, one of Aristotle`s assumptions was that there ought to be a type of ‘character’ education. This technique of education stipulates a firmness of approach towards the student. In processing a human being in this manner an imprint of basic virtues is imparted to the learner. By a mentor modeling a process that includes examples of moral characteristics, this format of character learning is soaked up by the learner in a similar fashion as dye becomes drenched in wool. Mentoring such as this creates habitual personality characteristics within the protégée (Kirstjansson, 2007). Characteristics invoking one`s virtuous nature are concerned with morality and being righteous. Indoctrination, manipulation, and coercion are part of the educational process and it does not recognise individual freedom (Schaffar, 2014).
Being free is a point that is further emphasised by Emanuel Kant. One of educations greatest problems is that children attempt to exercise their capacity of freewill (Kant, 2012). This freedom sought by human beings is a fundamental right to learn. By educating human beings, teachers and educators must free people and make them more creative whilst taking account of formal and informal transitions of knowledge (Peters, 2015).

Renowned educator John Dewey believed that education is about acquiring information. He also insisted that technical and intellectual skills which develop social dispositions are nurtured by education and therefore, there must be a proper balance between formal and informal education (Dewey, & Boydston et al, 2009). Freire believes that the world is not completed or concerned with a finished learning process and so human beings are learning by becoming liberated through education (Freire, 1998). By adolescences partaking in part of school activities they are attempting to have a balanced education and by it being a time of development and growth in many aspects of their young lives and by them not having reached the free choice of adulthood, for them, life is still evolving and so this learning process of learning is ongoing.

As education is both a formal and informal process it is important to examine each process individually and how they impact on Ireland’s education system.

**Formal Education**

The Irish Primary School Curriculum was developed in 1999 and was designed to cater for the formal primary education of children throughout eight years of early to late childhood. It aims to encourage their love of learning and to develop a child’s potential. The 12 subjects of the curriculum have a combined aim to give children life skills (NCCA, 2015). With all subjects combined the objective of the whole curriculum is to have children’s social and emotional development of central importance. Akin to this, it is concerned with future political concerns as well as the future child themselves. A focus on life-skills for the future development of the child is considered necessary in the further development of the primary curriculum (FitzPatrick, & Twohig et al, 2014).
Upon leaving primary school, a child has to choose a post primary or secondary school to facilitate their further learning. Their choice is swayed by their perceptions of the potential new school that they will attend. These perceptions are strongly influenced by the opinions of other family members or by other friends who have previously attended this school. Children who transition from primary to post primary school can feel nervous or excited about this prospect. They understand that they will no longer be amongst the oldest children as they were in their primary school but, instead, they will be one of the youngest. Accompanying realisations appear in the surface of their mind which makes them comprehend that they may be potential victims of bullying (Smyth, & McCoy et al, 2004).

There are two subjects that concentrate on the social education of students before the leaving Certificate. Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are both part of the Junior Certificate syllabus. The CSPE coursework is assessed by way of an action project at Junior Certificate level. There is also a written CSPE examination paper for the Junior Certificate which usually concentrates on contemporary issues (Eolaíochta, & A.R.O.A, 2015). SPHE centers on the student’s self-esteem and their self-awareness. This method advocates the process of assessment for learning. Assessment methods such as this concentrate on giving information back to the learner which effectively part of the learning process. The learner can then look forward to the next stage (Simons, & Klopack, 2015). Neither CSPE or SPHE are taught or assessed after the Junior Certificate (Commission, 2015).

A student’s knowledge, skills and understanding are acceptably accounted for by their teachers through the means of assessment (Hardiman, & Whitman, 2014). In Ireland, this assessment process is completed by the annual Leaving Certificate. The examination features foundation, ordinary and higher level papers on an array of subjects across the syllabus. In 2003 there were 53,000 Irish students who attempted the leaving certificate. The objective of this examinations procedure is to incorporate the vast ranges of abilities, special needs and individual learning styles of all pupils (Ireland, Department of, et al, 2001). Of course, not all abilities are formally academically scrutinised. Despite being informed in all aspects of their learning, children who attend both primary and post primary school are educated with a range of topics, traits and subjects that are not all assessed on a formal basis. Criticisms of the Leaving Certificate structure
are beginning to become more pronounced as its underlying aims are failing to prepare students for realities of university or to think independently found a Dublin City University study (Power 2018). Assessments procedures associating problematic marking systems are prevalent in the Leaving Certificate (O Kelly, 2018). Therefore, it remains to be seen what the relevance is of some subject areas within the Leaving Certificate curriculum.

**Non Formal Education**

Non-formal education is an emerging field of education that raises students motivation (Pauli & Shipper, 2019). Of course, informal learning can be carried out at home. Quite often there are sub-cultures within a society that do not appreciate or value, formal educational attainment. A traditional example of an Irish sub-culture is the Irish Travelling movement. Their perception, as a collective, on the importance of educational attainment is changing as many Irish Travelling mothers (within the Irish Traveling culture) are beginning to appreciate the value of progressing in formal education. They are now more eager to become involved in skills-based work-related learning.

By using Bourdieu's ideals, literacy programmes allow Travelers to have an alternative space to learn and have their culture and history incorporated into existing subjects (Donnelly, 2018). Informal spaces can be learning spaces, as can entertainment spaces in one’s home (Nee, & Dozier, 2015). By a child informally watching news media they can learn to appreciate civic engagement. Informal learning such as this allows for discussion that can actually enhance participatory civic engagement (Nee, & Dozier, 2017). Television shows such as *Raised by the Village* the hit show on RTÉ where troubled adolescents swap life in the city to live within smaller Irish villages attempt to educate younger audiences about being in the role of two different ways of Irish life (Fitness, 2018).

Although there are differences in urban and rural life, everyday life for most children involves frequent interactions with their family and friends. From a study of over 50,000 people it was established that adolescents mostly hang out with their most available and the most similar friends to them (Siennick, 2018).
Formal or informal educators must be aware of the subject content that they teach or facilitate. Some subjects or skills need specialised teaching as ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ methodologies are inadequate ways to transmit education from the teacher to the learner. Regarding music education, it is best to conceptualise music and its range of pedagogies so as to best facilitate proper learning in either a formal or informal setting (King & Himonides, 2016). In fact, teaching music using methodologies such as the online YouTube site has overall implications for the learning of music (Waldron). In the past few years, avid musician and astronaut Commander Chris Hadfield travelled to outer space on three separate occasions. Hadfield aptly examines music’s intimate relationship with the human psyche by saying:

“Music serves a really important role for humanity on earth; it’s a large part of how we understand things. In amongst the other equipment that NASA prioritised they put a 6 string guitar up there”

-Astronaut Commander Chris Hadfield (Kenny, 2015)

In commenting on Chris Hadfield’s achievements in space (which included over 170 scientific experiments), the presenter Pat Kenny of his show In the Round (2015) surmised that students find his scientific experiments and teaching bold and exciting, and above all, they want to follow his lead (Kenny, 2015).

The non-academic learning attributed to children and young peoples’ formal and informal social spaces can become part of their young personalities and youth culture. Youth culture use positive engagement within spaces to create a culture that is transformative in nature (Iwasaki, 2016). Nestle (2002) spoke of his research in the United Kingdom and stated that an informal social chill out area, a social area for sports, areas for art, drama, dance and music and a quiet place, are areas of social space that are recognised by children from 11 -16 years old in after schools communities. Therefore, children and youth are able to recognise their need for addressing their own behavior in an informal social space (Forum, 2015). From research of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) which assessed 38 other countries in 2009, it showed that Irish adolescents were less likely to be involved in Civic and Citizenship activities as their peers in other countries (Gorard, 2013). Nonetheless, they are able to express themselves.
The "draw-and-write" method of communication has allowed Irish children express their social and active self-concepts (ScholarlyEditions, 2013). Away from the traditional school, children and youth socialise. Among the social and cultural actors that shape adolescents’ lives are their families and friends, as well as being part of their community. Of course, informal social spaces do not necessarily have to be fundamentally ‘inside’. Rather, outside informal social spaces can impact upon children and young people’s lives also. Considering outside activities, children feel they need real and meaningful outdoor play in Ireland (Taylor, & Hanna, 2018). Outdoor play has now become part of the Irish pre-school education (Harris, 2017). Of course outdoor play and education can involve physical learning. Irish adolescent boys are notable consumers of "media sport" in comparison to the opposing female gender media is a space where young people learn about their bodies, ideals and it can influence attitudes for young people also (Armour, 2013). It is believed that participatory digital culture can be now, via social media, bridge the gap between formal and informal education and it has the ability to motivate future areas of research in education also (Trust, 2019).

**Youth Culture and Informal Learning**

Formal education involves a highly instituted hierarchy that includes an organised structure and assessment whereas informal education is made up of some kind of organisational framework that includes the provision for activity, skill or area of knowledge (Europe, 2018). Academic school achievement in Ireland is generally measured by the degree of success one has in gaining Leaving Certificate results and the subsequent entry into third level education but this causes stress to many young people (Banks, & Smyth, 2015). Removing academic achievement still leaves a social group of children and youth in a formal education setting. Researchers of children understand that children are a society in their own right (Mhic Mhathúna, & Taylor, 2012). So too, youth culture is a subculture of society in general. Culture of young people is informed by the style predisposed by the musical interests of this age cohort (Hebdige, 2011). The connection of media is again apparent here as MTV use musical videos in a similar way to commercials to advertise to young people so that they can make money. Whether media sources such as this are entirely about profit or a space for young people to adapt their adolescent styles is an interesting area of query (O’Brien, 2017) but what is important to note is that music can be closely linked to the social forces of an era (Frith, 2017).
By adults treating children as young adults they are respecting their thoughts and ideas. Children will appreciate and acknowledge this as they realise that they are still only children. Maturity is developed in children by adults who lead by using suitable methodologies, such as role playing techniques (Wootan, & Mulligan, 2007). Adults using imaginary techniques such as these are feeding into a child’s sense of imagination (Primary Curriculum, & NCCA, 1999). John Carr, the secretary of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) in the 1990s, felt that imagination is the present and opportune gift for educators into the future. Imagination denotes all human achievements in human history and is the fertile soil for development in Irish education. He considered that Irish education fosters imagination and, in turn, creativity harnesses economic development (Irish National Teachers, I. C. C. O; & Education, 2009).

Over many years now Britain’s Angela McRobbie has become a highly respected researcher and author on cultural, ethical, and feminist issues. In the past ten years or so she has built up an accurate day-to-day understanding of the social, cultural, and political practices that have become popular in contemporary media. Since the turn of the century, McRobbie has concentrated on multi-culturism. As Ireland has such a closely knit media co-operation with Great Britain which inevitably feeds into Irish people’s changing social habits, it seems pertinent to mention her views (Connolly, 2014). McRobbie is concentrating on the media political ideology that Great Britain influences Ireland by broadcasting its media content within Ireland as well as in Brittan (McRobbie, 2005).

Two informal social spaces which impact Irish children’s and youth’s culture are Foróige clubs and Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) Clubs. The underpinning rationale around Foróige’s philosophy takes into account that everyone is unique. It aims to foster creativity, interrelationship and interdependence by young people by making an influential difference to the world of others whilst learning and taking responsibility at the same time (Foróige 2018). The Gaelic Athletic Association educates its youth with the GAA ‘Give Respect, Get Respect’ initiative which advocates that children adhere to their behavioral programme including be responsible, to encourage others, and be supportive, considerate and positive to others. It also demands that children be enabling, and tolerant of all (GAA, 2015).
Education and Discipline

Bill Rogers (2007) an educational consultant of note remarks that:

“Discipline is [primarily] concerned with guidance and instruction; it is the way we teach and enhance a social order where rights and responsibilities are balanced.... Teachers should, and most do, make every effort to plan for a positive working environment, cater for mixed abilities and have thoughtful routines for the smooth day to day running of the class...we will need to correct student behaviour [but] it is still more positive if consideration is given to our language and manner... the mark of an effective discipline plan includes a balance of prevention and correction; short and long-term discipline; correction and encouragement; and, repairing and rebuilding strained relationships between teachers and students, student and student”


Similar to hospitals and prisons, schools are clinical elements of socially controlling children. Power and discourse are encouraged and instigate a disciplinary society. Certain distinctions are made between those that are well or unwell in hospitals, those that are judged to be a criminal or not in prisons, and the differentiation of control between adults and children in schools. In this way the adults practices are the norm, whereas the children are as yet a work in progress towards this idealist adulthood nature (Skerritt, 2017). Of course the family is the first socialising space for the child (Amerijckx, 2015). In essence a family gives advice and comfort in times of distress and discomfort. In a study with nearly four hundred children and adolescents and three hundred parents the findings illustrated that emotional responses by adolescents can be linked to the similarly emotional feelings of their mothers (Bariola, & Hughes et al, 2012). Such is the closeness of the family as a socialising agent for children and young people.

Once a child attends some shape of formal education their socialisation changes. Sport in school helps to maintain social balance and discipline. It aids children’s personal development. More specially Gaelic games fosters cultural identity and links within communities (Bowles, & O'Sullivan, 2012). Of course, a child or youth may have self control and be self responsible (Gibson, 2010). But, from a study of 4,225 Australian school children and adolescents’ behavior...
it was established that many children and adolescents believed that their responsible behavior was principally as a result of the likelihood of external controls (Lewis, 2016). Having self control and taking self responsibility feeds into good discipline and gaining more independence (Simpson, & Steele, 2017). Discipline is valued in school. Without it, the intellectual learning of reading, writing and arithmetic are problematic. In the absence of schools, character training is beneficial (Thomson, 2011).

2.3 A Definition of Coaching

Coaching allows a person to develop and learn in order for their performance to improve (Parsloe, 1999). Coaching elicits communication, questioning and mental skills that support and strengthen behavior. It is carried out through a discussion of issues in a friendly and co-operative manner that promotes reflection in order to instigate self-actualisation for the attainment of individual goals and collective achievement. According to Ellinger, Beattie and Hamlin in (Cox, & Bachkirova, et al. 2010) managers effectively define coaching as using listening, analytical and interviewing skills along with effective questioning techniques and observation skills. However, those that are in a coaching friendly context often reflect on their actions, seek advice or feedback and discuss their problems also. Being open and trustful as well allowing for mistakes that can enable learning is tolerated and acceptable (Hunt, & Weintraub, 2011).

David Clutterbuck cites Katz (2007 1) on how sports coaching is concerned with winning and competition whereas, in contrast, coaching at work concentrates on co-operation within the team itself. Here, coaching is concerned with practice to enable short bursts of performance. Whereas Clutterbuck states that Keidel (1987) note that team performance in sports coaching is a combination of all individual performances (Cox, & Bachkirova, et al, 2010).

Shen et al, in (Vincent, 2014) tells that a family coach indirectly motivates, promotes and uses problem solving techniques to support a family’s sense of control. They can strengthen ties between children and their parents, as well as strengthening their parents’ relationships and promoting goal setting that caters for adequate behaviour modeling to occur. The family coach enables the family’s children to self develop their life skills, increase their level of confidence, and interpret and display good role modeling within the family system. By a family coach utilising the ‘Family by Family’ programme (F by F) they allow families that have experienced
difficult times to link with families who are experiencing a similarly challenging period in life. Effectively, observations of suitable family role modeling occurs when the family that is feeling challenged observes the other family’s interactions with their parents and this in turn encourages their own behavior modification within their own family (Vincent, 2014).

Success as a coach, rather than being about achievement in absolute terms such as attaining a medal or a ranking, is viewed by Banks as having helped an individual reach their ‘ceiling’. Epitomising his coaching philosophy, Banks relates coaching to his own analogy of sculpting a Ming vase from clay (Dixon, & Lee, et al; 2012). Using coaching as a term to facilitate life change has also become popular in recent decades.

Life coaching according to Dilts and Duval (2013) is clinically coaching by way of a special conversation between people. This conversation gets to the very nucleus of the issue at hand. By supporting and challenging the client during this conversation, the coaching allows for self actualisation to occur. The coach must be a people person who uses a transformative conversation with their client. By a coach using skilled questioning techniques, reframing the conversation and picking up a client’s body language they are coaching well (Lee, 2014).

**Life Coaching**

Life coaching inspires the whole development of an individual’s life through projecting a person from their current reality towards a forward life goal. It originated in the United States of America and its main accrediting body, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) was originated in 1992. Another prominent life coaching accrediting body is the Coaching Coaches Alliance (CCA) which originated in 2004. It is now prominent across 25 countries internationally and accredits certified professional life coaches. It believes that a person’s quality of life arises from how they achieve their goals and to actively alter, heal, inspire and energise its clients and its coaches (CCA, 2015).

The process considers the ‘wholeness’ of a person. Although there are many differentiations of coaching, there are many similarities between both the techniques used in coaching and the theory of psychological therapies. The life coaching process takes place by a coach improving a person’s life by aiding them to take part in their own personal development (Menendez, 2015). Theoretically, life coaching subscribes to the view that people are largely governed by their feelings such as happiness,
interest, surprise, fear, sadness, anger, contempt or even anger. Fundamentally, people are originally biological beings and secondly, they are people (Richard, 2007). Goal setting is one of the aims of life coaching for young people. Coaching seeks to address the life skills of confidence, leadership, discipline, emotional control, teamwork, and moral reasoning (Gould, & Carson, et al, 2013).

Despite the growing use and appreciation of life coaching, there is little research to show its success when it is used to support families. Despite this fact, many teenagers have achieved higher self esteem and self efficacy from being life coached (Seat, 2018).

“Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their potential both professionally and personally.”

-(Richardson, 2011)

Life coaching involves collaborative inspiration (Richardson, 2011). There are many differentiations of coaching. Collaborative inspiration is required in coaching. The GROW model requires that there is a personal relationship between the coach and the coachee. The model involves establishing a client’s goals (G), beginning with their reality (R), then discovering their options (O) and finally, proceeding to coach the client into a way forward (W) (E; 2011). In Ireland, the Irish Lifecoach Institute (ILI) concentrates on life coaching and business coaching. It focuses on humans as a resource and attempts to benefit individuals by tapping into a person’s innate personal developmental ability.

**Coaching Quality**

A coach’s own personal experiences can impact their coaching attributes and mannerisms (Bennet, 2014). In fact, coaches may originate from a vast multiplicity of backgrounds. An individual coach’s backgrounds may include training or other education that is different from many other coaches’ training or education. Education of coaches can instill a reflective ideology into the coach that enables them to be more critical of their coaching role (Bennett, 2014A). Successful coaching within organisations and areas such as team and sports’ league coaching has the ability to motivate creativity and empower learners (Erhardt, & Martin-Rios, et al, 2014).
Regarding the realm of sports’ coaching, Olympic coaches stipulate the importance of mentoring within their role as well as the other psychological attributes that are in need of support by an athlete during their performance. One such psychological attribute is the ability of a coach to motivate control over their participants’ emotions during times involving competitive pressures (Bernabe, 2017).

Garvey (2017) states that despite Ireland not being a great measure of successful coaching, in the nearby United Kingdom the profession is highly respected as there are many coaches who are highly experienced and academically qualified. However, poor coaches are prevalent in the profession and their impact on coachees can have an adverse effect in actually increasing an individual’s stress (Garvey, 2017). Furthermore, when a good coach begins a relationship with an individual coachee, it is vital to establish the goals of the coaching process so that the proper support for the coachee is given (Bernard, 2018). Support of a coachee is of vital importance as the role of coaching involves leadership by the coach themselves. Despite the need for such leadership, these skills are not always a natural trait of all coaches (Grant, & Hartley, 2013). Despite there being a plethora of literature on hand on the topic of coaching, the relationship with coaching and leadership has not been established (Hudson, 2010). The coaching process implies the person centered process whereby many perceptions of the coaching role sees it as being a type of therapeutic intervention although it is quite unlike counseling. None the less, boundaries between these two different professions exist, despite the fact that there is a growing interest in the phenomenon of coaching psychology (Bachkirova, Jackson et al, 2011). It is important to note that coaching that comes from a constructivist approach can have positive affects, however there is a narrow measure between positive and negative coaching (Berry, 2015).

A Definition of Mentoring

A mentor aims to provide ongoing guidance in a trusting and caring way that may also act to transform a mentee`s character through the behaviour modeling of the process in action. The mentor is an older and more experienced person who seeks to establish a younger person`s
competence by guiding the latter in acquiring the mastery of progressively more complex skills and tasks. In doing so, the character’s sense of respect, loyalty and identification is enriched (DuBois, & Karcher et al, 2005). In ancient Greece, Odysesius left his son Telemachus under the care of his friend Mentor as he went to the Trojan War. From here arose the term ‘Mentor’ (Strong, 2009).

Supervision is a part of the mentoring process. KatePinder in (Bachkirova, & Jackson, # et al,2011) articulate about Hawkins and Smith’s (2006) definition of a supervision as being:

“....the process by which a coach or mentor, with the help of a supervisor who is not directly working with the client but with the coach or mentor can attend to understanding better both the client system and themselves as part of the client-coach/mentor system, and transform their work...”


Mentoring can be done in a formal or informal setting. Formal mentoring of children is possible in the school setting. Mentoring children allows for more preemptive and proactive measures before they reach adolescence. As children have experienced fewer risks and traumas in life, therefore, mentoring them can involve a modeling of behaviour. Though school based mentoring is less expensive and encourages all partners of the school education process to interact, further research is required into its effectiveness towards the benefits of it for children.

Informal mentoring can occur between a more experienced person and a younger person. Rhodes (1994) in (Newburn, & Shiner et al, 2005) sees Informal mentoring as a type of relationship that is:

“...between an older, more experienced mentor and an unrelated young protégé. The mentor typically provides on-going guidance instruction and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé. Over the course of the relationship the mentor and the protégé develop a bond of mutual commitment, friendship, respect and loyalty which facilitates the youth’s transition into adulthood ...”

The relationship of trust and a caring character is important in the mentoring process.

“Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee”


The Mentor Protégée Relationship

Once expectations of change occur over a credible time span, school will enable “turnarounds” that benefit youth in formal educational spaces so as to use the process of mentoring and coaching. These programmes demands flexibility and complete systematic evolutions as they impact on the overall culture of an educational organisation (Hess, 2009). Mentoring can improve grade point averages sand academic scoring in youth (Bayer, & Grossman, et al, 2015).

A mentor Informs, listens, and facilitates with the protégé. The process of mentoring can include brain storming and collaboration in a holistic manner (Hagger, 2006). In fact, Lockwood, Carr Evans and Eby in Allen and Eby (2007) believe that mentors of protégés benefit from mentoring themselves. They can benefit through having an enhanced satisfaction with their own self, their life and even their career or job performance. They may find that they have established better leadership skills also (Allen, & Eby, 2007). From research carried out across 12 studies of the schools’ academic skills, behavior, social skills, and self esteem in UK and Europe, Liabo, Lucas and Roberts hypothesis that there have been no negative effects on mentoring young people (DuBois, & Karcher et al, 2005). Of course with the acceleration of digital media mentors of youth must be vigilant of the potential harm arising from the advances in technology. Policies ought to be put into action in order to maximise the benefits of such digital media for youth (Schwartz, & Rhodes, et al, 2014). Another disadvantage is that mentoring can be unsuccessful when used over a social distance, by an untrained mentor, and if there is a conflict of the roles of the mentoring process (Wisker, 2008).

Liang and Grosman, observe that protégés seek mentors who have similar characteristics and who may come from the same cultural background. They may also have a mutual chemistry
with them (Allen, & Eby, 2007). Yet, little in the literature takes account of the parent’s perception of mentoring. Although it is accepted that the attribute of trust is a major factor in the relationship between the mentor and the protégé (Lakind, & Atkins et al, 2015). Rogers contends that mentoring enables young people to be thwarted away from antisocial behaviour and crime (Williamson, 2016). It is important to note that mentoring can have positive and negative effects on the mentee. Negative effects can have a stronger impact that the impact that positive effects can bring to the protégé, even if they have had a positive mentor. Ones memory of being mentored can elicit negative memories. The protégé may have copied the actions and words of the mentor and they may become more disadvantaged in their actions and words as a result of the relationship (Kumar, 2017).

Variables of Mentoring

Good mentoring can be utilised in many aspects of personal and professional life. The relationship between the mentor and the protégé are important. Mentoring young people is favoured throughout the foster care system as it can be used for intervention purposes. By its use, better relationships are elicited between non-parental mentors and young people at risk in order to develop their emotional and social well-being (Greeson, & Thompson, et al, 2015). Sustainable relationship are recommended for both mentors and their protégé (Strapp, & Gilles, et al, 2014). During a Swedish branch of adult-youth mentoring which targeted intervention of low risk youth and their substance use, results confirmed that a majority of youth received help from the process and in turn they liked and trusted their mentors. Although, it was acknowledged that when there are negative experiences it may force to break up the mentor-protégé relationship (Bodin, & Leifman, 2011).

Mentoring experiences can differ by the gender dissimilarities also. Boys that are going through puberty often feel that negation of females is needed in order to show masculinity. Rather than a lecturing style of communication, dialogue is needed with boys and this may lead to laughter being expressed positively that will inform communication and learning for boys when they are within a successful mentoring process (MacDonald, 2009). When dealing with mentoring,
women in organisations require more specific support than men. Despite organisations having mentoring procedures in place, many such organisations see it best to facilitate females by assessing the transformations that are required within the organisations themselves (Devries, 2011). Problems exist with youth of both genders and how these problems are addressed can have a future impact on these growing youth. The youth mentoring approach is no longer only about rectifying problems with youth but it is also about promoting positive youth development. By utilising partnerships between youth and mentors social change can be targeted (Bowers, 2015). There is an apparent need for mentors and youth to work collaboratively with positive youth development in order to impact on local community practices and policies as well as enable greater civic engagement. Yet, not all youth gain from a balanced relationship between mentors and young protégés and so it is most important that existing youth adult partnerships continue to strive to improve social justice as well as school success (Wright, 2015).

**Role Modeling**

Being a role model involves inspiring others to live a meaningful life (Roots in Action, 2019). A *role model* is a person that models moral behavior to other individuals who view themselves as actively living in the same way as them. Role models are people who may live, facilitate, manage, guide or influence another person that may be or could possibly be in similar circumstance as them at a future point in time. A good example that emphasises a person representing these traits is the American singer, Johnny Mattais.

John Mattais` status meant that he was to become a respected role model to many. He was an American singer who captured the attention of legions of fans throughout his career, which spanned across decades. He was a well-known romantic singer. As well as that he was initially a talented sports man and although being admired by many women, he was an openly gay man which shows how attractive he really was as a person and not just a sports man and singer.

"I wish I were Johnny Mathais. So mainstream. So popular. So ironic, yet perfect. effortlessly boyish at over 70 years old, with a voice that still makes all of America wants to make out."
Heavenly, warm. Yes, I'll say it out loud – wonderful, wonderful. I saw Johnny Mathis in life once, we didn't see me – the best way to glimpse role model."

-(Waters, 2011)

For a child or youth families are often a place where role models are present. By a family being agreeable to the care of each other, there are different and special household models in them. These models are defined as being leaders within the family. As people want to do what leaders do, therefore, models set a good example of doing the right thing. In a family setting, models can be brothers, sisters, grandparents, teachers, friends and even coaches (Rissman, 2011). Anderson, (2010) writes of how he, at a young age, attended a national hockey league game in America. There he witnessed violence in the sport he supported as he sat beside his father and noticed when the team he was cheering, (The Los Angeles Kings) player violently struck another player from the opposing team. He surmised that it was in a boy’s nature to realise that this was wrong and that violence between players ought to be punished. He felt that the rules of the game should stop fighting in sports. Even though his father told him the player was punished Eric did feel this was good enough. It led him to believe that professional sports like to see some sort of violence in their games as it helps to sell seats and create controversy. In doing so, it built publicity. In turn, this publicity sold regular tickets to sports’ games. He believed that if professional athletes stopped fighting then younger athletes may stop using this or violent behaviour as they would view them as role models and would want to mimic their actions (Anderson, 2010).

Female Role Models

Although there are many powerful role models for males there are also female role models for young females also. This can be seen in public life and through the media (Farrell, 2016). Many forms of media can communicate role models actions with instantaneous and expansive appeal. This appeal can impact young people’s thinking and feelings. There is a growing influence of the media that may impact the well being of young people. The media has the power to act as a role model for young people and much work is required to figure out how young people are being socially influenced (O’Brien, 2012).

Commenting on the leadership skills of one of the Notre Damme female basketballers, Flynt (2012) noted that Ruth Riley was not just a good player but also showed qualities through being
involved in a youth outreach programme (Flynt, 2012). On the other hand, a survey conducted by Ireland’s Comhairle na nOg observed that 15 year Irish girls were extremely dissatisfied with their physical body image (Roxby, 2014). However, being a female role model in Ireland means that women such as Jenny Taafe (Founder, & CEO of digital marketing group iZest Marketing and Izest Influence) can adopt more previously masculinity dominated roles, such as being a CEO (Image, 2016).

Katie Taylor was an Irish Olympic boxing champion in 2012 and was heralded as a role model for her down to earth yet determined nature (42, 2015). As Taylor is a non-drinker, she fails to live up to the stereotypical Irish image of consuming large quantities of alcohol. Being a heavy drinker or alcoholic is not seen as being a good attribute of a role model as the well known Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) teaches its members to follow members who have already graduated from their programme of non-drinking (Browne, 2019). Conversely Katie Taylor’s negation of alcohol is unlike the Irish Taoiseach’s status at that same time when he was criticised for being inebriated during a public broadcast. Irish Taoiseach Brian Cowen was interviewed live on radio whilst still appearing as being intoxicated from the previous nights’ socialising and in doing so, expressed himself as being a poor role model for Irish people (O Connell, 2015).

In 2014, Giang magazine listed the internationally most inspirational female role models. They contended that by a female being well-known and acting as an inspiration and a leader in their field it would provide to be an important leading attribute for women throughout the world. In guiding, being a motivator or a social activist or by even being a speaker on important issues, women can provide a role modeling inspiration (GIANG, 2014). Conversely, there is too much sexualisation within New Zealand society that is broadcast by the media and perceived by young females in a negative fashion. Seventy one pre-teen girls were researched and the outcomes suggested that there was too many celebrities lifestyles negatively influencing these young girls sense of self (Jackson, & Vares, 2015).

Male Role Models

Of course males as well as females can be role models. Many male role models come from sport. Northern Irishman Rory McElroy was the number one golfer in the world for 95 weeks starting in 2012 and throughout other periods until 2015. He acknowledged that he had to be a role model
for children and that many young people look to him for leadership (Campos, 2015). Hurler Tony Browne was seen as a role model to many as he was able to play sport at a high level for over 22 years with a high level of discipline despite being ultimately unsuccessful in his quest to win the elusive all-Ireland medal (Shannon, 2017).

Similar to the aforementioned female Irish boxer Katie Taylor, male Irish boxer Paddy Barnes was spoken about as being a role model throughout his community due his success and the enthusiasm that resonated amongst his followers from winning bronze in the 2012 Olympic games (McGuinness, 2016). Kilkenny hurler Henry Shefflin became hurling`s only 10 time all-Ireland medal winner in 2014. His inspirational performances and his ability of having the crucial attributes of skill, speed and stamina have marked him out as one of the greats of the game. After returning from two cruciate knee injuries and a major shoulder injury, Shefflin was admired by all of his fellow team mates who referred to him as the role model for the rest of the team (Cremin, 2015). Likewise, Kerry footballer Colm Cooper was known as a role model for being such a talented player who was admired and respected by all (Advertiser, 2017).

Criticism over Shefflin’s commanding influence, not just on the other Kilkenny players but on all other hurling players, were attributed to a fellow competitor Joe Canning after a pre all–Ireland media interview in 2012. Canning, heralded by many as being the next great talent in the game, was adjudged by many in the game of hurling to have insulted Henry Shefflin for referring to some of his actions in an earlier match between the counties as being unsportsmanlike. However, when clarifying his true opinion, he stated that he viewed Shefflin as being a positive role model (D, O. F. 2012). This point was echoed by the then Galway hurling management, who also noted that the entire Kilkenny team were role models as they were the team that all other teams aspired to be like (Neville, 2015).

Roles of gender and sex stereotypes within sport have been broadly researched and the results state that these stereotypes are absorbed by the self during the active social processes involved (Jakubowska, 2018). Of course a role model may be the official leader of a team or group, but this is not always the case. This was the case with the 2019 European football champions Liverpool footballer and world player of the year nominee Virgil Van Dyke who was seen as a role model for the team but was not the official club captain. This is why there is the need for leadership of people (Reds Live, 2019).
Leadership

Leadership involves influencing others positively (Martin, 2017). By defining leadership it is important to note that it extracts a variety of attributes from within an individual. However, central to these attributes are the leader’s capacity to be able to be trusted in their society that views them as intelligent, determined, and morally empathetic characters that encompass the overall organisation’s quest for a common goal. Akin to this, a good leader must have a mindful awareness of self-efficacy that promotes a confident and resilient valued based self discipline.

Leadership has many different definitions. Bass (1990) in (Northhouse, 2010) proposed that leadership can be defined in relation to the group that it oversees. Another perception of leadership comes from a set of personality traits. By a leader having intelligence, self confidence, determination, sociability they contain these leading attributes. In offering a base definition where all the variety of definitions arise from, Northhouse (2010) states that:

“Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal “

- (Northhouse, 2010)

According to the aforementioned Bass (2009) there are two main different styles of leadership. These two types are authoritarian leadership and democratic leadership. Autocratic leadership implies that the leader controls and elicits their power over their followers. These leaders may be good motivators. Whereas, a democratic or egalitarian style of leadership, is consultative and participatory and allows the followers to make some decisions for themselves. Bass and Northhouse offer leadership characteristics, styles of leadership and an underlying definition of what leadership is (Bass, 2009). Dawlabani (2014) point out that leaders require a certain form of moralistic attribute. They believe that the leader carries out the truthful intentions of the group`s ideology and in so doing rewards the followers of the group (Dawlabani 2014). In tandem with the leadership trait of self confidence that Bass (2009) implied earlier, Bennett (2014 A) noted that self efficacy is required in leaders as it is related to a person`s confidence in their ability (Bennett, 2014 A). One prominent international leader who lived throughout many decades of the twenty first century and showed tremendous resilience and confidence as a black South African to become the head of his nation was Nelson Mandela. His expression of leadership was
surmised as having the where withal to foster a personal relationship, become an interpersonal communicator and to aspire to having strategic abilities. Mandela also projected empathy as a leader (Pietersen, 2015). By a leader expressing reliance they are developing their own self and forming a better culture of resilience in their followers (Shambaugh, 2010). Of course, being a confident leader in times of economic stability is much easier than times of uncertainly. Since the world economic crash in 2008, many leaders have lacked confidence in their leadership approach. Hence the need for a more resilient outlook so that leaders establish more innovative and opportune mindfulness in their approach (Baldoni, 2015).

Thompson and Tracy (2010) noted that Peter Drucker felt that leadership can be a natural characteristic of an individual, yet as there are so few natural leaders this has little overall relevance (Thompson, & Tracy, 2010). Whether or not a leader has natural traits or characteristics, their leadership character is largely different than many of their followers. Leaders must have good character implied by a values system (Bali, 2011). Values such as trustworthiness are important in order for the culture of an organisation or a body of people to become led by a successful person (Ordoñez de Pablos, 2016). Kudesia (2010) believe that good leadership stems from self control and their internal attitudes. However, for a leader to continue to remain self controlled they must negate the stressful situations that they will undoubtedly encounter as leaders. Stress management for leaders can be performed through Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) or simple yoga asanas, which have both proved more effective to deal with stress than prescription drugs (Daft, 2016). As there are many regular stresses with being a leader, adopting a practice of yoga asanas takes self-discipline. Self discipline is a component of effective leadership and it is relative to the trust that followers show in their expected leaders (Brewer, 2014).

**Coaches, Mentors and Role Models as Leaders**

Mentor-leaders are a new function of democratic leadership. Considered to be role models, their behavior inspires growth both on a personal level and within organisations (Bell, 2013). In fact due to changing realities, many Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or leaders of companies require mentoring within their leadership role. As the skills needed for their role is so plentiful and diverse, mentors of leaders are essential in distinguishing the behaviors that best equip
organisations with the most successful leaders (2013). Teaching, as well as mentoring, is required within many US companies in the recent past due to pressurised economic times. Teaching that evokes and promotes spirit-building programmes helps sustain and address the metal psyche of unmotivated U.S employees (Marabella, 2014).

Coaching relationships have enabled over 35,000 leaders understand what is detrimental to adopting good leadership skills. Leaders can be coached to become cognoscente of their own behavior with their followers. Those that are in control can take a firm step towards becoming better leaders by balancing their intrapersonal and functional work chores correctly and accepting behavioral feedback that may recognise habits such as the want to be in the ‘ right’ and by learning to listen to others (Noer, & Sternbergh, 2014).

Leadership coaching enables leaders of organisations to become accustomed to the life coaching phenomenon and learn new coaching techniques that they can use in their leadership roles (Stoltzfus, 2005). A leadership coach will enable a small business owner or a leader to become adept at learning new skills and strategies that they can use in their professional or personal life. These type of coaches elicit the existing skills that the leaders already have in their armory and then try to build on them to improve the leader in order for them to achieve their end goal (Hansel, 2015).

School politics can hamper good teacher leadership. Traditional ways of doing things along with older polices and pressures cease an educational and school teacher leaders from building a successfully collaborative school system. Collaborative learning aids student learning and achievement, yet school leaders have been thwarted in their ambitions to change, despite having good leadership skills (Hewitt, & Hodge, et al, 2013). Although the future of all educational change is needed in order for education of young people to positively progress, it is questionable as to what path of developmental change must school leaders take in order to make this change truly worthwhile (Aksu, & Cantürk, et al, 2013).

2.4 Towards a Definition of Youth Work

Coaching juveniles in the GAA is a form of quasi youth work that focuses on self development of the young people who volunteer to participate in the club activities. In this section
comparisons between GAA coaching and youth work are examined and the author’s vindication for including GAA coaching as a form of youth work are addressed.

Although youth work generally encompasses voluntarily participation in professional youth services, this does not distinguish it in being totally different to other leisure activities and human services that young people choose to be part of. Rather, the voluntary participatory aspect of youth work is differentiated because it also lends to the fact that a youth can cease its participation in youth work at any time under their own free will (Ord, 2016). Per se, coaching GAA at youth level is voluntary and is a form of quasi youth work. Quasi youth work tries to provide a service that is differentiated according to need (Bright & Pugh, 2019). This can be done within the GAA through a differentiated coaching of sporting tasks (GAA Fun Do, 2007).

Electric Ireland who was the sponsoring company of the 2016 GAA All-Ireland Minor Championships (which facilitated competitive sport for people less than eighteen years of age) discovered that 94% of Irish people found that sport had a positive impact on young peoples’ lives. Almost three quarters of the males in the study felt that they had sustained friendships because of their involvement in the GAA. This study concluded that young people are positively shaped by their involvement in sport (GAA News, 2016).

The author argues that coaching in GAA is a form of one-to-one quasi youth work in itself. It involves face-to-face communication that enables a relationship based on the focus of self-development. This occurs in a supportive manner through one to one relationships in clubs that are very similar to those in a youth work facility in order for the young person to be enabled to overcome challenges such as any personal barriers that he/she may have. It is provided by unpaid volunteer adults who have personal skills but are not per-se trained youth work professionals. However their skills are often transferable and are founded on the building and maintenance of positive relationships with youth. Importantly and similar to a youth worker in an Irish context, their skills as a volunteer are regulated as they all have done basic compulsory certificates in coaching young people in sport. So it is argued here that the similarities between a youth worker and juvenile sports coach are notably close in terms of role and function.

Youth work involves a youth working with a volunteer. The decision to initiate and retain or dissolve this working partnership over time, is dictated by the youth themselves. The worker aids the youth within an educational context for the good of their development (Jeff, 2015).
Youth work is a form of interactive community facilitation, guidance and practical work carried out by conscientious adults. These workers are concerned with the overall community development in order to foster greater independence, which in turn results in increased self-responsibility for youth. Youth work and community work and development are indelibly linked with long lasting benefits for the community and society (Christens, & Dolan, 2011).

In deliberating why community work has not flourished as a division of the overall social work context, Kearney and Skehill (2005) state that the nurse, the guard, the home school liaison, the volunteer and indeed any person who is working in the community is a community worker. Community development defined is:

“...a process whereby those that are marginalised and excluded are enabled to gain in self confidence to join with others to participate in actions, to change their situations and to tackle problems that face their community”

- Carroll, & Lee, in (Kearney & Skehill, 2005)

Community work goes hand in hand with community development, in that, the workers are developing the community to collectively promote self help, service planning and service extension (Kearney, & Skehill, 2005). As youth are a sub section of the greater population of a community they too need to be developed. The above definition of youth considers the implied definition of the concept of ‘Youth’ itself. Youth is:

“... a socially constructed intermediary phase that stands between childhood and adulthood. It is not defined chronologically or can be tied between specific age ranges, nor can it’s end point be linked to specific activities, such as taking up paid work or having sexual relations. Youth is a boarder concept than adolescence which relates to specific developmental phases which begins with puberty and ending with psychological youth and the life course and emotional maturity is achieved and it tends to cover a broader time span”

-(Furlong, 2012)

As youth is socially constructed and these young people are growing and developing in a society, therefore there is a need for adult workers to guide this growth and development. These adults are youth workers who are either professional or worthy voluntary adult facilitators who
communicate and form an alliance that assist activities with younger people. By doing so, self responsibility and the development of independence is promoted which, in turn, may be mirrored within communities. Coussée, Verschelden and Williamson (2012) say that youth work is difficult to define and its complexity may only be unraveled by including its alliance in having “…association, activity, dialogue and action…” as well as “…support, opportunity and experience” for children and youth (Coussée, & Verschelden, et al, 2012).

For many researchers defining youth work is difficult, as so many youth workers deal with such a variety of programmes and functions within a young person’s life. Youth work involves a variety of practical effort with children as young as seven (although it is usually from 10 years of age either in a professional or voluntary basis) towards the beginning of their adult years. An added difficulty in getting to the essence of what youth work is, arises from the notion of what most youth workers refer to as being ‘who they work for’, that being “young people”. However, not all professions that work with youth define youth as “young people”. Youth workers view youth in social transitions from childhood to adulthood. This type of work involves facilitating the transfer from childhood dependence towards a progression headed for independence or interdependence so as to achieve what sociologists refer to as agency. Agency involves a young person becoming adept at being self responsible. In turn, the learned responsibility may be transmitted throughout a youth’s relationships in their community (Sercombe, 2010).

**An International History of Youth Work**

During the philanthropic movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, youth work was often carried out by priests or teachers and, thus, this showed its original voluntary background with an emphasis on addressing destitution with regard to troublesome children. Guy Van Weissenberg was a Finnish Boy Scout leader who visualised youth work as being civic minded. He envisaged that it ought to entail group work, which would be carried out by professional youth workers. His insights led him to become a international United Nations youth expert and a UNESCO activist (Partnership, 2012). In fact, youth work originated from Sunday schools and other youth organisations. By attempting to address the politically assigned’ rights’ of children, concerned adults provided youth work to address the socially altered expectations upon children. Organisations led by Sir George Williams such as the YMCA (1844) and the development of the
Scouts (1916) by Robert Baden-Powell assisted these adults in their work with youth (McGinley 2014). Robert Baden- Powell’s sister, Agnes Baden- Powell, followed on soon after from her brother’s youth work with her creation of the Girl Guides (Gardner, 2011). In London (1880s), Maude Stanley was a host for Sunday schools aimed at the youth and began the Girls’ Club Union (Ross, 2007). Around the same time The Boys’ Brigade (1888) was established by Sir William Alexander Smith (Swinton, 2010) and Lilian Helen "Lily" Montagu started the Western Centered Jewish Girls’ Club (Solomon, 2015). Another religious advocate of youth work at the time was the Belgian priest Cardijn who set out to harmonise youth and bring them away from the vices of the world and the state’s abuse. He began the ‘Catholic Working Youth’ early in the 20th century (Franklin Pilario, 2005). Local scout groups began to be created with the Catholic youth ethos in the early part of the 1900s. For example, in 1915 the Luxemburg Girl Guides was founded. In 1938 the Catholic Luxemburg Guides was initiated. The Catholic Church founded many youth groups prior to the Second World War and continued in this way after the war. They began providing youth groups for females also. The Scout movement for youth was prominent in refusing to give in to the Nazi movement in Luxemburg. By the 1960s leisure time was a concept that had become recognised by youth policy makers (Partnership, 2012).

As previously mentioned, youth work is a sub set of community work. According to Peter Baldock (1974), community work promotes self-governance of economic and social change for a locality. Community work can be utilised to the advance of youth work. Prior to the industrial revolution, the family allowed for the functions of modern youth work to be accommodated (Hurley, 2004).

A History of Irish Youth Work

The history of youth work in Ireland dates back to the end of the 1800s. Then, the morality of youth in Ireland was questioned due to the influence of the industrial revolution. Greater numbers of people moved to urban areas for employment and as competition between companies to sell products rose so too did ordinary men’s wages and their perceived power in society. A move from the agrarian towards an industrialised society promoted many youth organisations including the afore mentioned Boy Scouts, the Girl Guide movement and also the boys’ and
girls’ brigades. More nationalised groups including the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Inghindhe na hÉireann and Na Fianna Éireann (which tried to bestow a type of character education on its youth) were now in full swing. By 1968 the National Youth Council of Ireland was instigated and youth policy was put into operation by the O’Sullivan committee in 1974. More modernised happenings in youth work have come from the Final Report of National Youth Policy Committee (1984) and the Green Paper Education for a Changing World (1992) and gave more power to the VECs (Coyne, & Donohoe, 2013). Among the organisations in membership of the National Youth Council of Ireland are Foróige, Scouting Ireland, the Irish Girl Guides and the Catholic Youth Council. The Community Development Programme (CDP) was created in 1990. The CDP aimed to react to the poverty and disadvantage that would in turn make for a publically equitable decision making process. Effectively, the weaker segments of Irish society would then become more equalised arising from a community led perspective. Beginning with 15 projects the programme rose to 181 projects by 2007. More recent criticisms of CDP have meant that it is failing to provide structural change and it lacks equal power sharing across society. The Irish state concentrates on a narrower democratic viewpoint that excludes the best practice opinions of community representatives and volunteers that advocate a more futuristic and holistic democratic vision of Ireland (Forde, & Kiely, et al, 2009).

Proof of formal education being addressed informally came in Dublin in the late 1970s. The community youth services referred to the range of services that were aimed at children’s needs for social developmental within children’s locality and in more recent times the vast majority of youth work has operated on a voluntary basis. In Dublin city, the Dublin Vocational Educational Committee over stood the Comhairle le Leas Oige, which originated in 1941 to address the social needs of young people. In other parts of the country youth organisations could seek grants made available through the vocational educational committees. In fact, community youth services developed in an ad hoc fashion. Out of school care for those coming from single parent households was available. Those that lacked good familiar relationships or needed social care were looked after by concerned and skilled adults who developed children out of school by promoting homework, playing, and stimulating their interests and skills (Health, 1980).
Youth Work: From Education to Behaviour

The Catholic Youth Council originated in 1944 by the Archbishop of Dublin as a subsection of the Catholic Social Service Council. Volunteers led the project in vacant boarding schools. The volunteers emphasised dancing and homemaking classes as well as more informal socialisation, which impressed a trusting atmosphere between youth and all partners in the project. Linkages with more formal education was fostered with the Dublin Institute of Adult Education and the Department of Education in the 1960s (Jesuits, 2007). A similar Catholic youth agency is the Catholic Youth Ministry Ireland (CYMI), which formally advocates education and youth groups and ministries in Ireland (Ireland 2015).

Communities That Care (CTC) are unique community based programmes that occur in communities making youth, families and schools aware of informal education through forums, presentations, recreation in the community, and meetings. The CTC attempt to prevent adolescent problematic behaviours. Preventive programmes that CTC facilitate are ‘Families That Care: Guiding Good Choices’ programme, life skills training, ‘Police Department (PD) SafeKids: Out of Harm’s Way’ programmes, the ‘Families That Care: Staying Connected to Your Teen’ course, and the SPARKS (Strong Parents Actively Raising Kids Safely and Sister’s) programmes (Bell, 2007).

From a survey of 4,407 fifth-grade students from 2004 to 2009, results proved that long term public health benefits can arise from CTCs as they decrease problematic behaviour with adolescents (Hawkins, & Oesterle, et al, 2012). Communities That Care (CTC) are also at present in Europe and Ireland as their training programmes are advertised through the Irish Health Service Executive (HSE) (Hudson, 2010).

In 1991, the Chicago Community Trust (CCT) initiated community centered project for children, adolescents and families needs. The intention was to create and interlink the diverse adults and youth alike to establish an inclusive community board that featured both adults and youth to manufacture youth services in the neighbourhood of the south west of Chicago (Collaborative, 2015). The Intermediate Treatment project has helped community social workers decide on giving youth the opportunity to keep themselves from appearing in court and from going into care. It has been proven to keep young people away from anti social behaviour. Disadvantages of the Intermediate project is that it can be perceived to reward the ill behaviour of young delinquents (Shardlow, 2004).
The Intermediate Treatment Projects were planned as a continuum of care for juvenile delinquency (Paley, & Thorpe, 1974). Whilst on the intermediate project 87% of youth failed to commit an illegal offence. After two years, 26 from 46 offenders failed to offend whilst involved in the project (Newsam, 1983). The projects’ philosophy demands the help of supportive volunteers that believe in the rehabilitation of youth (SWT, 1985). The intermediate treatment projects was praised for their philosophy which included a lower cost than keeping a child in care and reacting to the first time offending youth’s offence (Department, 1977). It was a less recognised part of Cornwall’s social history (Charles, 2012). In the 1980s the treatment project was an alternative treatment to putting youth into custody. Devon, Cornwall, Hampshire and Northanbshire were leading areas that advocated the project. By diverting antisocial behaviour in youth the project helped motivate policy development in Northahamshire and it provided an alternative to locking up the delinquent youth in these areas (Smith, 2003). Research into residential care and the characteristics of intermediate treatment is important, as it improves the overall quality and effectiveness of residential care and care in the community (Walton, 2014).

The Changing Economics of Youth Education

At present problematic behaviour is prevalent for many youth. Observations have shown that many youth with troubles come from economically disadvantaged lives. Internationally, the relationship between education and labour is critical. Analysis is demanded to assess this relationship and its impact on both formal and informal education of youth. For example, youth work has become heavily influenced by economic ideals. According to Ord (2018) an adjustment in leadership is required in youth work. This, together with formal and informal education (that will respect existing policy), includes greater emphasis on local accountability. In essence this will mean changing roles for teachers and educators with an emphasise on innovative interaction and fresh values (Ord, 2018). With new economical perspectives, there are poorer neighbourhoods in existence. Problematic childhood and disgruntled youths crop up from these new neighbourhoods. A further complication is that not all parents adopt similar parenting strategies within these neighbourhoods and this lends to potential local problems (Chaskin, 2013).
With a prevalence of economic injustice, children can be agents of change within their school communities (Hughes, 2018). Poverty in children and adolescents arise from three main reasons. These reasons encompass personal and structural problems and difficulties arising from economic issues. Personal problems such as a lack of morals, structural problems arising from economic circumstances and concerns of fate coming from luck or mere chance (Law, & Shek, 2014). From a comprehensive survey of 988 first to third year and leaving certificate students in county Kildare in 2004/05, 82% of those surveyed lived with both of their parents, 13% had either separated or divorced parents, and non Irish respondents were in the extreme minority (0.8% of African origin and of Eastern Europe 0.8% origin respectively). All in all, they favoured ‘hanging out’ with their friends as being a valuable pass time, with around 25% of the respondents watching 10 hours weekly television/DVDs, with the remaining 75% or so watching less television and DVDs. Nearly 70% spent their weekly spare time on the Internet or by gaming. Alarmingly 25% of respondents failed to partake in weekly sporting activities with 34% of girls being more dormant than the 21% of boys surveyed. Over 1/10 partook in Scouting or Girl Guide guilds, with the attendance of these groups declining as the youth got older. Worryingly, 17% said they drank alcohol often. Bullying affected 33% of respondents (Lalor, & Baird, et al, 2006).

In 2006, 7,356 antisocial behavior order (ASBOs) had been issued in the UK. Forty three percent of these were to youth. There is a wide scope in defining antisocial behaviour in youth abusive language, excessive noise, litter, aggressive behavior including misuse of alcohol and drugs (Hörschelmann, 2012). ASBOs in the UK may be given out to any child over the age of ten years of age (Copyright, 2015). Although ASBOS were introduced to Ireland in 2007, within four years only 3 had been issued as Gardaí opted for public order offences to be given out in place of them. By 2018 it was reported that there were fewer than 1000 of them handed out in that previous year (Hosford, 2018). Yet in 2014, Dublin business owners were calling on ASBOs to be reintroduced as young people who were begging and taking drugs on city streets (Kelly, 2014).
Societal Change and Social Education

According to the ‘The National Youth Policy Committee Final report’ (1984) social education aims to harmonise the learner and to give guidance to a person living in a society with complete social, political, economic, and technical issues. It tries to prepare a person for the demands of living and socialising in a responsible manner as well as for a young person to understand politics and also to provide qualifications and knowledge. The report also stipulated that ‘learning by doing’ promotes social education. Although some international countries failed to promote social education in school, Ireland did favour this in its curriculum at the time. Interestingly, the report mentioned that mutual respect regardless of sex, age or social status was stated as being the bedrock of social learning, where this type of social work could be facilitated through group work, projects and debates. By the mid 1980s, young Irish people spent their spare time at three main activities. Forty eight percent of young people spent their time playing sport (mostly males aged 15-17 years of age), 25% (common with females) spent their time reading and a minority of just 23% (common with both females and males) spent their time watching television. Involvement in youth groups were most popular for middle class males under the age of 17 years (Office, 1984).

Since the early 1980s Ireland has changed. Many other cultures now reside in Ireland. Since the Celtic Tiger there are nearly 200 new cultures living in Ireland (Mendonça, & Cheng, et al, 2014). As with society, social work changes and evolves. These adaptations concern the individuals, their relationships and the values that they have (Martin, 2013). Practitioners and service managers for children’s services must connect with families in an inclusive manner. They must ensure that informal social networks for families are used. The practitioners must consider the whole child in innovative and resourceful ways that uphold quality standards and encompasses partnership with families (Children, 2012). In order to become adept at adjusting to a more multicultural society, racism awareness and multicultural teaching attitudes require multicultural teaching skill and knowledge (Rinaldi, 2018). Despite their being an awareness of racism in modern day Ireland, Jews, Travelers and asylum seekers all report feeling racially discriminated against (Sciences, 2018).
Societal changes of parents working away from the home, children having more monetary access by their parents and a perception by children that they are more confident are notable changes to Irish childhood in comparison to current parents’ generation of childhood. There is also a greater media influence and more persuasion from peers and others than when the previous generations were children. Yet, despite present day children’s perceptions of having more confidence, parents feel that children are not emotionally mature enough to warrant this opinion (National Children's Resource, 2007). The media have more influence. It has a role to play in the accurate reporting of Irish social care workers’ issues. This coupled with the fact that senior management in Health Service Executive (HSE) fail to admit and report the true state of Irish social service system show that there is room for improvements in social systems. By taking into account this realisation it means that on the ground social services are hampered by a lack of resources and proper interventions. Social work, and the public perception of it, feeds into Ireland’s culture (Burns & Lynch, 2012).

**Towards a Holistic Service of Well-Being in Youth**

In the past, young people were unable to realise that there are broad restrictions upon them and they are powerless to tackle them. These restraints give way to a young person’s agency. Examples include how the family disciplined the child regarding their body language, sexuality and gestures (Holt, 2010). However, more progressive knowledge about body language in children states that it conveys many emotional and psychological feelings. Woman tend to articulate better during discussions about emotions and feelings and are more comfortable and adept at promoting the conversation about these tentative issues in families (Gilligan, 1997).

Despite parenting being restrictive to children in the past, many children now have other outside services that will aid them and their families and this is now socially acceptable. Home visiting promoting programmes benefit the wellness of parents, children and communities alike. Based upon strength based programmes involving clients, the *Parent Child Psychological Support Program* (PCPS) originated in Dublin in 2001 in Dublin. Judging by its outcomes and the difficulties of modern day parenting, support and intervention from outside services are vital for all parents (ResearchGateA, 2018).
Findings established by the National Children’s Office (2005) indicated that children view well-being as them “... feeling good, being happy, and able to live your life in full...”. This was followed by the Irish government putting together a 6 year policy culminating in 2020 for children and young people. The policy aims to keep children and young people physically and mentally active, make sure they are reaching their learning potential, are safeguarded from harm, have economic security and opportunity and connected and respected as world contributors (Bernhardt, & Singer, 2012).

Children and Youth’s (from both rural and urban primary and post primary schools) perception of well-being include children and youth receiving a voice that would improve others understanding of children’s lives and the assurance that children would obtain quality supports and services. Children voiced their appeal towards their relationships with people and animals as being a firm indicator of their well being. Further emphasis must be impressed upon family and infrastructural support and for school and community development that refers to children’s well-being being maintained and improved (Nic Gabhainn, & Sixsmith, et al, 2005). Wellbeing of children incorporates physical, mental, emotional and behavioural wellness. It is holistic as it facilitates the wellbeing of a child’s intellect, spiritual and moral, their identity, as well as their familiar and social relationships (Kennan, 2011). Keenan (2011) also states that both the UK and the Irish government have ratified that the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is the most important international human right for children. It includes provision for children’s civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Despite there being a modern acceptance for well being in children and youth to be fostered, nonetheless, there are still many problems that are addressed therapeutically. These problems maybe violent in nature and be existent within the Irish family. Psychotherapy is another way to address such problems (Coogan, & Lauster, 2014). This form of therapy ought to be specifically planned to meet the individual needs and unique requirements of each person (Norcross, 2011). Multi-systematic therapy (MST) is a mixture of family based therapy and Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) that can act as preventative measure to children who may be at risk to developing an antisocial personality disorder. It can improve discipline, promote positive family relations and improve their social behavior. Another intervention therapy that can positively help a child’s social issues is that of Functional Family Therapy (FFT). Here cognitive, interactive and emotive
components provide for an intermediate to long term effect of behavioural change for the individuals and the family (Utting, & Monteiro, et al, 2007).

Children may display resilience to vulnerabilities in their lives. In assessing children during youth work or any other profession that deals with childhood assessment it is important to be vigilant of carrying out a holistic approach that incorporates the needs and strengths of the individual taken in context with the surrounding influences of their environment (Howie, 2014). A youth’s needs and strengths may be influenced by their self-esteem. Self esteem is a behavior regulator (Lachowicz-Tabaczek, & Śniecińska, 2013). One such factor that could influence a youth’s self-esteem are their self motives. Motives influence a youth’s actions. Young people are admired by potential employers for having partaken in youth work. Yet, they often fail to express this association sufficiently well during their employment application process. This is a pity as employers value their social skills sharpened by youth work involvement, which employers view as being vital whilst mixing with other people in workplace organisations (Souto-Otero, & Ulicna, et al, 2013).

Holistic youth work can be seen in Youthreach. Youthreach serves a ‘whole’ person approach and caters for their personal issues to be firstly addressed. It allows for young people who are lacking confidence to return to formal education. Services such as career counseling and support enable youth to gain momentum before rejoining the formal society concerning their education (Reach, 2018).

**Other Variations of Youth Work**

Historically, Marie Paneth started art therapy and used play as a guide to children’s social connection despite the violence era of the Second World War. She used this alternative strategy acknowledging the need for citizenship even though the society of the time was devoid of a pleasant social existence for children. Citizenship promotes personal a youth’s development of rights and duties (ResearchGate3, 2018). An understanding of rights and duties are the backbone of democracy in an organisation. Informal youth work is positive when it is organised. There is
evidence of positive outcomes for children`s development when there are organised after schools` youth work within the community (Vandell, & Larson, et al, 2015).

Of course, communities include people and relationships ensue within communities. Building relationships with young people is paramount for detached youth workers success. Of course not all youth relate well to all in a community, for example sometimes youth encounter falling outs with family and friends and may need the emotional closeness of another important non parental adult (Molenaar, 2014). Other youth may have the closeness of a detached youth worker.

Detached youth workers allow for youth to develop their own youth projects. Unlike many other youth work approaches, detached youth workers` work comes from is a `bottom- up` approach to youth work. Many agencies with youth workers instigate a `top-to bottom` approach. The `bottom- up` approach is a long term approach that allows for more partnerships with other youth agencies and involves them working with all the needs of a youth such as their housing, employments and their relationships also (McInerney, 2012).

Youth cafes give youth a variety of educational, developmental opportunities and information to youth. A successfully run youth café involves them being attentive to supporting youth and to their individual needs, whilst taking into account the national policy for all children. A café must have a set of guiding principles and be accountable and sustainable regarding its operational concerns. Cafés ought to be ideally monitored and assessed to assure that they are operating in a quality approach (Ireland, National Children's Advisory, et al, 2008). Many youth cafes have volunteer youth workers. Among the benefits that youth work volunteers seek at the beginning of their work is their perception that volunteering will give them a personal satisfaction by helping people. Other distinct benefits in volunteering are the possibility of becoming more self-aware, gaining feelings of enjoyment, and eliciting new friendships in an informal surrounding. Through volunteering the volunteer learns listening skills and of being reliable. They begin to appreciate the need for privacy and respect for the confidentially of the youth work and feel that their views and opinions are respected during their work (Griffin, 2011).

Of course, families dictate their children`s behavior (Simons, & Mulder et al, 2017). Yet a child or youth`s self-control can also dictate other people`s opinions of them. A person who has self-discipline can be viewed as being responsible and trustworthy by others. By increasing a child`s mastery over their own decision-making, the child is learning to accept the consequences of their
own decisions. Children require learning to be positive and understand morality from an early age. This aids their self-control and their feelings of self appreciation and being able to understand other people`s viewpoints. By coaching children to accept that they are unique and special they will accept that their feelings are relevant to themselves and to their long term progress as they build their emotions and relationships throughout their lives (French, National Children's Resource, et al, 2008).

2.5 Advantages of Social Media and Disadvantages of Social Media

There are many advantages of social media among youth. Many businesses, charities and individuals use social media to display information that is required for their advocates to stay up to date and informed about current happenings. It is a cheap and easily accessible form of communication in comparison to many other forms of communication and can be accessed and updated globally and instantaneously. As there is such a high usage of SMS and social media among Latino youth, it gives public health programmes an innovate way to communicate and educate young people on health initiatives to aid their overall health (Vyas, 2018). The time spent on social media is very relevant also. Young people now spend from 7 to 11 hours per day on a variety of media. Children`s media can influence children`s behaviour. In fact, media influences children and young people`s behavior, aggressiveness, obesity and early sexual behaviour (SAHM, 2018). Being safe online is a concern for all. Anonymity is observed to be more prevalent on online communication. As people are not face-to-face a greater openness is possible. However, less attractive ways of communication which can include cyber-bullying and stalking may also occur (Ess, 2009). The growing popularity of developing communication technologies impact upon youth and the way they publish their information. Open publishing on the internet by way of using text messages, SMS messages, video footage, digital photographs are challenging the mainstream media (Ross, & Nightingale, 2003).

Mass Medias` highly influences adolescents and their perception of their body image. Within the mass media a campaign that stipulates the need for thin body imagery is evident. This can pressurise young adolescents in their quest for a better body image. Unhealthy behaviors such as
eating disorders in adolescent girls can result from this media pressure. Advertisements of fashion and glamour magazines carry a strong message but it is television movies and adult themed programmes that are the biggest conductors of pressure to adolescents’ physical dissatisfaction (Rodgers, & Paxton, et al, 2014). That said, many young people crave the media portrayed idyllic body image. Images of celebrities are projected within media and are observed by younger people. Although many young people seek stardom and the wish to have a celebrity lifestyle they are also cognisant of the need to work hard and to achieve a good education that will hopefully lead to this type of life style. The famous singer Beyoncé lived a celebrity lifestyle and she possessed the ability to sing and perform, but also to work very hard to achieve her celebrity status. This explains that ability is needed as well as hard work for a young person to become a star celebrity and to be credited by media in general (Mendick, & Allen, et al, 2015).

**Young People and Technology**

Sedentary behaviours are more prevalent in urbanised children. From a study of over 800 girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 12 years of age it was discovered that by parents partaking in physical exercise tend to increase children’s willingness to increase their efforts to exercise also (Marques, & Sallis, et al, 2014). Being unhealthy can impinge upon one’s mental as well as their physical health. Young people who self harm are proactive in communicating with health care practitioners about their personal problems in an online forum, though many health practitioners are wary due to issues over accountability and other issues relating to work load and work boundaries (Williams, & Nielsen et al, 2018).

Visual technology also works an individual’s memory. The visual working memory of small children is so minimal that they find it difficult to understand the sideward shifts that continually occur during the camera movement displayed within a television movie. Although there are many frequent camera movements such as this in television programmes, small children are unable to recognise the variable camera shifts during television movies, where as the older a child gets the more their visual working memory learns to sustain such movements in the camera (Pittorf, & Lehmann et al, 2014).

There are many perceptions surrounding the effects that watching television has on small children. However, in a study of 107 preschoolers it was found that television viewing had an
effect on the amount of sleep time. By children becoming exposed to background television it can lessen their hours of sleep. As they experience a decreased amount of sleep hours they decrease their neuropsychological functioning (Nathanson, & Fries, 2014). Visual manipulation of imagery regularly occurs with images on the Internet. Erin Riesland (2005) in (Baker, 2012) say that students of visual imagery ought to consider what they are looking at, what the imagery means, what the relationship between the image and displayed text is and if the message is effective or not when they are encountering and considering the visual imagery (Baker, 2012). In the western world, there are now regular occurrences of technologically designed visual imagery being easily accessed by children. Normal behavior for American school children includes watching television and playing computer games. Mothers of children that watch television are more positive about the effects that watching television has rather than any potential adverse affects that this habit will have on their children’s educational attainment (Vaala, 2014).

Richard Ling and Leslie Haddon state that the literature on children, youth and mobile phone usage has become relevant. Despite this, they feel that there is scope for further research. Because of the availability of mobile phone technology it has given adolescents the tools to have greater awareness. Mobile phone technology allows for individuals to communicate prior to meeting. For example, as individuals who use mobile technology have previously communicated prior to meeting up and as they probably communicate via this technology after the physical meeting, it has altered the whole interaction around meeting (Livingstone, & Drotner, 2008). Mobile technology can impinge upon socialisation and education also. The motivation to learn can be improved by children gaining access to e-mail and computers as well as a marked increase in the excitement among school children to want to learn in this way (Cummins, & Brown, et al, 2007).

**Technology and Socialisation**

Due to the exposure and progress of technology there are new challenges in how children and young people socialise. Online interaction can facilitate harmful forms of communication that can prove problematic for adolescents who spend too much time on the Internet. This can harm
their social life. It can make them loose friends and even harm their mental health. (Levesque, 2007). The Internet allows the user to diffuse its attention, whereas a school book is there to focus attention. The Internet allows people the opportunity to talk and to comment as this is naturally an enjoyable thing to do. It also gives humans the option to experience intrusive stimuli. These are some of the reasons why 40% - 80% of the developed world have Internet access (Poe, 2011).

Sex is a tentative issue for young people. Technology has allowed young people communicate in a more sexually graphic way. ‘Sexting’ is the transfer by electronic media by a person of suggestive or sexually nude images or messages. ‘Sexting’ has become another form of social interaction that young people are now partaking in. This form of communication has negative effects on young females and younger children in particular (Ringrose, & Gill et al, 2012).

People can also play games off or online with each other. Quite often excessive video gaming can result in a negative association for a child or young person’s socialisation. Playing video games can impact a person’s feelings. Although video gamers enjoy the game playing, it can impact on one’s moral reasoning. When playing violent video games people can feel guilty for killing video game characters unless there is a legitimate reason within the game for this (Universiteite, 2018). By playing video games for a prolonged period it can impact the adolescents player’s perception of trust and their willingness to be cooperative in their real social interactions thereafter and onward into the future (Rothmund, Gollwitzer et al, 2014). In fact, pathological internet use (PIU) strongly relate to higher rates of self destructive behaviours and rates of suicide (Kaess, & Durkee et al, 2014). From a study of 324 German children who used violent electronic video games at time 1 analysis of their behaviour was taken and measured against at time 2 behaviour. It then compared these children’s behavior before and after playing the video games. Results showed that children’s aggressive behavior increased after they had played the violent electronic computer games (Ferguson, 2018). Children that have a tendency to seek a higher sensation are more likely to play violent computer games. This in turn leads to them carrying out more unruly behaviour (Pittorf, & Lehmann et al, 2014). From a Norwegian study of adolescent gamers it was found that despite there being a high amount of video game usage in both cohorts of adolescents it was possible to separate those adolescents who had more addictive patterns of behaviour as appose to those that did not. Those that displayed addictive
behavior were found to have psychological problems in comparison to those that were not addicted (Brunborg, & Hanss et al, 2015).

2.6 The Key Link of Friendship and Social Support

Friendships can be defined as being mutually reciprocal within human relationships (The British Psychological Society, 2019). Human relationships affect us socially. The time of adolescence is a time that involves much anxiety for a young person as there are so many physical, intellectual, emotional and social changes occurring. Although the existence of good parenting skills or poor parenting skills being displayed can have an adverse effect on young people (Gault, 2018) a further worry can be exacerbated due also to sexual development and identity issues (Martino, & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005). Family relationships are becoming altered (Davies, 2011) and a greater emphasis during this time of life is now placed upon the social issues in these youths’ lives (Frydenberg, 2010). These myriad of adolescent changes demand a maturity of one’s self awareness, their management of feelings, their motivation and it demands a promotion of their empathy, and social skills (Cowie, 2012). Further pressures present upon some adolescents’ psychological well being around the time they transition from primary to post primary school (Longobardi, & Prino et al, 2016). Although the family is generally the initial primal socialising agent for an adolescent (Dolan, & Canavan, et al, 2006), their developing social inclination promotes positive and negative pressures and stresses upon adolescents too. Developing a greater sense of autonomy is natural for most adolescents, but this is intermingled with the need for a non-formal, yet chosen social support also.

As well as families, friends and other peers, socially supporting human beings can provide sustenance to youth. Adult facilitators or supporters of young people can improve an individual’s personal and interpersonal competences and assist in guiding them (Buelens, & Theeboom, et al, 2017). Adults providing social support for young people can inspire democratic leadership (Bell, 2013), which in turn can positively synergise throughout organisations in a collaborative manner. This democratic collaboration is often characterised in the spirit of the colloquial Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). From it, breeds a cultural identity that promotes personal development within communities (Bowles, & O'Sullivan, 2012). Similarly, youth workers have been known
by researchers to create interactive communities. By offering life skills programmes to young people they can learn practical as an adolescent. Those that work with the youth in this way develop a community supportive atmosphere that promotes greater communication which in turn, instigates self-responsibility and a more meaningful belief in good citizenship in general (Allen, & Lohman, 2016).

Of course, communication to develop these trusting relationships demand certain tact, especially with young people. Away from school there are a variety of skills being required by districts, states, and organisations for youth in order to provide adequate social support (Epstein, & Sanders, et al, 2018). New age actors of social support are anchored by communicative technologies fuelled by the interests of the mass media. As a result, communication is altered in both positive and negative ways. Positive forms of communication still involve the interaction within youth work and other informal youth social spaces. However, conversely there are other negatives possibilities associated with social support. In 2016, the University of British Columbia, Canada carried out a study of 733 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 regarding their online and offline (real life) socialisation. They discovered that although having an online social life can benefit young people’s success, the respondents to their study who exclusively socialised online and not in real life had the lowest levels of self-concept (Khan, & Gagné, et al, 2016). Making sure to be affiliated with the ideal people can motivate more positive behavior. A positive leader can attain extraordinary outcomes when organising people (Dutton, & Spreitzer, 2014). Thus, the importance of social support in both human and a variety of other forms are vital for young people within informal social spaces in order for the positive development of their behavior and wellbeing to develop.

**Social Support definition**

Social support encapsulates human endeavors of possibly sometimes intangible efforts that include emotionally supportive and loving behavior within a socially networked community. For any study of informal social spaces involving the education of young people it is important to establish social support of young people. However, providing a firm and definitive measure of how many communities view social support gives a reason for its existence for those who require
it. Authors Bowldby (1969) and Weiss (1974) state in Veieland Baumann (2014) that social support is a form of basic human requirement.

Cutrona notes how social support satisfies a person`s basic needs (Cutrona, & Russell, 1990). Later researchers came to the conclusion that social support implies not just human, but more intangible efforts to provide support in a social context. Veiel, Hans O.F (1992) state that social support is “.. commonly implies an abstract characteristic of persons, behaviours, relationships, or social systems…” (Veiel, & Baumann, 2014). Cohen (2000) explain how social support necessitate the functioning of human relationships and behaviours and their associated networks or information (Cohen, & Underwood et al, 2000).

Dolan and Brady (2012) believe social support entails the communication and actions that give way to reduced stress and this aids coping in life which in turn leads to healthier self esteem and self efficacy. Social support is mainly transferred to a youth via concrete, emotional, or esteem support by giving support via an advisory capacity. This socially emotional support is echoed in a loving safeguard as Cobb (1976) in (Glanz, & Rimer et al, 2015) utter that social support recognises that individuals ought to be cared for, to feel as if they are loved and have more self esteem within a supportive network that is communally recognised. A network of support can be found in a community where confiding partners provide a basis for social support (Lin, & Dean et al, 2013). A sense of community can benefit an individual`s life in general, but also throughout stressful times (Oh, & Ozkaya et al, 2014). Community workers, organisers, educators, and those working in urban renovation can be supportive care givers by utilising the presence theory.

The presence theory, which arose out of research from the field of an urban mission in both poor and disadvantaged area in the Netherlands, illustrates how adults can have trustful and co-operative relationships with young people that is based on dignity and feeling free. By adults simply observing and listening for signs of exclusion, any lack of responsibility and even deviance can be avoided as a caregivers presence can support and help solve practical problems. Its success can be measured by adults who are tapping into local rhythms and the structures that work within an area (Baart, 2002).This theory has a number of principles. By the adult being open and attentively relaxed in the presence of those that they care for they are showing support.
In perceiving the world from those they work with and connecting with the daily life around them an adult’s availability is beneficial as is their patience, time and loyal dedication (Kuis, 2015).

However, disadvantages can also be associated with social support. From a study of Chinese students it was found that fellow country groups and politicians could be more supportive of native students who have become international students (Chen, 2015). Although family relationships allow for greater kinship and an interconnection between close members for overall support, being in a family situation can also provide animosity, and critical appraisal or even, distrust (Cicchetti, & Cohen 2016). The changing face of the conventional family is now producing many single parent families. For a parent having a partner gives much needed social support (Ekas, & Timmons et al, 2015), but conversely many single females choose to have children without having the support of a partner (Traister, 2016).

The international community has contributed many layers of documented research in relation to perceived social support (PSS) and psychosocial well-being. From a recent study of 1,299 rural Chinese children affected by HIV/AIDS, PSS is connected with family members or relatives. This connection of PSS is aligned with internalising problems, whereas friends support is attached to their loneliness. Although most social support may originate from the family background, this support can be quite distressful whereas support from friends can prove more fruitful (Zhao, & Li et al, 2011).

Informal social support coming from family and friend for older African Americans from the National Survey of American Life found that family contact is positively correlated with being satisfied in life. Even negative support from family was viewed as greater happiness and self esteem along with subjective closeness with friends. The study concluded that unique contributions are made by both family and friends in supporting older people (Nguyen, & Chatters et al, 2016).
Another affirmation that family and friends provide a regular form of social support came from a qualitative study of Mexican school going male adolescents. Here, family and friends provided males with support. Males found that adaptability, emotion regulation and confidence were promoted by these forms of social support (Chapin, 2014).

**Social Networking**

Social networking allows for an overall sharing of human support and information instigated through real life or through online ways. In recent years social networking has evolved to include social media. Although online social networking sites such as Facebook provide social networking opportunities there is little evidence to support it as therapeutic benefit to alleviate serious mental health issues (McCloskey, & Iwanicki et al, 2015). Human support within a network stem from human relationships. Cohen (2000) states that social networks involve human relationships, encompassing their existence, their quantity and their kinds of relationships (Cohen, & Underwood et al, 2000).

Traditionally, social networking involves the real life interaction between people in public. Although conventionally, social networking involved the interaction of people in more outgoing ways, more modern online interactions are providing many positive benefits to network. Benefits from people studied who socially networked using Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, Youtube and Flikr noted that they felt enjoyment, self-efficacy, learned things, gained personally, received altruism, empathy, social engagement, community interest, reciprocity, and reputation, however, the respondents of the study also communicated that each network had different ways of communication for them (Oh, & Ozkaya et al, 2014). As already mentioned, policies for the safety of digital media are required to be put it into place (Schwartz, & Rhodes et al, 2014). This was examined by the Irish government and by early 2019 it was decided that there would be new online safety laws together with an Online Safety Commissioner (Goodbody, 2019). Other former information confirms the importance of online social interaction where popular social networking applications are dominated by those aged 15 to 25 years of age (Berger, 2005).
Social networking requires that one uses safe passwords and to be clever, but above all else a golden rule during social networking is to treat others `as you would like to be treated yourself’ (Ryan, 2011). Youths use social networking services (SNS) in a growing capacity and with it comes an aligned rise in mobile phone addiction amongst young people (Salehan, & Negahban, 2013). Popular modern social networks are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp and Viber. Facebook as a form of social media uses cluster analysis to gather information from its users about their preference to like a topic online (Wallace, & Buil et al, 2014). From a study of 244 Facebook users it was established that trust in the social networking peers and the provider of the social network itself influenced the perception of privacy concerns and social benefits (Proudfoot, & Wilson et al, 2018).

Instagram is an easy access mobile application which has an important in-person element related to it that allows its users to feel comfortable in posting personal photographs online (Joyce, & Cochrane et al, 2015). There is little evidence about how the social media application of Twitter enables those who use it to communicate about health. From a study on childhood obesity, 676 individual users from 1,110 overall tweets, emphasised how many individuals have taken to Twitter in the past couple of years (Harris, & Moreland-Russell, et al, 2014). Whatsapp promotes the use of fast and simple and secure messaging or calling without cost an available internationally (Whatsap, 2018). Another app that promises this level of security Viber is a cheap, fast, accessible, reliable and feasible online photo sharing application (Viber, 2018).

Social Support Benefits & Challenges

Social support is not only directly affected by matching personalities within a social environment. To be successful it demands that accurately correlating environments and the most fitting personalities in an objective manner. Fitting participants being socially supported by particular personalities is pivotal. Clarity is required to decipher whether a particular environment or a specific personality best motivate effective social support (Pierce, & Lakey et al, 2013). As social support, schools have challenges in understanding that teachers only have a limited impact upon their students. In fact, schools must acknowledge that young people’s peers are pertinent. By a teaching giving a pupil social support this can be positively aligned with overall peer liking and pro-sociability whereas conflict with teachers can be linked with
aggressive behaviours amongst peers (Patterson, & DeBaryshe et al. 2017). Further differentiation in the recognition of adolescent’s rights comes about by the way of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. Here limited research has signified that there are restricted opportunities for socialisation amongst young LGBTs. With these few opportunities, it provides a further challenge for social supporters of this sector of youth culture (Brennan-Ing, & Seidel et al, 2014).

Although there are many new versions of what modern day families such as married couples with children, cohabiting couples with children, and one parent father with children there are also single mothers with children. As of the 2016 Irish census results there were over 75,000 single mothers in Ireland (Ptacek, 2014) yet there is still a stigma felt by many adolescent single mothers along with a perceived lack of informal levels of support (Brennan-Ing, & Seidel et al, 2014). Other preteens have social challenges present in their lives also. Those who transition from primary to post primary schools may avail of Foróige (the Irish national youth organisation’s programme who put the Big Brothers Big Sisters agenda into place within 60 Irish secondary schools) in order to promote peer relationship and to aid support (Brady, & Dolan et al, 2014).

From a qualitative study comprising of 3 urban middle schools (containing mostly low income African American students), mediation between peers, more expansive mental health services and more parental involvement was understood to help generate an improved resilience for those being exposed to community violence. This, in turn, was accepted to affect the overall wellbeing and student effectiveness (Maring, & Koblinsky, 2013). With the absence of such social support self destructive coping mechanisms such as alcohol abuse or drug use can fill voids of support for an individual in need of human guidance. How a person appears to manage their stress can dictate whether they extract support from their close network or not. Those appearing to manage their stresses are more likely to elicit a socially supporting role from others; whereas those that appear less likely may detract attention from would be supporters (Eckenrode, 2013).
Overall, there are challenges evident for those that seek social support, but the benefits of attaining human connection that abridges an emotional and a loving behavior, far outweigh the disadvantages of seeking adequate social support.

2.7 A Link with Empathy

Non-formal social cultures may impact on young people’s behaviour as they progress towards adulthood. Adolescence is a time when individual children develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually. Adolescents’ socialisation is entwined with their level of self-awareness and their management of feelings which in turn may impact on their motivation and their ability to empathise. As an adolescent forms more complex human relationships that may involve personal social rejection they enlarge their capacity to become more empathetic to others.

Ireland’s formal education system concerns children’s social and emotional development across 12 subject areas (NCCA, 2015). Informal education enhances participatory civic engagement. Foróige identifies the need for young people to become self-responsible in their actions and the GAA promote the ‘Give Respect, Get Respect’ mantra. By an individual showing growing self-responsibility and respect for others they are promoting empathy in their surrounds. Civic behavior such as offering someone help or helping in a community was found as being low amongst 700 respondents of 12-16 year olds in Ireland despite them having high levels of empathy and social responsibility. Young participants were inactive due to not understanding how to act in this way and by being fearful of showing weakness. Despite this, those that engaged in extracurricular activities were found to have higher levels of empathy (Silke, 2019).

Youth workers promote responsibility amongst young people that increases community development in a positively interlinked fashion. Other than teachers in formal education, coaches, mentors or role models can demonstrate leadership skills to a young person. Being a moral and empathetic character is part of being a leader (Rhode, 2015).

As the mass media demonstrates social, political, economic, religious information to its vast audiences it targets communal activities that interest the general public at large. This marketing of media information challenges societies’ cultural outlooks and at times may pose questions to
their moral values. Empathy lies at the nucleus of the moral understanding of people. Marketers and media advertisers design games, television, and Internet applications that involve the usage of social networking sites. Social networking facilitates peoples` communal interest and behaviours. The economies of scale of social media applications and the convenience of modern and developing technologies such as smart phones and other computerised personal devices promote an instant and possibly impulsive reaction towards breaking news headlines for many masses of people. As mass media operations advertise communal topics of interest, people invariably pay a lot of attention to what they observe in the media. Thus, the mass Medias concentrations on topics of interest that elicit an empathetic response are of great importance to a society. Showing empathy towards another individual involves thinking about another person’s feelings from their point of view. If empathy exists trust and rapport is established between people in a community. In this way empathy is a determining strand that gels together the earlier sub-sections of adolescence, education and teaching, youth work, coaching, mentoring and role modeling and technology and media. By establishing the level and regularity of empathy during this literature review it provides a theme of significance that embodies the time of adolescence and education and teaching, youth work, coaching, mentoring and role modeling and the technology and media that influence these young people. By then determining the levels and empathetic outcomes during the fieldwork part of this research it will help to discover the later findings which will provide information to analysis so as to provide partial outcomes of this overall research.

**Empathy Defined**

By definition, empathy is a neurologically propelled component of the brain that is cognitively and affectively established which promotes emotional and social awareness and skills within a person. The feelings of empathy are neurologically rooted in the human beings anterior insula and subgenual anterior cingulate cortex of the brain. Empathy is the capacity to vicariously experience and understand another human being’s feelings which triggers prosocial behaviors (Newman, 2016).

Empathy involves compassion through a shared experience and the want to alleviate suffering through a sharing of emotions and is one of the motivators of altruism. Often compared with
sympathy, which deals with a distress at another’s plight and often has condescending overtones and can be denoted by a sense of wishing to see another happier and does not avoid a shared experience (Burton, 2015). Empathy differs from sympathy as it requires a greater ability to relate to another person or being able to take his or her perspective (Teachman et al., 2003).

Further research into empathy is welcomed (Singer, & Klimecki, 2014). Empathy encompasses cognitive, affective and behavioural components. There are at least eight various psychological forms of empathy that a person may feel when hearing of a friend who is about to lose their job or have something negative happen to them. Examples of this may be of knowing another person’s internal emotional feelings, one can be said to be cognitively empathetic by adopting a “facial empathy” or a type of “motor mimicry”. This allows for a person to communicate their shared feelings with another affected person. The human brain’s intrinsic activities are concerned with the overall relative empathic ability (REA). A healthy adult has mature emotional and social cognition that progresses their feelings of being statically empathetic to another towards the knowing of being both affectively and cognitively empathetic to others’ situations and issues (Cox, & Uddin et al, 2012).

Being generous in empathetic ways can motivate imitation of other people’s behaviours. Yet there is a wide breath of pro-social conformity in this regard (Zaki, 2017). It can motivate a person to actively help another person who is in need of help but conversely this action may be to take care of a person within a specific group, and in acting empathetically, it may in turn exclude other people and therefore this can threaten the fundamental principle of helping another morally. In effect, this begins to explain the complex relationship that empathy and morality have (Ugazio, & Majdandzic et al, 2014).

**Social Empathy**

Social empathy involves both static and active empathy. Static empathy is emotionally understanding, in an unsympathetic manner, where a person is coming from within their given situation. Active empathy is doing something about the situation at hand (Dolan, 2017).
By showing empathy in a social way, it has positive outcomes on personal development, interpersonal relationships and the well-being of a society (Silke, & Boylan et. al; 2019). In defining social empathy it is important to have an explicitly multidimensional approach to the subject. Author Stoland in 1969 stated that it allows for the observer to react emotionally as they perceive what the other is experiencing. In the same year Wispe was commented on by Hogan who noted that the observer must construct for oneself another person’s mental status. Once constructed affective or emotive reactions must be employed. With yet another author Balkanize in mind Mark H. Davis notes that this type of empathy is:

“ ... broadly defined as a set of constructs having to do with the responses of one individual to the experiences of another.”

-(Davis, 2018).

Social empathy can also be defined as:

“Social empathy is the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities.”

- (Segal, Wagaman, & Gerdes, 2012)

Empathy is both a combination of cognitive and psychological traits that many who work in social work can be in danger of burning out due to the nature of their work. The importance though of such empathy is pertinent in such a profession and needs to be constantly educated through use of correct training measures in these professionals’ lives (Wagaman, Geiger & et al, 2015). Educators in schools who have empathy can teach this behaviour to young people and this, in turn, aids greater morality (Goroshit, & Hen, 2016).

A healthy developing human brain is continually socially maturing and continuing to develop the ability to empathise. With experience and emotional maturity the human brain continues to create social structures (Cozolino, 2014). Self compassion and empathy are connected to
mindfulness which is a basis for stress reduction in the human mind (Raab, 2014). Empathy and compassion are different as empathy involves one person experiencing the same emotion as someone else, where as compassion acts on the resilience and well being in an altruistic fashion. More resilient empathy would benefit people across the world (Peters, & Calvo, 2014). Empathy motivates an activation of one`s feeling towards another`s situation. This activity stimulates a person`s moral principles and thus gives rise to the need to care for another. By establishing the need to care for another, it propels a person to act morally. This is especially important when considering the interrelationships for young people and within schools. In feeling the need to react to another`s issues, school and organisations can provide an ethical leadership for their young people which fosters ethical responsibility within their environment. Schools, families, students and communities ought to realise that having a ethics of care means that we are actually looking after those around us as and using a relational leadership which owes to us living well as humans (Smit, & Scherman, 2016).

Although the majority of people learn to care, be responsible and have a sense of justice in everyday engagements with family, their friends and in their schools and communities, there is still a need for education that instills democratic citizenship (EDC) and human rights education (HRE). This type of education aids people throughout their shared lives within communities, both locality and on a larger global scale. The Council of Europe (2010) view Human Rights Education (HRE) by definition as “… education, training, and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights”. Human rights education needs people to impart the day-to-day skills that show these fundamental attributes to other people. Education for democratic leadership is the basis for educating for a sustainable democratic society (Tibbitts, 2015). From a University of College Cork study published this year about Irish travelers’ education and friendship, it was noted that there is little evidence on the non-traditional students’ experience of university (Scanlon, & Leahy, et al, 2019). However, it noted that having friends with similar interests and aspirations was important at the time of transition to university life.

Environmental stresses can hamper the resilience of a young person. By being able to forge a meaningful relationship with an adult and by having the ability to take care of another person or having others rely upon a young person, it fosters the development of resilience (Benard, 1991). By having autonomy, a social competence and a distinct sense of self, a youth can develop an
overall insight of self meaning and purposeful existence which cements resilience in individual youth (Constantine, 1999). Therefore, it is possible to use a more recently designed tool to measure the degree of resilience in children and young people. This will be explained later in the methodology section of this dissertation.

Empathy in Formal Education

Education systems across the world teach with their own individual ideologiempathetic that young people of the 1980s and 1990s. In Europe, Finland is known for being proactes in mind. In Germany in 2002 a study proved that children who volunteer to help others finish their homework accomplished better academic results two years later. Whereas, in the United States of America (USA) in 2010, a study found that students were 40% less active in their educational settings. According to international psychiatrist Daniel Siegler (Siegel, 2018) of the University of California all of the ‘brain studies’ show once people show empathy with another person then their brain chemical dopamine surges within them resulting in good feelings for them. By a person thinking about another’s point of view (and not just being concerned) but, also being happy for another’s success, empathy can create more positivity for the person who empathises. When people show empathy there is a ‘we’ between two people. This ‘we’ is more powerful for an empathiser as they are building on their already singular ‘me’ individuality. This, in turn, builds resilience in knowing that there others to interact with (Fíorscéal, 2019).

It is paramount that all players such as parents and schools express a positive cultural outlook towards empathy (Dolan, 2015). Empathy can have a very positive effect on sport also. Team sport participation enhances social inclusion and the quality of life and overall wellbeing (Turola, & Barbieri et al, 2016). Sport education including empathy promotes self and social responsibility (García-López & Gutiérrez, 2015).

The Irish formal education system stipulates several subjects that encompass the topic of empathy within their remit. Both the primary and the post primary curriculum offer subjects that highlight the importance of embodying empathetic attitudes in young people. The primary school *Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)* curriculum educate pupils through the *Myself and my*
Family unit which sees empathy as being important to the harmony in families and aiding the diversity of communities in living together in peace. Empathy is also relevant in the Myself and the Wider World strand of SPHE. Here differences can be respected in national, European and wider world relations though the imparting of empathy towards others (NCCA SPHE, 1999). The SPHE curriculum for the senior cycle in post primary education aims to fortify students’ capability to empathise with another person’s situation, feelings and motives (NCCA, 2011). The Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) is taught to all Junior Certificate students. Active citizenship, becoming involved in the community, making a difference, becoming an active citizen and protecting the environment aims to facilitate active citizenship for its learners (CSPE, 2018).

The Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills in 2013 recommended among other things, that new national anti-bullying procedures for schools should strengthen collaboration with youth services in local communities to foster greater youth empathy and fend off the existence of bullying (Report, 2013). As an alternative to the Leaving Certificate programme the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme aims to allow students interact effectively with and learn from adults in the community (Vocational). Moral deliberation can trigger the need to act empathetically. A child having selective attention or not noticing a peer in distress can deter this deliberation. Children may also feel that a peer that needs help is playing rather than in anguish (Report, 2013). Learning how to be empathetic can occur very early on in life such as in a child’s infantile years within their family. From a study of 481 participants between the age of 10- to 14-year old it was found that aggressive behaviour in boys can be improved by cultivating family and school relationships (Batanova and Loukas 2014). By families experiencing conflict there is a lower adolescent empathy (Van Lissa, & Hawk et al, 2015). When mothers show empathy it can have a positive knock on effect on their youth through their external expression. Conversely, when mothers reject or punish their youth they internalise their problems (Thompson, & Jones et al, 2014).
2.8 Summary of Themes and Tentative Model

Thus far this chapter has provided a fit for purpose scoping review of the literature focusing on key themes central to the study, including friendship encased within other sections, social support, empathy and the broad functions of coaching and within a sporting context.

The chapter opened by examining adolescence, which is the period life that the respondents of this study find themselves in at present. Following on from this, education, coaching, mentoring, and leadership were explored. A focused discussion on youth work then ensued before media and technology were included. Once these sections had been explored, links were then made with social support and empathy which are at the core within this overall study.

A tentative model which connects friendship, social support, empathy, and sport is provided below. It is indicated here that positive adolescent development is enhanced when friendships grow deeper and even sometimes more complex, as opportunities and feelings of richer relationships materialise. The undeniable need for independence for young people at this time of life becomes cemented by friendships and developmental changes. Growing individuals can choose to exercise this development together in the out-of-school sporting context. Empathy plays a key role in peer and supportive bonding. Friendship, empathy and social support can occur reciprocally within a sports’ participation context.

Friendship enters into this model from late childhood arising from school attendance, community participation and other areas outside of family life. As young people grow they naturally play with older adolescents also. As the older age groups partake in sport a greater reliance on one another is required.

By spending time together playing sports and being members of clubs, young people can deepen these friendships and provides him or her with positive peer groups that can exist beyond the sports club and into the wider local society. This can be a key advantage to a young person in coping in life, particularly if relationships within school or elsewhere are of a poor or even a toxic nature.

By playing sport together in late childhood and on into adolescence, young people can begin to see the abilities and limitations that they and others possess. However, they can also see potential
as they too feel their own development occurring and realise that their sporting peers are also on
the same trajectory. This can enable communal empathy on the sporting field and also generate
positive feelings with local peers outside of the sporting context.

Social support enlistment from others provides a source and a ‘playing pitch’ for friendship, as a
soft landing and support for young people who are developing in many areas of their growing
lives. Feelings of vulnerability, awkwardness and inability can be handled with care and
guidance by leaders of young people in sports clubs as well as fellow members. This, in turn, can
enable adolescents to not just cope but become good sporting leaders and mentors in their
community too.

During adolescence, deepening friendships that are interwoven with feelings of being socially
supported and being shown and giving empathy from and to others within sport, enables personal
development that can have value beyond the playing pitch. Interpersonal exchanges and not only
physical assistance but exchanges that are inclusive of emotional caring and making others feel
that they are appreciated provide social support (Brady, Dolan & McGregor, 2020). Similarly,
empathy has established a robust inter-relationship with social support. Thus, it is argued here,
that all three facets namely robust friendships that reciprocate social support, with the presence
of empathy and compassion have value and can be found and interlinked within the context of
sport for adolescents. Figure 2.1 below brings this relationship together figuratively as a tentative
model for the study as it unfolds later in this thesis.
Figure 2.1 A Tentative Model Connecting Friendship, Empathy, Social Support and Sport Within the Sports Club Environment

Finally, the tentative model presented above will be revisited later in the thesis within the Discussion Chapter in the light of the emergent key findings.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored adolescents from development, through education, coaching, mentorship, role modeling, leadership, youth work, technology and social media. Importantly, and core to the study, beyond these fundamental aspects of adolescence, friendship, social support and empathy during a young person’s development have been outlined. Based on the latter, a tentative model for the ensuing study was also presented. The next chapter moves to provide an outline for the design methodology and implementation of the study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter opens with the rationale of the study before the overarching aims and objectives of the study are addressed. Once this has been attended to, the specific methodology being used within the project is explored in detail within all of the four sections that follow. Section 3.1 touches, again, on the rationale for this study before restating the overall aims and objectives as initially addressed in chapter 1. Section 3.2 delves into the design of the study. This begins with the theoretical considerations for the study before discussing how best to measure friendships, social support, and empathy. Finally in this section, the researcher establishes his position within the research. Section 3.3 explores the implementations of the study, the ethical considerations throughout and the methods of analysis used. Finally, Section 3.4 concentrates on the study’s limitations and recommendations to surmount them.

3.1 Rationale, Aims, and Objectives

The rationale for this study arises from adolescent involvement in community sport and the potential benefits for their social development. Not enough is known about the social benefits of young people involved in sports. There is a weakness within the research when it has attempted to identify the best ways forward for sports and social inclusion (Coalter, 2017). More specifically, there is a lack of research specific to the social development of those partaking in sports even though all sporting events have a knock-on environment impact (Maguire, 2018). As a result, the intimate social developmental traits of friendship and empathy have largely been ignored when sport is central to the youth culture.

The author of this study has chosen this specific research topic for two reasons, one of which is professional and the other being personal. From a professional standpoint, he has seventeen years of experience of teaching children and adolescents in primary and post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland in addition to acting as a nationally recognised volunteer for youth work. Academically, he continued his education by studying several facets of well-being, therapy,
coaching and behaviour and, in the past few years; he created and established his own professional educational, coaching and therapeutic private practice for young people and adults.\(^1\)

During an earlier dissertation at Masters Degree level, this researcher completed a study on young people within community settings and, where he learned of how and when young people choose to join a sports’ club whereby they begin to become more socially adept and more skilled at sustaining peer relationships and making new friends. By experiencing this, the author became motivated to learn why this might be the case.

Throughout the study, the author was a member of the Castlegar GAA Club executive committee. By GAA rule, the executive committee only looks after the business running of the club and avoids interacting with team affairs (GAA Structures, 2018). Regarding the St. James’ Club, the author of this research was not on any committee or at any match or training sessions in both the ladies or men’s clubs other than those that have been reported in the fieldwork that acted as specific observations for the overall research inquiry. Prior to the author coaching any GAA team and being involved with a club’s executive committee, he played both hurling and Gaelic football at club level.

Having grown up in this competitive sporting environment a couple of decades before, he still appreciates the socially supportive structure and friendships that he was fortunate enough to make. However, this researcher noted that winning and losing were all that mattered to most young people and participating, including fostering friendships, did not appear to be valued highly enough. This motivated the author to undertake this study. It fostered a curiosity to learn the potential for socially supportive friendships and empathetic behavior as they are perceived by young people in the present day.

Countries and their national bodies of governance struggle with balancing the competitive aspect of sport with the participation and personal development that it can bring to young people (Côté

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\(^1\) In 2006 the author won a regional and national Junior Chamber of Ireland Award for Voluntary Leadership. Much of this work centred around voluntary youth work.
Although sport improves young people’s physical health by negating the risk of physical conditions such as obesity, it also brings a range of psychosocial health benefits too (Eime, & Young et al, 2013). As parents, relatives, and friends provide social support, there can be increased participation and physical activity levels during adolescence. Investigations on physical activity and social support ought to include representative samples of the adolescent population and study the variety of social support in communities and in both structured and unstructured organisations (Mendonça, & Cheng, et al, 2014).

Empathy involves the ability of two or more human beings sharing feelings. It is a basic tenant in human’s social and emotional lives (Bernhardt, & Singer, 2012). In defining social empathy, Segal (2011) says that it deals with ‘understanding people deeper by experiencing or perceiving their life situations’ (Stanley, & Sethuramalingam, 2015). By young people partaking in a caring sporting climate, they can also experience and learn empathy, which is a pivotal cornerstone of living in a civil community (Gano-Overway, 2013). Feelings of empathy are neurologically rooted in the human beings anterior insula and anterior and midcingulate cortex of the brain.

Team sport builds social networks. Being involved in the dynamics of team sport facilitates a basic experience of human sociality (Gaffney, 2015). Social networks arise from bonds of friendship (Lin, & Dean, et al, 2013). Friendship is a private yet voluntary mutual relationship of concern that involves communication between two individuals (Rawlins, 2017). Social support for groups of people who work towards the same common goal is significantly aided by friendship (Ptacek, 2014).

Friendship within sport is also linked with empathy whereby friendly peers exercise empathy and intimacy (Chow, & Ruhl et al, 2013). By establishing the GAA Clubs’ Juvenile members’ perceptions of social support and friendship, this study creates new empirical and theoretical findings within the area of social research.

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2 The term adolescent within this study refers to anyone over the age of 10 years of age and under the age of 19 years of age as per the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.
This study establishes the perceptions of the variety of youth membership in sports clubs namely four juvenile GAA Clubs in Galway City. The study concentrated on the availability of social support, the existence of friendships and levels of empathy, among respondents and attempts to discover any potential social benefits with these clubs in order to contribute social science research which will allow for similar informal social settings.

Based on the above rationale, the overarching aim of this study is to **explore perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership (females and males) of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
2. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
3. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
4. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

### 3.2 Designing the Study

This section defines the theoretical basis for the methodology of the study. Firstly, methodological considerations are investigated. Then, the considerations for this research namely the positivist and interpretative research approaches, and how they integrate with the both the qualitative and quantitative approaches are addressed. Once this has been established triangulation is then described. From this, the author creates his own research position for the study. Finally, how the central data collection tools were designed is described.
Both the positivist and interpretative research traditions are pivotal when the theoretical basis for this research study is discussed. The following section explores these traditions. The importance of a methodological triangulation is then outlined in order for it to create the anchor foundation of the study.

The Positivist and Interpretative Traditions

Not unlike other notable professions such as lawyers and doctors, youth workers want their profession to be considered to be as effective as possible. However, not all of those that work within the realms of the profession agree on the best methods to learn new things that they need to understand (Rubin, & Babbie, 2016). Despite having a concern for the groups being studied by acknowledging that a study’s central concept needs to be outlined, human peculiarity can arise within the research. This is how sociology can be humanised (Reinharz, 2017).

Both epistemology and ontology are central to social science research (Scott, 2018). Niraj Poudyal (Phd) of the Kathmandu University School of Arts believes that the fundamental questions of both epistemology and ontology are the same in the social sciences. By using current technology, social happenings can be observed (Poudyal, 2017). Epistemological and ontological issues are interrelated, but there is considerable disagreement about how this relationship between the two is linked. Their relationship is a contested issue and Colin Hay (2006a) believes that an ontological position cannot be proven nor can it establish the relationship between itself and epistemology (Lowndes, & Stoker, 2017).

Epistemology is the study of justified belief and knowledge (Stanford, 2005). By questioning what the truth is its historical underpinnings are validated by its linkage back to a time prior to Socrates. On one hand, ontology studies existence whereas, on the other epistemology studies knowledge. Although separate strings of the same chord, both ontology and epistemology are both separate philosophical branches (Terms, 2019).

Ontology uses questioning to understand the study of being (Philosophy, 2019). It studies the actual reality of existence as appose to the perception of existence (Harvey 2019). Identified by Aristotle as the ‘first philosophy’, ontology is the study of ‘being’ in general, and what actually is ‘real’ (Jaroszyński & McDonald, 2018). Throughout its existence, two main forms of ontology
have been developed, namely, ontological realism and ontological materialism. Ontological realism states that particles, chemicals, and energy are even more ‘real’ than the mind of a human being. Ontological materialism comes from the belief that the human mind and even consciousness is more real than material things (Löfgren, 2013).

Social science was created as a discipline in the 19th century by French philosopher Auguste Comte. Since then it has developed in various ways. Comte was also said to have been the driver behind positivism. This philosophy labelled ‘positive’ was not an invention of Comte, but a devotion to the great scientific minds who have developed the human race to what it is (Stuart Mill 2005).

Different theories with their own specific understanding have come to the fore, not least, the positivist and interpretive social science approach. Each of these theories explains human behaviour under the umbrella of social science. In 1922, Moritz Schlick the Professor of Philosophy at Vienna, reunified philosophy with positivism stating that ‘the logic of science takes place of the inextricable tangle of problems which is known as philosophy’. This is how logical positivism developed (Passmore, & Philosophy, 1943). Although the positivist theory was deeply rooted within the social sciences it helped to create other theories of approach (Antwi, & Hamza, et al, 2015).

Positivism can be challenging to explain, yet its philosophical ideal points to the rationale of ‘factual’ knowledge being the core of its theory (Minds, 2019). Whilst taking a positivist approach, the researcher is a scientist. This approach is underpinned by objectivity or realist ontology. Here, the central core is that facts are facts. By using research methods such as surveys and questionnaires statistical logic is discovered (Lohr, 2019).

As author Pring states, there is a definite separation between the ‘knower and the subject known to the knower’ and within the realm of this positivist research framework, the author is well aware of the ontological research respondents and their environment and plans the research with this in mind. Within the positivist research paradigm, the researcher holds the epistemological idea and sees them as they are in order to form generalisations form the research’s casual
relationships (Dammak, 2015). In general, positivist research approaches are quantitative methods (Thompson, 2019).

The concept of the ‘interpretive approach’ within social science means to organise the concepts of the world. When refereeing to the interpretive approach the word ‘interpretive’ translates from the German word ‘verstehen’. In the German language, it means ‘understanding’ (C.D; 2019). Taking account of people’s character and their existence within the cultural and social world, interpretivism rules out the methods of natural science. The German Max Weber is credited as being the main influencer of the approach which attempts to elicit meaning behind people’s interactions and overall behavior (Chowdhury, 2014).

Immanuel Kant deduced that there could be an existence of phenomenon that is not disputed on by various philosophers. Therefore, it is possible to believe that this phenomenon is true (Kelsen, 2020). Interpretivism covers as many differences of approaches to social enquiry and is also influenced by Kant’s ideas. Positivism seeks objectivity and to interpret details accurately. This approach is a good way to address a research project (Grix, 2018). For a long time the positivist approach has been concerned with quantitative methodologies but qualitative methodologies are just as important also (Babones, 2016). In taking this approach, Babones (2016) argues that this gives a more reflective and holistic interpretation of the analysis. The positivist approach uses the methods of natural sciences based on the social evidence of reality. This lends to the standard of validity and reliability of the research (Pham, 2018). Positivism pertains that individuals are shaped by the society that they are in whereas, interpretivism believes that individuals are more complex and can understand the reality in different ways (Revise Sociology, 2015).

**The Strengths and Weaknesses of Positivism and Interpretivism**

Positivism and interpretivism have combined strengths in the social sciences. Both are appropriate in certain levels of analysis and social action. Research that entails large-scale social surveys that require descriptive information about the phenomena of the social world is best captured through the positivist lens. On the other hand, interpretivism can magnify the multiple realities of a specific society (Hasan, 2016).
Positivism has a high level of both reliability and validity. It identifies the link between the natural and social sciences to understand these contexts (Alakwe, 2017). By providing evidence such as questionnaires and focused group discussions it measures their day to day realities. Interpretivism can cut through the complex core of social behaviour and to discover accurate insights in the world of marketing (Irshaidat, 2019).

Positivism has its limitations also. Adopting the positivist approach alone without another methodology makes it possible that the attitudes, intentions, and thoughts within the social phenomena of the research site may not be observed and measured. It has also the potential to present the researcher with incorrect data. If the respondent provides the researcher with inauthentic responses then the data cannot be validated scientifically.

Although Pham (2018) acknowledges Creswell’s (2007) feeling that interpretivism gains a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity within its unique context, it has weaknesses also. It can show a gap in the verification of validity as it fails to generalise the results of other people and alternative contexts (Pham, 2018).

**Qualitative Methodologies**

Having addressed the theoretical standpoint, it is now important to address the methodologies employed in this study. Having examined this theory, is clear that positivism familiarises itself with quantitative methods whereas interpretivism use qualitative methods (Revise Sociology, 2020).

Qualitative research and quantitative research are different but they are also interlinked as qualitative data will always have quantitative data within it. Similarly, quantitative data have qualitative data within its own likeness. It tends to use replications of statistical data to provide mathematically proven experimental and survey samples without social variables whereas, qualitative research observes social life in its depth. It explores social variables through the setting of manageable boundaries.
Qualitative research attempts to reduce potential constraints on the methods of research. It manages subjectivity so well as political polls, opinions polls, government, opposition, and even independent scientific reports are proving to be less actual truth are subject to ‘political spin’. During research questionnaires, the questioner can dictate the mood of the respondent’s replies depending on their own mood when asking the questions (Labott, & Johnson et al, 2013).

By using multi-methods, qualitative research focuses on its natural setting. It uses a variety of techniques such as personal experiences, case study, being introspective, interviews, observations, historical, interactions, life stories, and visual texts. Here these explain problems and happenings in individuals lives (Duff, 2018). This type of research involves studying the meaning of people’s lives. By allowing a multitude of data to be collected in a variety of ways, it allows for the triangulation of research methods to come to the fore for the good of the overall study (Flick, 2017).

Of course, effective qualitative research needs to be valid. During this type of research, a very important area of validity needs to be looked after. Questions like ‘How might the results and conclusions be wrong?’ and ‘Why should readers or assessors of the research believe the findings’ need to be taken into account before beginning (Bickman, et al, 2009). Throughout any research of the social sciences, there is the possibility that the researchers may cause some form of stress for individuals or groups of participants. This is particularly true for those more vulnerable to adult researchers especially for the elderly or younger sections of society.

Stress for young people can trigger personal vulnerability which in turn leads to them needing greater social support in their lives (Tottenham, & Galván, 2016). Here a young person may oppress feelings of traumatic experiences and they may be acquiring a negative sense of self or this may even arouse a certain level of suspicion in them. It may also impinge on how they form certain parts of social engagement with others or force them to tap into ancient survival strategies to participate in groups or with research with adults. Certain lifestyle issues may also be at play where a person who is not experiencing a good lifestyle may be tipped over the edge into mental distress if social support is not present or available to them. Then there are relationship systems
that can cause tensions and eventual stress to a person. Hew (2002) noted how oppression, unresolved conflicts, over-involvement, hostility, instability, and crisis as well as indirect communication are also possible parameters of stress for a respondent (Warrener, 2017).

There are advantages to using interviews when carrying out qualitative research. Interviews, although largely used in social science research, give flexibility to the researcher to cover a wide array of issues with the interviewee. Although it takes time to transcribe interviews, using semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to give respondents a greater range of expansion for their answers to the questions asked (Bryman, 2016).

Good qualitative research needs to be properly analysed. One mechanism of competently achieving this is by using sophisticated software. NVivo supports qualitative analysis by promising its users a set of tools that enables the researcher to analysis qualitative data. As it was developed by researchers in the first place, it has gained extensive researcher feedback in its first few years across a multitude of research fields. It aims to increase the efficiency in which the researcher’s analyses their qualitative data to produce a more effective outcome. NVivo allows the users to sort, record, match and link data that has been collected from research respondents to answer their research question. There are five key principals in the software’s design. They are to manage data and ideas, to query this data, to allow for graphical modeling of the data and to report the data also.

In managing data, NVivo attempts to keep account of data files that contain questionnaires, field observations published research rough notes, or focus groups and provide conceptual maps as to what is occurring within the set of data (Bazeley, 2007).

**Quantitative Methodologies**

Quantitative analysis is mostly concerned with communicating peoples’ opinions in numbers and data (Bernard, 2017). This can involve techniques such as surveys. Even the most skilled researchers can experience a non-response to their survey design during a research project. This can depend on the design of the questions, the nature of the sample units, the mode of collection of the data, the procedures carried out throughout fieldwork, and even cultural and societal
factors within the research paradigm. By even mailing an advanced letter to the potential research respondents and including the contact details of the researcher, and overall scope of the study and it’s design of how the fieldwork is to be carried out, potential respondents can then choose to contact the researcher to decline the offer to partake in the research (Leeuw, & Hox et al, 2008). By carrying out quantitative studies validity needs to make sure that the study is reliable and accurately measured (Heale, & Twycross, 2015). There are threats to the external validity of research experiments. These threats can be broadly based on both population validity and ecological validity. Population validity deals with the population of research respondents. Here, they are within the scope of the overall research intent. By measuring the population it is important to observe those within the population of respondents. How researchers compare their population to another or greater population outside the sample respondents of the research is nicely encapsulated by Kaplan (1964, p.20) when they stated:

“*How we can know that the future will resemble the past, and weather, indeed, some principle of ‘uniformity of nature’ is even presupposed by science. Such questions have exercised many philosophers of science. Yet scientists themselves – and surely behavioural scientists – would be quite content to have only as much justification for their predictions as we have for expecting the sun to rise tomorrow*”


Within Kaplan’s text, ecological validity is also explained and notes that this needs to be communicated within the researcher’s account of their overall research findings.

In assessing the quality of data, Blasius claims that when designing and carrying out questionnaires, it is important for researchers to know the fatigue can play a part in how interviews respond to questions within the interview itself (Blasius, 2012). By respondents taking rest periods throughout research they can avoid excess fatigue (Ikeda, & Kubo et al, 2017).

Observational research is usually qualitative (Silverman, 2016). However, in this study, the observational research employed is quantitative as it will use the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule. When we observe as adults we bring our views on board. We can often have a bias or ‘illusion’ before what we are trying to observe. Quite rarely we may consciously even consider these illusions and this can impact our observations throughout the research. With this subjective viewpoint, we can bias the way we observe the age, class, religion, or even gender
of young research participants when we are observing them. Separate to this, in the past forty years there has been a lot of changes that have now impacted upon modern-day children and this can shape the way researchers view today’s children also. With further factors like life, religion, lifestyles industry and women’s roles in society have changed within this time frame it can also impact how researchers observe youth. For example, in days gone by, childhood was seen as a time of innocence yet, in the modern-day, children as young as three years of age are more aware of gender differences and see violence and sexuality portrayed on television screens where previous generations of children would not have had this experience at that age (Fawcett, 2016).

Observers can be teachers, coaches or learners. As an observing teacher, the teacher is trained to use either summative observation or formative observation in the classroom setting. Summative observation deals with school teachers observing lessons as a way of managing their classrooms. Formative observation is a creative and formative process for assessing and monitoring the performance of pupils, in allowing the learner to become the observer of their self, and in allowing the observer to be the coach or expert advisor of the observations (Watson-Davis, 2009).

Often, in a group context, there can be defensiveness to a group’s behaviour or underlying anxiety. By establishing trust within a group observation of all members of a group is needed. There may also be splits in subgroups of the greater overall group. Members keeping to themselves and their plan or agenda and reluctance to participate in overall group activity also prevalent showing that trust is not as it should be (Corey, 2014).

Observations used within social science allow for accuracy. It is more accurate than seeking people to fill out questionnaires. One of the reasons for this is that the researcher can concentrate directly on observable behaviour. Despite the advantages of observing participants in their natural habitat, often many issues are not accessible when observing and they can only be addressed through the process of interviewing participants in the study (Bryman, 2016).

Mixed methods researchers have shown how the positivist and interpretative paradigms could be used together successfully. Agergardard et al, (2005) use mixed methods in the field of research on youths’ participation in physical activity. Following this research, Agergardard et al, believed
that by using both quantitative and qualitative research methods subjectivity and objectivity, their behavior is best observed within the research context. Here, they established the identification of sporting talent as well as sports’ policy. Similarly, Collison and Marchesseault (2018) established that ‘Participatory Social Interaction Research’, can improve cultural understanding of the specific research at hand (Skinner and Engelberg, 2018). Therefore, this confirmed to the author of this research the merits of adopting this form of research design within this specific study.

**Methodological Triangulation**

Triangulation is a way of using three different sources to verify data instead of using one single source. Triangulation is a way of using multiple operationalisations of constructs to separate the specific construct being considered away from other information within the operationalisation. In doing so, it compensates for weakness within the study (Elsevier, 2015).

Triangulation began in the 1970s within the field of the social sciences with researcher Norman Denzin using a more systematic conceptualisation of it. Going back a little further, triangulation used qualitative and quantitative methods. Even as far back as 1940, William Whyte completed an ethnographic study of the USA a street gang. Here, he took notes and other forms of research to maximize his study over a two year period. He learned of the motives, life values and even the social organisation and friendships of a group of second generation Italian migrants. From this, he deduced the local cultural scenery of these young people.

Both triangulation and mixed methods allow a researcher to use more than one methodology for their research study. However, whilst mixed methods concentrates on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, triangulation opens up to a broader approach to research. Unlike mixed methods, triangulation allows several kinds of data to be analysed (To, 2017). The triangulation method used in this study is outlined later in this chapter.
How Best to Measure Friendships, Social Support, and Empathy

Information is now presented on how best to measure friendship, social support and empathy. Below is a discussion on how to establish a research position to address this study’s objectives. As friendship, social support, and empathy are important topics of this research, they require individualised explanations as to how they are best required to be measured within this research project.

How Best to Measure Friendships

Friendships enable warmth, positive communication, well-being, and support. It is also important for a person’s social health (Stainback & Stainback, 1987). Different researchers on the topic of friendship have adopted different methodologies of researching their specific studies. Within this section, the author will shine a light on the most important researchers that he has identified in the area of friendship and discover their researching methodologies before choosing his position in the research on the topic of friendship.

Friendship occurs when one person reciprocates a mutually beneficial relationship (The British Psychological Society, 2019). For adolescents, this time of life produces many changes and progressions. Physical, intellectual, emotional, and social developments occur. These adjustments can be supported by good or bad parenting. Bad parenting can have an adverse effect on young people (Gault, 2018). Sexual maturation is another factor that Martino, & Pallotta-Chiarolli (2005), who carried out qualitative interviews years after young men had left school about issues such as families, friendship, sport, sex, and risk-taking behaviour, say can impact on a young person’s identity issues (Martino, & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005). As family relationships are becoming modified (Davies, 2011), Frydenberg, who opted for questionnaires to elicit quantitative and qualitative data regarding children’s social behaviour, feels that young people are becoming more socially aware (Frydenberg, 2017). Self-awareness, the personal management of feelings and social skills that promote empathy are required according to author
Helen Cowie (2012) who differed again to the aforementioned authors by using case studies, tables, and references to relevant studies to study adolescents’ relationships (Cowie, 2012). Most specifically, an adolescent’s transition from primary to post-primary school and peer pressures and can present challenges for some adolescents’ psychological well being (Longobardi, & Prino et al, 2016). Differing socialisation at this stage of life opens adolescents up to new types of pressures away from their families which, up until now, have been their main socialising anchor (Dolan, & Canavan, et al, 2006). These authors have both used quantitative and qualitative tools such as surveys, questionnaires, and interviews to study young people. At this stage, the natural urge to live more autonomously and make and sustain friends with others is the norm in young peoples’ lives. New friends and supporters that may be peers or adults provide sustenance to young people. Other authors, namely Buelens & Theeboom (2017), who only used qualitative methods, viewed that these new relationships can guide a youth positively (Buelens, & Theeboom, et al, 2017). Thus, the importance of social support and friendship in both a face-to-face and online manner is vital for young people within informal social spaces so their positive behaviour and wellbeing develop. Procidano (1983) uses a friendship measure where an individual requires information, support and feedback from both family and friends (Procidano & Heller, 1983). The author of this study may have used this tool to measure friendship but he declined as he felt that this tool, although successfully used in other studies, it presumes that friendship already exists within an individual’s family. Instead, the Social Network Questionnaire (SNQ) and the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule were used to measure friendship in this study.

The Social Network Questionnaire (SNQ) and the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule

The SNQ discovers who are in a person’s social network. The Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule observes people’s instances of friendship. Both are used in this research as they are the most accurate and efficient measures of the respondents’ friendship given the number and types of participants, and with the overall time frame of the study in mind.
Although many experts on the topic of friendship have used a variety of quantitative and qualitative data, the Social Network Questionnaire was used as the researcher also felt it established how many were in a young person’s regular network. It detailed all the people that a person spent time with during a regular week as well as their close friends who they communicated and confided with. The questionnaire gave the respondents the time to choose who they felt were the warmest and most caring of people in their lives. It also allowed them to list those that they emotionally shared things with. Lastly, it was chosen to be used by the researcher, as it allowed the respondent to distinguish between their casual friends and those who are the most important people in their life also.

Then, he used a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule. The Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was used to measure friendship by the researcher because it allowed the respondents to approximate to the nearest ten per cent how the skills of friendship were observed. The schedule had thirteen different sections whereby friendship can be broken down into. Although these sections provide a thorough collection of the areas of friendship, these sections were further broken up into fifty eight subsections which made it even easier for the researcher to pin point the exact skills of friendship that could be attributed to individual respondents’ perceptions of friendship.

**How Best to Measure Social Support**

By there being social support for youth it enables them to be positively sustained and guided into adulthood (Zinn, Palmer, & Nam, 2017). Youth behaviour can, therefore, be influenced throughout the complexity of growing up and journeying into adulthood as well. Even the most complex of human behaviour can be researched in a balanced manner (Noble & Heale, 2019).

Authors Bowldby (1969) and Weiss (1974) (who used interviews and questionnaires respectively) noted that social support is a basic human requirement. Cutrona (1990), who used surveys to complete her research, states that social support utilises a person’s basic needs.
Veiel (1992), who used interviews in his research, surmised that social support satisfies a person’s behaviours, relationships, and social systems (Veiel, & Baumann, 2014). Cohen (2000) explains how social support necessitates the functioning of human relationships and behaviours and their associated networks or information (Cohen, & Underwood et al, 2000). As established academics over several decades, Cohen and Underwood have used a series of research methodologies that encompass both quantitative and qualitative methods.

As Dolan and Brady (2012) are users of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies they believe that social support enables communication and actions that reduce stress. This then promotes coping in life, better self-esteem, and self efficacy. By providing advice to young people, social support is concrete and emotionally engaged. Cobb (1976) believes that social support demands a caring facilitator so that those that they support feel loved and within a strong support network. His research methodologies have been wide and varied throughout his long career. Supportive networks can be found in a community where partners may confide and provide a basis for social support. Oh & Ozkaya (2014) used observations to understand that a sense of community can benefit an individual’s feelings of stress and life in general (Oh, & Ozkaya et al, 2014). Educators, organisers, and community workers can use the presence theory to be supportive caregivers.

The presence theory was when Baart (2002) used long term empirical research and intensive theoretical research to discover that by adults simply observing, indications of exclusion can be discovered. Here, Baart found that caregivers’ presence can give help and support for practical problems. His work emphasised how adults’ presence can aid those around them.

Concerning this study, social support was measured in order to establish if there is positive development of the respondents’ behaviour and well-being and if this is comparable across populations. The researcher wanted to discover if there is individual and mutual support as well as there being an existence of tangible human support scaffolding and reinforcing the respondents in the study. There are other measures of social support such as Bryant’s theory on savouring an experience which is achieved by an individual adolescent appreciating the positive
aspects of a lived experience (Soots, 2015). This measure was not used for the purposes of this study as it negated to allow the researcher to compare across populations.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) is a twelve item questionnaire that briefly measures the perceptions of support from three sources. These sources are family and friends and a significant other (Bruwer, Emsley, Kidd, Lochner, & Seedat, 2008).

Another good measurement of social support is the Duke-UNC Functional Social Support Questionnaire (DUFSS) developed by Broadhead, Gehlbach, DeGruy, and Kaplan in 1988 (López & Cooper, 2011). Both the MSPSS and the DUFSS measurements of social support were considered too small for this research by the author.

Sarason, Levine, and Basham et al. (1983) created the ‘Social Support Questionnaire’. It is a 27-item questionnaire developed to measure social support satisfaction and perceptions. However, this scale was considered too large by the author to be used in this research. Instead the Social Provision Scale was deemed to be the best sized scale as it allowed the author to have a reduced and adapted twenty item scale for respondents to fill out.

It is important to establish the norms of the research tools before the respondents utilise them as there are a variety of quantitative tools that will be utilised throughout this study. In developing the Basic Empathy Scale authors Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) administered it to 363 15-year-old girls and boys. At this time it was a 40 item scale. A year later the same researchers used a 20 item scale with 357 young people in the same school (Jolliffe, & Farrington, 2006). The Social Provision Scale has been used by many studies of note. Two such authors are Vogel & Wei (2005) who studied 355 college students at a large Midwestern university. Another respected study carried out by Ribas & Lam (2010) used the tool on only 60 Latinos with mental illness. McLean, Jarus, Hubley, & Jongbloed (2014) used it with only 46 participants when they studied social participation. This emphasises that the tool can be used on a variety of research participants (Chiu, Motl, & Ditchman, 2016).

The Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule although developed and adapted by Attwood was actually initially created by Attwood and Gray (1999). As they firstly designed it to measure those on the autistic spectrum disorder and it was generally used by teachers, most of the
observations were carried out observing smaller groups of children. This is because special needs classrooms having smaller numbers than mainstream classes (Henault, 2002).

The Social Network Questionnaire is a tool that was developed initially for adults. Therefore, there are no normative scores to measure it by. However, it was used in youth research by Pinkerton & Dolan (2007) in measuring young people and by Cutrona and Russell (1983) have also used this tool on young people (Cutrona & Russell, 1983).

**The Social Provision Scale (SPS), a Reduced and Adapted Version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule, and Semi-Structured Interviews**

This research attempted to establish the availability and the quality of social support as perceived by the respondents. It also discovered the social benefits that these young people perceived they are receiving. With this in mind, primarily, the Social Provision Scale (SPS), a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule, and semi-structured interviews were be used by the researcher.

The SPS designed by Cutrona and Russell (1987) was used in this research as it measured the availability of social and emotional support, their social integration, and the help available to them in their lives. It also measured their attachment to others. The Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was used as the schedule could be quantified to attain deeper levels of social support. Semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents’ time to think of their answers and a private one to one conversation with the researcher without any peers around them. It also allowed for a deeper way for them to express their feelings and opinions about social support.
How Best to Measure Empathy

Empathy is about putting oneself in another person’s shoes. To this effect, a person needs to try to observe and understand things from another person’s point of view. As adolescents develop greater autonomy during this period of life, they also develop greater awareness. In gaining greater independence they begin to socialise more away from their home. From here, the ability to manage their feelings is challenged. More complex human relationships now become part of an adolescent’s life. These complexities may involve social rejection, acceptance, and new realms of networking with peers and older people. Throughout this period of life, they have the ability to enlarge their capacity to be more empathetic to other people around them.

Although the GAA does not have any specific empathy programme, the association’s mantra of ‘Give Respect, Get Respect’ represents the closest bedfellow on a similar topic for them. By all GAA participants giving respect, all other members receive respect also. This promotes civic behaviour. Despite this, this kind of behaviour was low amongst 700 respondents of 12-16-year-olds in Ireland even though they were adjudged to having high actions of empathy and social responsibility. This research used quantitative cross-sectional research and qualitative focus groups and interviews (Silke, 2019).

Being moral and showing empathy is central to good leadership according to author Helen Rhode (2015). Yet many forms of modern mass media produce vast bulks of information, news, and entertainment that challenge societal outlooks. This, in turn, challenges moral values and peoples’ active empathy. Authors Segal, Wagaman, & Gerdes (2012) concentrated on quantitative research methods and noted that by perceiving or experiencing another person’s life, social empathy is activated (Segal, Wagaman, & Gerdes, 2012).

The researcher sought to establish whether or not the respondents are putting themselves in the shoes of the other respondents of the study throughout the research period. As many of the happenings of this research occurred within the sports’ teams’ meeting times, the researcher was conscious that there was unplanned interactions that tested the empathetic reactions of each respondent with one another. In carrying out this research, the researcher was clear to segregate and record the instances of empathy which occurred independent of the normal playing rules of
each sport’s game as these games may have intended to promote empathetic interactions through their governing rule. In doing so, the researcher was able to find out the true levels of empathy from the respondents.

Discovering the true levels of empathy is important and in deciding upon the most suitable tools the researcher contemplated several tools to measure the levels of empathy. The Empathy Questionnaire (EmQue) is a 20 item questionnaire that allows adults accurately calculate the levels of empathy in older children (Overgaauw, 2017). Although this is a reliable tool to measure empathy, the author of this research avoided using it as it does not allow young adolescents to give their perceptions of the levels of empathy they experience. The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire is a 16 item scale to measure empathy. It was developed by Spreng et al. (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar & Levine, 2009). Although the scale refers to the feelings of empathy and allows the respondent to reply either ‘rarely’, ‘always’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ the scale was not used for this project as the researcher thought it did not ask enough questions to the respondents. In contrast, the Hogan Empathy Scale (HES) uses 64 items to measure empathy (Hogan, 1969). The author of this project neglected to use it as he thought it was too long for the young respondents to use. Instead, he used the Basic Empathy Scale.

The Basic Empathy Scale

The Basic Empathy Scale is a twenty item quantitative research tool that allows young people to give their perceptive feedback to the researcher. It was devised by Jolliffe & Farrington in 2006. It allows a researcher to measure the affective and cognitive empathy of respondents. It was chosen for this study as it allowed the respondents to give their own perceptions of the existence and levels of empathy within their lives and to reflect on the existence and levels of overall respect afforded to them within their sports’ Clubs by taking into account the changing out of school complexities of adolescents’ lives.

In conclusion then, the tools used within this study were the Basic Empathy Scale, the Social Provision Scale, the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule and semi structured interviews.
Establishing a Research Position to Address the Study’s Objectives

By establishing a research position that addresses the study’s objective the researcher needs to examine the various research methods, how they can and will be used, and why they have been chosen to be used in this way for the purpose of this study.

By researching social support a researcher is discovering the extent to which an individual respondent fits within a social network. An individual’s interactions with others around them can aid or stress their well being. Psychological or material support from others can help with personal stress (IREsearchNet, 2019). Here, their family, community, friendships, colleagues, and other networks around them can be assessed to distinguish their overall levels of affection (Rappaport, 2012).

From the outset, social research can have a range of purposeful intentions. Beginning with the simplistic aims of more complex ones social research can describe, explain, evaluate, assess, and even change a research study. Questions to ask when designing a complex social research study is ‘What?’, ‘Why?’, and ‘How?’ need to be addressed. When there is a requirement for descriptive research these questions may be expanded upon to include a greater array of inquisitiveness to match with the overall research objectives (Blaikie, & Priest, 2019).

Researchers within the social support realm must be sensitive to the individual respondents, their circumstances, and the situations they are in throughout their lives in general (Oakley, 2018). By an adult showing trust to young respondents during social research in a nurturing way, it promotes children’s beliefs and behaviours towards others (Roberts, 2017).

This research discovered the levels of affection within individuals’ social networks and its design allowed for a depth of research complexity whilst also providing sensitivity towards the respondents’ individual needs. In doing so, the validity and reliability of a study are aided substantially. Any potential for research bias that can arise from single method practices of research was eradicated as objectivity and a more aligned construction of reality was put into place (Webb, 2019). By doing qualitative research this study provided an objective outlook of
the researcher’s personal experience (Packer, 2017). Quantitative research methods provides specific answers to specific questions, and it analysed numerical data to answer a researcher’s specific questions (Apuke, 2017).

On the basis of this, this study, for the most part, took a positivist methodological approach. The methodology employed included both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These methodologies used a triangulated approach to analyse the data.

As this study took place in GAA Clubs where all the respondents were active members under the guidance of their coaches, the researcher supported taking a positivist approach to the study in general.

By using the interpretive approach to research, the author undertook the research in agreement with what was said by the aforementioned Abderrazak Dammark (2015). Here, the ‘knower’ understands the subject and is involved through interaction and not detachment throughout the research. For the most part, the interpretive method of research within social sciences uses qualitative methods (Yanow, & Schwartz-Shea, 2015).

Within this research, the researcher was conscious of understanding that the research respondents’ interactions and communication affected their relationships. He measured both one-to-one and group interactions of respondents in order to establish if there were mutually reciprocal positive human relationships in existence within the study. This being the case, the personal outcomes for the proposed respondents would be positive ones.

Thus, quantitative tools comprising the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale, the Basic Empathy Scale, and the Indices of Observations were decided upon to gain quantitative data in relation to respondents. This also acted as counter-balance to the qualitative interviews with the respondents, in order to understand their individual stories.

The Social Network Questionnaire was chosen as a research tool as it allowed the researcher to understand how many people were in their regular network and how close these relationships were to the respondents.

The Social Provision Scale was decided to be used as it allowed the researchers to not only understand the respondents’ social relationships and the amounts and quality of perceived
support but, it also afforded an opportunity for the author to explore their relationships within their GAA Clubs.

Finally, the Basic Empathy Scale was chosen as the different areas of empathy were broken down into clear and concise areas for the research respondents to consider before answering.

As many of the respondents of this study were very young it was predicted that having a clear and concise breakdown of the various areas of empathy would allow the respondents to understand the concept properly before answering. With this in mind, a matching of the research methodologies had to carefully adopted by the researcher.

Each objective was matched with specific methodologies to be best facilitate the research aims. The first objective of this study was to explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs. With this in mind, quantitative data was collected using the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale (SPS), and using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule. Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews of research respondents.

The next objective was to measure the levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs. This was achieved by using the quantitative data collected using the Basic Empathy Scale, and a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule. It used qualitative data by using semi-structured interviews with the respondents.

The third objective was to establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports Clubs. This was attained by analysing quantitative data collected using the Social Provision Scale (SPS), a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule, and utilising qualitatively designed semi-structured interviews.
The final objective of the study was to create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field. This was discussed in Chapter 6 following the outcome of the results of this study.

In order to properly establish a research position that involved triangulation, it was important to address what triangulation was and how it related to other methods of research. The mixed methods approach allowed for an entire area of examination for the researcher and gives them the possibility to carry out interdisciplinary investigations (Hesse-Biber, 2015).

Beginning in the 1950s and over subsequent decades, the mixed methods in social research has continuously developed and evolved. This approach advocates that there is no one premium method, but that multiple forms of data collection in social research should apply. Following the combination of multiple quantitative methods within a pioneering study within the discipline of psychology in the 1950s (Creswell, 2013), sociologists began to use fieldwork and adopt a similar approach. By the 1970s there was a general use of multi methods. Later in the same decade, triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods were being utilised also.

Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) in Creswell et al, establish how triangulation allows for the research study to be corroborated, to converge, and to correspond with the results of the data (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011).

The corroboration of evidence of the data arises from different sources of information. It is there to promote codes or themes which in turn, gives validity to findings (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation allows the researcher to use several sources in order to code or theme the data to provide validity to the study.

Known as convergence in the 1970s, triangulation is a well recognised approach in mixed methods studies and encourages the independent collection of both the quantitative and qualitative data Here, the researcher collects and analyses the qualitative and quantitative data and then fuses them in order to discover the overall analysis of the results (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011).
Although both mixed methods and triangulation seek to use more than one methodological approach, triangulation goes further and allows the researcher to have a greater integration of methodologies and focus on what can be combined. Triangulation allows for the extension of knowledge and the insights for the researcher (Flick, 2018).

**Rationale for Mixed Methods:**

In social science research, people are central to the construction of the research and so the proper application of these research methods is important. Several methods are required to facilitate the research project properly. Although mixed methods research drains more time and resources from the researcher it aids the study’s validity and reliability (Abowitz, &Toole, 2010).

Observations have allowed sports psychologists a direct way to assess their clients within their sporting environment (Martin, Winter, & Holder, 2017). Whilst observing the heading ability in soccer, researchers Harriss, Walton, & Dickey (2018) noted that although observations have their benefits in this way, it did not accurately represent the number of headers that the players attempted (Harriss, Walton, & Dickey, 2018). This is why the author of this study used other tools to research his respondents in a sporting context. Different mixed methods research tools can complement one another and can be combined for complementary purposes (Sale, 2002). Although mixed methods research challenges the researcher, it has benefits to the overall outcome of the study. Yet, its overall value can be improved with the addition of triangulation throughout a study (Gibson, 2017).

As the respondents in this particular study were socially bound by their membership of their individual GAA Clubs, it was therefore decided to capture them in their natural social surroundings to best reflect their interaction with one another. With this in mind, it was decided by the researcher and his supervisor to observe their active interactions during training.
However, as these type of observations involved watching the cognitive, motor, and visual system interactions among respondents (Hodges, 2017); it was important for the researcher to breakdown specifically what direct actions he observed for the benefit of this study. This is why he chose to quantify his observations in this study.

By interviewing respondents, an interviewer is allowing the interviewee to freely and openly express themselves and their behaviours (Powney, & Watts, 2018). As these interactions meant that they would be unable to communicate their true opinions and feelings verbally, interviews were then decided on to best capture the opinions of as many respondents as possible from each club. This was completed within the time limits of the study.

This natural surround of training is an active and competitive one. The qualitative interviews allowed for the individual respondents time to fully think about their answers in a relaxed and non competitive setting. By carrying out quantitative observations it allowed the researcher to observe the irregular activity in a predefined manner. This then allowed him to compare individual respondents.

By best measuring the needs of a research project, the researcher is maximising the reliability and validity of the research (Morse, 2016). After carefully consulting with his supervisor and choosing the correct quantitative tools for this study the researcher then gained ethical approval. As good mixed methods research includes tools that can produce quantitative results it boosted the researcher’s confidence in knowing that the study had more credibility (Pluye, Gagnon, Griffiths, & Johnson-Lafleur, 2009).

At this stage, he also established that quantitative measures are flexible and adaptive to the study’s design. This helped him to understand the in depth feedback of the research respondents of this study (Wisdo & Creswell, 2013). The qualitative measures allowed him to elicit deeper and more emotional opinions from the individual respondents of the study (Crang, 2003).

**The Difference between Mixed Methods and Triangulation**

Triangulation is a single method that can use other methodologies within its sphere. It enlarges the number of key learning points and knowledge from a qualitative study. In combining
research methods, triangulation improves the validity of a social study. Triangulation is when the issue of research is considered or constructed in at least two different methodologies. As the term triangulation initially came from the surveying of land and geodesy it is about using at least two points of interest to locate the third point of interest (Flick, 2018). It is used to understand the unconventional or different options and is utilised to challenge existing research findings. In this way, it validates the findings also (Turner, & Turner, 2009). It is therefore deemed suitable for this study by the researcher and his supervisor.

As Flick (2018) also noted, although similar, mixed methods and triangulation make a study’s research concrete in different ways. Mixed methods combine both the qualitative and quantitative methods but triangulation gives a wider scope in how the methods are mixed together (Flick, 2018). Many mixed methods designs do not fully attend to the diversity of research scenarios (Edmonds, & Kennedy, 2016) and so this motivated the researcher to accept the need for a triangulation approach for this study.

**Triangulation of Triangulation**

The following three figures brings the triangulation process for the study ‘into play’ for the reader. Firstly, Figure 3.1 below shows how by using initial triangulation within this study, a balanced approach from literature to survey instrument use was established. This potentially resulted in a rich depth of research results providing a set of research results that would be as beneficial as possible to all readers. Figure 3.2 then shows the specific triangulation of all of the specific instruments including qualitative interviews were used during the study. Finally underneath, figure 3.3 shows how the four objectives of this study utilised the methodological tools within this triangulation.
Figure 3.1: Using methodological triangulation sources that studied the perceived social support and friendship and empathy among adolescents
Figure. 3.2 Triangulation showing how the specific instruments were used during the study.
Figure 3.3 Triangulation showing how this study’s four objectives utilised its methodological tools.
Locating Suitable Sports Clubs for Inclusion in the Study

To make this research fieldwork a reality and to develop the concept of research from its theoretical basis, the researcher had to locate suitable clubs for inclusion in the study. Given the position of the researcher as a volunteer in four clubs, this became essentially a sample of convenience. Here the first available primary source of data is used as a matter of convenience (Saunders, 2011).

After deciding on the research method generally, and the source of respondents more specifically, the next step for the researcher was to approach Gaelic Athletic Clubs (GAA) within the Galway city area to get permission to do the study. This step was a tentative one as the researcher was well aware of the need for confidentiality when dealing with children and adolescents from his other professional experience in working with children and youth. Having established that the eastern side of Galway City was becoming a very multicultural and diverse area of geographical growth (Advertiser, 2019) the researcher decided to approach the two-parent GAA clubs that were directly linked with these areas in the two main sports of the GAA. These were the sports of hurling and Gaelic football.

As the researcher had played these sports within this locality and was a keen supporter, member, and volunteer of both clubs and codes his approach to both the Castlegar GAA Club and the St. James’ GAA Club was welcomed by both executive committees.

Once this approval was received, the author was given direct communication pathways to adult leaders in both the Castlegar GAA and St. James’ Clubs. From here, he was put in touch with the ladies clubs’ adult leaders, namely the Castlegar Camogie Club and the St. James’ Ladies Football Club. Then each of the four individual adult leaders representing each of their club coaches and sets of youth players liaised with the researcher throughout the entire research process. Below is table 3.1 showing the approach and approval of GAA Club executives.
Table 3.1 Showing the Approach and Approval of GAA Club Executives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2016</td>
<td>Researcher approaches Castlegar GAA executive committee to do fieldwork with the clubs juvenile members (providing the university approves the ethical application).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>Request to research Castlegar GAA juvenile members approved by the club providing the university approves the ethical application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>Researcher approaches St. James’ GAA executive committee to do fieldwork with the clubs juvenile members (providing the university approves the ethical application).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Request to research St. James’ GAA juvenile members approved by the club providing the university approves the ethical application and the researcher accesses informed consent from juvenile members and their parent(s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Designing the Data Collection Tools

Table 3.2 below shows the research objectives used for the four objectives of this study and the tools that met each objective. The first three objectives used an array of research tools. The fourth objective of the study was a result of the outcomes of the first three objectives.
The first research objective was concerned with the perceived availability of social support. Here, the Social Network Questionnaire (Cutrona, & Russell, 1981; with amendments by Dolan, 2002) (see appendix 1) provides a quantitative way of gaining the young peoples’ perceptions of who they have listed as being significant people in their lives. This questionnaire dealt with accessing information on who young people spend time during a typical week.

The first objective also used the quantitative Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule (see appendix 2). Here the indices list the most common skills of friendship and allowed the researcher to rate and comment on their observations. For this fit for purpose research study, this scale was adapted. As the creator of this tool, Tony Attwood partially designed it to deal with those with Aspergers and as there were no reported children or young people in this study who have Asperger Syndrome (AS), it was decided to adapt the tool to reflect the research respondents’ better ability to socially interact and understand non verbal communication that those with AS who have developmental issues in these areas (MD, 2019). The Social Provision Scale (SPS) (Cutrona, & Russell 1981 and revised in 2002 by Cutrona and Dolan) (see appendix 3) was another quantitative tool used for this first objective. The SPS includes questions on normal social provision as well as a social provision within GAA Clubs for young people.

The final tool that was used for the first objective is semi-structured interviews of research respondents. This allowed the researcher to have balance as the respondent has flexibility in answering questions and giving a personal testimony, while the overall context of the question is still structured in some way. This, and the fact of their youthful age, allowed youth respondents the opportunity to answer an interview in a semi-structured manner which would allow them more space and time to interact with the researcher.

The second objective attempts to seek out young people’s levels of empathy and instances of friendship. Here the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was again used. The Basic Empathy Scale was also a quantitative data tool that was used to establish the levels of empathy among the respondents to the study. Semi-structured interviews were also used to address this objective also.
The third objective uses the Social Provision Scale (SPS), the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule and semi-structured interviews established the perceived social benefits of the respondents. Table 3.2 below matches the research objectives for the study to the tools used in order to achieve them.

*Table 3.2: Tools used to collect the data required to address the objectives of the study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objective</th>
<th>Tool to Meet Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.</td>
<td>Quantitative data collected using the Social Network Questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative data collected using the Social Provision Scale (SPS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative observations collected using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative data collected using semi structured interviews of research respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.</td>
<td>Quantitative date collected using the Basic Empathy Scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative observations collected using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative data collected using semi structured interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.</td>
<td>Quantitative data collected using the Social Provision Scale (SPS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative observations collected using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative data utilising semi structured interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.</td>
<td>Provided in Chapter 6 as part of the discussion on selected key findings and again in a summative format in the concluding chapter, Chapter 7.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tool 1: The Social Network Questionnaire (Cutrona & Russell in 1981 with amendments by Dolan in 2002)**

*Background, Content and Format*

The Social Network Questionnaire (SNQ) provides the researcher with the opportunity to establish a onetime picture of who respondents spend time with during a typical week. Here, people, they live with, people they consider are their closest friends, their casual friends, a close relative, and any other important people in their lives during a typical week can be included. It was designed by Cutrona and Russell in 1981 with amendments by Dolan in 2002.

*Administration*

One hundred and thirty respondents filled out this survey. It should be noted that although the survey allows for respondents to list a large amount of names and gives them the option to comment on whether they have a good, bad or half in half relationship it does not give them a larger scope to explain their answers in greater detail. One hundred and thirty respondents filled out this survey during the research. The questionnaire takes on average fifteen minutes to complete. A copy of the template of this tool is available in appendix 1.

*Scoring*

Each completed SNQ from individual respondents was then entered into the SPSS programme. Firstly, in terms of sources of support, each respondent that completed the SNQ was separately scored by the number of nominations with sub-groups for sources e.g. specific family members and friends. In addition, where a member was communicated as living at home with the respondent, this nominee was assigned a numerical value. Finally, regarding the quality of relationships, where a respondent perceived their relationship with another as bad, this was given a value of ‘0’. Where the respondent perceived the relationship as half-and-half this was given a value of ‘1’. Lastly, where the respondent perceived the relationship with the network member as good this was valued at a score of ‘2’. This was the way the quality of relationships within each respondent’s network was quantitatively scored.
**Possible Limitations**

Whereas the SNQ gives a wide-ranging assessment of respondents chosen and a perceived set of close people in the young person`s network it does not allow a respondent to explain any issues with those they would have been friends with recently. For example, any recent fallings out with long term friends could have been overlooked by the respondents as there is no section to explain this type of networking scenario. On the other hand, a person that may be perceived as an acquaintance may be, at the time of the questionnaire being filled out, perceived as being the supportive other in the wake of this fallout and in turn may be given a untrue value by respondents owing to the level of upset they feel about their recent falling out. The researcher contends that both the Social Provision Scale (SPS) and the SNQ have quantitative as well as qualitative qualities and this was the very reason why they were chosen over other tools that have not to go these qualities.


*Background, Content and Format*

The Social Provisions Scale was created by Cutrona and Russell in 1981. It was later revised in a version for specific measurements with adolescents in 2002 by Cutrona and Dolan. The scale has 12 multiple-choice questions. Each question gives the respondent the option of answering `no`, `sometimes`, or `yes` to each question. The first four questions ask questions on respondents` current relationships with their friends. The next third of the questions ask about their relationship with their siblings. The final part of the questionnaire asks about the relationships with adults in their life.

*Administration*

As this research tool did not include questions aimed specifically at the GAA members in general, it needed to be modified in order to best reflect the research respondents within this
study. As a result, the researcher amended the Social Provisions Scale to include 8 extra questions as well as the initial 12 that were already in the questionnaire. These extra questions referred to the respondent’s current relationships with friends in their GAA Club and their relationships with adults within their GAA Club. One hundred and thirty respondents filled out this tool during the research. A copy of the template of this tool is available in appendix 3.

Scoring

In order to establish the total score from each individual SPS, each question is individually scored by assigning each of the three possible responses demonstrating a value from ‘1’ to ‘3’:

No = 1

Sometimes = 2

Yes = 3

All completed questions are then compiled and their values worked out for overall and aggregate scores.

Possible Limitations

As with all questionnaires there are advantages and disadvantages and the SPS is no different in this regard. As this tool allows respondents to respond by quickly circling their appropriately perceived answer to each specific question, young people surveyed may hurriedly fill out the questionnaire in order to quickly complete the study and be finished. The researcher is aware of such limitations and due to the fact that the author of this research decided to amend the questionnaire to fit his research demographic he is confident that this will overcome any disadvantages that the scale may have. More importantly, the researcher will be with respondents in person when they are completing the SPS and in a one to one or small group administration (maximum group of four youth at any time), so he will be watching for evidence of disinterest or non-compliance by respondents.

**Background, Content and Format**

The *Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule* research tool developed by Tony Attwodd (2003) is a 13 item set of friendship skills. It is used during the research to quantitatively measure observations of the respondents in their club surroundings. This tool is designed in two stages. During the first stage of friendship, entry skills, assistance, accepting suggestions, interest, avoiding and ending are documented. In the second stage, the friendship skills of compliments, criticism, and cooperation are measured as well as characterisation, pragmatics, conflict resolution, and empathy are assessed. An amended version of the *Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule* Research Tool was used in this study (see appendix 2).

**Administration**

In total 64 respondents (n=64) were individually observed using this tool during the study in separate one half hour period observations. A copy of the template of this tool is available in appendix 2.

**Scoring**

Within the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule a rating of friendship or team skills is possible. Here the researcher must enter numbers ranking their perceived observations from ‘1’ to ‘5’. Rating ‘1’ on the schedule estimates that a respondent has approximately 10% of the skill. Rating ‘2’ states that 25% of the skill is observed. This is followed by a rating of ‘3’ where approximately 50% of the skill is observed. Three quarters of the skill is observed if the researcher registers a ‘4’ on the schedule. Finally, 100% of the skill is observed when the value of ‘5’ is entered on the schedule.

**Possible Limitations**

Although the *Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule* research tool has many benefits for social research such as being a way to quantitatively monitor observations that are quite often observed qualitatively, it also has limitations. The main limitation is that it still means that the
researcher’s perceptions are the most fitting way to begin to communicate the ratings. As the researcher is intent on being as objective as possible during the fieldwork, he is aware that unconscious bias on his part is a risk to the validity of data created by him through observations made.

**Tool 4: The Basic Empathy Scale (Joliffe and Farrington 2006)**

**Background, Content and Format**

The final quantitative tool used in the study was the Basic Empathy Scale. This tool was designed by Joliffe & Farrington in 2006 (see appendix 4). The scale includes twenty multiple choice questions in order to establish levels of perceived empathy among respondents. Respondents gauge their answer of whether they strongly disagree or strongly agree with a question or if they are content to just disagree, or agree with it. They may also answer in the middle of these four choices.

**Administration**

Of the twenty items on the scale, nine of them address cognition and the remaining eleven items measure levels of affection.

One hundred and thirty (n=130) respondents filled this survey out.

**Scoring**

Scoring for the Basic Empathy Scale allows for respondents to circle a five possible responses ranging from number ‘1’ which is when a respondent strongly disagrees with the above statement posed to the respondent, or number ‘2’ when they disagree with the same statement, number 3 if neither disagree or agree with the statement and number ‘2’ if they agree with it. Finally, if the respondents strongly agree with the above statement they choose the circle the number ‘5’. Once all twenty of the multiple choice questions are scored they are then fully scored.

**Possible Limitations**
Although the tool is a quantitative way to measure a large number of respondents it limits their expression when answering a question. The basic empathy scale is by its nature quantitative only and in terms of measuring social empathy does not cover opinions or nuances on respondents' views of others in terms of caring and compassion. Nor does the tool address the particular context of this study namely sport, thus, the qualitative set of 20 interviews used in the study help to address this gap.

**Probability and Non-Probability Sampling**

Sampling refers to a certain portion taken from a larger group of respondents. Ideally, the sample represents the larger group’s characteristics. Two types of sampling are probability and non-probability sampling. If the researcher wishes to have as strong as possible a correspondence with the overall population they are said to be increasing the probability of the sample. This is called probability sampling. By randomly choosing respondents from an overall population the researcher is using random probability sampling (Lynch, 2010). Non-probability sampling is often used in trial research and fails to represent the target population. It is based off subjective judgment (Ayhan, 2011).

**The Choice of Sampling For This Study**

The researcher decided on his sampling strategy based on other researchers work across the three topics of friendship, social support, and empathy. In reference to young peoples’ friendships and relationships, Cowie (2012) draws from nine different cases studies that used different sampling techniques. Regarding social support, authors Cohen and Willis (1985) in Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb (2000) reviewed more than 40 social support studies that also used a variety of sampling methods. In considering empathy, Silke, Brady, Boylan, & Dolan (2018) used probability sampling and they did a systematic review of the literature and analysed 168 empirical research papers focusing on typically developing adolescents from 13 to 18 years of age. Similar to this project’s respondents, Silke, Brady, Boylan, & Dolan’s (2018) review also included adolescent respondents, and because of this, and as they carried out an extensive analysis of 168 papers, this influenced this researcher’s eventual choice of using probability sampling for this study.
As a result of a meeting with his Graduate Research Committee it was decided due to several factors that the researcher would study this representative sample of respondents using probability sampling. This decision was partially made due to some of the respondents being under 13 years of age. Other reasons such as the timeframe of the study and the financial limitations were also factors that influenced this decision.

Regarding mixed method sampling methods, Teddie and Yu (2007) believe that there is no widely accepted typology of these methods. However, a combination of qualitative or purposeful sampling and quantitative or random sampling is a possibility for a researcher (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011). Throughout a study, researchers are required to be flexible to the possibility of sampling changing. In having a thorough planning process, researchers can adapt to these changes if needed (Cresswell 2013).

Although it is unknown whether other sub-urban GAA communities have young people who have issues of ‘caseness’, all of the 130 research respondents in this study represented a normative sub-urban community that are members of the GAA. Burger & Neeleman (2007) define ‘caseness’ as being whether or not a person has a condition of interest (Burger & Neeleman, 2007). It referred to a person who would be, in the case of this particular study, a juvenile player that would have mental or physical health issues to the extent that they are presenting at a social or health professional service. ‘Caseness’ means they are outside of the general population. In being so, they required a professional intervention for a mental or physical health issue in their life.

In researching the observed behaviours and the self-reporting opinions and perceptions of the research sample, the researcher was cognisant that the respondents of the study were reflective of a normative sample rather those with issues or ‘caseness’ in their lives.

This was evidenced in that the entire sample attended main-stream schools and there were no reported learning difficulties, nor were there issues of attendance at psychological or other services among the population raised by parents, coaches, and parents or self-reported by the respondents themselves. To ensure this being the case at the outset of the research the researcher communicated with the coaches of all of the respondents of the study. In addition, the coaches
informed the researcher that there were no known noticeable personal difficulties among the respondents.

### 3.3 Implementing the Study

The implementation of this study was communicated within this section in four distinct areas. Firstly, the fidelity, reliability, and validity of this study were discussed. Then, as with any study of young people, ethical considerations were addressed. Following on, the study’s overall ethical considerations were outlined. The process for data collection was then described. Here the researcher detailed the order and specific happenings during the collection of data from the four GAA Clubs. Finally, the methods that were used to analyse the data which accrued from the study were described.

**Fidelity, Reliability, and Validity**

The Social Provision Scale and the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule were modified for this study, all other tools remained unchanged. When tools such as these are modified it can raise questions as to how closely the specified procedure of the research tool is being followed so the researcher does not interfere with the integrity of the findings which accrue from their usage. Prior consultation with the stakeholders of the research study are best completed before the research is carried out to establish the specific boundaries of this approach (Stephaine, 2019).

For this study, the researcher and his supervisor met and agreed on the specific modifications of the afore mentioned tools to only widen the scope for the research respondents to have adequate space to best communicate their feelings about the specific research objectives being questioned. The Social Provision Scale was modified by Cutrona and Dolan in 2002. For the purposes of this study it was further modified by the researcher in order to best reflect the element of sport participation and networks among the GAA study sites. By adding questions to the scale that were more specific to members of GAA clubs it allowed the researcher to better contextualise GAA clubs and their potential for social support provision.

The Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was modified to adapt to the sports’ training context where this study was taking place. As the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was not initially designed to specifically observe young people in a sporting capacity the
researcher added typical indications of friendship that occur throughout GAA training as sub categories to the originally designed schedule. These modifications these related to GAA specific nuances. In this way, the typical indications of friendship that occur throughout GAA training added to the initial design of the research tool and complimented its ability to observe the research respondents. In neither case was the established validity or reliability of the established tool hindered or impaired.

When using quantitative measures in research, validity is required to understand the extent to which a concept is measured as precisely as possible. This then affects the reliability of the study and the accuracy of the tools being used (Heale, & Twycross, 2015). Within this study the Indices of Observation Schedule, the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale and the Basic Empathy Scale were used to quantitatively measure the research respondents of the study. All proposed modifications to these research tools received full ethical approval and permission from their originating authors.

As the Indices of Observation Schedule has five different rating scales it allowed the researcher to pinpoint as closely as possible the accuracy of observations it is therefore a valid tool for research. The Social Network Questionnaire allowed the research respondents to rank people in their network according to their perceptions and so gave these respondents the power over their choice. The Social Provision Scale instructed its respondents to carefully think about their current relationships and their feelings towards them. In so doing, it instructed the respondents to become more aware of their answers. This verifies that this tool was a valid measure for this research study.

Finally, the Basic Empathy Scale allowed the respondents to rank their choice of what they felt was closest to ‘Strong Agree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’. They could also choose to avoid any strong commitments to agreeing or disagreeing with any of the statements in the scale and instead select the middle choice which gave them the space to have a medium answer to the specific research question. Similar to the afore mentioned Indices of Observation Schedule it provided a validity to the research questions being asked. As all of these research tools provided accurate validity,
which aids the reliability, this eradicated as much as possible any potential researcher bias (Simon, & Hoss, 2016).

**Ethical Considerations**

Once the research question and objectives of the research were finalised and the literature review was thoroughly researched, a formal written application was made to the Ethics Committee at NUI Galway which was subsequently approved. A copy of the template of this tool is available in appendix 5.

The ethics application was designed to meet the general principles of sociological studies by including an application that had integrity, respected all human rights and diversity and integrity, and was socially responsible. In so designing this type of application it maximised the due care that is required to be shown all young people who take part in all sociological research. Within the application the title of the research, the overall aims and objectives and detailed appendices which encompassed all the data required for the research to take place was included, a distressed person protocol, an information sheet to parents/guardians, a consent form to the parents/guardian of participants, an information sheet to respondents aged 12-14 (females and males) years of age who participated in the study, and an information sheet to respondents aged 15-18 years of age (females and males) were also included. As well as this a participant consent form (12-14 Years’ of Age), a participant consent form (15-18 Years’ of Age), a contact information sheet, a child protection protocol, a sample letter to respondents who participated in the study, and a sample letter to parents/guardians who participated in the study were within.

All instruments were sent for ethical approval within the application including the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provisions Scale, the Basic Empathy Scale, and the Indices Observation Checklist, together with the researcher’s curriculum vitae and a verified Garda clearance certificate. For the most part, the furnishing of this ethics application was created with the Sociological Association of Ireland’s (SAI) Ethical Guidelines in mind and as a result, the application was approved for the researcher to commence the fieldwork for the project. See specific appendices at the end of this study in each case. Soon after, information sheets and consent forms were sent by post to parents and guardians to all potential respondents. Within these documents it was clearly stated that the researcher would give a reward for participation in
the study. The researcher accessed sponsorship for a reward of a day trip to the GAA museum within Croke Park Stadium and lunch for all of those on the trip. Croke Park is the headquarters of the GAA and is where all the major finals of the GAA are held since the inception of the organisation 135 years ago. However, and very importantly, for all club members who wished to attend with adult supervision it was made clear that if they did not participate in the study then this would not prevent young people from getting the reward.

The day trip to Croke Park was a huge success. Juvenile members went from all four clubs involved in the research study. More than enough adults also came meaning there was a very safe and suitable ratio of adults to children supervising on the trip. All of the children seemed to enjoy the trip as most of them thanked the researcher as they exited the buses that brought them to Dublin and that returned to Galway later on in the evening. Further to this trip, the researcher received a couple of texts thanking him for his role in organising the trip as their children reported to them that they had enjoyed it.

Also of importance, all participants in the study were informed that they will receive a two page summary of key findings from the research in youth friendly language upon completion of the study. GAA headquarters will also receive a presentation from the author and his Supervisor and a findings brief once the research findings are known.

Was There a Lack of Informed Consent or Deception?

Informed consent for all parties that were intending to take part in the research was of utmost importance for the researcher. Not only was this a key ethical principle which underpins good sociological research but it was a conscientious and moral obligation that the researcher felt needed to be attained to properly respect the participant's rights, and opinions. From the outset all parents, guardians and potential adolescent participants were given the option to partake in the research and that if they did, their opinions would help others learn about social support, empathy, and friendship within GAA juvenile clubs. They were notified that there would be no right or wrong answers to any research questions asked and that if they partook in the study, it would be completely voluntary and that they could decide at any time to cease their involvement in the study if and when they so wished to do so. Once each parent, guardian and potential
adolescent participant read their individualised consent form before the data collection they were asked to sign them which the researcher would keep until the cessation of the research. Copies of the consent forms used with both parents and adolescents and adults are contained in the appendix below. Before any surveys took place the researcher inquired with all coaches and the individual adult leaders from each GAA Club to see if any particular participant had literacy needs that would require more indebt communication explaining the study and their role within it. No child was reported as having any difficulty such as this.

**Was There Risk of Harm to Participants?**

Researching such a young cohort of people can be harmful to them. This research design took account of the guidance for developing ethical research projects involving children by Children First. Within this framework, a key required element was for the researcher to minimise the potential risk to each participant. This was planned for by risk designing and researching by being aware of any potential for physical, psychological or social harm arising from the research. By avoiding research sensitive topics, evaluating potential discomforts for the children involved and by ensuring measures were in place to mitigate potential harm the researcher took maximum precaution to avoid any harm.

As the researcher included a distressed persons protocol within the framework of the research design all participants were immediately asked whether they wanted to continue with the research or withdraw from it at different times, if they felt safe during the research, if they wanted the help of a general practitioner, and they were given sufficient time to answer questions as they arose in the surveys and interviews to ensure the maximum amount of care was given throughout the research. All of these precautions worked and none of the research participants were harmed in any way.

**Was There an Invasion of Privacy?**

Adhering to the strict guidelines of both the Sociological Association of Ireland’s Ethical Guidelines (Guidelines, & Ireland, 2019) and Children First (First, 2019) all completed surveys were confidentially kept by the researcher within the child and family research centre in the National University of Ireland, Galway once the research had taken place. These strict guidelines
demand a researcher to have professional competency, integrity, a respect for the human rights of the respondents and to be socially responsible. This was adhered throughout the research. Examples are that throughout the interviewing process, all participants were given the choice to use pseudonyms to keep their identity private. As a result, no research participants have been identified in this thesis and every attempt has been completed to ensure that the individual feedback of young people or their families are not identifiable to any reader of the research.

When the observational part of the research was carried out the researcher was careful not to look at children that were not specifically being observed. Instead, he was only intent on observing the children that he was intent on observing and this was done for 30 minutes observational period.

**Pilot Study**

Before commencing the fieldwork proper within the four GAA Clubs, it was important to test the instruments with a sample of respondents in case there would be any misunderstanding when filling out either the surveys or throughout interviewing. With the quantitative and the qualitative parts of the study in mind, a pilot study was completed with six young people from another GAA club outside of study.

As the surveys were intended to be completed by respondents varying from ages 11 to 18 years of age, two younger adolescents were chosen to fill out the surveys along with two older adolescents. Of the younger two, one was female and the other was male. An older female and male filled out all of the surveys also. These four young people acted as the pilot study for the quantitative fieldwork.

As there was going to be considerably less young people interviewed than those that were partaking in the survey proper, only two young people did practice interviews with the researcher before the proper interviews took place. Here, two males obliged the researcher and agreed to partake in these practice interviews. One male was thirteen years old and the other one was seventeen years of age.
As a result of the pilot study, none of the four young people reported any problems or difficulties with filling out all of the three surveys. Regarding the interviews, neither of the two males had difficulty in answering questions for the practice interviews and reported afterwards that they felt comfortable speaking with the researcher. Learning this made the researcher more confident when he began the fieldwork proper soon after this pilot study.

**Completing the Fieldwork**

The fieldwork was completed in the following ways. Firstly, the administration and the collection of data was addressed before the specifics regarding the total sample and the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data are then concentrated on.

**Administration and Data Collection**

All three instruments; the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale and the Basic Empathy Scale (n=130) were administered to and completed on the same day with youth respondents. Some days the author used these surveys with single respondents and other days with groups of respondents. However, there were no more than four respondents in each of these groups. This all depended upon the availability of young people at any given time.

The first collection of data started at the end of May 2018. The last data was collected by the end of October of that year. When the surveys were being given out to individual respondents the researcher read out the main terms by way of explaining how to complete each survey. For many this was the first time they heard of the term ‘empathy’. The researcher also answered any questions that respondents had at this stage. There were some delays in collecting data due to team training being the respondents’ primary reason for being at their GAA Club during the data collection times. The 130 young people that participated in the research arose from a possible total sample of 177 research respondents from all four GAA Clubs. This represented a 74% response rate of individuals who actively consented to partake in the study. Of the 26% that did not reply with the prepaid self-addressed envelope, almost all of the potential sample were satisfied with the study’s aims and objectives and several messages from parents were also received by the researcher explaining their child’s/children’s unavailability to partake in the research. Their main reasons for being unavailable were understandable and were due to their
child partaking in the Junior or Leaving Certificate examinations, attending the Gaeltacht or because they were on a family holiday. Other than those three understandable reasons to avoid partaking in the fieldwork (from all the adults and young people approached to take part in the research), only one parent and their child seemed dissatisfied with the study’s aims and objectives and were unwilling to partake in the research. As this was the only lack of well wishing towards the study it proved that there was such a swell of goodwill towards the researcher from all four GAA Clubs.

The implementation of the fieldwork took place in the following way:

1. **Early April, 2018:** Each young person that was approached to take part in the research was sent a self-addressed envelope with a prepaid stamp on it together with letters to of invitation, information sheets for them, letters for their parents/guardians and, information sheets for their parents and consents for themselves and their parents to fill out before they could partake in the research.

2. **Mid May, 2018:** An information session was then hosted for all juveniles and their parents in both Club houses to avoid potential feelings of exclusion experienced by other respondents. Here, parents were provided with an outline of the study, had their questions answered and negotiated suitable dates and times to proceed with the research questionnaires.

3. **End May, 2018:** Letters returned consenting to participate from both parent/guardians and the young person.

4. **Start of May - End June, 2018:** Young people filled out the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale (SPS) and the Basic Empathy Scale (n=130).

5. **Summer, 2018:** Observations of an even amount of research participants in each of the four GAA clubs (n=64).

6. **October, 2018:** Semi-Structured Interviews of 20 randomly selected from the 130 young people from all four GAA Clubs who filled out the surveys earlier in the year.
Total Sample

As shown in figure 3.4 below, a total of 130 people participated in this research study. Of the 130 that completed the surveys, there were 20 young people (spread across gender age and club sources were) chosen at random to partake in semi-structured interviews. There were also 64 individualised observations completed throughout the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Research Participants:</th>
<th>Survey: (Comprising of the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale and the Basic Empathy Scale)</th>
<th>Observations: (the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule created by Tony Atwood, 1999)</th>
<th>Interviews: (Semi-Structured)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130 (n=130)</td>
<td>130 (n=130)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the Data

The Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale (SPS), the Basic Empathy Scale, and the Friendship Observations Schedule comprised the quantitative data gathered from all of the research respondents. All three sources were then analysed using the software packages of SPSS. The researcher did two private one to one lessons with an experienced tutor who had researched using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software previously. Once the SPSS produced its statistical information from the surveys and the observations, the outcome was then added to the first round of coding within another software package of Nvivo. Coding is how a researcher defines what the data that they are analysing is about. Nvivo was then used to code the qualitative interviews.

Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package. It allows for highly rich text-based along with other more complex information to be put through an in-depth rigor of analysis by a researcher. When large volumes of data are being analysed using this package, it allows for coding to take place. The coding enables the researcher to sort through various levels of analysis.
NVivo has a framework matrix. This framework is designed in a grid like manner that enables the skilled user to sort specific source materials into themes and cases. Manageable quantities of data are then produced from larger volumes of material arising from the respondents’ interviews (QDA Training, 2020). By a researcher adopting this framework they are not only organising the material into smaller sets but are also making themselves more familiar with the data as they do so.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twenty respondents during this study with NVivo software being used to analyse the data once the interviews took place. The researcher did three private, half day one to one tutorials and training sessions with the UK and Ireland’s leading NVivo trainer in preparation for the research study. This enabled him to become proficient in the use of this specialist qualitative software. NVivo was used to code the interviews. This took place over a one month period in early 2019 due to the fact that each interview was between 22 and 30 minutes in duration. Three rounds of coding took place. The outcome of the three rounds of coding meant that certain themes emerged from the data. The first two themes that emerged were identical to the first two topics that were identified as objectives of the research study. These were ‘friendship’ and ‘empathy’. Both ‘friendship’ and ‘empathy’ then acted as theme 1 and theme 2 of the study respectfully. The third theme that emerged from the coding was that of ‘social support’ which co-ordinated with the third objective of the study.

From the point of view of analysing data gathered in the interviews, importantly the researcher was cognisant that respondents may communicate things differently or ineffectively as they may have already formed a judgment in their minds of the researcher or the research project’s aims. They may have been hesitant to communicate their private judgment due to issues such as social desirability and self-presentation. So importantly interviews were not the sole source of data leading to results. With that in mind, it was not surprising that both ‘friendship’ and ‘empathy’ emerged from the first round of coding as the respondents had previously filled out the The Social Provision Scale (where ‘friends’ was mentioned) and The Basic Empathy Scale.

When analysing the data, the author used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves a researcher discovering patterns in the interview data (Mortensen, D.H; 2020). Three rounds of coding took place in the following structure:
1. After firstly gathering the data and realising the quantity, range, and nature of it, the researcher then began to interpret it using the coding process. He began doing this by bringing the material into NVivo.

2. Then, he created nodes through coding in the detail view of NVivo. He did this by making nodes for selected words using the respondents’ data. This was completed by selecting the specific word or phrase to name the node.

3. Further coding analysis of the data allowed the researcher to recognise and pick out more phrases and keywords that best described both the initial key feelings and expressions that he discovered. This then began to provide him with trusted guiding points that he soon intended to categorise the information by.

4. The researcher then consulted with his supervisor to clarify that his interpretation of the data was being properly perceived. Following this meeting, a deeper understanding of the researcher’s overall interpretations then came to light. Within his mind, the researcher then had a new set of questions to seek answers to, from within the data.

5. After taking a break from the data for a few days he neglected to return to the Nvivo software straight away and instead used practical measures such as the printing out of the resultant data and using a variety of coloured markers to highlight the key phrases and words used in the study that best shaped the data. He did this to correctly focus his analytical thinking on the research at hand. As he had used this technique when studying for his Masters Degree and found it to be very successful (as he aided him in clarifying his objectives in what, and how to analyse his data) he repeated this technique at this stage also. This served to add to his interpretation after initially using the Nvivo software.

6. He then returned to using the Nvivo software and combined and grouped his nodes into related categories. This helped him to assign themes to the data. At this stage it was clear to the researcher that for the first objective there were four themes coming to the fore. For the second objective there was only three themes that stood out and the third objective showed a further four themes for the findings to be laid out under.
Afterwards, he doubled checked the themes and reported them to his supervisor who compared them with the initial data findings.

All of these steps assured the researcher discovered patterns in the data that was truly reflective of the respondents’ feedback.

The outcome of the three rounds of coding meant that certain themes emerged from the data. The first two themes that emerged were ‘friendship’ and ‘empathy’. Both ‘friendship’ and ‘empathy’ then acted as theme 1 and theme 2 of the study respectfully.

Participant observation was used when undertaking the research. Leon Festinger famously used this type of observation in the 1950s when observing a religious cult who felt the end of the world was coming (McLeod, 2015). This method of observation allows for the researcher to interact with the willing participant during everyday life. Emerging from anthropology and sociology it gradually spread to other fields. It requires trust for the researcher and an artful way of observing (Jorgensen, 2015). As the researcher was there to carry out research, he was nonetheless, also welcome there as a coach in all clubs as one of his professional skills includes coaching and he has coached children and young people from these communities in the past also.

As the researcher had to comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation his permission to study respondents was limited to those who assented to participate and stay with the study thus, he was unable to compare respondents with non-respondents of the study. This position was upheld by all the committees of the four GAA Clubs.

**3.4 Limitations of Study**

Following the design and implementation of a specific research methodology for this study, it is important at this stage to highlight any limitations experienced by the study and suggest ways to overcome them, as described below.
1. **A point in Time Study:**

Many studies which contain this (deliberately) limited amount of participants are carried out over two tracking points in time using the same research methods on both occasions. Although the author would have liked to carry out a more comprehensive two time series study of all participants, due to up to four different locations for training and the variety of evenings that the training was on, it was not possible for the researcher to carry out a second time to track each respondent later in the year.

2. **Urban GAA Clubs**

The researcher was fortunate to have carried out this research in a very diverse and highly populated area of Galway City. In 2009 it was reported that there were 33 different nationalities living in this area and that a third of the population was non–national (News, 2009). Seven years later this had grown to 47% of the population having not been born in Ireland (Corrigan, 2016).

However, in many texts, including that of the GAA main descriptions of its association, it is said that the majority of GAA Clubs reside in rural areas and in parishes and towns all around Ireland (Home, 2019). With this in mind, the four clubs who partook in this study were located in suburban areas of Galway city and were not fully representative of the typical rural Irish landscape. With that being said, many of the parents, schools and the general areas where all of these clubs were located would have been considered rural in the not too distant past which would have provided a bedrock of traditionalist rural GAA community only several years before urban sprawl engulfed the eastern side of Galway city during the Celtic Tiger years, some 15 years previously (FitzGerald, Wijeratne, & Walsh, 2016). As a result, this study was limited as it did not seek to gain a rural perspective.
3. Single Season Study

Although the author would like to study this cohort of young people over a longer period, it was impossible at the time of this study to carry it out in this way. This study began in April and ended in late October, 2018 as the GAA adjusted the season to allow for the inter-county games to be played throughout the calendar year.

4. Perceived Social Support

Although this study concentrated on the perceived social support of adolescents with four Galway GAA Clubs, no data was gathered from the potential people that were mentioned as giving them this support throughout their young lives. These people included coaches, teachers, parents, relatives, and outside friends. Other potentially socially supportive agents such as schools and other extracurricular activities were not researched so it is unsure whether the perception of those researched and the actual received social support that they received are equally quantifiable to the researcher. This study only covered what was reported by young people as their perception of support friendship and empathy rather than it being received. However, due to the fact that they perceived this support it is still key and is as important in many respects as received support, as Cutrona stresses that “social support is in the eye of the beholder” (Devaney, 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodology that was developed, designed and applied with regard to perceptions of friendship, empathy, and social support networks among juvenile members of four Galway city GAA Clubs. The rationale, aims, and objectives of the study were identified, as was the overall structure of the research study as a whole. A positivist and interpretive paradigm were considered as overarching theoretical positions and the specific research design was explained in detail with these traditions in mind. Implementation of the study, together with the ethical concerns and the methods of analysis were outlined before the limitations of the study were considered.
Chapter 4: Context

Introduction:
This chapter provides a descriptive context for the study. It is divided into two sections. **Section 4.1** examines the host sporting organisation for this study, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) as the largest amateur sporting association in Ireland and its relationships with regard to friendship, empathy, and the expressed social attitude towards diversity and inclusion. **Section 4.2** outlines the study’s geographical area. Here, the locality of this study is set in context whilst also providing a detailed description of the local educational providers, its community context, the social support systems within the local environment as well as the GAA Clubs, that the youth respondents of this study are members of.

4.1 The History of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)

This section begins with a brief introduction to the GAA. This is followed by contextualising friendship and empathy within the GAA. A comparison with other major Irish sporting team organisations on friendship is then addressed, followed by an investigation of the social policy towards diversity and inclusion within GAA, Clubs before the recently formed healthy clubs project is discussed.

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was formed in November 1884. On the first day of that month, two men by the name of Michael Davitt and Maurice Davin met with others in Hayes Hotel in county Tipperary to create the GAA. In an opening speech to address those who turned out for this initial meeting of the association, Cusack readout sixty letters of support from the Land League leader, Michael Davitt. Later, Davitt along with Charles Stuart Parnell, who was the nationalist leader and the archbishop of Cashel Thomas Croke, would be the patrons of the new association. During that period, Ireland was going through a highly politically charged time. It was a time when there was a battle for land between landlords and their tenants.

Some months later, on the 8th of July 1885, the GAA declared that it was not a political organisation, but instead a preserver and cultivator of national pastimes and that it was wide enough for all Irish of all creeds and classes who did not seek the support of any other
organisation outside their own. Since 1884, then, it has focused on social, political, economic and cultural life in Ireland (Cronin 2017). Within 6 months of this meeting, new GAA clubs began to be formed all around the island of Ireland although at that time it was only the aristocracy and gentry who were allowed to join athletics clubs. In contrast, the GAA was open for the general Irish populous. At present, there are over 2,200 sports playing GAA Clubs across Ireland and around 1.5 million people go to county games each year (GAA 2019).

**Friendship in the GAA**

The GAA appreciate neighbours of each other who partake in their local clubs. Their aim is to build relationships that are strong in order to foster supportive communities (Park 2019). Over the coming years, the GAA is planning to get Irish primary school children more active than is the current situation. In response to the fact that 1 in 9 Irish children are now classified as overweight and that 18% of primary school children get less than an hour moderate exercise daily, the GAA is putting together a GAA 5 Star Centre plan (Enovation, 2018).

Centered around young people’s capacity for hitting, kicking and catching balls, the GAA has developed the new plan to get Irish children fit in response to their way of developing better activity and inclusion. Three thousand primary schools will have three hundred coaches involved in the initiative by 2022. The director of games, at the GAA Pat Daly, stated that the plan was to get the children having fun, fairness, and friendship (Sheahan, 2018). The programme was piloted in Kilinure N.S and Lisnagry N.S in Limerick in 2017. After 6 weeks of the programme a 7.3% increase in the fundamental movement was reported. By 2022, the GAA aims to have the children involved in the programme and have completed a staggering 39 million hours of moderate to vigorous exercise in 90% of all primary schools across Ireland (Report, 2017).

The GAA prides itself on the inclusion of all diversities of society (Connacht, 2019). According to a past and present, GAA player participating in the GAA is about inclusion and respect. Seán Óg O’Halpian who won All-Senior All Ireland medals with Cork and played in the early 2000s on the Cork senior football team recalls how after being born in Australia and with a Fijian
mother he moved to Cork and there he needed to participate in the games to integrate with Irish peers when he said:

“I figured out as well that if I wanted to hang around with the lads I was friends with I’d have to play hurling because they did.”

- Seán Óg O’Halpian Former Cork dual player in (Crowe, 2018).

Current Wexford hurling star Lee Chin has an Asian heritage but was born in Ireland. He feels that being born in Ireland allowed him to be accepted easily in spite of his different appearance to most boys of his age (Crowe, 2018).

Dublin City University (DCU) boasts some good current inter-county GAA players. They feel that the University is great to put aside bitter sporting rivalries and to become friends with one another instead. Two players from opposing teams, Mayo and Dublin, have two of their players living with one another in college such is the closeness of their friendship. Mayo’s Paddy Durkan and Dublin’s Eoghan O’Donnell feel that when players are committed and avoid socialising at night time it is easy to just hang around in the same house as they have the mutual motivation to avoid late nights out (Culhane, 2018).

**Empathy in the GAA**

Regarding active members of their association, the GAA have no official policy on empathy or respect other than the afore mentioned ‘Give Respect Get Respect’ code of behaviour (in Chapter 3). As a result of discovering this, the author researched for other aspects of empathy such as its inclusive nature within the GAA as inclusion can impact on empathy (Shanyi, 2016). Following the All-Ireland hurling final in 2019, RTÉ Sunday Game analyst and former Waterford county hurling team manager Derek McGrath noted that his chosen moment of the year was seeing Leitrim hurler and Kurdish-Iranian refugee winning a divisional All-Ireland medal (Sports Reporter, 2019). Jeffrey Lynskey a professional teacher and the Galway minor hurling winning manager of 2015, 2017 and 2018 and the current Galway under 20 hurling manager, wrote a document for the GAA’s learning network after he guided his team to an All-Ireland victory in
2015. In his writing, Lynskey outlined the values of performance being; trust, honestly, teamship, control, respect, spirit, heart, fight, and empathy (Lynskey, 2016).

Commenting on how the GAA has continually disrupted the playing fixtures calendar, former Laois county footballer said that fixtures schedule was a shambles and that the 2018 Super 8’s restructuring of the county football All-Ireland was not conducive to the majority of players in the GAA. More notably though, he felt that the then GAA president, Aogán Ó Fearghail, was showing a lack of empathy in hearing the arguments of the disgruntled complainers who were annoyed when the GAA allowed some of their live games to be exclusive to a paid subscription of Sky television when usually these games would be free view on RTÉ (Parkinson, 2018). His use of the word ‘empathy’ is of particular interest to this study.

**Friendship in Other Major Irish Sporting Team Organisations**

The issue of ‘friendship’ has been specifically addressed in other major Irish sporting team associations too. In rugby, the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) has a friendship trust. The union has a charitable trust set up to help those severely injured rugby players who may have had accidents in their life as well as through sport. Established in 1978, the trust has already aided 34 seriously injured players in their medical and nursing needs. Financial support is often required for these injured parties and the trust has provided approximately €200,000 to these players over the years (Charitable, 2019). For young people and children, the IRFU has devised ‘Leprechaun Rugby’ which is a modified game of rugby to aid children with a noncontact and softer game for both females and male children (Rugby, 2018).

In soccer, the Football Association of Ireland had the 75th anniversary of the Dublin District Schoolboys' League with the best of European clubs celebrating in style in a friendly manner in May of 2018. Here some of the most prominent European clubs, including Germany’s Bayern Munich (the eventual victors in the competition), celebrated the anniversary in a volunteer-led celebration of inclusive football friendship (Ireland, 2018). Another novel football tournament
was organised in 2017 to celebrate inclusive sporting friendship with those that needed it most. It arose from the Chinese people of Ireland who wanted to show their solidarity with the Syrian refugees who were fleeing their homeland due to war. As a result, a friendly football game was organised. The idea was inspired by their international soccer teams who had met a few months earlier in a world cup qualifier. After viewing the international game, the Chinese people began to respect the Syrians refugees who were going through this war in their own country (Pollak, 2017). The game, which was in Ireland, was seen as being ‘unprecedented’ (Heneghan, 2016). This mark of solidarity was made to try to build peace and friendship among immigrants in Ireland. English Premier League team, Liverpool (along with Manchester United) is the most supported professional soccer team in Ireland (The Irish Times, 2017). Their manager Jurgen Klopp stated that his team was successful in winning the European Champions League (in 2019) partly because of the competitive friendship that was within the team and the constant need to improve together (Blood Red Podcast, 2019).

**Diversity and Inclusion within GAA Clubs**

Ballyhaunis in County Mayo is said to be Ireland`s most ethnically diverse town (Sheridan, 2014). In the past few years, it has opened its doors to immigrant children and their parents from countries as far away as Eastern Europe, Syria, and Pakistan. Many of these people live in direct provision within the Mayo town.

Roughly 250 asylum seekers live in the Nuns’ old convent in Ballyhaunis and with the town giving refuge to 42 % of its residents who are foreign nationals, it means that the local primary school now educates most of its children who simply do not have any English language. The local GAA Club in Ballyhaunis hosted an integration day to try and break down the barriers that they felt exist in many ghettos and towns around Ireland (Butler, 2015). Local man, Darran Conlon, has tried to integrate the children from direct provision into their GAA Club to counteract the loss of native players that his GAA Club has had (O’ Brien, 2017).

From 2002 to 2008 the number of non-nationals in Ireland rose from 274,000 to 465,000. As a result, in 2009, the GAA developed an inclusive and integrative strategy to reflect these changing
demographics. The strategy’s specific targets were agreed upon by the leadership of the GAA, Camogie, Ladies Football, Rounders, and Handball (President, 2009). With this in mind, Ballyhaunis GAA Club is doing what the GAA expects them to do. According to the GAA, inclusion means that people ought to have a sense of belonging and have comfort in things that they value whereas diversity is having awareness and a celebration of different kinds of people. Integration enhances a Club’s development, promotes wellness and equality and it brings a holistic approach to the future of clubs whilst injecting a sense of ‘family’ within the association (Connacht, 2019). A sense of ‘family’ can also bring about positive feelings that can lead to sporting victories also. Immediately after the 2019 All-Ireland, the winning hurling manager Liam Sheedy noted that sport was all about the support that family gives to its participants and managements (Clarke, H. 2019).

The GAA Healthy Clubs Project

The GAA Healthy Clubs scheme came into existence in mainstream GAA Clubs in 2017. A year before that, a pilot scheme of 18 clubs in the country took part in phase 1 of the project. Twelve focus groups were carried out at the provincial level at working group meetings and as a result of this, the initial phase began (Lane, 2018). As of 2017, all GAA Clubs in the country must have a Healthy Clubs Officer. Initially, the role was entitled to the Health and Well-Being Officer, but this was altered in 2018. The role within clubs was put into place to help support the holistic health of clubs’ members' health and wellbeing by signposting and communicating available support for physical, social, emotional, and psychological health. The project aims to enhance the players, officers, coaches, parents, supporters, of each GAA Club’s local community (Training, 2018).
4.2 Towards a Holistic Context

This section deals with the geographical areas of the study. As there are four GAA clubs within this study, there are a large number of geographical areas addressed here within Galway City. However, these areas are where most of the children and young people that are involved in this study reside in. Within this section there is also a detailed description of the formal education that includes the local primary and post-primary schools. The local community context and its social support systems are also discussed. All of these entities are brought together hereunder in a holistic context under the two main GAA catchment areas of Castlegar and St. James’.

Galway City

Known for its energy, Galway City is the capital City of the west of Ireland’s province of Connacht. It has a total of 79,934 residents (Central Statistics Office, 2016). A quarter of the residents of the City are students with major colleges of the National University of Ireland, Galway and the Galway/ Mayo Institute of Technology being central to its success.

Its economy is backboned by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), medical device, and retail sectors. Other strong players within the City are the manufacturing industry, tourism, education, healthcare, cultural, construction, and financial services and professional, and business sectors also.

Of the ICT industry’s five big companies four of them namely IBM, SAP, Oracle, and Cisco, are located in Galway. The City’s households have a 72.8% broadband connectivity in comparison to the national average of almost ten per cent less.

American medical devise manufacturing companies Boston Scientific and Medtronic are the largest employers within the medical device industry in Galway City which employees one third of all Irish medical device employees. These companies are supported by the afore mentioned local third level colleges as well as other enterprise organisations.

The retail sector of the City’s main hub is situated in Eyre Square. There, up to 200,000 weekly visitors shop in over 60 shops and stores. The City’s social and health services are considered to
be above the national average. The same applies for Galway`s financial and construction area of support (Galway Chamber, 2019).

In 2016 Galway was awarded the European Capital of Culture. As a fifth of its population come from diverse countries such as Germany, Poland, Nigeria Pakistan, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, India and China, and other states around the world, the Capital of Culture programme aims to raise awareness for the need for inclusion for all types of cultures living in Galway (Galway 2020, 2019).

Many of the young members of the four GAA Clubs focused on within this study live in the Doughiska, Roscam, and Ardaun (DRA) areas of Galway City. The DRA has been transformed in recent years from a rural landscape to a highly populated sub-urban area made up of multicultural and heterogeneous locality. Located five kilometres on the east side of the City, the area has gone through rapid economic alteration from 2008 up until the time of the study (King, 2014).

There are shared services and resources between many of the areas on the east side of Galway City not least Doughiska, Roscam, and Ardaun (DRA). With the former having over 4,000 in its population (FitzGerald, Diamond, Wijeratne, & Walsh, 2016) and the latter having up to 2,700 new homes to be constructed in the coming years (Cunninghman, 2017) these neighbouring areas are pivotal to this study. Other older areas on this side of the City which has thousands of people are Mervue, Renmore, Castlegar, Merlin Park, Menlo, and Briarhill. They are also linked to DRA and to the respondents of this study.

These shared services will be brought to light when firstly; the Doughiska, Roscam, and Ardaun (DRA) Community Profile and Needs Analysis will be examined, before the Doughiska Neighbourhood Report Findings from the 3-Cities Project is brought to light. Then, the Ardaun, Roscam, and Doughiska (ARD) Family Resource Centre is explained followed by the importance of the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force within the locality of the study. Lastly, the overarching Merlin Woods Sports Club idea is examined before finally, another youth activity in the DRA is addressed.
The Parish and Communities of Castlegar

The four GAA Clubs within this study are Castlegar Hurling Club, Castlegar Camogie Club, St. James’ GAA Club and St. James’ Ladies Gaelic Football Club. From these four Clubs, both the Castlegar Hurling Club and the Castlegar Camogie Club have a close allegiance with the great area of Castlegar. Castlegar is a townland, village, and parish on the east side of Galway City. It is called after a castle that was built in the area. Historically, the parish of Castlegar contained the neighbouring areas of Mervue, Renmore, Castlegar, Merlin Park, Menlo, and Briarhill. In more recent decades, some of these areas formed their own parishes but as the GAA Club’s successes dates back to the early 1900s many of the local youth have the option of playing with the club (Super User, 2019).
Castlegar GAA Clubs

As Galway’s most successful hurling club, the club has won many underage and senior title as well as honours in camogie, the club has a coaches of both juveniles from 3 years of age right up to mature adults.

The club has a clubhouse that includes dressing rooms, a gymnasium, a shop, three indoor squash courts, a meeting room, and a multipurpose hall. It also has two full-size hurling pitches as well as a new indoor GAA arena that has only become operational in 2019. In comparison to Renmore, Mervue, and Ballybane the facilities in Castlegar GAA are superior as their clubhouse is at least twice as big as the other clubhouses and they have an indoor GAA arena that the other clubs do not have. The club attempts to educate its youth into having a healthy lifestyle as there were adolescent Well-being Summer camps and talks for the young girls and boys put on in the past couple of years (NCSE, 2019).

Mervue

One of the older suburbs on the east side of Galway City, Mervue has many housing estates. Mervue parish originated out of the old Castlegar parish before 1971. Showing the links between the area off Mervue and the Castlegar area not just socially and historically, but this clarifies how geographically adjoined the two parishes are even up the present day. Mervue parish as it stands today became a modern urban parish in 1971 following the development of the Mervue housing estates which opened in 1954 (Church, 2019).

Notable historical landmarks are the Eircom building which was the home of the Telecom Éireann building up until 2000. It also has a more classical building in the Royal Tara Visitor Centre. The centre is only minutes from the City Centre and is the country’s leading manufacturer of exclusive hand painted pieces, tableware, and China and cold cast giftware selling nationally and internationally (Guide, 2018).
Renmore

The area’ Renmore’ means a ‘large point of land’. The book Hardiman’s History of Galway referred to 1643 as the year when Galway City was threatened with invasion. As a result, batteries were erected. One of these batteries was in ‘Rintinnane’ on the west side of the City and the other was in ‘Rinmore’ on the east side. As the area became inhabited by people there was evidence of ‘Fulachta Fiadh’ or ancient cooking sites on the shores of Lough Atalia which is on the waterside of Renmore. This dates back as far as the Bronze and Iron Ages.

By the 11th century, Renmore boasted a Norman Tower and in more recent times the Merlin Park Hospital was erected nearby. Supposed to be the first location of settlement in Renmore was Ballyloughane village with the present-day house dating back to the 18th century still standing. During those times the main occupations were fishing, farming, and seaweed harvesting. Renmore House was occupied by the Wilson Lynch family and dates back to the early 1800s. Other such areas of note with such historical background are that of Murrough House which was built by the Blake tribe of Galway in the 1850s and Rosshill House owned by the Davenports and built twenty or so years earlier than Murrough House.

Renmore’s heartland had a barracks called Dun Úi Mhaoiliosa built in the 1870s. It was home to An Cead Cath also known as the First Battalion. In the year of 1813, there were said to be 35 houses in Renmore but by the 1960s many more estate houses began to be built. Other notable buildings in earlier years in Renmore were the Calvary Hospital which was built in 1953 (Hardiman, 1820).

Castlegar

The parish of Castlegar is located on the east side of Galway City. Initially, the parish was much bigger than the present day’s size but with subsequent enlargements of other suburban areas on the east side of the city together with a rise in population and industry on that side of the city, the parish was adapted into an overall smaller size in the 1970s. Known for its hurling exploits the parish is the most successful senior hurling area in the county of Galway and hosted the first All-Ireland Senior Champions arising out of the whole province of Connacht in 1980. The ladies of
the parish complimented this victory when they vectored in the 2012 All-Intermediate Club Camogie final.

Historical folklore deemed that the local GAA Club had a team before the 1880s but with the GAA not being in operation until four years later there does not seem to a written record of this local claim. The parish also has the famous Ballybrit racecourse in its vicinity. This racecourse is world-renowned and hosts several racing festivals each year with the Summer festival being broadcast live on RTÉ television annually. The parish includes areas such as Brierhill, Coolough, Two-Mile Ditch, Brookey, Killeen, and old Ballinfoyle (NCSE, 2019).

**Merlin Park Woods**

The Merlin Park woods are on the southern boundary of the Galway to Dublin road. It houses a lot of biodiversity of plant and animal life, as do other parts of Galway City. The Merlin Park Hospital which was formally a tuberculosis sanatorium in the 1950s until the decline of the disease in the early 1970s.

Located around the land folio of both Merlin Park Woods and the hospital it is built on the donated land from the Waithman estate which was built by Charles Blake during the first decade of the 19th century. The Waithman family inherited the land in 1876 after it had bought by Henry Hodgson in 1852. Later in 1945, the family sold their house and estate to the state in all the estate consists of 340 acres (Browne, 2009).

**Schools within the Castlegar GAA Catchment Area**

There are eight primary schools in both the parish of Castlegar and the general catchment area that the Club feeds from. There is one main post primary school in the area that is within one kilometer of the Castlegar GAA grounds. Castlegar School, Scoil Bhride Menlo National School, Mervue Boys’ National School, Mervue Girls’ National School, Scoil Dara Renmore, Scoil Chaitríona Junior and Senior Schools, and Merlin Woods Primary School make up the eight local primary schools. Merlin College is the name of the local post primary school.
Castlegar School

As a Catholic school that is ever welcoming to children of all faith and backgrounds, Castlegar National School is located in the heart of Castlegar 3km from the Tuam road exit only 10 minutes from Galway City Centre. With a skilled staff that focus on implementing literacy and numeracy areas of the primary school curriculum, it also has a parents’ association and a student council.

The student council consists of seven students who are made up of the chair and deputy chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer, and a communications officer. The council has regular meetings that communicate and listen to the needs of the student body within the school and act as a go-between with the school principal and the school’s students. They are concerned with decision making, providing health and safety information to their fellow pupils and act as a linkage with the school and home (NS, C. 2018).

Scoil Bhríde Menlo National School

Located 5km from Eyre Square in Galway City Scoil Bhríde, Menlo opened it’s existing building only 5 years ago in 2014. The building is a two-story one with a full-size sports hall to the rear along with a grass pitch outside to cater for the sporting needs of the children. Although situated in Gaeltacht part of old Castlegar and having a teaching staff that is fluent in Gaeilge they allow the children to speak English during the learning of that subject each day. As the only Irish medium school within the Gaeltacht boundary of Galway City, it has extra teachers as a result.

Historically, the school has a long history as the old building was opened in 1862 and to this day is very proud of its Gaeltacht heritage. They cite local man Seanchas Thomáis Laighéis who tells of Thomas in 1977 living in Menlo where he never spoke any English with his wife or the people of the community. Other publications about the local area that the school is satisfied about is that of Stiofán Ö Conghaile who quoted his writing refereeing to the local whiskey in saying:
‘I remember once talking to a grand Catholic teacher of one of these areas and he told me that not infrequently did children come to school and fell on the floor as a result of poteen.’

-(Bhríde 2018)

**Mervue Boys’ National School**

St Michael’s Boys’ National School opened its doors in 1969. Located in the heart of Mervue just across the road from the Catholic church in the parish and just 3km from the Galway City centre it educates boys who are in second as far as the sixth class in primary school. With over 150 pupils and seventeen teachers, the boys are given ample space to enjoy the school campus as it surrounded by a wealth of green areas.

The school aims to continually develop a positive environment in which its pupils will learn. With an emphasis on having a disruption-free school setting the school prides itself on being well ordered, highly disciplined and seeks a high level of parental, teachers and pupil cooperation to benefit all in their school community. The high order level of good order is maintained in the school through the teachers retaining their right to correct any child who misbehaves (St.Michael’s, 2018).

**Mervue Girls’ National School**

Holy Trinity National School in Mervue is the sister school to St. Michael’s Boys’ National School in Mervue. Both schools are on the same campus but have two different individual principals.

Opened in 1969, the school is co-educational up until first class. At that stage, the boys join St, Michael’s National School and the girls continue within their surrounds to be educated within an all-girl environment. Acceptance, care, and love are integral parts of the school belief. Within the school, the children are developed by the staff caring for them intellectually as well as culturally, socially, spiritually, physically and creatively. By the end of the sixth class, Holy Trinity aims to
have educated well-rounded children who are self-confident, responsible, independently minded, well balanced and happy in their lives. Situated on four acres of the ground the school has plenty of trees, greenery, and flowers for their pupils' outdoor education. Along with having a multisensory room it also has its yoga and mindfulness room for the well-being of its student body (Trinity, 2018).

**Scoil Dara Renmore**

Scoil Dara is the only Gaelscoil in the Renmore area. Originally located immediately off the Dublin road only 2km from the City Centre, the school moved to a purpose-built school building in 2013 which was officially opened by the president of Ireland Michael D. Higgins. The school building is now located just off the main Dublin road immediately beside the new Galway police barracks and across from the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) which is always the second most notable third-level educational institution.

Having children of both genders from junior infants right up to sixth class within its surrounds the school also has a preschool that is operational for 40 children as well as an after school service within the school boundary (Association, 2018).

**Scoil Chaitríona Junior School**

The present parish as it is known now in Renmore was established in 1971 and Scoil Chaitríona Junior School opened its school doors two years later in 1973 to its school of 207 pupils. At that time, the school had a principal and five other teachers educating the new children.

The school employs an inclusive vision for all of its children that are run within a caring and secure environment to best foster the active participation of happy, confident children who have good self-worth. With wonder, awe and appreciation as its bedrock the school staff attempt to nurture their children in a respectful space that is Catholic in its patronage yet tolerates other children’s’ beliefs and aims to be empathetic to all.
The school guides its pupils by employing six golden rules that stipulates gentleness, kindness, a hard work ethic, honesty respect for one another’s property and a good capability to listen (School, R.J. 2018).

**Scoil Chaitríona Senior School**

Opening in the same year as the Junior School the senior school of Scoil Chaitrióna did not move into its building until 1975 and it spent its first couple years of existence housed in the same building as it’s Junior School. To this day both schools are on the same campus and share outdoor yard space but have different principals for each school. The school was built before the church, which resides immediately outside the school campus, the Senior School allowed it’s hall to be used for parish masses originally. Renmore Senior School`s motto is Mol an Óige meaning to ‘Praise the Youth’ and with this, in mind, it attempts to take care of all of it girls and boys physical, intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual needs. In doing so it is supported by its school staff and prides itself in having good home school inks and community integration.

Similarly to Brierhill National School, it has its student council. Scoil Dara National School who bring a new idea, teacher communication, support to younger pupils and a different point of view to the overall running of the school. Pupils who are on the council are also involved in the school’s involvement in planning and decision making (School, 2018).

**Merlin Woods Primary School**

Merlin Woods Primary School is the feeder school for Merlin College and is located beside their main building on the Doughiska road. The school which is right beside the Merlin Woods area of Galway City derives its name from the natural woodland close by, a place that the school staff like to allow their children to visit regularly. In early 2014 they moved from a close by the road where they had pre-fabricated buildings to their shared site with their educational allies Merlin
College. As well as having the regular timetable that the Irish Curriculum is set out to cover the school also has a special autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) classroom (Primary, M. W. 2018).

In November of 2011, the school began creating a Social, Political and Health Education (SPHE) plan for the school. In subsequent years, the school put this plan into place. The plan dictates that the school teaches SPHE through a variety of other subjects such as Religion, Physical Education and Geography and utilises certain programmes such as the Walk Tall, Stay Safe and Sexuality Education programmes among the school’s aims are to promote a health and well-being awareness for all pupils and to learn to make informed decisions in order to become responsible citizens. The school, despite having many different cultures within, educates its children to focus on a respectful within a positive school climate that enables discreet time for SPHE as well as integrating it into other subjects throughout the regular school week (WSE, 2014).

**Merlin College**

Merlin College is a Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) School on the east side of Galway City. The GRETB was established in July 2013 to provide education to the Galway and Roscommon counties in the west of Ireland. It arose out of the cessation of the 33 Vocational Educational Committees and became one of the 16 Education and Training Boards. Governance of the GRETB is under the Education and Training Boards Act of 2013. The GRETB aims to provide individuals under its care support through the medium of learning for each individual to reach their full potential to adequately take part in cultural, social, and economic development within their communities. For them, the learner is central to their work which aims to be of a high level of service for teaching and learning to occur. By having a respectful and include the positive structure of people they target the promotion of openness, fairness and the adoption of cultural values. With diversity in mind, the GRETB promotes innovation, inclusiveness, partnership and a link to the schools’ local communities (College, 2018).

Merlin College echoes GRETB`s philosophy in its attempts to build an environment of integrity and respect within a safe and enjoyable setting that is a positive place to be. The College was
opened in 2013 with an intent to make it’s learning exciting so that the children began to embrace their lives and those within the local community in turn. Although the school began educating it’s students in 2013 before it moving its location in Doughiska on Valentine’s Day 2014.

The college emphasises the importance of studying by imparting to its students the importance of finding a quiet place to study and to do it at the correct time of the day. It attempts to draw importance to working hard and studying at least ten hours every week on top of school work and believes in the SMART approach to learning in that students need to learn with specialisation in mind, have measurable goals, to try to be active, realistic in their targets and time-bound in their approach. Study skills are educated to the pupils by eating well and having a balanced outlook. The teaching staffs are keen to make students aware of them understanding the specific learning styles that each of them may have. Learning styles of either being a visual type of learner, an auditory learner or a student who learns best by kinesthetically learning is communicated to them (Skills, 2018).

Merlin College also provides information to its pupils on their wellbeing. In November of 2018 they had well-known psychologist David Coleman visit the school in order to allow parents learn parenting tips and they also draw attention to free help and advice offered by the Samaritans, Headstrong which was a guiding light for young people, Jigsaw which is the National Centre for Youth Mental Health and Youth Work which boosts the largest organisation in Ireland by supporting its members through integration with their whole community (College, 2018). All of these schools provide a formal educational option at either primary or post-primary level for those that live in the geographical area of where this study took place.

The Main Parishes and GAA Catchment Areas of St. James’ GAA

With both female and male Gaelic football Clubs, St. James’ GAA is a growing Club on the east side of Galway City. The Club was founded in 1994 to initially cater for the Gaelic football needs of the Mervue, Ballybane, and Renmore parishes. However, throughout the years new
housing estates have been built on the east side of the City and this has led to a growth in the overall catchment area of St. James’ which now includes Ballybrit, Castle Park, Wellpark, Good Shepherd Parish Doughiska, Castlegar Roscam, Rosshill and the Ballybrit areas of Galway City. St. James’ (2018).

**St. James’ Mervue and Renmore**

Following the development of the Mervue area in the 1970s, this newly identified district on the east side of Galway City was then intended to encompass the Monivea, Ballynew, Ardaun and Dublin road areas and would stretch as far as towards the Oranmore area. Despite this re-organisation, the population continued to grow and in 1995 a new parish was built to include the Hillside, Castle Park and Ballybane areas of the parish and so the Ballybane parish adjoined to Mervue was enlisted. Ballybane is immediately off the Dublin Road on the opposite side of the GMIT and across the Dublin road from Renmore (Church, 2019).

When the St. James’ GAA Club was originally formed in 1994 the initial name of the club was Mervue/ Renmore. The club arose out of a need to produce a competitive adult football team in the county after two separate individual clubs namely Renmore and Mervue both reached a county final against one another in the early 1990s only for both of them to struggle to field adult teams thereafter. Four years after its beginning, it was renamed St. James’ Gaelic Football Club. Both the green of Mervue and the white of Renmore were included as the two main colours of the club jersey but this later changed again as maroon and green was then adopted to represent the club colours. Although the club (having now been called St. James after the local graveyard in Mervue) had to begin in the lower levels of junior club football at that time it was not long before they won both the junior championship and then the intermediate championship and became a prominent senior club in Galway county.

They won the 2012 under 21 championship and were the Galway club of the year in 2010 (Club, 2015). As the males were proving victorious the females of the area formed their own ladies club in 2012. They started in the lower ranks of Junior football but qualified for intermediate status in 2016. Both the men’s and the ladies' clubs are known as ‘The Jimmies’ locally (St.James’, 2018). The St. James's Men's GAA Club and the St. James’ Ladies GAA Clubs both often
practise and play their games within one of their Clubs’ main parishes, that being Renmore on
the east side of Galway City.

**Other Geographical Areas of St. James’**

Although the Castlegar parish is much older than the St. James’ GAA Club, Ballybrit is one of
the main catchment areas of St. James’ and it is also one of the historical areas within the
parish’s surrounds. Here, is where the famous Ballybrit racecourse is located. This racecourse is
world-renowned and hosts several racing festivals each year with the Summer festival being
broadcast live on RTÉ television annually. The parish includes areas such as Brierhill, Coolough,
Two-Mile Ditch, Brookey, Killeen, and old Ballinfoyle (NCSE, 2019).
As the Merlin Woods is accessed by both the Ballybane and Doughiska housing estates, it
provides a biodiverse meeting point within the City surrounds for two of the geographical areas
of St. James’ GAA Club. The castle is also a meeting point for local adolescents and offers a
playground for the local children (AIG, 2019).

**Schools within St James’ GAA Catchment Area**

As all of the schools that are in the Castlegar area are located on the east side of Galway City,
therefore, all of these schools also feed into the membership of the St. James’ GAA Clubs. Due
to the St. James’ GAA Clubs including Ballybrit within their club catchment area they, along
with the Castlegar Clubs, have members that go to the local Briarhill National School.

Scoil Bhríde in Brierhill is located near the Lynch roundabout across from the Brierhill Shopping
Centre in Ballybrit area of old Castltlegar. It is the nearest school of the parish schools of
Castlegar to the famous Ballybrit Racecourse which welcomed Pope John Paul II to Galway in
1979. The school believes in its pupils showing a Christian and caring attitude and believes in a
respectful and welcoming atmosphere to all types of human beings.

Scoil Bhríde was originally located on this spot in 1953 but before that, it was located a ½
kilometer west of the existing building to the west side of Brierhill. In the 1950s, it became a
three-teacher school increasing by one extra teacher from the previous location. By 1975, due to the increase in the local population, it increased into a 15 teacher school. Eleven years ago, it opened an Autistic Spectrum Disorder unit (NS, B 2018).

**Castlegar and St. James’ GAA Clubs Supportive Role for Galway City**

The Castlegar GAA Clubs are inclusive and welcoming to all of its members (Healthy Clubs’ Officer, 2019). Similarly, the St. James’ GAA Clubs champion trustful and respectful behaviour towards its Club members. They promote responsibility, encouragement, support, positivity, and tolerance to all kinds of people within their Club (St. James’, 2018).

GAA Clubs such as these also try to facilitate mutually supportive relationships between all Clubs, whether or not they are GAA or sporting clubs, or, if they are representing any other local organisation. They try to foster good relations with the diverse population that lives in the locality and have the potential to feed into the sporting support that is required in the area also. These proactive attitudes towards their supporters attempts to address the needs of the local communities where its members reside (GAA Our Games, 2018).

**Other Support Systems**

As the young people in this study do not spend all of their out of school time within their sports’ Clubs, it is important to know what other groups, and organisations are within their localities. These entities may influence the youth so it is pivotal for this study that they are examined. The following sections look at the other supporting agencies in the Doughiska, Ardaun, and Roscam localities. Once a view of the local Family Resource Centre, the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force and the Merlin Park Sports’ Club are looked at, a conclusion to this Chapter is then addressed.

**DRA Community Profile and Needs Analysis**

The Doughiska, Roscam, and Ardaun (DRA) area had a needs analysis research on the area in 2009 by the National University of Ireland, Galway Continuing Education Office as this region of Galway had the largest population increase outside of Galway. With there being appropriately
4,000 residents, 47% of which are foreign nationals. In comparison to the rest of Galway City where the number of foreign nationals is 17%. Of these immigrants, the Polish community makes up the majority of the area. Many of the residents of Doughiska are under 25 years of age with 35% of them even younger. The population of Doughiska has 92% of its people under the age of retirement (FitzGerald, 2016).

The area had the highest population increase with a 78.9% increase from 2002-2006 in the state other than 4 Dublin districts. A startling statistic at that time showed that 1/8 of the residents were lone parents. At that time it was reported that a vast majority of the people were of some form of Christian belief. Of them, 71.5% of them were Roman Catholics, 1.1% were Church of Ireland and another 7.4% were of another Christian background. At that stage, there were 2,447 households with an estimated 7,280 people in residence of which appropriately 1/3 were non-national natives broken up into 33 different nationalities.

Communality facilities included a working parish entitle Good Sheppard Parish which was run out of the Castlegar GAA Clubhouse, there was no community centre or the post office in existence at the time. Then there was a community resource house in Sean Bháile Estate which was often used for youth work. Additionally, there were several parent and toddler groups, resident committees in a variety of housing estates. There was also the HSE’s Community Development Department and Health Promotion Department in Doughiska (Geraghty, 2009).

**Doughiska Neighbourhood Report Findings from the 3-Cities Project**

Fitzgerald (2016) wrote a policy brief entitled ‘Doughiska Neighbourhood Report Findings from the 3-Cities Project’. In it, they documented Doughiska children, youth and older peoples’ participation with disabilities. According to the report trust and enhanced reciprocity within Doughiska were needed to build on existing relationships in the area. It also acknowledged how, despite their being opportunities in the area for participation, that the diversity of the area also posed problems. Admitting that there was a dynamic social context within Doughiska, the report went on to explain that Doughiska had a high population of migrants and those from an ethnic
minority, which in general has a lower neighbourhood level of socio-economic status (FitzGerald, 2016).

According to the report, diversity was a prominent feature within the locality of Doughiska. Both young and old residents saw diversity as being a potential positive community-building block in the future. The positives of diversity were that people could socialise with others from different backgrounds and attempt to have cultural groups created. Many felt diversity was a good thing and could be harnessed as a resource.

Figure 4.2 The Doughiska, Ardaun and Doughiska Areas Mapped on the East Side of Galway City
Ardaun, Roscam, and Doughiska (ARD) Family Resource Centre

The Ardaun, Roscam, and Doughiska (ARD) family resource centre is situated 5km from Galway City on the Doughiska road within the Cumusú Centre. This is located immediately in front of the Doughiska playing pitches and athletic grounds. The ARD Centre became operational in this specific building in 2015 and before that, it was a ¼ of a km away closer to the Briarhill Shopping Centre.

The ARD Family Resource Centre is one of 109 centres like it nationwide and is supported by the Child and Family Agency's, Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. Centres like this aim to improve the local family units functioning and to help them steer away from disadvantages. The ARD Centre, like all others, is operated independently and its remit is to include local people, their families, the community as a whole and stator agencies. Successful partners are to be forged with voluntary bodies with state and voluntary agencies in the local community that attempts to provide inclusiveness to marginalised groups within its locality. By providing information, advice, and support to the local people of Doughiska, Roscam, and Ardaun, the ARD centre delivers certain education programmes to attempt to meet the needs of its surrounding community (Tusla, 2018).

The Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force

Three years before the inception of the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force it was reported that 94% of the general public of Ireland was aware of the drugs of cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, and cannabis. Seventy per-cent were also aware of LSD and amphetamines (Reitox national focal point of Ireland, of et al, 2000). Then in 2003, the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force was established. At that time there was a growing number of drug issues in Ireland to warrant the inception of this task force The task force is one of a network of 24 Regional and Local Task Forces in Ireland.

The Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force stated in The National Drugs Strategy Plan (2017- 2025) that they aim to:
“Play a key role in coordinating interagency action at local-level and supporting evidence-based approaches to problem substance use, including alcohol and illegal drugs”. The WRDATF covers the “Western Region”

- (Force, 2017)

Commenting on its challenges within the Galway City area, the task force noted that as of the census in 2016 the population of Galway City had risen by 5.3% to almost 80,000 over the previous five years since 2011. Until 2025, the goals that the task force set out was to promote and protect health and wellbeing, minimise potential misuse of substances as well as promoting rehabilitation and recovery within the areas that it worked with. Other aims were to address the harm of drug markets and reduce access to drugs for harmful use, to provide supportive participation of communities whilst looking after individuals and families and concerning policies & actions they hope to develop sound and comprehensive evidence-informed protocols (Force, 2017).

**About Merlin Woods Sports Club**

Merlin Park Sports’ Club was founded in 2014. Its head office is located in the Cumasu ARD Family resource centre on Doughiska Road on the east side of Galway City. The Club encompasses a range of sports including Soccer, Cricket, Basketball, Athletic, Tennis, and Volleyball for the Ardaun, Roscam, and Doughiska (DRA) areas of the city. It prides itself on being a welcoming club that applies the growth mindset within its sporting model.

The principles that the Sports’ Club is founded upon are education, consistency, and a place for restorative practice. Concerning it being a competitive sporting club, it is keen to state that participation is the most important thing for all of its members of the Club. The Club has futuristic goals to provide professional coaching to all its participants as this mimics European sports hubs models that they have researched. With this and their emphasis on participants being key to their Club, they are eager to encourage parents to train with them as coaches and to grow as lifelong learners and for their involvement to not just aid the needs for greater supervision in their club but as it enables the parents of the locality to fulfill their own goals as potential leaders.
of the greater DRA community. Other ways in which the Club attempts to build a more stable community include their involvement in Project Youth (Club, 2018).

Other Youth Activity in the Doughiska, Roscam and Ardaun (DRA)

In May of 2012, the DRA youth were funded to do a Youth Theatre Project. They intended to showcase the myths and legends to show social change through cultural production. The community was supported by the Galway Film Fleadh. The drama went on the Town Hall and was shown in the Galway Film Fleadh in 2013.

According to author Anna King, who included this experience in her resultant Phd dissertation, throughout the filming the young people seemed honest in their endeavors and the project was generally ‘community-led’. As the author, of this specific study on the GAA, was part of that youth event’s organising committee at the time he can attest to this uplifting community sentiment towards the project in 2012. The success of the project led there to be a development of a Public Space Theatre Company (King, 2014). However, in 2019 this company has no public record of any production since.

The Merlin ladybirds, brownies, girl guides were set up in the past few years and offer females children the opportunity to gather in a group regularly and try to earn badges (Guides, 2018). The Girl Guides offer a non-formal educational programme for each member to journey on a developmental fun, challenge, and adventure (Guides, 2018). Foróige is also in operation in the area. Foróige is Ireland’s leading youth organisation since 1952. With youth people from 10-18 each year their clubs are volunteer-led (Foróige, 2018).

Other activities that were available to the youth in Doughiska are litter picks around the area, a gardening group, and some of its youth leaders are partaking in Marking Minority a Priority: Insights from Minority Ethnic Young People Growing Up in Ireland. The study has shown that 15% of the 15-24-year-olds are an ethnic minority. Of this age group, 82.3% were White Irish,
1% was White Irish Travellers, any other White background made up 8%, and Black or Black Irish were 1.7%. The Asian or Asian Irish were 2.4%, and the others were 2%. Of the findings, the youth reported that they wanted a safe and supportive place to express their views. They also felt that they were being judged regularly as they look or sound different and have a varied cultural background. They also felt that they do not belong in Ireland (Walsh, 2017).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided contextual information for this research study. It opened with an examination of the Gaelic Athletic association (GAA) and its relationships concerning friendship, empathy and the expressed social attitude towards diversity and inclusion. After that, the geographical areas of this study were outlined as was a background to all the four participating GAA Clubs was given. Then, the formal educational setting for this study was addressed before; finally, the community context and social support systems within the local environment that the youth respondents reside within was addressed.

Within this chapter it was clear that Galway is a richly vibrant and diverse Irish City. Much of its development in recent years has resulted in new and old communities living side by side. With new cultures come new challenges and opportunities for both the people coming into an area and those that have been born there. Trust and reciprocity is required to be built and sustained for a civic society to be maintained.

As team sport lends to a social culture among people it is important to understand its influence on those of all backgrounds and beliefs. As the GAA is a native Irish sport and welcomes people from all cultures and creeds this study of the Castlegar and St. James’ GAA Clubs are hugely significant for not only the eastern side of Galway City but for all other sporting organisations and similar agencies.
Chapter 5: Results

Introduction
The aim of this study is to explore the perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs (females and males) in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education. Friendship has shown to be interwoven with feelings of being socially supported and having empathy has shown to be a close bedfellow to the traits of friendship also. Similarly, empathy has been established to have a tight inter-relationship with social support. Within this focus, four specific objectives have been identified. This Chapter will address all of these objectives and establish resultant findings from the study. The chapter is separated into distinct sub-sections. Table 5.1 shows the sequencing for these sub-sections and clarifies the specific location of each of these sets of results against related objectives.

Section 5.1 hereunder, shows the sample characteristics of the study. Below is table 5.1 which shows the location of the results in this chapter relative to the objectives of the study. The following section 5.2, presents the findings related to objective 1. Section 5.3 will deal with the second objective. The next Sub-Section, 5.4, addresses the third objective that is important to this research before sub-Section 5.5 deals with the triangulation of the research methodologies. The fourth objective is dealt with in the following chapter. Once the key findings of these objectives are identified, they will be discussed in greater detail and in the light of the literature and other relevant research in Chapter 6.
Table 5.1 Location of Results in This Chapter Relative to Objectives of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective of study</th>
<th>Location in this chapter</th>
<th>Sources of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Quantitative data collected using the Social Network Questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative data collected using the Social Provision Scale (SPS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative observations collected using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative data collected using semi structured interviews of research respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances and types of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Quantitative date collected using the Basic Empathy Scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative observations collected using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative data collected using semi structured interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.

4. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

5.4 Quantitative data collected using the **Social Provision Scale (SPS)**.

Quantitative observations collected using a reduced and adapted version of the **Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule**.

Qualitative data utilising **semi-structured interviews**.

5.5 Emerging from results in the above objectives (located in the Discussion and the Conclusion Chapters)

### 5.1 Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

In all, there were 130 surveys and three instruments (n=130) completed by the youth. There were 64 individualised observation templates filled out by the researcher and 20 semi-structured one to one interviews were carried out. This comprises the entire fieldwork that was completed in the study, starting in April 2018 and ending at the end of October 2018 which is the duration of a typical GAA sports season. Table 5.2 shows the number of participants by the research methodologies used.
Table 5.2 Number of Participants By Research Methodologies Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Research Participants:</th>
<th>Survey: (Comprising of the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale and the Basic Empathy Scale)</th>
<th>Individualised Observations: (the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule)</th>
<th>One to one Interviews: (Semi-Structured)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation Rates

All three instruments, namely the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale, and the Basic Empathy Scale were completed by all of the research respondents (n=130). Twenty respondents of these instruments also took part in individual interviews with the researcher. The Indices of Friendship Observational Schedule was used by 64 respondents. The table 5.3 below displays the overall quantitative survey instrument usage.
There were 16 different individual participants observed by the researcher in each of the 4 GAA clubs. In all, this totalled 64 research participants observed.

The youngest respondent was 11 years of age and the median was 14.5 years of age. The oldest respondent was 18 years of age. Figure 5.1 shows the age range by frequency distribution of the overall set of research respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Quantitative Survey Name</th>
<th>Number of Research Respondents:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Social Network Questionnaire</td>
<td>(n=130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Provision Scale</td>
<td>(n=130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basic Empathy Scale</td>
<td>(n=130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of individual players</td>
<td>(n=64)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.1: Research Respondents by Age Groups

There were four individual GAA Clubs and Table 5.4 below outlines the breakdown of respondents by gender.
Table 5.4 Research Respondents by Individual Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAA Parent Club:</th>
<th>GAA Club by Title across Gender:</th>
<th>Overall Research Respondents By Gender:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar GAA Club</td>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club (Males)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club (Females)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ GAA Club</td>
<td>St. James Gaelic Football Club (Males)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. James Gaelic Ladies’ Football Club (Females)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>130 (n=130)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Objective 1: To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ clubs

Introduction

This section describes the quantitative survey results in respect of the Social Network Questionnaire, the Social Provision Scale (SPS), and the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule. This is followed by an outline relating to the qualitative results collected using semi-structured interviews.

The Quantitative Survey Results for Objective 1

According to the Social Network Questionnaire, 98% (n=127) of youth respondents had their mother and fathers living at home and nominated these parents to be in their social network. Regarding family, 97% (n=126) of respondents reported a good level of friendship with family members. The 3% of the remaining respondents reported having only a ‘half in half’ friendship with their siblings (n=4). All of the young people reported having good relationships with their parents. Ninety six percent (96%, n=125) of young people had a ‘good’ friendship with the friends whom they spent time with on a typical week (which they listed on the Social Network Questionnaire). A very small minority (4%, n=5) stated that they had a ‘half in half’ friendship with some friends in their lives.

From the study it emerged that all 130 respondents had some form of social networking with at least four other youth listed as chosen that is ‘people you [the respondent] would spend time with in a week’. Almost 14% of young people (13.8%; n=18) stated that they were friendly with a high of seven people in a typical week whereas, 11.5% (n=15) had five friendships outside of the family home and extended family over the same time period.

When exploring further into the types and qualities of friendships in the young peoples’ lives, the results from the questionnaires illustrated that youth members of the GAA Clubs divided their
nominees into two main sub-sets namely ‘close confidante friends’, or ‘casual friends’. Of the ‘close confidante friends’, no young person had more than ten friends. Almost half of the respondents (46%, n=60) reported 3 to 5 close confidante friendships. Almost a quarter (23.1%, n = 30) of young people had what they considered to be three ‘close confidante friends’ with less than seven percent (6.9%, n = 9) reporting that they did not have a close confidante friend. A further 14.6% (n=19) of respondents reported having only one close friend in their lives. Table 5.5 shows the perceived response to the amount of close confidante friends in young peoples’ lives.

Table 5.5 The Perceived Close Confidante Friends By Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Close Confidante Friends</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost half of those surveyed (44.6%, n=58) reported no casual friendships. The remaining 55.4% (n = 72) have between one and seven casual friends in their lives. Figure 5.2 shows the perceived response of the amount of casual friends in young people’s lives.
Almost 98% (n=127) of the overall 130 respondents using the Social Network Questionnaire reported that they felt supported by their parents. This was measured by their perception of whether or not they had a good or bad relationship with their parents. Almost 90% (n=117) of respondents who completed the Social Provision Scale felt that they were supported by their parents. This was measured by the question ‘Can you depend on other adults you know for help if needed?’ on the Social Provision Scale.

The Indices of Observation Schedule or the Basic Empathy Scale were not suitable tools to measure the perceived feelings of being supported by parents. As the Indices of Observation Schedule was used by the researcher to observe the youth during training there was no support by parents evident. The Basic Empathy Scale measures peer empathy and so it was impossible to discover the existence of the respondents’ perceptions of parental support using this tool.

When the Social Network Questionnaire was used to measure the difference in gendered and individual clubs perceptions of being supported by parents, more females than males felt
supported by their parent using these tools of measurement. Castlegar Camogie Club females reported that 99.2% (n=32) of them felt supported by their parents whereas St. James’ Ladies Club had an even greater amount of perceived support (99.7%, n=15). Slightly fewer males than females felt supported by their parents. Almost ninety seven per-cent of the Castlegar Hurling Club males respondents felt that they were supported by their parents (96.7%, n=52) and a slightly less amount of male respondents (96.1%, n=28) from the St. James’ Club felt supported by parents. Although the difference is minimal, the Social Provision Scale also showed that more females than males perceive they are supported by their parents.

It is notable at this stage that all four Clubs perceive that they are supported by their parents as not all young people feel this way. While more females than males perceive this kind of support all four Clubs have very high levels of perceived support from their parents. The table 5.6 below shows the individual Club respondents broken down by gender using the Social Network Questionnaire by the percentage of perceptions of feeling supported by their parents.
Table 5.6 Individual Club Respondents By Gender The Social Network Questionnaire By Percentages of Perceptions of Feeling Supported by Parents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Club</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Score by Gender</th>
<th>Club Mean</th>
<th>Club Median</th>
<th>Gender Mean</th>
<th>Gender Median</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>Overall Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>62.6% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>68% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Gaelic Football Club</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>33.7% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Ladies Football Club</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
<td>31.9% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Club Score:</td>
<td></td>
<td>97.9%</td>
<td>97.95%</td>
<td>49.05%</td>
<td>48.15%</td>
<td>24.62%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There is no modal value (percentages) as each value percentage appeared once only.

This is followed by table 5.7 that shows the individual Club respondents broken down by gender using the Social Provision Scale multiplied by the percentages of perceptions of the respondents feelings of being supported by their parents.
Table 5.7 Individual Club Respondents By Gender The Social Provision Scale By Percentages of Perceptions of Feeling Supported by Parents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Club</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Score by Gender</th>
<th>Club Mean</th>
<th>Club Median</th>
<th>Gender Mean</th>
<th>Gender Median</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>Overall Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>57.8% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>61.7% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Gaelic Football Club</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>30.1% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Ladies Football Club</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>27.6% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Club Score:</td>
<td></td>
<td>89.22%</td>
<td>89.55%</td>
<td>44.45%</td>
<td>43.95%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>20.75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There is no modal value (percentages) as each value percentage appeared once only.

From the results of the Social Network Questionnaire, it is clear with a mean of 97.9% that all four Clubs feel supported by their parents. As the majority of respondents outlined earlier that the come from a home where both of their parents live with them this finding verifies that those close relationships are very supportive of the young people.

However, after measuring the young people’s perceived support by parents using the Social Provision Scale the mean is almost ten per-cent lower (89.22%). This shows, not only the importance of using several tools to measure such happenings, but that, on average, there may be over ten per-cent of young people who do not feel fully supported by their parents.

On average, there is almost twice the amount of females who where members of the camogie Club than were members of the ladies Gaelic football club in this study. Yet, both cohorts felt as supported by their parents. The males in both the hurling and the Gaelic football Clubs showed a very strong perception feeling supported by their parents in this study.
Regarding the perceptions of respondents to family or other relatives, two thirds (65.4%, n=85) spent time with between two and five relatives. Only 1.6% (n=2) of those surveyed, failed to spend time with one or less relatives in a given week. The figure below shows the number of relatives that respondents spent time with on an average week.

**Figure 5.3 Amounts of Relatives Respondents Spent Time With on an Average Week**

![Figure 5.3](image)

Regarding perceived help seeking, more males than females perceived that their friends were more willing to help them, with almost two thirds of males (63.1%, n= 82) feeling that they would get help from a friend if needed, while only over a third of females feeling the same way (36.9%, n=48). Figure 5.5 shows the perceptions of ‘being helped’ by peers in the Study.

In addition to using the Social Network Questionnaire, the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule and semi structured interviews, and the Social Provision Scale (SPS), also helped
answer the area of enquiry exploring the quality of social support with the GAA clubs. The SPS offered respondents three ways to rate others across each of the twenty questions with options of either ‘no’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘yes’.

Over half of the younger respondents (55.3%, n=72) between 11-13 years of age perceived that they would be helped by a friend if they needed it. The figure below shows the breakdown of age groups of respondents in relation to their perceptions of ‘being helped’.

Figure 5.4 Age Range of Respondents & Their Perceptions of ‘Being Helped by a Friend’

Of all respondents, almost four out of five (77.8%, n=101) felt that their friends provided ‘a sense of acceptance and happiness’ whereas only 3.1% (n=4) felt they were not getting this kind of assistance from friends. For those over the age of 16 years, only 4.6% (n= 6) of 16-year-old both males and females surveyed, 6.9%, (n=9) of 17- year-olds and 8.5% (n=11) of 18-year-olds felt that their ‘talents and abilities are recognised’ by their friends. Regarding having a problem,
again four out of five (83.8%, n=109) said that they had ‘friends they could turn to’ if they needed to.

Almost half respondents (46%, n=60) reported 3 to 5 close confidante friendships. In response to the question on feeling they ‘could depend on a brother or sister’ slightly under two thirds (62.3%, n=80) of participants were affirmative as always, yet 35.4% (n=46) replied that this was only the case ‘sometimes’. Approximately Sixty percent (61.5%, n=80) of respondents felt that their sibling gave them ‘a sense of acceptance of happiness’ with a further 28.5% (n=37) feeling this only ‘sometimes’. The percentage was very similar when respondents stated that 60% (n=78) of them felt their siblings ‘recognised their talents and abilities. Again, a similar score arose when participants recognised that when they needed ‘advice’. More than sixty per-cent (61.5%, n=80) would turn to a sibling whereas, 20.8% (n=27) would only seek this advice sometimes.

Regarding ‘adults’, virtually all respondents (99.2%, n=129) perceived that they could always or would ‘sometimes’ have an adult as a friend to depend on if they felt they really needed it. Regarding adults in their networks, almost four fifths (78.5%, n=102) of respondents reported perceived themselves as having a ‘sense of acceptance and happiness’ when relating to them. Almost the full cohort of respondents were always or ‘sometimes’ positive in agreeing that the adult in their lives recognised their talents or abilities with 82.3% (n=107) saying they did and 16.9% (n=22) saying that this occurred ‘sometimes’. Three quarters (76.2%, n=99) of respondents said that they could turn to another adult within their lives for advice, if they were having problems. Table 5.8 displays a summative table of the above percentages showing the respondents perceptions of adults in their lives.
### Table 5.8 The Respondents’ Perceptions of Adults in Their Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Respondents:</th>
<th>Amount of Respondents:</th>
<th>Respondents Who Reported ‘Sometimes’ or ‘Always’:</th>
<th>Amount of Respondents (Of either ‘Sometimes’ or ‘Always’):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could have an adult as a friend to depend on if they felt they really needed it.</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>‘Sometimes’: (16.9% of the 99.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Always’: (82.3% of the 99.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived to have a ‘sense of acceptance and happiness’ when relating to adults.</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>‘Always’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive in agreeing that the adult in their lives recognised their talents or abilities.</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>‘Sometimes’: (16.9% of the 99.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Always’: (82.3% of the 99.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>‘Always’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
could turn to another adult within their lives for advice.

Observations in Respect of Objective One

In addition, the researcher carried out the observations across a random sample of 64 young people at training sessions. These entailed observations of their time arriving and preparing for training as well as during and after training sessions. Each individual respondent was observed for 30 minutes throughout training for one session only and at various intervals. This provided direct ‘observed’ information on the nature of friendships and perceived availability of support amongst the players across all clubs.

When the observations were taking place, the vast majority of respondents were primarily partaking in the physical activity of their club trainings sessions and so it was difficult to choose a particular measures that best matched their perception of the availability and quality of social support. Added to this was the fact that the young people were often arriving on time for training (already in their playing gear) or they were rushing to change into their playing gear in the dressing room just before training. This emphasised their overall eagerness to get active on the training ground. In considering this, the researcher recorded ‘appropriate greeting’ and ‘giving compliments’ as the most accurate ways to discover their perception of the availability and quality of social support as it did not require any conversation or any time delay on the young person’s behalf. It also encompassed the initial body language that the young people communicated upon first arriving in this social situation and this was perceived as being the most evident communication of the first objective for the researcher.

Twelve skills sets or attributes were being looked at. These were derived from the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule that included:
1. Appropriate Greetings,

2. Giving Compliments,

3. Assistance Given,

4. Contributing to a Common Goal,

5. Offering Comfort,

6. Forgiveness,

7. The Ability to Adapt and to Compromise with Others,

8. Incorporating Others’ Ideas,

9. Indication of acceptance of suggestions,

10. Coping with Criticism,

11. Patient Co-operation,


The first two skill sets are described below with the following two tables. The remaining ten skill sets are described later in the chapter.

**Skill Set One: Appropriate Greeting**

When observing for an ‘appropriate greeting’ there was four sub-sets recognised. These were ‘waving at the dressing room door’, a ‘high five or fist pump’, a ‘positive verbal’ or ‘eye contact’ by the respondents. Each measure is considered a quarter of giving an appropriate greeting.

Of the total amount of observed youth (n=64), almost two thirds (64.1% n=41) of respondents demonstrated 75% of the skill of ‘appropriately greeting’ team mates when training was beginning. Table 5.9 shows the researched respondents’ ‘appropriate greeting’ observed by the researcher in the study (n=64).
Table 5.9 ‘Appropriately Greeting’ (Skill Set (100%):‘Waving at Dressing Room Door‘ (25%),‘High Five or Fist Pump’ (25%)’Positive Verbal (25%) or Eye Contact (25%) By Respondents (n=64):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired skill observed:</th>
<th>Number of Respondents Engaged in skill Set:</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One of the skills are observed (1 of either ‘Waving ‘/’High Five’/’Positive Verbal or Eye Contact)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two of the skills are observed (2 of either ‘Waving ‘/’High Five’/’Positive Verbal or Eye Contact)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three of the skills are observed (3 of ‘Waving ‘/’High Five’/’Positive Verbal)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skill Set Two: Giving Compliments:

Half of the respondents (50% of n=32) displayed the full skills of ‘giving compliments’ when observed. Figure 5.5 shows the percentage of respondents who gave compliments when observed. The four ‘giving compliments’ measures are when there were observations of the respondents saying ‘hi’, waving with a verbal, performing another hand gesture or a phrase. Each measure is considered a quarter of giving compliments.
Interview Results for Objective 1

This section outlines the more qualitative data of friendship in action within clubs reported from the voices of participants within the study. Overall from their individual interviews, all 20 respondents were free-flowing in their descriptions of their own subjective definitions of friendship. A number of specific terms were used most frequently and in common by
respondents as follows. The term ‘trust’ arose as a theme of friendship as did ‘self-awareness’, ‘respect’, and ‘leadership’.

Of all the descriptors of friendship that were given by the twenty interviewees, ‘trust’ was the most frequently occurring word that was used. ‘Trust’ was specifically referred to by ten of the twenty respondents. There were mentions of ‘trust’ from respondents in each of the four GAA Clubs. Below, using direct quotations, testimonial quotes and examples of the respondents feedback throughout the interviewing process now follows. All of the qualitative sections of this chapter can be referred to in the appendices (See appendix 6).

‘Trust’:

Peter\(^3\), a seventeen-year-old participant in the study from the St. James’ Gaelic Football Club felt:

“In the club of St. James’ and lucky enough, I’m with a club that can deal with stuff like that and that have people like that where I could turn to someone if I did have a problem, now I never had have a problem like that, but it’s good to be in an environment where you can trust someone and there’s a lot of people around you that can help you if you’re having a problem or a serious problem like that.

Having good friendship, having someone to turn to, and being able to be open enough to talk to them about anything were attributes that he saw evident in his football club. Having reciprocal honesty within these conversations was seen as being important for Peter as had a frank opinion on life’s ups and downs. By being able to share a person’s feelings on a matter it allows them to lessen the burden of keeping it all to themselves. In keeping all to themselves, it can potentially cause problems for young people. In contrast, although texting on phones has its merits, Peter felt that by being face-to-face with someone that you trust, builds a firm rapport from which to start a friendship. This is the foundation of good friends for him.

Shauna who played for the Castlegar Camogie team and was an under-12 player ‘agreed’ with Peter’s (17) insistence that friendship needs trust to prosper. She thought that fun and trust were

\(^3\) All names are changed and appear as pseudonyms
central to good friendships, as having a friend meant that a person can tell them anything and more than what they would tell other people in their life.

‘Self Awareness’:
Three respondents referred to ‘self awareness’ as an aspect of friendship. They included ‘someone you can be yourself self around’ and three people specifically mentioned this. No respondent from either of the Castlegar Clubs refereed to anything touching on ‘self awareness’ in the interviews. John (16) from St. James’ referred this with regard to friendship and Eva (14) from St. James’ emphasised how ‘being able to be yourself around someone’ as being important to her. ‘Self awareness’ also included ‘feeling good’.

‘Respect’:
For this study, the author adjudged the friendly treatment of others as being closely connected to the virtue of respect. The most common words used by respondents in their interviews in relation to respect, included terms such as, ‘socialising or real life talking’, ‘loyalty’, ‘fun’, ‘inclusion’, ‘sharing’, ‘kindness’, ‘honestly, communicating ‘face to face’ and having a ‘common interest’.

Nine of the twenty respondents referred to some form of ‘socialising or real life talking’. From these nine respondents, there were collectively twelve references to ‘socialising or real life talking’. There was at least one respondent from each of the four Clubs that mentioned this topic. In modern life socialising can occur through the medium of social media. Real life socialising is referred to here as being that of ‘socialising or real life face to face talking’.

John (16) from St. James’ Gaelic Football Club explained why ‘socialising or real-life talking’ was important for him when he stated that it was important to have someone actually there for you when you are feeling as if you are in the best of form. By spending time with this person, you can be completely yourself and not have to give excuses for your mood to them. A friend such as this can visit your home whenever you wish and you can confide in them. This, in John’s view, builds a trusting relationship.
Speaking in the context of being in a friend’s presence, another sixteen year old respondent Sophie (16) from Castlegar Camogie stated a good friend is someone you can be completely transparent with and that when you are they will be trusted to keep that private information secret. By having someone like this in life, it makes things more comfortable and you realise that there is someone there to help you if the need arises.

‘Loyalty’ was also considered as being of prime importance for almost half of the research respondents. Of the twenty interviewees, nine of them mentioned it as being pivotal in their understanding of friendship. Again, all of the four GAA Clubs were represented in their references to being loyal.

Jodie a fourteen year old from St. James’ Ladies Gaelic Football noted that a loyal friend who backs you up is also a nice friend to have. Seán (14) from St. James’ re-emphasised the importance of sticking up for friends when he said that friends listen to one another and will not speak badly of you.

‘Fun’ was a very important word that was echoed by eight of the twenty young people interviewed. One respondent mentioned fun twice and seven others mentioned it once only. There was at least one reference to ‘fun’ from each of the four GAA Clubs. Fintan, who was twelve years old, and from the Castlegar Hurling Club described how friendship was ‘fun’ for him. He noted that good friendship comes from how funny the other person is. This, to him, indicates how much fun that you could potentially have with this other person within the boundaries of friendship. By living with ‘comedy’ between friends, Fintan felt that it eased the seriousness of life and that it was a good way to transition into a friendship for two people.

Eva, who was fourteen and played with St. James’ Ladies Gaelic Football, re-iterated how ‘fun’ and laughing is central to good friendship when she mentioned that someone who can make you laugh and be simply a nice person can make you feel good and that this is appreciated.

The oldest of the research respondents, Ben (Castlegar Hurling Club) brought up ‘inclusion’ as being noteworthy to the essence of friendship as did two females Ana (age 14) and Amy (aged 15) from St. James’ Ladies Gaelic Football Club and Castlegar Camogie Club respectively. They were the respondents who felt strongly that ‘inclusion’ ought to be noted when referring to
friendship. However, nobody from the St. James’ Gaelic Football Club mentioned ‘inclusion’ in the interviews.

Ben (17) answered that being able to have someone around you who you feel that you can talk to is important. By having that person present to do things together and have good laughter is also welcome.

St. James’ Club members Seán (14) and Mary (12) along with Castlegar’s Sophie felt that ‘sharing’ has an influence on friendship. Seán said that good friendship requires strict confidence that is between two people who can exchange views and opinions with one another without fear of that other person telling a third party. ‘Sharing’ was not mentioned by anyone from the Castlegar Hurling Club.

Ana (14) from St. James’ Club stated that being a good friend is about showing kindness and calling on a person shows this to her. Joyce (15) from the Castlegar Camogie Club also felt ‘kindness’ was also pivotal. None of the males referred to kindness in the interviews. ‘Honesty’ was mentioned in this context also. Sinéad (12) from Castlegar (and one of the youngest to be interviewed) perceived that simply ‘being best friends’ explained friendship for her.

Being ‘Face’ to face’ was referred to by one male from St. James’. Peter, who was one of the older respondents at seventeen years of age, replied at one stage in his interview about social media when he made the point that it is important to be open and honest and speak to them in a face-to-face manner to properly understand their opinions rather than keeping it to yourself or using social media as a place to share in that way.

Fintan (14) from Castlegar thought that having a ‘common interest’ was beneficial to friendship when he explained that having the same interests with another person builds connection and trust.

None of the females mentioned either of these two areas during the interviews.

‘Leadership’:
References to ‘leadership’ were highlighted by members from each of the four GAA Clubs.

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The young respondents spoke about ‘being supportive’ and ‘being helped’ as being central to friendship. ‘Being supportive’ was seen by six of the twenty respondents as having meaning with regard to friendship. J.C (15) was quite specific when he spoke about ‘support’. He explained support as being quite simply connected with friendship.

‘Being helped’ was mentioned by four of the youth. From those for respondents there was a total of five references to it. Hugh (13) emphasised the importance of ‘being helped’ when he stated that a sign of this is when a friend gives up something in order to choose to help you instead.

Again Joyce (15) ‘agreed’ with this value in friendship stating that sadness needs to be addressed in friendship when she said that being friends is being there for someone when they are feeling sad.

In all, considering the first objective, slightly fewer males than females felt supported by their parents. From all four Clubs, the St. James’ Ladies Club felt most supported by their parents whereas their male counterparts in St. James’ felt less supported. However, individuals from all four Clubs mentioned ‘trust’ and ‘respect’ as being components of good friendship. Neither of the Castlegar Clubs members mentioned anything about ‘self awareness’ but at least one member from each of the four Clubs referred to the importance of leadership.

**Summary of Findings in Respect of Objective 1**

- From the survey, it was found that almost all of the respondents had two or more people in their social network and they describe their friendships as good.

- Almost half (46%) of all respondents perceived that they had between three and five close confidante friends whilst 83.8% (n= 109) said that they had ‘friends they could turn to’ if they needed to but, more males than females perceived that their friends were more willing to help them.
Younger respondents more than the older ones that perceived they would be helped by someone else in their life. Over three-quarters of respondents say that their friends provide them with a sense of acceptance and happiness, whilst almost two thirds of respondents perceived that they could depend on their siblings and respondents perceive they have strong family networks.

Trust and respect are two traits that defined good friendship for the respondents of this study. They also perceived that self awareness, socialising or real life talking and good leadership qualities are required to positively affect friendship.

5.3 Objective 2: To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved in four Juvenile Sports’ GAA Clubs

Introduction

This section shows quantitative results collected using a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule and the Basic Empathy Scale. In addition qualitative data was collected through the use of twenty semi-structured interviews.

The Quantitative Survey Results for Objective 2

The second objective of this study concentrated on the levels of empathy and the identification of instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four GAA Clubs. Hereunder provides these findings.

From the (20) direct questions contained within the Basic Empathy Scale, when asked about whether friends emotions did not affect the respondents, over a quarter ‘disagreed’ that this was the case (25.4%, n=33) and a further 20% (n=26) ‘strongly disagreed’ meaning that to the majority of respondents, their friends emotions did affect them. Table 5.10 shows respondents’ perceptions of ‘my friends’ emotions don't affect me much’ in the survey.
Table 5.10 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘My friends Emotions Don’t Affect Me Much’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion:</th>
<th>Amount of Respondents:</th>
<th>Percent:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Disagree nor Agree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In respect to the question ‘after being with a friend who is sad about something, I usually feel sad’, 44.6% (n= 58) either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement, see figure 5.6 below.

Figure 5.6 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘After being with a friend who is sad about something, I usually feel sad’
Almost three quarters (72.3%, n=94) of those surveyed ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with understanding their ‘friend’s happiness when she/he does well at something’. Figure 5.7 shows the responses for ‘I can understand my friend’s happiness when she/he does well at something’.

**Figure 5.7 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘I can understand my friend’s happiness when she/he does well at something’**

Under a third (30%, n=39) of those surveyed said they neither ‘agreed’ nor ‘disagreed’ with the statement ‘I get frightened when I watch characters in a good scary movie’ whereas 16.2% (n=21) ‘disagreed’ and 17.7% (n=23) ‘agreed’.

Regarding ‘I get caught up in other people’s feelings easily’ 26.9% (n=35) ‘disagreed’ and 16.2% (n=21) ‘agreed’ of those in the empathy survey, whereas, 28.5% (n=37) ‘strongly disagreed’ and 26.9% (n=35) ‘disagreed’ with the question of whether they found ‘it hard to know when my friends are frightened’.

With regard to this second objective, table 5.8 shows the most relevant of these results where it displays the answers to ‘I find it hard to know when my friends are frightened’.
Table 5.11 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘I find it hard to know when my friends are frightened’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amount of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Disagree Nor Agree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a fairly even response to the query ‘I don’t become sad when I see other people crying’ with 29.2% (n = 38) neither ‘agreeing’ or ‘disagreeing’ and all other answers over 10% (n=13).

Figure 5.10 shows respondents answers to ‘I don’t become sad when I see other people crying’ query.
The question ‘Other people’s feelings don’t bother me at all’ was asked within the empathy survey and over half of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 35.4% (n=46) ‘strongly disagreed’ and 18.5% (n =24) ‘disagreed’. Figure 5.9 shows ‘other people’s feelings don’t bother me at all’:
Over a quarter of respondents (25.4%, n=33) ‘agreed’ and 30.8% (n=40) ‘strongly agreed’ when asked ‘when someone is feeling ‘down’ I can usually understand how they feel’. Figure 5.10 shows ‘when someone is feeling ‘down’ I can usually understand how they feel’
When asking about whether the respondents could decipher if their friends were scared at times, with the statement ‘I can usually work out when my friends are scared’ it resulted that just over half of the study participants 26.2% (n=34) and 24.6% (n=32) of those respondents either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement respectively.

Figure 5.11 shows when the respondents replied to the question ‘I can usually work out when my friends are scared’.

Figure 5.11 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘I can usually work out when my friends are scared’

From the question ‘I often become sad when watching sad things on TV or in films (screen time)’ in the survey, 19.2% (n=25) and 16.2% (n=21) of respondents ‘agreed’ and ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement. However, overall there was a wide spread of responses and, notably, the greatest response was a neutral view of neither disagreeing nor agreeing (37%, n=48). Figure 5.12 shows the response for ‘I often become sad when watching sad things on TV or in films (screen time)’ from the respondents n=130).
From the statement ‘I can often understand how people are feeling even before they tell me’ 43.9% (n=57) of respondents said that they either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’, with 33.8% (n=44) ‘neither agreeing nor disagreeing’. Figure 5.13 shows ‘I can often understand how people are feeling even before they tell me’ by the respondents of the study.
In relation to ‘Seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings’ responses showed that 26.2% (n=34) ‘disagreed’ and 14.6% (n=19) ‘strongly disagreed’ which accumulates to 41% (n =53) for this statement across both options. Figure 5.14 shows results for ‘seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings’.
Figure 5.14 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘Seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings’

Thirty percent (30%, n=39) ‘agree’ and 40% (n= 52) ‘strongly agree’ with the question of whether the respondents can ‘usually work out when people are cheerful’. Figure 5.15 shows how respondents answered to ‘I can usually work out when people are cheerful’.
When asked if they ‘tend to feel scared when with friends who are afraid’ 31.6% (n=41) of respondents ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ with this statement where as 36.2% (n=47) ‘neither disagreed nor agreed’. Figure 5.16 shows the respondents answers to ‘I tend to feel scared when I am with friends who are afraid’.

Figure 5.15 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘I can usually work out when people are cheerful’

Figure 5.16 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘I tend to feel scared when I am with friends who are afraid’
‘I can usually realise quickly when a friend is angry’ was either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with by 61% (n=80) of the total participants in the study. Figure 5.17 shows ‘I can usually realise quickly when a friend is angry’ by the respondents.

![Figure 5.17 Basic Empathy Scale: ‘I can usually realise quickly when a friend is angry’](image)

Conversely, just over a quarter (25.4%, n=33) ‘disagreed’ with the statement ‘I often get swept up in my friend’s feelings’. Figure 5.18 shows ‘I often get swept up in my friend’s feelings’ by the respondents.
Over a third, 33.1% (n=43) ‘strongly disagreed’ and 26.1% (n=34) ‘disagreed’ with ‘my friend’s unhappiness doesn’t make me feel anything’ in the study. Figure 5.19 shows the ‘my friend’s unhappiness doesn’t make me feel anything’ answers by the respondents.

In respect of the statement ‘I am not usually aware of my friend’s feelings’ results show that 54.6% (n=71) of those surveyed either ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’. See figure 5.20 below.
When querying the ability to figure ‘out when my friends are happy’ with the respondents, 69.3% (n=90) felt this was not the case. Figure 5.21 shows ‘I have trouble figuring out when my friends are happy’ as perceived by the respondents.
As the respondents of this study are all from 11 to 18 years of age they are still in a vital stage of development as young people. They are still developing and it is important to monitor where the opportunities lie within this developmental phase of their lives. Among other objectives, this thesis examines the understanding and presence of empathy of the 130 research respondents who took part in this study. Therefore, it is worthwhile to establish that if these research respondents have opportunities for the deeper development of empathy.

When showing empathy with another, firstly, a person must adapt to the needs of the other person. From the Indices of Observation Schedule it was discovered that almost seventy percent of respondents (68.8%, n=44) showed an ability to adapt to others. In having adaptability to another it opens the door to understanding their point of view. As this was the most suitable area observed within the Indices of Observation Schedule that would provide a springboard for the potential deeper development of empathy, this is why the researcher choose this specific observation. Although the other quantitative tools which included the Social Network Questionaire, the Social Provision Scale, and the Basic Empathy Scale were examined to see if there were any notable areas from the results that may trigger a potential for the deeper development of empathy, only the Social Provision Scale question of ‘do your relationships with your friends in your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?’ showed a suitable congruence with the potential for deeper empathetic development. This question was chosen by the researcher as he believed if the young respondents felt accepted by a friend then it was possible that they could develop deeper empathy for this other person. Over three-quarters of respondents to this question (78.5%, n=102) felt that their friends in their GAA club provided them with a sense of acceptance and happiness.

Of the 68.8% (n=44) total of respondents that used the Indices of Observation Schedule and showed an ability to adapt to others, there was a difference in gendered and individual Clubs discovered. The Castlegar Camogie Club females showed that 67.6% (n=11) were able to adapt to others whereas the females of the St. James’ Ladies Club had a slightly greater ability to adapt to others (68.9%, n=11).
A similar amount of males in both the Castlegar Hurling Club and the St. James’ Football Club showed that they could adapt to others also. In Castlegar 68.7% (n=11) of the males and St. James’ 69.9% (n=11) displayed the ability to adapt to others.

When measuring the difference in gendered and individual clubs from the (78.5%, n=102) of overall respondents regarding perceiving a sense of acceptance and happiness, the Castlegar Camogie Club females reported that 79.7% (n=26) felt this to be so, and a similarly high percentage of 78.1% (n=12) of the St. James’ females reported these perceptions also. Whereas, 78.0% (n=42) of the Castlegar Hurling Club and 78.4% (n=23) of the St. James’ Boys perceived this to be the case.

The first table below shows the research tools used by the percentage of respondents showing opportunities to develop deeper empathy. This is followed by the figure that displays the Indices of Observation used by the percentage of respondents showing opportunities to develop deeper empathy. Underneath that figure, is the Social Provision Scale that was used to show the percentage of respondents showing the opportunities to develop deeper empathy.

**Table 5.12 Research Tools Used By Percentage of Respondents Showing Opportunities to Develop Deeper Empathy:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Tools</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Showing Opportunities to Develop Deeper Empathy:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indices of Friendship Observations</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Provision Scale</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below that a table 5.13 illustrates the individual Club respondents by gender using the Indices of Observation Schedule by the percentages of respondents showing an ability to adapt to others.

**Table 5.13 Individual Club Respondents By Gender the Indices of Observation Schedule by Percentages of Respondents Showing an Ability to Adapt to Others**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Club</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Score by Gender</th>
<th>Club Mean:</th>
<th>Club Median:</th>
<th>Gender Mean:</th>
<th>Gender Median &amp; Mode:</th>
<th>Overall Mean:</th>
<th>Overall Median &amp; Mode:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>34.3% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>34.3% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Gaelic Football Club</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>34.3% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Ladies Football Club</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>34.3% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Club Score:</td>
<td>68.77%</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table 5.14 shows the perceptions of a sense of acceptance and happiness by gender using the Social Provision Scale.

**Table 5.14 Individual Club Respondents By Gender the Social Provision Scale le by Percentages of Respondents Perceiving a Sense of Acceptance and Happiness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Club:</th>
<th>Overall Totals:</th>
<th>Score by Gender:</th>
<th>Clubs Mean:</th>
<th>Clubs Median:</th>
<th>Gender Mean:</th>
<th>Gender Median:</th>
<th>Overall Mean:</th>
<th>Overall Median:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>50.6% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>55.3% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Gaelic Football Club</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>27.7% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Ladies Football Club</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>25.5% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Club Score:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78.55%</td>
<td>78.27%</td>
<td>39.77%</td>
<td>39.15%</td>
<td>19.77%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There is no mode as each value (percentages) appears once only.

When using the Observation Schedule to measure the respondents’ ability to adapt to others the mean was 68.77%. This average is ten per cent higher when the Social Provision Scale is used to discover their perceptions of a sense of acceptance and happiness. Here, on average, 78.55% of youth reported their perceptions of acceptance and happiness.

**Observations in Respect of Objective Two**

The Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule had notable results with five skill sets. They were when the respondents gave assistance, when they were offering comfort, when they contributed to a common goal, showed forgiveness, and had the ability to adapt and to compromise with others.
Skill Set Three: Assistance Given:
The observations provided indicators regarding the instances of friendships among respondents within the four clubs. Thirty eight per-cent (38%, n=24) of respondents completed three quarters of the specific four identifiable skills of giving ‘assistance’ when observed. Figure 5.22 shows the ‘assistance given’ in observation of all of the research respondents.

By team mates of their own volition assisting one another in collecting cones and bollards and in a collegiate manner, they chose to be friendly to one another. The four ‘assistance given’ measures are grabbing cones, helping with bollards, purposely getting out of a fellow player’s way and making a run for a team mate. Each measure is considered a quarter of giving assistance. The figure below shows the ‘Assistance Given’.

**Figure 5.22 ‘Assistance given’ (Skill Set (100% of): Grabs Cones (25%)/ Bollards (25%)/ Gets out of player’s way (25%)/ Makes run for team (25%) in Observations**

Skill Set Four: Contributing to a Common Goal:
The fourth skill set observed was contributing to a common goal which implies collegiality leading to friendly acts between players. Figure 5.23 shows observations of the respondents who are ‘contributing to a common goal’. Here there are two sub-sets recognised. They are clapping
and smiling when warming up. Each measure is considered half of contributing to a common goal. The figure below shows the ‘Contributing to a Common Goal’.

Figure 5.23 Observations of Those ‘Contributing to a Common Goal’ (Skill Set (100% of): (Claps (50%)/ Smiles when warming up (50%))

![Graph showing observations of contributing to a common goal.](image)

Skill Set Five: Offering Comfort:
By the researcher observing the two contributing ‘offering comfort’ measures he noticed that the respondents either checked if players were injured or avoided others’ running spaces. Each measure is considered a half of ‘offering comfort’. This includes them doing both acts checking on the welfare of a fellow player and not blocking other’s playing space.

Figure 5.24 show observations of all of the respondents ‘offering comfort’ (n=64).
Skill Set Six: Forgiveness

Forgiveness was also observed by the researcher. The skill was defined by the respondents as forgiving another after the loss of a training game. Here he noted that 81.3% (n=52) of all respondents demonstrated acts of forgiveness when they were observed. Figure 5.25 show that ‘forgiveness’ was observed when the respondents lost at a training game.
Skill Set Seven: The Ability to Adapt and to Compromise with Others

Nearly seventy percent of respondents (68.8%, n=44) adapted to ‘the character of others’ when observed. Over four fifths of those observed (81.3%, n=52) showed that they could ‘compromise’ approximately with others. Figure 5.26 shows that the observations of all of the respondents (N=64) had the ability to adapt and to compromise with others.
Qualitative Interview Results for Objective 2

In the same manner as the first objective once the quantitative data was collected, the qualitative one to one interviews occurred on separate occasions. The following are the findings.

It should be noted that the first mention by the researcher to any respondent of ‘empathy’ throughout this study came before any direct questions were asked of the respondents during the semi-structured interviews on the topic. The researcher used the word in the explanatory narrative (see appendix 7). ‘Empathy’ was perceived as being important in the context of friendship by some respondents as they first heard the mention of ‘empathy’ (from the
researcher) some months beforehand when they were asked to fill out the Basic Empathy Scale. During the opening part of the interviews the interviewer reminded the interviewees of this when he said:

“So I'm going to ask you a few introductory questions. You can just say ‘yes’ or no to them or just nod your head. Communicate your answer. Then, after that I'll ask you about friendship and empathy. Throughout the interview you can stop me as I speak or interrupt me to ask questions or give comments.” (see appendix 7)

The references to ‘empathy’ by respondents throughout the interviews were coded and grouped by the researcher into three themes owing to the consistent opinions and feedback from all twenty respondents in the study. These three themes were ‘understanding empathy’, ‘empathy as a positive thing’, and ‘empathy in sport’.

‘Understanding Empathy’:

The results for ‘understanding empathy’ act as an appropriate platform to begin the findings for the qualitative results for this section. Respondents from all of the four GAA Clubs fed into this theme. Although the concept of empathy was generally understood throughout the research, during the interviews, some respondents seemed confused in understanding the term itself.

An example of this confusion was shown when Hugh (13) from Castlegar noted that people can ‘have empathy for you instead of just caring about themselves’.

When asked during the interview Eva aged 14 from St. James’ Ladies Club said of ‘empathy’:

“I don't know. I don't really imagine myself and how other people see you. I'm not really good at seeing how other people are, their point of view, their perspectives on how they're living.”

When Eva was probed further as to whether or not she had heard the term ‘empathy’ before she nodded affirmatively and stated that she had probably first heard it during a SPHE lesson [Social, Personal and Health Education] at school.

At this stage the interviewer was content that the interviewee understood the concept of ‘empathy’ as he again described how the term involved ‘to be able to walk in another’s shoes’.

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‘If someone is feeling down’ was mentioned by five respondents and referenced a total of six times by the same respondents about the ‘understanding empathy’ theme. James Anthony, who was 14 from the St. James’ Gaelic Football Club, provided his understanding when he explained that when someone is feeling down it was important to try to help boost another person’s mood as this is what others would have done for him when he felt down. He thought it was the human thing to do and that it helped people along.

His fellow club mate, John, who was a couple of years older (16) from St James’ explained that if someone on his team had been playing well but then did not play to their level in the biggest of games then he would understand if they could feel down about it. In this instance, he thought it would be important to understand how they feel. He thought that it was a skill to be able to put yourself in another person’s shoes who felt in this way and that by consoling the other person and by trying to talk to them it may help them.

An ‘unsure understanding’ of empathy was expressed by four respondents all of which were female. Castlegar Camogie player Amy (15 years) said that if she was younger she may be unsure of empathy. Carla (13) from the St. James’ ladies Club admitted she was not sure about empathy either. However, she made a telling point of how having empathy brings difference to your own personal ideas and insights into other people’s daily lives and that it takes focus away from your own life.

‘Feeling bad for someone’ was referenced by two respondents as a form of expression of empathy. The two respondents mentioned the topic a total of three times in all. Derek (12) from Castlegar Hurling Club went on to speak of how empathy is when someone is not having a good time and you feel badly for them. This occurs as you can relate to what is wrong with them due to your own previous experiences. By helping that other person it brings about improvement and goodness.

On the other hand, fourteen year old Shauna from Castlegar Camogie saw it as how people are not themselves when she said that eliciting communication with a friend who is not being themselves is a good way of eking out if they have something the matter with them.
Other descriptions from respondents included ‘when something bad happens’, ‘understanding a person’s sad or hurt feelings’, ‘understanding another’s mental state’, ‘seeing things from another person’s point of view’ and ‘understanding another’s emotions and opinions’ were also described by other research respondents once throughout the interview process.

Seamus, a fourteen-year-old from the St. James’ Club, explained that his understanding of empathy was ‘understanding another’s emotions and opinions’ in noticing that empathy is about understanding others’ emotions, opinions, and being upset for them. By another person losing a match or becoming poor, it also brought about appreciation for Seamus to know that he was thankful not to be in that unfortunate situation.

‘Empathy As a Positive Thing’:
Another theme that emerged from interviews with respondents included their valuing empathy as a desirable positive. Here, this was communicated by five of the respondents out of the twenty in total. There was at least one respondent from each of the four GAA Clubs that mentioned this theme.

Peter, a seventeen-year-old from the St. James’ Club, explained this best when he commented in his conversation with the interviewer that when people lose games together it is a good way to figure out who a person’s real friends are. In losing, those that empathise with you are the most caring and trustful in your life. He believed that in the St. James’ Club there is good empathy with one another even when they experience a loss together. Peter, who was fortunate enough to play hurling at a very high level, believed that empathy was important in sport as it allows people to relate to one another after the games are over or throughout the games also.

‘Empathy In Sport’:
‘Empathy in Sport’ was the next theme that emerged from the set of interviews. From all of the four GAA Clubs an even spread of respondents referred to empathy in sport. ‘Helping someone in sport who needs it’ and ‘feeling sorry for a losing team’ were both mentioned three times by all the respondents.
Peter (17) from the St. James’ Club gave his example of empathy in a sport when he said that sport, like life, has many ups and downs. By having people that help you around you it aids with understanding. When things go well and games are won it's important to have people to bring you back down to earth and it is equally important to have people to try to be positive with you when you are not playing so well.

Jodie (14) from St. James’ Ladies Football Club said that by ‘helping someone’ it makes them feel happy. She explained that if you are feeling sad by being helped by another you can then feel happier even if you do not feel like talking with that other person.

Another respondent Joyce (15) from Castlegar re-iterated the idea of helping another when stating that by teaching the basic skills of the game to a team-mate it can help them and make them feel better.

‘Feeling sorry for a losing team’ was seen by Sophie (16) from Castlegar as being a way to know how they are feeling. She explained that if someone had been verbally given out to after having a bad performance then you could feel sorry for them and help them by talking to them.

Fintan (12) from Castlegar spoke of how losing teams need to be remembered in a time of celebration when you feel exuberant it is important to console with the other losing team as it reminds you of the times when you too have lost. For Fintan, this is a good way of explaining empathy in the GAA.

**Other Areas Of ‘Understanding Empathy in Sport’:**

Terms including ‘When a teammate struggles in training’, ‘when someone misses a score’ and an ‘unsure understanding of empathy in sport’ were referred to by two participants.

Hugh (13) from the Castlegar Club explained how ‘when a teammate struggles in training’ is related to his ‘understanding of empathy in sport’ and that by wanting to help them and understanding their problem it is better than being confused with their situation.
Shauna (14) from the Castlegar Club gave a similar description of the difficulties for another player when they may miss a score they may be really frustrated and feel bad because someone else did better than they did.

Amy (15) had an ‘unsure understanding of empathy in sport’ when asked ‘what would empathy look like in sport to her?’. Her face communicated to the researcher that she was unsure as she then paused for a while and finally told the researcher that she was not sure.

Single references were given to the matter of ‘avoiding passing to someone’, or ‘clapping for allies’, or ‘not getting on with teammates’, ‘understanding someone’, ‘sympathy in sport’ and simply ‘does not understand empathy in sport’.

Avoiding passing to someone’ was seen as Anna (14) from the St. James’ Club as being important when she detailed how this occurs if you are not getting on with someone personally [away from the game]. However, if you are getting along with them then it is a positive thing to communicate that to them.

‘Clapping for allies’ was explained to the interviewer by Ben (17) from the Castlegar Club when he said that empathy could be best seen in sport when in the same way he saw a television recording of the recent Ryder Cup [International golf tournament between USA and Europe] and he noticed how there was craic [an Irish term for ‘fun’] when the Europeans were winning against the USA. Then, the crowd of supporters clapped communally for them. This, in turn, gathered momentum into a Mexican wave which all came from the first one or two people showing support.

‘Not getting on with teammates’ was referred to by St. James’ Eva (14) when she mentioned that it is possible for team-mates to be mean to one another, not get along with one another and this then de-motivates them in attending training with the team.

Ollie (15) from Castlegar when speaking about ‘understanding someone’ summarised that accepting a person’s mental state was important.

Fourteen-year-old Seamus felt that ‘sympathy in sport’ was important when he went on to explain in a set of ‘in-depth’ comments of how it is paramount that people show empathy in their own way for others. He gave the example that although some people act as if they are the best
behind it all they may be a frightened person who needs others' attention. Although, if someone is making fun of others it is not to be welcomed if someone is injured or not doing so well they need to be shown sympathy in sport.

Sinead (12) from the Castlegar Club also showed a distinct lack of understanding of empathy in sport. She gave a simple answer of ‘no’ to the interviewer’s question on whether she understood empathy in sport.

St. James’ Gaelic Football males displayed the highest ability to adapt to others whereas the Castlegar Camogie females had the lowest adaptability to others. Yet, the camogie females perceived that they had the highest sense of acceptance and happiness, and their male counterparts in Castlegar had the lowest sense of acceptance and happiness. There were respondents from all of the four GAA Clubs that understood empathy, could see it as a positive and were able to explain empathy in sport.

**Summary of Findings in Respect of Objective 2**

- The constant trend is that the majority of the 130 respondents demonstrated consistent empathy. In reply to the Basic Empathy Scale’s query of whether friends’ emotions affected them, over 45% (n=59) were affected by their friends’ emotions whereas 21.5% (n=28) were not.

- The query ‘other people’s feelings don’t bother me at all’ was asked within the Basic Empathy Survey and over half of respondents either ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ with the statement, 35.4% (n=46) ‘strongly disagreed’ and 18.5% (n =24).

- Well over a half, (55%, n=70) of respondents are bothered by ‘other people’s feelings’ in comparison to 18% (n=23) who are not bothered by others’ feelings.
The respondents were aware of the term empathy as they covered this term during their time in primary school when learning the subject of Social Political and Health Education (SPHE) (although the amount of time being spent on teaching SPHE in Irish primary schools is flexible, the objectives of its curriculum must be achieved -SPHE 1999). Throughout the results, it was clear that the term ‘empathy’ was confusing, but that they understood the concept and could give examples of it in action.

Over two thirds (68.8%, n=44) adapted to ‘the character of others’ whilst over four fifths of those observed (81.3%, n=52) showed that they could ‘compromise’ appropriately with others. These results, along with contributing to a common goal, being affected by their friends’ emotions, understanding when their friends were happy and helping a team mate were all ways that the respondents empathised.

The respondents failed to show any meaningful signs of fear or sadness when watching television, movies or screen time.

5.4 Objective 3: To establish the perceived social benefits of their involvement in GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs including GAA friends and club involvement as perceived by youth members

Introduction

The Social Provision Scale includes twenty questions about the respondents’ perceptions of friendship and relationships. Twelve of the questions referred to the respondents friends in general, their siblings and their adult relationships within their lives. The other eight referred to their relationships with their fellow GAA Club members specifically and was adjusted into the tool by the researcher on the advice of his supervisor and author of the original youth version of
the instrument. Also, a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was used and again qualitative data was collected from 20 semi structured interviews.

**Quantitative Research for Objective 3**

The third objective produced meaningful data from the research with regard to the perceived social support and friendships within the GAA Clubs. Many of the details were provided by the completion of the Social Provision Scale.

When asked ‘are there friends within your GAA club that you can depend on to help you if you really need it?’ three quarters (73.8%, n=96) answered affirmatively. From ‘do your relationships with your friends in your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?’ an even bigger response occurred to this question (78.5%, n=102).

In relation to accessing advice as a support, seventy percent (70%, n=91) answered yes to this question. Almost three quarters of young people surveyed (73.8%, n = 96) said ‘yes’ to ‘can you depend on other adult(s) within your GAA club to help you, if you really need it?’.

Over two thirds of respondents (68.5%, n= 89) answered ‘yes’ to the query ‘do your relationships with this adult(s) within your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?’, whereas even more (76.9%, n=100) responded affirmatively to ‘do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult in your GAA club?’.

When asked ‘could you turn to another adult within your GAA club for advice, if you were having problems?’ young people studied answered positively 70% (n=91) of the time and 21.5% (n=28) felt that this could be achieved only ‘sometimes’. Under ten percent (8.5%, n=11) said they did not feel they could turn to another adult within their GAA club for advice if they had problems. The following table 5.15 shows the respondents perceptions of social support and friendships within the GAA Clubs using the Social Provisions Scale.
Table 5.15 The Respondents Perceptions of Social Support and Friendships within the GAA Clubs Using The Social Provisions Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Are there friends within your GAA club that you can depend on to help you, if you really need it?’</td>
<td>73.8%, n=96</td>
<td>23%, n=30</td>
<td>3%, n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Do your relationships with your friends in your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?’</td>
<td>78.5%, n=102</td>
<td>21%, n=27</td>
<td>0.5%, n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Is there a friend within your GAA Club you could trust to turn to for advice, if you were having problems?’</td>
<td>70%, n=91</td>
<td>25%, n=32</td>
<td>5%, n=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Can you depend on other adult(s) within your GAA club to help you, if you really need it?’</td>
<td>73.8%, n=96</td>
<td>23%, n=30</td>
<td>3.2%, n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Do your relationships with this adult(s) within your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?’</td>
<td>68.5%, n=89</td>
<td>30%, n=39</td>
<td>1.5%, n=2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult in your GAA club?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>76.9% (n=100)</th>
<th>21.5%, n= 28</th>
<th>1.6%, n=2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘Could you turn to another adult within your GAA club for advice, if you were having problems?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>70% (n=91)</th>
<th>21.5% (n=28)</th>
<th>(8.5%, n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Neither the Social Network Questionnaire nor the Basic Empathy Scale was used to measure the difference in gendered and the individual Clubs’ perceptions of trust or co-operation. As the findings suggested that the respondents did not feel they had to be friends with their teammates to get along with them it was rejected as a measure for the trust and co-operation that is directly linked to the perception of the social benefits of being members of GAA Clubs. Also, the Basic Empathy Scale does not ask any direct question on trust or co-operation and so was not used at this point either.

From the Social Provision Scale it was found that concerning accessing trusting advice as support, seventy percent (70%, n= 91) answered affirmatively to this question. Of this total, 70.3% (n=22) of the Castlegar Camogie Club females and 69.9% (n=10) of the St. James’ Ladies Club answered that they could trust another member if they sought advice. Similarly, 70.9% (n=38) of the males in the Castlegar Hurling Club and 68.8% (n=20) in the St. James’ Football Club showed that they would also seek out others in their clubs to give them good advice.

The Eleventh skill set in the Indices for Observational checklist noted that ‘Patient Co-operation’ was observed in the study. Being able to co-operative with someone lends itself to the trusting that other person or group of people if only to complete a task that is beneficial to one, the other, or of mutual benefits to both parties. Almost two thirds (62.5%, n=40) of respondents were seen to have shown ‘patient co-operation’ during the observations. Of this total, 62% (n=10) of the Castlegar Camogie Club females and 62.3% (n=10) of the St. James’ Ladies Club showed
‘patient co-operation’. Similarly, the 63.1% (n=10) of the males in the Castlegar Hurling Club and 62.4% (n=10) in the St. James’ Football Club showed that they had ‘patient co-operation’.

Below is table 5.16 displaying the Individual Club respondents by gender using the Social Provision Scale by the percentages of the perceptions of trusting friends within the GAA Clubs.

Table 5.16 Individual Club Respondents By Gender the Social Provision Scale by Percentages of Perceptions of Trusting Friends within GAA Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Club:</th>
<th>Overall Totals:</th>
<th>Score by Gender:</th>
<th>Clubs Mean:</th>
<th>Gender Mean:</th>
<th>Gender Median:</th>
<th>Overall Mean:</th>
<th>Overall Median:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>45.7% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>46.8% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Gaelic Football Club</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>24% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Ladies Football Club</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>21.2%, Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Club Score:</td>
<td></td>
<td>69.97%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>34.42%</td>
<td>34.85%</td>
<td>17.25%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There is no mode as each value (percentages) appears once only.

Below is table 5.17 showing the individual Club respondents using the Indices for Observational checklist by the percentages of ‘Patient Co-operation’ observed in the study.
Table 5.17 Individual Club Respondents By Gender the Indices for Observational checklist by Percentages of ‘Patient Co-operation’ was observed in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Club:</th>
<th>Overall Totals:</th>
<th>Score by Gender:</th>
<th>Clubs Mean:</th>
<th>Clubs Median &amp; Mode:</th>
<th>Gender Mean:</th>
<th>Gender Median &amp; Mode:</th>
<th>Overall Mean:</th>
<th>Overall Median &amp; Mode:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Hurling Club</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>31.25% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlegar Camogie Club</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>31.25% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Gaelic Football Club</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>31.25% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’ Ladies Football Club</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>31.25% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Club Score:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62.45%</td>
<td>62.35%</td>
<td>31.25%</td>
<td>31.25%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although separated by only a couple of per-cent, both the Castlegar GAA hurling and camogie Clubs respondents feel that they can trust their club mates more so than what the St. James’ female and male respondents perceive that they can. This may be due to the fact that many of the Castlegar respondents have attended a fewer number of schools and that are generally smaller in numbers within their respective parish in comparison to those from the St. James’ Clubs. Also, as the St. James’ Club is a younger Club than the Castlegar Club (who have also won more competitions throughout the years) this may also have influenced the perceived levels of trust being slightly lower in the St. James’ Club.

A positive feature of this research is that both females and males have similar amounts of patient co-operation in all four of the GAA Clubs.

**Observations in Respect of Objective 3**

The observations in respect of Objective 3 feature the final four skill sets of these results.

**Skill Set Eight: Incorporating Others’ Ideas:**

The observations of the 64 respondents presented within the study meant that the young players were observed in their natural playing environment of training together. Here, 87.5% (n=56) of the reduced sample of respondents incorporated ‘others’ ideas’ at least three quarters of the time whilst being observed, whereas, twenty six of the respondents (40.62%, n=26) incorporated ‘others ideas’ at all times during the observational period.

Figure 5.27 shows the respondents answers to ‘incorporating others’ ideas’ during the observations. The two contributing ‘incorporating others’ measures are when there were observations of the respondents being ‘happy to change drill taking position’ or by ‘leaving the playing balls down’. Each measure is considered a half of giving an appropriate greeting.
Figure 5.27: ‘Incorporating Others’ Ideas’ (Skill Set (100% of): Happy to change drills position (50%)/Leaves Balls down (50%) by Respondent

Skill Set Nine: ‘Indication of Acceptance of Suggestions’:

Figure 5.28 shows the respondents answers to ‘indication of acceptance of suggestions’ during the observations. The two contributing ‘indication of acceptance of suggestions’ skills being sought are when respondents ‘leave things as they are’ or ‘throwing the ball back’. Each measure is considered a half of giving an appropriate greeting.
Skill Set Ten: Coping With Criticism:

Nearly two thirds (62.5%, n=40) of the sub sample of respondents coped well with ‘criticism’. Figure 5.29 shows the skill of ‘coping with criticism’ as observed by the researcher (n=64). The two contributing ‘coping with criticism’ measures are when there were observations of the respondents saying ‘OK’ or affirmatively nodding. Each measure is considered a half of the skill set of ‘coping with criticism’.
Skill Set Eleven: ‘Patient Co-operation’:

Figure 5.30 shows the respondents answers to ‘patient co-operation ‘during the observations. The four contributing ‘patient co-operation’ measures are when there were observations of the respondents waiting for the ball, shouting ‘calm down’, shouting ‘slow down’ or just slowing down for players in the warm up laps. Each measure is considered a quarter of patient co-operation. Almost two thirds (62.5%, n=40) of respondents demonstrated ‘patient co-operation’ during the observations.
Skill Set Twelve: ‘Avoidance of Aggression’:

The ‘avoidance of aggression’ was achieved by 78.1% (n=50) of respondents. Figure 5.30 shows the observation of ‘avoidance of aggression’ among the set of respondents (n=64). The contributing ‘avoidance of aggression’ measure is when there were observations of the respondents being ‘calm while under pressure’ or ‘physical confrontation’ in training.
Qualitative Interview Results for Objective Three

From respondents who participated in the set of interviews the identified social benefits being involved in the GAA included four main themes. They were ‘being friends’, ‘fun’, ‘mutual respect, and ‘teamwork and winning’. Most, if not all, of these themes were mentioned in the qualitative interviews by at least one respondent from each of the four GAA Clubs. Although there were other areas mentioned by other individuals in the interviews and this is accounted for within this section also, these areas were not substantively mentioned by the majority of research respondents.
‘Being Friends’:

‘Being friends’ was reported by ten respondents. Each one of the of the four GAA Clubs had at least one respondent mentioning the importance of this theme. Here Mary (12) from the St. James’ Club discussed with the interviewer about the issue of making friends by saying:

“I feel it is very important because if you do or don’t feel comfortable or some people don't like you the best won't pass to you. You won't feel as part of the team if you're not friends with people if you're not comfortable around them.”

She added:

“Well there are a few people in my team. I am friendly with them. I do talk to them but they're not my friends generally. But them, I do feel comfortable around them. I do like my team very much and I associate them with friendship as well...like if I saw them in a shop I would wave to them. I would talk to them for a minute and then I'd say goodbye.”

Whereas Joyce (15) from the Castlegar Camgoie Club said that it is important to be friends with team-mates over the long Summer holidays so that they will pass you the ball.

‘Fun’:

The next most popular responses in this sub-theme were simply ‘fun’ which seven respondents spoke about in eight different references. Again, there were members from each of the four Clubs mentioning this theme. Ben (18) from the Castlegar Club stated that thinking about the opposite of sex is not the most important thing, but that having fun during training is more important. He felt the training and the physical contact was also beneficial for him.

In relation to the connection between training and having fun he added that by having fun when doing grueling training exercises can be a really important factor to the sport.

Paul (17) of the St. James’ Club said that having fun helps with team work, gives better team results and helps people enjoy the games more which are not just about winning but playing with your friends also.
Fintan (12) of Castlegar gave his thoughts about ‘fun in the GAA’ when he stated that it was important to enjoy yourself no matter where you go.

‘Mutual Respect’:

Six respondents referred to the importance of mutual respect in sport. This theme was not spoken about by anyone in the Castlegar Hurling Club but others from the other three clubs mentioned it instead. Ana (14) from St. James’ said that although you may fight with a team mate outside of sport that it is respectful to put this difference to one side for the sake of the team and still pass the ball to them during a game.

Whereas James Anthony (14) of St. James’ had feedback which noted that although you may not be good friends with team mates it was important to respect them. By treating others like you would like to be treated yourself it fosters a good and respectful team moral. He gave an example of how you need to also consider the other person`s playing skill set and be aware of this when you are playing with them to maximise the team’s chances of doing well. He also felt that this was present within the GAA in general.

Shauna (14) from Castlegar said that working with your teams mates helps with the possibility of having more success in the games.

‘Teamwork and Winning’:

‘Teamwork’ was seen as important by four of the respondents, one in each of the four Clubs. Jodie (14) from St. James’ neatly connected teamwork with friendship and saw it as being important to have friends all around you when you play. Three respondents touched on the topic of winning and Paul (17) of St. James’ clarified his feeling of it by explaining that enjoyment and being able to play with friends was most important as it built a connection to friendships.

Other Areas Mentioned:

Hugh (13) from Castlegar mentioned the ‘art of conversation’ in the GAA Club as being a prelude to being active with the other person in the club. Similarly, Castlegar’s Ollie (15) reflected that just ‘being more involved’ was a positive from being a club member. There were
no such mentions of these areas by any of the females in the Castlegar Camogie Club, or either of the St. James’ GAA Clubs from the interviews.

Amy (aged 15) explained that having outside activities from school gives a person ‘double friends’. As the ‘school day is only a few hours long’, ‘as you choose GAA over school you choose GAA friends over school friends’, the importance of ‘body language’, the possibility of ‘long term friends’ in the GAA and having ‘fun’ and [yet] being ‘serious’, ‘life pressures’ and the ‘importance of communication’ were also referred to as being important points by individual respondents when the theme of ‘social support and the perceived social benefits of being involved in the GAA’ was discussed by all (n=20).

The males in the Castlegar Hurling Club were the respondents that were most likely to seek out others in their clubs to give them good advice. Whereas, the males in the St. James’ Club, were least likely to seek out good advice. The Castlegar males also showed most ‘Patient Co-operation’ whereas the females in the Castlegar Club showed the least. ‘Being friends’, ‘fun, and ‘teamwork’ were themes that at least one person from each club felt was important to refer to during the interviews. Although at least one member from each club spoke about the theme of ‘mutual respect’ with the exception of the Castlegar Hurling Club.

**Summary of Findings in Respect of Objective 3**

- Being friends, having fun and being respectful to team members were perceived as important parts of being supportive in a GAA Club. It can also help team success.

- Almost all respondents perceived that an adult could be their friend and could be depended on if they really needed them. Here over 90% (n=118) felt that they could communicate with an adult and turn to them if they had problems.

- Three-quarters of respondents communicated that they perceived a sense of acceptance and happiness from adults in their life.

- Over 70% (n=91) of respondents perceived that an adult within their GAA Club could be depended upon if they needed it and that they could turn to them if they were having problems.

- Overall, the quality of social support in their life for the respondents is good.
However, because of their membership within their GAA Clubs, the quality of support is enhanced within their lives.
Crystallization

Throughout the interviews it was evident to the researcher that all of the young people were content in his company. They were also very happy to talk about the subject matter, and usually in great detail. Whilst observing the young people it was also initially clear that they were generally content within the realms of their training pitches. Throughout the writing of the results’ chapter it was beginning to become clearer to the researcher that all four of the Clubs were experiencing positive social benefits as a result of being involved with their GAA Clubs. However, at this stage it was not clear to the researcher as to what extent the amount of actual tangible support and friendship they perceived to have received was having on them. It was also difficult to understand at this point which Club and age-group perceived the positives of their involvement in their Clubs the most. At this stage, what the researcher did know came from him using crystallisation with the resultant data.

Crystallisation is a methodological structure for bringing together data and analysis. It validates findings in a mixed methods way mimicking that of triangulation and is based on Richardson’s idea of qualitative crystallisation. It gives the researcher a deep and thick means to understand his respondents' perceptions, answers, and views. However, it also has its limitations. It demands that the researcher has a wide range of skills that includes the researcher being able to write creatively, and to understand ideological philosophical ideals. Although crystallisation usually concentrates on the analysis of qualitative data, it can also be used to include that of quantitative data also (Ellingson, 2009).

Far from a ‘do as you please’ method, carrying out crystallisation properly will mean the research can turn ‘lead into gold’. By understanding that there is more to what seems to be on the one face of research data, the researcher can see different things from a range of vantage points to improve the overall analysis of the project. By the researcher taking their time to not just concentrate on the data but to also step away from it they have space to reflect on the outcome. By acknowledging that the real ‘gold’ on the data can be found in the deepest of places the most radiant of research outcomes can arise to the surface (Stewart, Gapp, & Harwood, 2017). The process of crystallisation involves seeing things through prisms that refract to create variations of colour (Ellingson, 2008). This colour can be an opinion, experience, and overall perception.
In the case of this research project the author took his time to not just initially analyse the data presented, but to then meet with his supervisor for a more objective viewpoint on the insights of what he thought he saw from these coloured refractions of light arising from the respondents’ perceptions. By taking his time after the first round of coding it allowed him to see things from other viewpoints. This triggered him to look deeper into the four GAA Clubs data from a variety of angles. He realised that from the first objective that although both males and females felt supported by their parents, slightly fewer males than females felt supported by their parents. When he learned this he delved ever deeper into the overall data to see if there was some other link with males’ feelings towards their parents. However, he did not find any but he did notice at this time how all respondents from all of the four Clubs mentioned ‘trust’ and ‘respect’ as being basic characteristics of good friendship.

Although the Castlegar Clubs respondents neglected to mention anything about ‘self-awareness’ it made the researcher wonder if they lacked it during their answers to his questions. Again, he never felt this was the case as those from that Club that answered believed that ‘leadership’ was an important factor of friendship, and this showed awareness from the respondents. This was echoed by those from the other Clubs who also felt that ‘leadership’ was of prime importance.

When beginning to reflect on the second objective, the researcher noted how although the Castlegar Camogie females had the lowest adaptability to others they had a high enough ability even though it was not as high as the St. James’ Gaelic Football males. However, he marveled at how the same group of females perceived that their sense of acceptance and happiness was high and higher than the males in Castlegar. Although all of the respondents from all four Clubs understood the concept of empathy in general the author soon realised that the respondents were eager to share their feelings on the topic and that this was to be celebrated as it is an important topic in relation to youth sport.

As the third objective was the last one to be looked at within this Chapter and it resulted in the males in the Castlegar Hurling Club being the respondents that were most likely to seek out others in their Club to give them good advice the researcher was eager, especially as a male who had played the games himself, to notice if the St. James’ males would follow suit. Yet, this was not the case as they were least likely of all the four Clubs to seek out good advice.
Finally, prior to this research study the researcher would have felt that young males playing team sport would not have been the most patient cohort to study but he was proven incorrect as the Castlegar males showed the most ‘Patient Co-operation’ whereas, in contrast, the females in the Castlegar Club showed the least. The mentions of simply ‘being friends’, having and seeking out ‘fun’, and the importance of ‘teamwork’ were themes that at least one person from each club felt was noteworthy to refer to during the interviews and this together with the fact that ‘mutual respect’ was referred to by three of the four clubs began to show the researcher that involvement in team sport was positively influencing these young people.

5.5 Triangulation and Conclusion

Triangulation enables a researcher to use more than one kind of research method to attain the results of a study. This study’s research question was designed to explore the perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs (females and males) in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

Regarding the Objective One, the results from the Social Network Questionnaire showed that the respondents had plentiful sources of family and friendship support. Perceptions of being able to depend on siblings were a result of the Social Provision Scale by most respondents and this instrument also showed that the respondents generally perceived that their friendships contained acceptance and happiness.

Both the semi-structured interviews and the observations proved that socialising or real life talking are required to positively affect friendship. From the interviews and the Social Network Questionnaire the respondents felt that they had someone to turn to if they needed it whereas, more specifically, the interviews showed that younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to feel as if they would be helped by someone in their life. They also largely acknowledged that trust, respect and self awareness were important for friendship to occur.
When the second objective was addressed, the results showed that the Basic Empathy Scale and the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule established that most of the respondents were able to adapt to ‘the character of others’, could ‘compromise’ appropriately, ‘contribute to a common goal’ and were ‘affected by their friends’ emotions’. In general, they could understand when their friends were happy. The semi-structured interviews and the observations showed that most of the respondents acknowledged that they would help out a team mate when needed. The interviews also showed that the respondents failed to show any meaningful signs of fear or sadness when watching television, movies or screen time.

The third objective’s results showed that from the semi-structured interviews that most of the respondents felt that being friends, having fun and being respectful to team members were perceived as important parts of being supportive in a GAA Club. From the interviews and the Social Provision Scale, almost all respondents perceived that adults could be friends. The Social Provision Scale backed up this finding as respondents mostly felt acceptance, happiness and dependability with adults in their GAA Clubs and their lives. From the interviews, the observations and the Social Provision Scale it was clear that the quality of social support in the respondents’ lives is good and even enhanced because of their membership within their GAA Clubs.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from chapter 5. The purpose of this chapter is to firstly provide a linkage from the objectives of the study from the opening chapters through to the findings chapter and then use them as a starting point to provide a more in-depth and richer detailed discussion of these research findings in order to describe their meaning within the overall study. Of course, there are many results that could be discussed within this chapter but, for the purpose of this study; the author will adhere closely to a discussion on the core objectives of the thesis. In doing so, the author believes that this will best add much needed new knowledge and evidence based learning to the areas of friendship, social support and empathy within the GAA and other out of school agencies that offer a volunteer led social support to young people in Ireland.

The following is a discussion of key findings as they relate to the first three objectives of this study and then a separate closing discussion on how this will affect policy makers in the near future which addresses in part the fourth and final objective.

6.1 Aim & Discussion of research findings in relation to Objectives 1-4

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs (females and males) in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

As an initial reminder, the four objectives for the study are:

1. To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
2. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
3. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
4. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

The findings from this study came from a general population of juvenile members from a single hurling club, a camogie club, a men’s Gaelic football club and a ladies Gaelic football club. All of the clubs were located on the east side of Galway City. The city of Galway has a population of 79,934 residents (Curriculum 1999). Although there were many findings from this study, the author has chosen to discuss those of which are most pertinent to the study.

From the Literature Review chapter, it was clear that young people develop through adolescence and become more independent thinkers and, as a result, they, therefore, develop new relationships as they grow. Although there may be positive relationships, there can also be stressful ones too (Chen and Foshee 2015). These new human relationships can be more complex for adolescents than when they were younger (Laursen, Adams et al. 2018).

From the findings chapter, the research results showed that in this study, the adolescent respondents are capable of making and sustaining friendships because of their close traditional family units and their involvement within their GAA Clubs.

Chapter 2 also indicated how empathy can be projected through the good leadership of people (Pietersen 2015) and that, although adolescence can be a time of much anxiety for a young person (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005), it is also a time that demands a growth of empathy and social skills (Cowie 2012).

From the second chapter, it was also known that the primary school curriculum in Ireland concentrates on developing children’s social and emotional development across 12 subject areas (NCCA 2015) and that through participation in sport the GAA promotes the ‘Give Respect, Get Respect’ mantra. It mentioned that young people were engaged in extracurricular activities and because of this involvement they were found to have higher levels of empathy (Silke 2019). This earlier chapter of also educated the reader that empathy is neurologically rooted and can trigger pro-social behaviours for people (Newman 2016).

In the previous chapter of this study, the research results showed that the respondents were unable to give real-life examples including the term of ‘empathy’ in action, which had stemmed from their lack of familiarity with the term empathy itself. However, they were able to use other
words and terms which broadly equate to the concept of empathy and were observed in showing empathy within their sporting contexts leading them to discuss their perceptions of empathy and how it affects other people within a sporting context.

Empathy can often be compared with sympathy (Burton 2015). Yet, empathy is different from sympathy as it requires a greater ability to relate to a person or being able to take his or her perspective (Teachman et al., 2003). From Chapter 5 it was clear that although the young respondents of this study had been previously taught about the term empathy within their primary school’s Social Political and Health Education (SPHE) subject, they required a further explanation by the researcher about ‘empathy’, before taking part in the study.

From the Literature Review, it was said that social support involved intangible efforts that include emotionally supportive and loving behaviour within a socially networked community. Within these communities, a network of supporters can be found where confiding partners were required for support (Lin, Dean et al. 2013). In so doing, this sense of community can benefit a person’s life in general (Oh, Ozkaya et al. 2014).

Chapter 5 confirmed that the research respondents do not see friends that they initially make online as being ‘real-life’ friends and that those they meet on a typical week are more important to them than online friends in general. The quality of support from the children’s social network in their life in general is good but this quality has been increased due to the respondents involvement within their GAA Clubs.

The Literature Review chapter confirmed that the developing human brain is continuing to develop the ability to empathise and to promote social structures (Cozolino 2014). Its importance lies in the fact that it promotes moral principles within an individual (Smith and Scherman 2016).

By understanding the perceptions of the 130 respondents across four GAA Clubs within this study, a clearer understanding of the social benefits of being involved in the GAA can be discovered. As with any sporting club winning is not guaranteed each season but with the outcomes of this study it can benefit policy makers, clubs, organisations and agencies in order for them to provide a better social foundation that will aid overall friendships, empathy, social support and well-being for young people in Ireland.

With the first three objectives in mind the findings from the last chapter were as follows. Regarding the first Objective, it was found that the respondents perceived strong family networks
and good friendships with close confidante friends. More males than females perceived help from friends and that acceptance and happiness from friends was received if the respondents perceived they were having problems. Trust, self awareness, leadership and real life socialising were influencers of good quality friendship.

Regarding empathy, it was perceived as being important within the confines of friendship; and it was expressed within a sporting context also. The respondents perceived that they were able to contribute to a common goal and compromise with others; and that watching television or movies did not affect the respondents’ perceptions of fear or sadness.

In the areas of social support the respondents of the study felt that having fun, being respectful and showing support helps GAA Clubs and success and that acceptance and happiness were foundations to potential friendships with adults in their lives. Finally, respondents reported support and dependability from a friend and/or an adult within their GAA Club as available if required.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is a wealthy amateur sports association. However, it was also acknowledged in that chapter that although GAA Clubs have received funding from more than one source (such as the GAA and Sky Sports) the manner in how this money is spent within clubs is of prime importance to the social support structures that are perceived by young people to be supporting them within GAA Clubs. With this in mind, it is pertinent to engage with the specific perceptions of the young people that partake in GAA activities on a regular basis within the framework of a balanced discussion.

6.2 Objective 1 to explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs

From the results chapter five key findings emerge in relation to Objective One namely:

(1) Perceived strong family networks;

(2) Perceived good quality friendships with close confidante friends;

(3) More males than females perceive availability of help from friends;
(4) Perceived acceptance and happiness from friends if having problems;
(5) And perceived attributes of trust, self awareness, leadership and real life socialising
    influence good quality friendship.

6.2.1 Perceived strong family networks
In general, the respondents in this study perceive themselves as having strong family networks
who provided robust social support and overall they had good relationships with family
members. Although there were no specific open ended questions aimed at the relationships with
their parents, there were questions about adults in the respondents’ lives that they were free to
answer and to include examples about their parents. None were given and so judging by the
quantitative answers that the respondents provided it was clear that they were generally happy
and had close adults in their lives. It was also observed by the researcher when he watched
parents drop them off and pick them up from training. Here it seemed, in general, that there was
a happy relationship between young people and their parents.

Almost two-thirds of respondents perceived that they could depend on their siblings for
emotional support. Although some respondents had siblings playing in the same clubs, no
complaints came from them about them and there were no other specific remarks made to the
researcher about the quality of family life by the respondents. Again, from officially accounted
for the observations and it was apparent that their relationships with siblings were positive and
strong. Another interesting aspect during the early stages and recruitment research process was
that five young people and parents specifically voiced their appreciation of the young people
having their own say in doing this study on the areas of friendship, social support and empathy
within their clubs, which showed a close connection between parents and young people.

The results of this study prove that the respondents have retained support from their parents
through their involvement in sporting activity. This has helped to foster this tight parental and
sibling bond whilst also giving the respondents their own area of expression and independence
from their family.

Adolescence is a period of significant change in a young person’s life. Within this period of
growing up, there are physical, intellectual, emotional, and social developmental changes. A
young person’s growing independence away from parental guidance allows them to reach their individual potential and understand how to develop. Still, youth can be a vulnerable stage at this time in terms of personal development as it can be a dramatically changing time that presents a range of challenges in the transition between childhood and adulthood.

Much more than a passage from childhood to adulthood, adolescence allows young people to see their relationship with their parents in a different light. The battle for freedom is a constant one with young people and their guardians as a sense of independence takes over their youth. A lessening dependence on parents and a growing distance between the parent and the young person occurs with a result of disputes that epitomise this stage of the adolescent’s lessening parental influence (Soenens, Vansteenkiste et al. 2017). Annoyance and unpleasantness can arise between young people and parents but, in the main, this is normative and their original close bond will be ever present (Colten 2017).

Over the past few years, a further dimension of influence on young people is the introduction of mobile technology that provides instant internet connection, media and social media. The media has the potential to negatively influence vulnerable adolescents. Adolescence is a time when the media produces negative stereotyping which, in turn, can prejudice adolescents’ behaviour to overindulge in irresponsible, criminal and yobbish behaviour.

Nonetheless, many adolescents can be passionate about making a positive change in society (BBC News 2014). In spite of this enthusiasm, adolescence can present risks as it is a time of have psychological adjustment and can be intertwined with anticipation and anxiety (Qu, Fuligni et al. 2015). Due to it being a time of change, for many youth worry is possible and identity and healthy sexual development can be challenged (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005).

There are a few consistent differences according to the ego state of females and males differing at this stage of development according to Hy and Loevinger’s reference to Erikson, yet a criticism remains that Erickson’s theory on identity may be influenced by class or culture (Loevinger 2014).

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out-of-school agencies in general:
As several young people and parents commented to the researcher during the research that this study was a ‘good idea’, it allowed young people the opportunity to give their honest and open views on happenings within their clubs to an independent adult source. It is important for other GAA and sporting bodies and out of school agencies to continue to seek opinions of young people in order to improve the out of school activities for them and future age groups so that they can grow up to be independent and responsible adults. This, in turn, allows them to reach their individual potential.

As the vast majority of female and male respondents from all Clubs within this study feel very supported by their parents these young people’s positive experience of being supported ought to provide a solid basis on which the Club executives can use these young people to pass on that supportive knowledge to younger members of their Clubs. This can be done by these young respondents to this study volunteering for positions of responsibility to help support their Club’s younger juvenile members.

These results show that in spite of their being a variety of altering family units in present day Irish society, there is generally quite a traditional family make up in existence in all of these four GAA Clubs. Their inter-relationship of friendly values across these clubs and within the families that provide the clubs with juvenile players is important to understand. All sporting organisations and out of school agencies need to respect peoples’ individual understanding of ‘family’ and what it means to them as individuals. This will foster a good community and ‘family type feeling ‘within clubs in order for their youth to enjoy being part of them and thus, get more learning from their membership within the clubs, organisations and agencies.

6.2.2 Perceived good quality friendships with close confidante friends
This study found that all respondents perceived they had friends in their lives. Almost all respondents describe their friendships are good when choosing one of the multiple options on the Social Network Questionnaire. From the survey, it was found that almost all of the respondents had 2 or more people in their social network. It was also discovered that almost half (46%, n=60) of all respondents perceived that they had between three and five close confidante friends.
Regarding adolescence, the four major factors of adolescence allow for physical, intellectual, social and emotional development in young people. During adolescence, pubertal changes motivate the size, shape, and sexuality of individuals (Newman and Newman 2017). Intellectually, children develop but their emotions are still a considerable way off full maturity. There is, for example, the possibility of anxiety regarding changing family relationships (Cummings, Koss et al. 2015). Abstract thinking and being able to think in order to have increased ability to consider more situations in a hypothetical manner occurs during this time of development also (Bjorklund and Causey 2017). Understanding social issues and having a better cognitive ability in learning can be noteworthy too (Frydenberg, Liang et al. 2017).

In more recent years, social networking gives an opportunity for increased social interaction. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Linkedin contain millions of adolescent followers, yet there is an increased amount of mental health issues being reported in the literature attributed to excessive social media interaction (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Lewis et al. 2015). In essence, this illustrates the worth and danger of socialising for the adolescent in order for them to develop socially in a healthy manner.

There can be both positive and negative social partners during this time of development and this is vital for the altering feelings of young people. ‘Good’ parenting around a person can motivate feelings of happiness (Harold and Leve 2018). Friendship with peers is paramount but people of a similar age group can also be quite destructive to one another also. According to Messias and Kindrick (2014), for some young people depression can arise owing to bullying and leading to suicidal tendencies. Females have voiced their concerns towards bullying more often than males by reporting such instances when they happen in real life or online. Yet, males are more likely to report exclusive bullying before they feel psychological feelings of overall sadness (Messias and Kindrick et al. 2014).

Having a shared interest is important when making friends (Scanlon, Leahy et al. 2019) as this allows young people to appreciate one another’s social issues which can aid their coping skills (Frydenberg, Liang et al. 2017).
These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs and other sporting and out of school agencies in general:

- Adolescence is an ever changing time and a period of evolving family relationships. As the respondents in this study had two or more people in their social network outside of home this provides a thorough support structure for them during this developmental stage of life. By having more people connected to an adolescent outside of their home it allows them to have a better perspective on people in general. GAA Clubs and out of school agencies need to be aware of not only, how many people are in a young person’s home, but, the quality of close relationships that they are being influenced by over the course of a typical week. This will allow for better support and a more holistic development for young people.

- The fact that many young people in this study had at least two close confidantes (friends) in their lives highlights the socialisation function that can occur within GAA Clubs. Other sporting organisations and out of school agencies should promote closer social relationships with their local GAA Clubs in order for a greater co-networking of peers that can not only boost both clubs and societies memberships but create better links within the communities where young people reside.

6.2.3 More males than females perceive the availability of help from friends
Interestingly, results in this study unexpectedly showed that more males than females perceived that their friends were more willing to help them, where 63.1% (n=82) of males felt they would get help from a friend if needed with only over a third of females feeling the same way (36.9%, n=48).

From the interviews, seven males spoke at length about the importance of ‘trust’ for them whereas only two females briefly touched on this trait as being important for them. From the surveys, almost over 60% (n=78) of males answered the question on trust within the GAA being important in comparison to around a third of females.
From the review of the literature, it became apparent that as adolescents become less dependent, their behaviour then changes. Due to puberty, they can feel stress. Yet males and females can feel this stress differently and because of this, there is the risk of disease owing to the possibility of feelings of being vulnerable throughout the development of resilience at this time of life (Bale and Epperson 2015).

Boys spend less time with their families and more times with their peers during adolescence. On the other hand, girls often tend to spend more time with their mother (Arnett 2002). This point was echoed by Mmari (2018) who stated that parents felt boys were more able to look after themselves and that girls had more need for protection by their parents during adolescence (Mmari, Moreau et al. 2018). Leavitt (1998) in (Arnett 2002) explained how many traditional cultures expect boys to ‘achieve’ the recognition of manhood, whereas girls reach womanhood merely through biological changes and thus showing distinct differences of the genders as they develop.

High masculinity is evident due to the elite areas of youth sport and physical education that young males experience within schools (Kehler and Atkinson 2010) whereas, for females, the bus journey to and from school has been a form of unnatural or informal social setting where their home and family can be put under inspection by their peers (Bettis and Adams 2005).

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs and other sporting and out of school agencies in general:

- As boys tend to spend less time with their families and more time with their peers during adolescence, it is important to listen to their opinions on what constitutes ‘good’ friendship for them. This proves that males view on the issues of ‘trust’ within friendships need to be safeguarded in GAA Clubs, sporting organisations and other out of school agencies. As the GAA season is run over the Spring, Summer and Autumn in general, it shows that males feel a trusting bond when they are involved in their GAA Clubs throughout the season. When GAA fixtures are compromised or during the offseason the GAA could put in a place an indoor club for males in order to continue developing this trusting bond that has sustained their friendships throughout the season.
All sporting clubs including GAA Clubs need to continue to give males within their clubs a more consistent voice to communicate what they feel is the benefits of trusting relationships within clubs so as to aid a growing body of research on mental health for males in general.

6.2.4 Perceived acceptance and happiness from friends if having problems
The findings from the quantitative outcomes of this study show that when a problem arises, just over four out of five of respondents (83.8%, n=109) said that they had ‘friends they could turn to’ if they needed to. As well, over three-quarters of respondents say that their friends provide them with a sense of acceptance and happiness. They also perceive the value of friendships that are guarded by good leadership and empathetic ideals. This demonstrates a high rate of friendships and support among respondents.

The literature review refers to the importance of a sort of ‘central helping system’ which can be prevalent and accessed through informal social support. From it, family and friends may provide support for family members. The family provides socialisation for the adolescent (Dolan and Canavan et al. 2006). On the other hand, emotional rejection is possible if adolescents feel left out of a group. Neuroscience now recognises how a person’s brain can house their emotional thoughts. The right brain holds the key to the unique emotional and social functions of a human. The adolescent (who is developing their unconscious mind) can have either positive or negative effects triggered regarding their socialisation (Schonert-Reichl, Oberle et al. 2015) and how they are being either positively or negatively parented at that time of development also (Cole, Goodman et al. 2018).

When bigger life decisions are required to be made problems for adolescents can arise (Van Petegem, Vansteenkiste et al. 2015). As Erikson suggests, adolescence is a "..turning point of
increased vulnerability and heightened potential.” (Erikson 1968:96). This vulnerability can be influenced by negative factors also.

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs and other sporting organisations and out of school agencies in general:

- Regarding the ‘vulnerability’ of adolescence that Erikson (1968) spoke of earlier, bullying, depression and suicidal tendencies are possible with youth. In this study, the young people perceived friendship as being important for their self-awareness. This, along with having real-life trust, fun and loyalty were important for them. As a result, GAA Clubs, sporting bodies and out of school agencies need to understand that activities must be less pressurised for the developing adolescent who may already feel under pressure in other areas of life. Sport should not be solely about winning and losing.

- As respondents value friendships that are typified by good adult leadership and empathetic ideals, it demonstrates the importance to all GAA Clubs, and other sports organisations to quality assure the leadership of their clubs. Garda vetting (police checking) is a process that is in place in most clubs and agencies and in many cases Children First policies are already in place, but neither of these teach or cover the matter of good leadership and empathetic promotion ideals. More workshops on these topics are required in order to help foster these human qualities and attributes in clubs and agencies.

6.2.5 Perceived attributes of trust, self awareness, leadership and real life socialising influence good friendship
As none of the respondents of this study had general, mild, moderate or severe learning disabilities (to the knowledge of the researcher) they therefore had at the very least, average levels of intelligence (NCSE 2019). All respondents were playing the sports that they had joined the GAA Clubs for, and they had adequate motor skills for their ages also. The males and females of the study all seemed to converse with at least one other young person when entering
or exiting training and no one was left alone without some form of passive positive conversation. Throughout all training sessions the researcher observed that there was no aggressive language or behaviour outside of the usual nuisances of the individual games and their sets of rules which includes there being physical shoulder-to-shoulder contact as a main way to tackle someone with one`s body. Rather, there seemed to be a joyous atmosphere at most sessions for all clubs involved.

Overall, ‘trust and respect’ were the two themes that define good friendship for the respondents and this emerged from the study. The respondents admit that self-awareness is key to making and sustaining friendship. They also perceived that socialising or real life talking and good leadership qualities are required to positively affect friendship.

As noted in Chapter 2, adolescents are psychologically thinking more independently by this time of their human development. The process of adolescent growth naturally impacts their friendships and relationships. However, stressful feelings and severe life issues even abuse when dating can occur for some and in part due to these new types of relationships (Chen and Foshee 2015). General normative socialising can also be affected. Kehler and Atkinson (2010) found that school is an extremely powerful socialising agent for children and adolescence.

The cortical thickness of the brains of children who are between 7 and 19 years of age dictates their IQ intelligence levels (Johnson 2011). In general, a person`s intelligence levels are stable but throughout the period of adolescence males and females can show developmental differences (Schnack, van Haren et al. 2014). Motor skills that impact on learning within a human are closely linked to the general verbal and non-verbal abilities.

During adolescence, more mature relationships are being formed for both males and females than when they were younger and so a more efficient social cognition is required. A deepening of friendships from earlier childhood years as well as the possibility of romantic relationships coming on stream may provide a developmental difference at this time of life (Laursen and Adams et al. 2018).
These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- As adolescents are developing they ought to have greater access to cost effective forms of deepening their self-awareness. For example, activities such as yoga and mindfulness are becoming more main-stream in educational circles and these activities ought to be included within all GAA Clubs also (Yoga 2019).

- Off season youth clubs are needed in all GAA Clubs where all young males and females can socialise in a relaxed manner in order to develop their social awareness and leadership skills. This is also important for them as during the off season there are no pressures of playing and concentrating on improving playing skills that comes with the natural membership of competitive GAA games.

- Objective 1 set out to explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs and it is clear that the respondents perceived strong family networks and they perceived good quality friendships with close confidante friends. More males than females perceived the availability of help from friends and overall, respondents perceived an acceptance and happiness from friends if having problems. The perceived attributes of trust, self awareness, leadership and real life socialising influenced good friendship also. As a result, in general, the respondents of this study perceived availability and quality of social support in their GAA Clubs.

6.3 Objectives 2: To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs

In Chapter 5 the author identifies four key findings in relation to empathy for discussion here:

1) Perceived empathy as being important within confines of friendship;
2) Expressed empathy within a sporting context;
Perceived they were able to contribute to a common goal and compromise with others;
Watching television, movies and screen time does not affect the respondents’ perceptions of fear or sadness.

6.3.1 Perceived empathy as being important within the confines of friendship
From the findings chapter, the term ‘Empathy’ was perceived by some respondents as being important in the context of friendship as they first heard the mention of ‘empathy’ with regard to this study some months beforehand when they were asked to fill out the Basic Empathy Scale. Prior to this the respondents understood empathy as they covered this term during their time in primary school when learning the subject of Social Political and Health Education (SPHE). As mentioned in the last chapter, this outcome was mostly reported during the quantitative surveys of the respondents. However, during the qualitative interviews, they did not generally state or show in depth understanding or examples (other than sporting ones) of empathy in action. In fact, it was found that more than four fifths of those observed (81.3%, n=106) could ‘compromise’ with others and show understanding. Another finding showing the perceptions of empathy was found in that nearly seventy percent of respondents (68.8%, n=64) adapted to ‘the character of others’. Added to this, almost two thirds of the respondents of the empathy survey disagreed that ‘other people’s feelings don’t bother me at all’.

Although both the Observation Schedule measured the respondents ability to adapt to others the mean was nearly seventy per-cent (68.77%). It was almost ten per-cent higher (78.55%) when the young peoples’ sense of acceptance and happiness was measured. However, there is still room for these young people to have an improved sense of being able to adapt to others. This can be improved by educating young people on the importance of questioning their peers about their feelings during their regular social interactions. As both genders from all four Clubs have reported a similarly high ability to adapt to others, programmes can be put in place within these Clubs to facilitate interaction between the genders. This will further increase the ability to adapt to others within their Clubs.
In sum, this shows that while respondents heard of the term empathy they had mixed understanding of its meaning, but within the concept and context of their club it is strongly evident that they could and do demonstrate it.

From the literature review chapter, it was established that informal education increases the likelihood of participatory civic engagement (Nee and Dozier 2017). Young people learn how to become self-responsible in their actions and are encouraged to do so through youth work for example Foróige and sport participation through the GAA who promote the ‘Give Respect, Get Respect’ mantra. Empathy is ignited in young people by them showing growing self-responsibility and understanding and respect for others.

From a recent large representative sample study of 700 12-16 year-olds in Ireland, it resulted that there were high levels of empathy and social responsibility among youth but that civic behaviour (such as offering someone help or helping in a community) was lower (Silke et al. 2019). Their civic inactivity was attributed to this group not understanding how to act in this way and having a fear of being kind can show weakness. Even with all this in mind, those that engaged in extracurricular activities including youth clubs and sports were found to have higher levels of empathy (Silke 2019).

The literature establishes a deep neurological relationship with empathy or what is now termed the social brain (Cozolino 2014). By definition, empathy is a neurologically propelled component of the brain that is cognitively and effectively ascertained. Empathy also has a social function and has the ability to motivate emotional and social skills and awareness within a person (SPHE 1999). A human`s neurological ability houses their anterior insula and subgenual anterior cingulate cortex of the brain which allows for empathy to take place. Empathy gives the capability to explicitly understand another`s feelings which activates pro-social behaviours (Newman 2016).

Team sport participation promotes social inclusion and the quality of life and overall wellbeing and thus can contribute to youth being more empathetic towards others (Kapoor 2018).
Education, by and through sport participation, including empathy, promotes self and social responsibility (Project 2019).

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- The GAA have published a key policy document which states that the ‘Give Respect, Get Respect’ mantra is important (Roden 2018). Undoubtedly, this mantra has rich meaning and good intentions. However, from the study, it is clear that the young people do not refer to it at all or use it as a way of understanding empathy. The GAA, other sporting organisations and out of school youth organisations need to be aware that constant promotion of empathy and compassion is needed to continue to positively influence young people’s opinions and ideas.

- It was clear from this research that the respondents displayed actions of empathy but that they were not fully aware the term ‘empathy’ until the study commenced. GAA Clubs, sporting organisations and other out of school organisations (as well as educational facilities) need to understand that more education on empathy is required in order for them to expect young people to understand it’s true and holistic meaning and to know when they are practising it in life.

- Active empathy is hugely important. Coaches, educators, and adults that care for young people need to verbally communicate that empathy is an important facet for
human development in order to bring the term to life within GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies.

### 6.3.2 Expressed empathy within a sporting context

The findings indicated that the majority of those observed showed empathy within a sporting context most of the time, with a vast majority of respondents offering comfort (checking if player/s were injured or avoiding others running space) for 75% of the skills that they were being observed. Another indication of expressing empathy within a sporting context was when the respondents perceived that feeling sorry and helping a teammate was a good way to show empathy in sport. This was particularly emphasised by Peter a seventeen-year-old successful player who felt the need for others around a player to provide a sense of balanced support when a player was requiring it.

Having an empathetically shared experience and wanting to decrease suffering through shared experience is closely linked with altruistic behaviour (Kernan 2010). As mentioned in the literature review sympathy is quite often compared with empathy. Unlike empathy, sympathy specifies distress at another human being’s problem and often has condescending overtones and can be indicated by a sense of wanting to see another happier and does avoid a shared experience (Burton 2015). Hence, by attempting to metaphorically ‘walk in another person’s shoes’, people can attempt to show empathy to one another.

Singer and Klimecki (2014) recommend strongly the need further research into empathy and youth. Empathy can be broken down into cognitive, affective and behavioural parts.

Static and active empathy make up social empathy. By just understanding where a person is coming from a young person is showing static empathy. Actively doing something about the situation that the person finds himself or herself in, is putting place active empathy via acts of compassion (Dolan 2017).

As touched on in the Chapter 2 when defining social empathy, it is important to have an explicitly multidimensional approach to this trait. Stoland (as far back as 1969) highlighted
empathy as crucial in that it allows for the observer to emotionally react once they perceive what another person is experiencing. In that year also, Wispe (1969) said that the observer of social empathy must build for oneself another person’s mental status. Once this happens affective or emotive reactions must be put into place.

From the literature review it was apparent that youth workers are conscious of trying to promote responsibility within young people and they try to communicate this so there will be an increase in overall community development. Other professions that are concerned with leadership and youth such as teachers, coaches, mentors and role models can demonstrate leadership skills to a young person in this manner also (Wray-Lake, Syvertsen et al. 2016).

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- It is clear from the research that there are highly caring young people taking part in all four of these GAA Clubs. The GAA, other sporting organisations and out of school activities need to be aware that being active in the skills of caring and compassion breeds a more long term empathic culture within the groups of young people. By defining the differences between ‘sympathy’ and ‘empathy’ the GAA hierarchy can begin to foster an interest in great social awareness for others and from this approach other non-playing members may become caring administrators within their own clubs with the organisation.

- Initially this study planned to concentrate on the perceptions of young people from 12-18 years of age. However, as the objectives included finding out about young people’s views on friendship, empathy and social support and as many of the younger respondents (who were 12 years of age) also played GAA with 11 year olds, it seemed only fair to allow those that were 11 years of age to partake in the study. This was an example of the researcher showing active empathy to potential young respondents. Other GAA and sporting bodies as well as out of school organisations need to lead with active empathy even if it requires changing rules and earlier plans in order for young people to see how the trait can benefit all people.
6.3.3 Respondents perceived they were able to contribute to a common goal and compromise with others
The findings showed that more than 70% (n=45) of respondents observed perceive that they can contribute to the common goal, are adaptable to different characters, are able to compromise, are affected by their friends’ emotions and understand when their friends are happy.

The literature review showed that social maturation and developing the ability to empathise are good exercises for a healthy brain. In continuing to create social structures emotional maturity positively affects one’s brain (Cozolino 2014). By having self-compassion but also by showing empathy, stress can be reduced within the human mind (Raab 2014).

A youth`s resilience can be affected by environmental stresses. In having a meaningful relationship with an adult in life and by taking care of another or being relied upon resilience can be built up in a young person (Benard 1991). Self-meaning can be developed by having the free will to make choices for oneself. By providing a balanced support of young people and fostering resilience it can better their social competence and provide greater purpose to a young person (Lenkens, Rodenburg et al. 2019). Throughout a young person development it is possible for them to learn how to show empathy. By cultivating family and school relationships a study of 481 participants between the age of 10- to 14-year old discovered that aggressive behaviour in boys can be improved (Batanova and Loukas 2014).

Conflict in families can lower instances of empathy among adolescent members (Van Lissa and Hawk et al. 2015). By mothers showing empathy, a positive knock-on effect on their young offspring through their external expression can occur. On the other hand though, when mothers reject or punish their children they in turn will internalise their problems (Thompson, Jones et al. 2014). By parents being coached in order to lessen their impulse control and negative emotions with and towards their adolescent offspring, empathy can begin to prosper (Havighurst, Kehoe et al. 2015)

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:
• Goroshit and Hen (2016) noted that by having positive peer to peer behaviour and employing an educational culture where those who are empathetic teach young people, morality is improved. In so doing, GAA Clubs and other out of school agencies can allow for education on empathy to exist and a positive peer to peer educational moral culture can develop.

• By partaking in increased acts of empathy it is good for the human brain and leads to pro-social behaviours among young people. By clubs and out of school youth work organisations engaging young people in pro-social situations and activating empathy leads to better outcomes for civic society.

6.3.4 Watching television, movies and screen time does not affect the respondents’ perceptions of fear or sadness

The outcomes from the findings of this study illustrate that the respondents failed to show any obvious signs of fear or sadness when watching television, movies or during screen time.

Chapter 2 addressed how communal activities are targeted by mass media, which demonstrates that social, political, economic, and religious information are targeted by advertisers in order to elicit an emotional reaction from consumers. Moral values and cultural outlook are often pressurised by media marketers. Games, television, and internet applications have been marketed for the populous of young people, as are social networking sites. These social networking sites act to educate and entertain peoples’ common interest and behaviours.

Prior to the internet, social networking involved ‘real life’ interaction between people in public. Since the mid 1990s more modern online interactions are providing many positive benefits for people to network. Benefits referring to people who were studied having used social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, Youtube and Flikr noted that they felt enjoyment, self-efficacy, learned things, gained personally, received altruism, empathy, social engagement, community interest, reciprocity, and reputation. However, the respondents of the study also
communicated that each network failed to have the same way of communicating for them (Oh, Ozkaya et al. 2014).

As already mentioned, policies for the safety of digital media are required to be put it into place (Schwartz, Rhodes et al. 2014). This was examined by the Irish government and by early 2019 it was decided that there would be new online safety laws together with an Online Safety Commissioner (Goodbody 2019). Many adolescents have increased screen time which includes watching television, internet and being exposed to all forms of media and this can have a negative effect on their development (Ghekiere, Van Cauwenberg et al. 2019).

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- As the respondents failed to show any meaningful signs of fear or sadness when watching television, movies, or screen time it shows that the time they spend training is time well spent. It is a time for physical fitness and socialisation to occur but it is also a rest from screen time in an era where there is an ever reliance on mobile technology for many youth. Other GAA Clubs and out of school agencies need to put in place down times for screen time and to allow natural socialisation to occur for the developing brains of young people.

- Young people from this study did not feel as if they were being fearful when watching television or movies so educational television or movies ought to be used to help them learn about the need to socialise more and to be more empathetic in general throughout life. This can be done with GAA Clubs, organisations and agencies holding regular movie nights during the off-season.

- Objective 2 attempted to measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs. As the respondents perceived empathy as being important within the confines of friendship and expressed empathy within a sporting context it showed that empathy was important to the young people in the study. Respondents perceived they were able to contribute to a
common goal and compromise with others and that watching television, movies and screen time does not affect the respondents’ perceptions of fear or sadness. With all that said, strong levels of empathy and the instances of friendship were evident within the study.

6.4 Objective 3: To establish the social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four GAA Juvenile Sports’ clubs

After a review of the results, the author identifies three findings, to be elaborated on below:

(1) Whereas in general respondents had strong social support in their lives this was rated as particularly high within friendships in the GAA and there was an overall very positive and high regard for GAA club engagement as a source of support and friendship;

(2) It was perceived among youth respondents that having fun, being respectful and showing support helps GAA Clubs and the possibility of success;

(3) Perceived acceptance and happiness from others were seen by respondents as foundations to potential friendships with adults in their lives;

(4) Youth perceived they could seek support and dependence from a friend and an adult within their GAA Club.

6.4.1 Whereas in general respondents had strong social support in their lives this was rated as higher within friendships in the GAA and there was an overall very positive and high regard for GAA club engagement as a source of support and friendship
From the study it was observed that the vast majority of respondents had mobile technology as they choose to turn them off prior to the interview and put them in their bags before training or were seen to check them as they exited dressing rooms after training was completed. As the results showed that being friends, having fun and being respectful to team members were perceived as important parts of being supportive in a GAA Club it is important that this is continued when social networking happens in clubs.

By showing support to team mates it can help teams succeed more together which was also a major resultant finding. Often clubs are eager to win trophies and it is important for them to know that in order to provide a basis for success that young people value friendship as a starting point. Much of this support was perceived by the respondents of this study having occured throughout real life situations.

From the literature review it was apparent that tact is needed when trying to create trustful relations with adolescents. Organisations aimed at supporting youth outside of the school day require a range of skills to provide suitable assistance and sustenance (Epstein, Sanders et al. 2018).

Authors Bowlby (1969) and Weiss (1974) state in Veiel, Hans (1992) that social support is a basic human requirement. A number of other authors including (Herz 2015) came to the conclusion that social support implies not just human, but more intangible efforts to provide support in a social context and that personal relationships are central to humans’ lives. Social support can also provide a sense of belonging and benefit academic performance also (Sung, Koo et al. 2015). Cohen (2000) impressed how social support necessitates the functioning of human relationships and by having an increased positive social integration it aids psychological well-being in youth (Yang, Boen et al. 2016). Essentially then, social support is not just seen and heard. It is something deeper that satisfies a person’s greatest needs (Gallagher 2019).

Social networking allows for an overall sharing of human support and information instigated through real life or through online forms of communication. Modern social networking attempts to offer online social support in people’s lives but it also causes addiction with little therapeutic interventions available (Andreassen and C. S. 2015). Support of humans within a network grows
from human relationships. Cohen (2000) communicate that social networks encompass human relationships, including their existence, their quantity and types of relationships (Editors 2019).

As a positive feature of this research is that both females and males in all four of the GAA Clubs have similar amounts of patient co-operation’, both the Castlegar and the St. James’ Clubs could re-enforce this attitude and guide younger members into a similar mindset by both clubs and genders organising social events outside of their respective Clubs and sports to positively influence the youth atmosphere of their local communicates.

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- As former renowned GAA sports stars Kilkenny player Jackie Tyrrell and former Tyrone player Seán Cavanagh noted that even though they were not ‘friends’ with their successful adult managers they largely felt that their talents and abilities were recognised for most of their careers by their managers and this in itself was a form of social support for both of them. Within this study, another hugely informative outcome found that 82.3% (n=107) of respondents perceived that their talents and abilities were recognised by adults. It is, therefore, hugely important that GAA Clubs and their adults, other sporting organisations and other out of school activities recognise young members’ talents and abilities as many substitute players in these clubs fail to see on field action but do appreciate being told that they have something to give to the club and this should be communicated regularly.

- Going to GAA Clubs’ trainings and matches is not just about playing the games. For many of the young people, it is a considered a safe and enjoyable social space that, for the majority, gives them at least one friend. For other clubs, sporting organisations and out of school activities it is important to foster good friendship within groups to help young people feel welcome. Although socialising online can be good for young people, by socialising in real life it aids a young person’s self concept much better. This was
proven by the University of British Columbia, Canada’s study of 733 adolescents where they discovered that their respondents who exclusively socialised online and not in real life had the lowest levels of self-concept (Khan, Gagné et al. 2016). This can be compared with the lesson of an internationally well known poem. In ‘After Apple Picking’, written in 1914, Robert Frost’s wrote:

“My long two-pointed ladder’s sticking through a tree
   Toward heaven still,
   And there’s a barrel that I didn’t fill
   Beside it, and there may be two or three
   Apples I didn’t pick upon some bough.
   But I am done with apple-picking now.”

   - (Notes 2019)

In spite of this poem being about picking apples, it can be likened with this study on young people’s growth and development. In the above poem's opening lines the poet illustrates how the best apples are outside in the fresh air, and come from the top of the tree, but are still growing and developing. Similarly, by young people socialising in a more natural, outdoor and real life manner with their peers who have similar interests to them, they are socialising and developing in the most fruitful and the most natural of ways. All GAA Clubs, sporting organisations and out of school agencies need to adopt a fully social approach in order to best meet the needs of the young people under their care. Similarly, from the study, it was clear that the GAA respondents do not need social media as a form of social support.

When the interviewees spoke about friendship and social support in general in their lives and within the GAA Clubs many of them did not feel that they needed social media as a form of social support within their lives. Added to this, the vast majority of the interviewees did not know the interviewer prior to their interviews, yet they showed admirable confidence and open body language in explaining their opinions in a one to one face to face setting and failed to be perturbed by any questioning. From the
observations it was evident that the respondents got support on the pitch and in the
dressing room through face to face contact. The young people responded that this natural
support was effective for them.

- Along with their answer to the statement that ‘socialising and real-life talking’ was
positively referred to by nine respondents a total of twelve times, it emphasises that many
respondents are gaining enough social support in their GAA Clubs and lives in general,
already. Many GAA teams, sporting organisations, and out of school activities use social
media applications to directly communicate to their young players, yet the young players
have reported that they are satisfied with the level of real-life social support. This
suggests that a renewed emphasis is put on real-life interactive social support with young
people rather than social media applications for young people.

6.4.2 It was perceived among youth respondents that being respectful and showing support helps GAA Clubs and the possibility of success

and

6.4.3 Perceived acceptance and happiness from others were seen by respondents as foundations to potential friendships with adults in their lives

As the feelings of being respected lends itself to acceptance and happiness, both the second and third points will now be discussed together. This study showed that almost all respondents perceived that an adult could be their friend and could be depended on if they really needed them which verifies that social support, as already outlined by Bell (2013) can be inspired by adults. It was also found that three-quarters of respondents communicated that they perceived a sense of acceptance and happiness by adults in their life.
Democratic leadership can be inspired by adults providing social support to young people (Bell 2013). This can then collectively synergise throughout groups of people. The GAA can show this type of support. From it breeds a cultural identity that ignites personal development within communities (Bowles and O'Sullivan 2012).

Social support encapsulates human endeavours of possibly sometimes intangible efforts that include emotionally supportive and loving behaviour within a socially networked community. When studying informal social spaces that are in some way trying to educate young people it is important to promote social support as a central theme.

Dolan and Brady (2012) believe social support includes communication and actions that lead the way to reduced stress and this, in turn, allows for coping in life. Coping then is a welcoming plateau for healthier self-esteem and self-efficacy for youth. By having a firm emotional and esteem base of social support through the medium of advice there is a solid socially supportive structure for young people. Emotional support is reverberated within a loving safeguard as Cobb (1976) in (Glanz, Rimer et al. 2015) state that social support recognises that people ought to be cared for, to feel as if they are loved and have more self esteem within a communally recognised supportive network.

Confiding partners can group together to format a network of support that constructs good social support (Lin, Dean et al. 2013). During stressful times having a sense of community can benefit an person’s life in general (Oh, Ozkaya et al. 2014).

From the literature review of this study it was noted that informal social support coming from family and friends for older African Americans from the National Survey of American Life found that family contact is positively correlated with life satisfaction. The study concluded that unique contributions are made by both family and friends in supporting older people (Nguyen, Chatters et al. 2016). By support including a ‘presence’ approach to care-giving, trustful relationships can develop and real life socialisation can be sustained and developed within communities (Baart 2002)
These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- As Bell (2013) felt that democratic leadership can be motivated by this type of social support it proves that these four GAA Clubs are actively developing young democratic citizens. As outlined by Bowles and O’Sullivan (2012), cultural identify can stem from here. Other GAA Clubs, sporting organisations and out of school agencies need to be aware of their responsibility of contributing to the democratic process through their regular activity in non-formal education and community development.

- Acceptance and happiness go hand in hand according to the young people from this study. All other GAA Clubs and out of school agencies need to develop practices that firstly show how all individuals from all walks of life are accepted by their organisations and to then use this plateau to build greater happiness for their members.

### 6.4.4 Youth perceived they could seek support and dependence from a friend and an adult within their GAA Club

The findings showed that over 90% (n=118) of respondents stated that they could communicate to an adult within their GAA Club if they had a problem and that almost 70% (n=91) perceived they could turn to an adult in their GAA club if they were having problems. This is a very high and positive outcome for GAA adult leaders and coaches. Friendship in other areas was also noted as high, with over 70% (n=91) of respondents having a friend within their GAA Club that they could depend upon if they needed it and they could turn to if they were having problems.

As social media allows many young people to build socially supportive networks these applications can also pose greater mental health issues too (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Lewis et al. 2015). The influences of media can be both positive and negative. Mass media companies give sporting clubs, organisations and agencies the opportunity to use communicative technologies for their members. As a result of this modern and ever changing technology, communication is altered in many ways. Positive forms of communication still involve the interaction within the
likes of out of school youth work and other informal youth social spaces. Trying to be affiliated with the ideal people can motivate more positive behaviour as a positive leader can gain astonishing outcomes when organising people (Dutton and Spreitzer 2014).

Positive human development can come from real life social support. From a qualitative study of Mexican school going male adolescents it was found that family and friends provide a customary basis of social support. Here, family and friends gave males support. Males discovered that adaptability, emotion regulation and confidence were promoted by these forms of social support (Chaplin 2014). In showing patience and giving time to young people through listening and observing, adults can give developmental community support to young people (Kusi 2015).

These findings have a number of implications for GAA Clubs, other sporting organisations and out of school agencies:

- As ever updating technologies develop, GAA Clubs and other out-of-school agencies need to be mindful of their potential to both develop and destroy friendships. Regular education to adult leaders in GAA Clubs is required to educate them on newly designed communicative technologies as a safeguard for young people and the simple importance of play fun and sport needs to be retained when changes technological changes are adopted.

- As the agency of the family is the primary social educator of a young person, clubs and out of school agencies ought to have regular fun get togethers inviting family members to young people’s activities in order to motivate regular family conversation on young people’s out of school pastimes (Greenhow and Lewin 2016).

- Objective 3 attempted to establish the social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four GAA Juvenile Sports’ clubs. It was proven that whereas in general respondents had strong social support in their lives this was rated as higher within friendships in the GAA and there was an overall very positive and high regard for GAA club engagement as a source of support and friendship. As well as that, it was perceived among youth respondents that being respectful and showing support helps GAA Clubs
and the possibility of success. The perceived acceptance and happiness from others were seen by respondents as foundations to potential friendships with adults in their lives. Finally, youth perceived they could seek support and dependence from a friend and an adult within their GAA Club. This all proves that there are very specific and positive social benefits of being involved in the GAA.

6.5 Objective 4: To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field

The fourth and final objective in this study is to create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field. This is initially discussed here based on the findings, but further revisited in the Conclusion Chapter. The outcome of this objective is derived from the opening three objectives’ results.

- The minister for sport needs to be aware that this study deals with the perceptions of young people who are involved in the GAA and that these have positive ramifications for their lives. By becoming aware of this, changes in policies that guide the GAA in Ireland can come about in accordance with the people that the sport affects most— the young people.

- This study has proven that informal education is very important to the lives of young people. It has shown that sport is a worthwhile conduit, of not just fitness and physical health, but, that it aids the overall social well-being of young people as they develop. This needs to be considered when future polices are being drafted.

- Informal education such as the involvement in the native games that the GAA offers has been proven by this study to have close familiar ties with both young and old. As the respondents of this study have proven, quite often, being involved within the GAA promotes close family connections.
• This study has proved the importance of friendship in young people’s lives. Policy makers must realise that friendship is the anchor that pulls the boat of social support closer to a young person. For people to become good citizens in a good democracy they need to appreciate the value of social support when they are young. Policy makers need to understand that this is important, not just for the well-being of young people, but for them as adults in the future also.

• From the introduction to this thesis it was made clear that organisations that represent young people in an out-of-school setting in Ireland, feel there is a need for greater investment in order to gain the best outcomes for young people. By policy makers increasing their investment in voluntary led youth sport they can be assured that it is a worthwhile investment into these organisations’ young people and their ability to make and sustain friendships, show empathy and value social support.

Conclusion and the Tentative Model Revisited in the light of the Results

Thus far, the primary purpose of this chapter was to discuss the research findings with regard to the objectives of the study. This discussion also compared the findings with the earlier literature review chapter. The outcomes and discussion of the three opening objectives led to the discussion of the fourth and final objective in order to present messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education fields, which has been integrated into this chapter.

The fourth objective of establishing messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field was briefly dealt with in this chapter. More specific detail of this objective will be discussed in the final chapter of this study, namely, Chapter 7. Before doing so, the key findings will now be considered in light of the tentative conceptual model described earlier at the end of Chapter 2.

In the review of the literature (Chapter 2), a tentative model was displayed that showed the inter-relationship between the three topics of friendship, social support, and empathy and how through the context of sports’ participation, and how these topics can be interwoven.
In light of the findings from Chapter 5, it is clear that the respondents of this study are capable of making and sustaining friendships because of their close traditional family units as well as their involvement within their GAA Clubs. Although the respondents were unable to give real-life examples including the term of ‘empathy’ in action (which had stemmed from their lack of familiarity with the term empathy itself) they were able to use other words and terms which broadly equate to the concept of empathy and were observed in showing empathy within their sporting contexts. As they had learned about empathy in school (through SPHE) but were generally unable to recall the term, when given a further explanation about the term by the researcher, they were very capable of giving examples of empathy in sporting contexts.

This study has shown that the research respondents do not see friends that they initially make online as being ‘real-life’ friends and that those they meet on a typical week are more important to them than online friends in general. This is why their involvement within their GAA Clubs is so vital as their friendly interaction with other members of the clubs gives them support that is a better form of support than their friends met online.

The respondents perceived strong family networks and the majority had close confidante friends whilst more males than females perceived they could be helped by friends when required. They felt accepted and happy with the friends they had in their GAA Clubs. For them, trust, self awareness, leadership and real life socialising were influencers of good quality friendship.

Regarding empathy, it was perceived as being important within the confines of friendship; and it was expressed within a sporting context also. The respondents perceived that they were able to contribute to a common goal and compromise with others; and that watching television or movies did not affect the respondents’ perceptions of fear or sadness.

In the areas of social support the respondents of the study felt that having fun, being respectful and showing support helps GAA Clubs, and that acceptance and happiness were foundations to potential friendships with adults in their lives. Finally, there were strong perceptions among respondents of their seeking support and dependence from a friend and an adult within their GAA Club if required also.
With all of this to the fore, the theoretical inter-relationship between the three topics of friendship, social support, and empathy within the context of sports’ participation of the respondents’ communities have been found at least in this study to benefit adolescents overall perceptions of social well-being.

The overarching aim of this study which was to explore the perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs (females and males) in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field. As a result of this study, it is clear that the respondents perceived the availability and quality of social support in their GAA Clubs. They also had strong levels of empathy and instances of friendship were evident within the study too. The youth also perceived they could seek support and dependence from a friend and an adult within their GAA Club. There are very specific and positive social benefits of being involved in the GAA and these findings prove that future policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field ought to mimic their frameworks to aid other sporting and educational areas for youth.

With this in mind Figure 6.1, below, shows a tweaked version of the model connecting friendship, social support and empathy within the sports’ club environment. In this latter version, the importance of Family Support and club leader and peer support are emphasised as summative key factors in the lives of young people.
Figure 6.1 A Tentative Model Connecting Friendship, Empathy, Social Support and Sport Within the Sports Club Environment
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

In this the concluding chapter of the study four core areas are covered. Firstly, the study’s background and aim remind the reader of the overriding rationale and motivation for this project before the four objectives of the study are revisited (see Section 7.1). Then, a summary of the seven theoretical areas of the review of the literature that have shaped the study are returned to before the study’s research methods are summarised (see Section 7.2). Once this has been presented, the key research findings of the study are presented (Section 7.3) and, finally further messages for practice, policy and research are outlined in the final sub-section (Section 7.4).

In the introduction to this study it was established that many young Irish people who participated in sport received the benefits of having better fitness and physical health. However, during that opening chapter it became clear that less was known about the social benefits of being involved in sport for young people in Ireland. This study, which was of a general population, has shown that experiences of friendship and support matter for young people. In communicating that adolescence is a time of rapid social development that includes changes in friendships and both the existence and requirement of mentorship for young people, it has proved that there is a need for social support and empathy in order for friendship exist.

7.1 Background to and aim and objectives of the study

This study differed from many other studies regarding youth development as it provided a representation of the whole youth population (Greene and Harris 2011). None of the respondents had any known specific condition of interest that would have considered them as being young people with problems (Burger and Neeleman, 2007). Thus, as most social research on adolescents tends to focus on young people who face adversity, less is known about general youth populations, and this study provides new knowledge in this regard and specifically on the matters of young people friendships their social support networks and the related function of sport.
The overarching aim of this study was to explore the perceived friendship, social support and understanding of empathy among the membership of four Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile Clubs.

The objectives of the study were:

5. To explore the overall perceived availability and quality of social support among the youth membership of four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
6. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
7. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in four Galway City GAA Juvenile Sports’ Clubs.
8. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

The study focused on three specific interrelated areas. Firstly, it surveyed the vast majority of juvenile members of four GAA Sports Clubs in Galway city in order to get a broad picture of their perceived social networks, including family, friends and community. In order to do so, 130 young people completed three individual surveys, namely the Social Network Questionnaire by Cutrona and Russell (1981- with amendments by Dolan 2002), the Social Provision Scale by the same authors and thirdly the Basic Empathy Scale (Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). Secondly, the author used a reduced and adapted version of the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule created by Attwood (1999) to observe youth in their natural playing environment. Finally, one-to-one interviews were completed with twenty of the survey respondents. This included an even amount of youth from each of the four GAA Clubs and across gender in order to establish a balanced understanding from the young people on their perceptions of friendship, empathy, and social support.
7.2 Theoretical Underpinnings and Research Methodology

Chapter two outlined the theoretical underpinnings central to this study. Here, adolescence, education, coaching, mentoring, role models and leadership were examined. This was followed by a look at youth work before the impact of media and technology on young people was examined. The chapter then linked in the areas of social support and empathy as central themes within the literature. All of these were interwoven with the core concept of friendship during adolescence which was defined and covered within the literature review across a number of sections.

Adolescence was said to have included the rapid developmental changes from childhood to adulthood. This takes place during that normative time period of life for young people that include the physical, emotional, social and intellectual developmental changes that occur. At this time of maturation, adolescents became more independent of their parents and this happens in time with specific pubertal and biological alterations (Simmons 2017).

By being educated a person is admitting their own ignorance and being questioned which leads to self-learning. Education was referred to as being a formal and informal social process requirement that advances a person’s character and virtues through an awakening of their natural ability.

Coaching, mentoring, role models and leadership then followed the section on education. Coaching was concerned with the communicative skills that enable support and strengthens human behaviour and mentoring gave ongoing guidance in a trusting manner. Role models were seen to model good behaviour for those that partake in similar lifestyles.

In chapter two it was established that youth work occurs when a relationship between the youth and the worker is voluntary. The work must be educational and for the benefit of young people (Jeffs 2015). Youth work is a form of interactive community facilitation, guidance and practical work carried out by conscientious adults concerned with the overall community development.

The second chapter also included media and technology and how it influenced modern day adolescents. This aligned with the background to social support and empathy. Media encapsulated the changing forms of communication and the merging of advanced technology that
allows young people more instant access to social processes of modern communication. **Social support** was the emotional and socially supportive acts of behaviour that can occur from one human to another. Finally, in that second chapter, **empathy** was addressed as being a neurologically rooted process that allowed humans to have emotional and social awareness. The importance of social empathy was established in this chapter also.

### 7.2.1 Research Methodology

Chapter 3 described the research methodology that was created and put into place in order to answer the overall aim and objectives of this study. In general, it was concluded that qualitative research methods are positivist in nature. Whereas, the interpretive method of research within the social sciences utilise qualitative methods, for the most part. Here the rationale, aim and objectives for the study were presented as well as the study’s methodological choices. The design for the study and the overall implementation to carry out the study (which included a pilot study sample of a selection and acquisition of young people) was also brought to the fore at this part of this thesis.

Data collection occurred in the following ways within this study of a general population. The first research objective was concerned with the perceived availability of social support. Here, the Social Network Questionnaire provided a quantitative way of gaining the young peoples’ perceptions of support in their lives. The quantitative Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was also used as part of this first objective to observe the research participants in their normal sporting environment. Finally, semi-structured interviews of research respondents were asked to show a greater richness and depth to the collection of data.

For the second research objective the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule was again used as was the Social Provision Scale (SPS) in order to measure young people’s perceived social support. The Basic Empathy Scale was also a quantitative data tool that was used to establish the levels of empathy within the respondents to the study. Again, the set of 20 semi-structured interviews were used to complete the data required for this objective.
The third objective established the perceived social benefits of the respondents and this used the Social Provision Scale (SPS), the Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule and semi-structured interviews.

7.3 Key Research Findings from the Study

Key research findings established in the study included:

1. **Adolescent respondents are capable of making and sustaining friendships and they see friendships as being fun.**

   Youth respondents are capable of making and sustaining friendships because of their close family ties as well as their involvement within their GAA Clubs. They also feel that fun is vital cog in being friends at a young age.

2. **Respondents were able to use other words and terms which broadly equate to the concept of empathy and were observed in showing empathy within their sporting contexts**

   Research results showed that the respondents were unable to give real-life examples of empathy in action but they were able to use other words and terms which broadly equate to the concept of empathy and were observed in showing empathy within their sporting contexts also. This led them to discuss their perceptions of empathy and how it affects other people within a sporting context.

3. **Respondents do not see friends that they initially make online as being ‘real-life’ friends and that those they meet on a typical week are more important to them than online friends in general**

   The respondents to this study noted that the quality of support that they receive from their social network in their life in general is good, but this quality has been increased due to the respondents involvement within their GAA Clubs.
4. **Youth enjoyed face to face interaction through sport.**

Socialising in ‘real face to face life’ aids a young person’s self concept. From the study, it was clear that the GAA respondents do not necessarily need social media as a form of social support. This was especially clear to the interviewer throughout the interviews of the research respondents.

Along with their answer to the statement that ‘socialising and real-life talking’ was positively referred to by nine respondents a total of twelve times, it emphasises that many of the respondents are content with the level of social support they obtain throughout their lives and within their GAA Clubs already.

5. **Youth Respondents see adult coaches as friends and sources of support**

This study showed that almost all respondents perceived that an adult could be their friend and could be depended on if they really needed them. It was also found that three-quarters of respondents communicated that they perceived a sense of acceptance and happiness by adults in their life.

The findings showed that a vast majority of respondents to the study reported they could at times communicate to an adult within their GAA Club if they had a problem and that more than two thirds perceived they could turn to an adult in their GAA club if they were having problems.

7.4 **Messages for Practice, Policy and Research**

Objective 4 in this study sought to create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field. Whereas this was part addressed in the context of the Discussion Chapter more specifically within this section, and regarding the outcome of this study, the messages for practice, policy and research will be outlined.
Messages For Practice:

- Social workers and other professionals in the field of working with young people need to not just value involvement of youth in sport per se, but to value empathy as being an active tool to teach young people on how to care for others. It also shows that professionals are being positive mentors. By them mentioning the term empathy consistently, explaining its meaning and giving examples of it in action they are beginning to educate young people under their guidance in a proactive manner.

- Educational facilities such as schools and need to realise that friendship is a very important facet of socialisation for young people. Although primary and post primary schools concentrate in the main on academically educating their students, there is also a social objective to their remit. By teachers taking special care as to how they design their classroom seating plan and whom they choose to sit next to one another in their classrooms, and how they cater for positive opportunities for good communication to occur, they are helping to educate young people in a very positive manner.

- Agencies such as Foróige and Youth Reach and other out of school organisations need to be aware of facilitating friendship, empathy and social support, and particularly from a young person’s perception, thus it will blossom.

- This study has proven that sporting organisations need to realise that their adults have the capacity to be perceived as being potential friends to their young people. By these organisations being aware of this, they need also to realise that a diversion from an autocratic approach to coaching will be welcomed by its young members.

- This study has proven that sport gives respite for young people from their school and home life. Feelings of having fun must be central to the coaching and management of young people who partake in youth sport on a voluntary led basis. This is the glue that keeps all young people engaged and together and allows them to develop in their own
individual and collective sporting way. By understanding this, success of a closer kinship is guaranteed once all individual young people develop to their potential in life.

**Messages For Policy:**

- Young people who participate in sports’ clubs can help to shape the changes in policies that guide the future of the GAA in Ireland.

- This study has proven that sport is a worthwhile conduit of overall social well-being of young people. This needs to be considered when future policies are being discussed.

- Informal education such as the involvement in the GAA offers the opportunity to build and cement close familiar ties between both young and old. Policy makers must be aware of the importance of informal education and its intergenerational link with community sporting organisations.

- This study has proved the importance of friendship (which is closely interlinked with social support) in young people’s lives. For young people to become good citizens in a good democracy they too need to appreciate the value of social support. Policies must reflect this new learning in the formal and non-formal education system.

- Greater investment is required in voluntary led youth sport by policy makers in Ireland with the knowledge that it brings holistic improvement in youth in terms of physical fitness and less obesity, but also and more specifically here in terms of supportive relationships and greater empathy and compassion.

**Messages For Research:**

- The GAA need to do more research into their young members perceptions of their games and membership of the association. What this study has proved is that young people and
their parents and guardians appreciate the youth of the GAA being given a way to voice their feelings. In order for the association to sustain itself and to grow it is going to need its young members. The young members are the future of the association as players, officials and administrators. By allowing them to exercise their opinion on how social issues can be addressed and social relationships developed, it enables them become problem solving citizens in the future.

• Larger scale research studies that go further than this study demand greater financial resources. However, studies such as this are positively welcomed and valued by juvenile members of the GAA.

• As young people move from age group to age group every year it is important that any future research that is carried out on young people within the GAA concentrate on the distinct differences between each age cohort in potentially new studies. As this study has proven, at different times of adolescence young people may feel differently about a particular topic. Any potential research project in the future needs to plan for the differences in age and the associated opinions that come from the association’s young members.

• Although ladies football and the camogie association are entities within the main body of the GAA, they are none the less, the distinct female forms of the games of Gaelic football and hurling. It is important when researching young people to have gender balance. Thus, as young people foster deeper and more intricate relationships as they enter into older adolescence, it is important to include both genders in future studies about the GAA.

• As this study focussed only on adolescents and their involvement in the GAA, future Irish studies in sports’ participation for young people and their feelings on friendship, empathy and social support and other social issues ought to include other sports and sporting organisations within Ireland to enable deeper comparatives to this study.
Summary
This chapter divided into four key areas in order to conclude this thesis. Firstly, the reader was reminded of the background, aim and the study`s four objectives. Then, a summary of the four theoretical areas that have shaped the study was addressed before the study`s research methods were then laid out. Once this was presented, the key research findings of the study were presented.

This study, though long and often challenging, was a very enjoyable exploration into the perceptions of the young people of the four GAA clubs. The author`s interactions with the young players, and the adults connected with them provided, for the most part. a welcome, friendly and very positive atmosphere to work in. All club executives were open to work with the author right from the initial stages of the study, as they saw the importance of the topics at hand for their young members. Importantly, all 130 young respondents were not just compliant with the study, but keen and active participants. In essence, all involved showed active interest and enthusiasm for the study and this complemented the eventual outcomes in terms of what was achieved. The author is in debt to one and all involved.
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Appendices:
N.B: Some research tools were modified for the research. All proposed modifications to these research tools received full ethical approval and permission from their originating authors.

Appendix 1: SOCIAL NETWORK QUESTIONNAIRE

ID REF. No : ___________________ DATE : _______________

TIME 1

SOCIAL NETWORK QUESTIONNAIRE
(Cutrona and Russell 1981; with amendments by Dolan 2002)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please list below under “NAME”;

- First, the people you see and spend time with during a typical week. You only need to write first names of initials of all the people you see and talk to during a normal week. This would include the people you live with.
- Second, any other people whom you consider your close friends (not already listed). A close friend is a person with whom you really communicate and in whom you can confide about feelings and personal problems. The friendship is valued because of the warmth, caring, and emotional sharing it provides.
- Third, the people whom you consider your casual friends (not already listed). These are people with whom you mainly do activities such as shopping, school work, sports activities, etc
- Fourth, any relative to whom you feel close (not already listed).
- Finally, if there are other important people in your life that have not already been noted, please write them under “NAME” also.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

349
The following questions should be answered for each person you’ve just listed. Score your response next to each name. The column letters refer to the questions below.

A

A. Does “NAME” live in your home?

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

✓ = YES

X = NO

B

B. What is “NAME”s relationship to you?

01 = MOTHER

02 = FATHER
03 = CARER/ STEP-PARENT OR FOSTER PARENT
04 = BROTHER/SISTER
05 = OTHER RELATIVE
06 = CLOSE FRIEND
07 = OTHER FRIEND
08 = OTHERS IN RESIDENTIAL SETTING (NOT LISTED AS FRIENDS)
09 = PROFESSIONAL PERSON (PLEASE LIST TYPE)
10 = OTHER PERSON, PLEASE STATE

C

C. Is most of your contact with “NAME” positive (make you feel good), or negative (make you feel bad)?

1 = BAD
2 = HALF AND HALF
3 = GOOD
## Appendix 2: Observation Checklist

### Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule

Child’s Name:  
Location:  
Date:  
Start Time:  Finish Time:  Observer:  

Rating: 1 = Approximately 10% of the skill is observed  
Rating: 2 = Approximately 25% of the skill is observed  
Rating: 3 = Approximately 50% of the skill is observed  
Rating: 4 = Approximately 75% of the skill is observed  
Rating: 5 = Approximately 80% of the skill is observed  

#### Stage 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendship Skills</th>
<th>Rating of Friendship or Team Skills</th>
<th>Comments/Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entry Skills</td>
<td>Recognizes the cues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate Greeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcoming Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance</td>
<td>Given</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copes with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting Suggestions</td>
<td>Incorporating other’s ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indicates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Seeks solitude appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>Closure appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Stage 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendship Skills</th>
<th>Rating of Friendship or Team Skills</th>
<th>Comments/Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>Given</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Received appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticisms</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copes with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Contributes to common goal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepts the rules of the game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aware of personal body space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aware of appropriate touching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterisation</td>
<td>Chooses friends with similar interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapts to the character of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises bad characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatics</td>
<td>Keeping on track</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids monologue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not confused by literal interpretation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate humorous comments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate volume</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict Res</td>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids aggression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age appropriate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepts mistakes of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copes with change, new ideas, being interrupted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not consciously torment or provoke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises the perspective of others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition of being unfair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not unduly suspicious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises unfriendly acts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses verbal persuasion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids physical response</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids emotional blackmail</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks negotiation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seeks compromise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks Referee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses disengagement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forgive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Gesture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facial Expression</td>
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</table>

Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone of voice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises signs of annoyance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises boredom</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recognises approval</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises embarrassment</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not possessive of their friend</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inhibits comments that might offend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apologises for mistakes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offers comfort</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Indices of Friendship Chart By Specific GAA Observational Chart:**

**Stage 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendship Skills</th>
<th>Specific GAA Club examples of Said Skill:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Skills:</strong> Recognizing the Ques:</td>
<td>Saying ‘Hi’ when arriving at dressing room door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smiling upon dressing room entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Greeting:</strong></td>
<td>Waving at dressing room door / Positive Eye Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High five or fist pump at door of dressing room/ Positive Verbal at door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcoming Others:</strong></td>
<td>Smiling at dressing room door or upon jogging to pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eye contact at dressing room door or upon jogging to pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistance:</strong> Given:</td>
<td>Grabs cones/bollards from dressing room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gets out of player’s way/ makes run for team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sought:</strong></td>
<td>2seeks ball from coach/other player when leaving dressing room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copes With:</strong></td>
<td>When asked brings team gear to pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Happy to move goals posts and bibs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance Suggestions:</strong> Incorporating Other’s Ideas:</td>
<td>Happy to change drills position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaves balls down at beginning of session when asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicates:</strong></td>
<td>Says ‘leave them’ about balls needing to be left down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Throws ball back to ball back at start of session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest:</strong> Listening:</td>
<td>Listens when coach instructs from dressing room door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Says ‘ya’ and ‘sure’ when told to change gear quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoiding:</strong> Seeks Solitude Appropriately:</td>
<td>Goes behind goal alone to hit/ kick ball back out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Friendship Skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific GAA Club examples of Said Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Stage 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliments</th>
<th>Given:</th>
<th>Received Appropriately:</th>
<th>Waving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saying ‘Hi’ on field, positive phrase given</td>
<td>Saying ‘Hi’ back</td>
<td>Other positive hand gesture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criticism:</th>
<th>Appropriate:</th>
<th>Encourage to improve:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questioning misplaced pass: Why put it over there?</td>
<td>‘You can do better’ (from tone)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Copes With:</th>
<th>Says ‘OK’</th>
<th>Affirmative nod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Operation:</th>
<th>Contributes to Common Goal:</th>
<th>Smiles when warming up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>claps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accepts the Rules of the Game:</th>
<th>Runs along when free against team</th>
<th>No argument with referee/ coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<p>| Patient: | Waits for ball to return to play | Shouts; calm down, slow down’/ Slows down for |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>players in warm up laps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copes with mistakes:</strong></td>
<td>Taps team mate on back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copes with being interrupted:</strong></td>
<td>Positive eye contact with coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tells truth:</strong></td>
<td>Agrees when coach days they played badly in previous game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gives guidance:</strong></td>
<td>Roars ‘ mark up’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gives encouragement:</strong></td>
<td>Roars encouragement like ‘Hard luck’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoids behaving in a silly manner:</strong></td>
<td>Kicks or hits ball to coach after drill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characterization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chooses friends with similar interests</strong></td>
<td>Stand in nearest standing youth place when team talk on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most youth stand closet to coach when speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adapts to the character of others:</strong></td>
<td>Shouts out name in pass drill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recognises bad characters:</strong></td>
<td>Avoids reacting to other teams chatter as they pass by pitches to train</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatics:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Keeping on track:</strong></td>
<td>Team talk listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping on track:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate humorous comments:</strong></td>
<td>Laughing when coach laughs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict Resolution:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Compromise:</strong></td>
<td>Doing shuttle runs in relay team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Doing shuttle runs in relay team</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Avoids aggression</strong></td>
<td>Calm when under pressure during</td>
<td>Calm during Activity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>team talk</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accepts mistakes of others:</strong></td>
<td>Say ‘[better luck] next time ‘when free missed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not complain when when others’ missed pass or shot</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recognises unfriendly acts:</strong></td>
<td>Speaks up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Puts hands up/ Gestures referee or coach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Seeks Referee:</strong></td>
<td>For half time score</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>For fulltime score in training game</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Forgives:</strong></td>
<td>When lost training game</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy:</strong></td>
<td>gesture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High five</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fist pump</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Apologises for mistakes:</strong></td>
<td>Says ‘sorry’ for bad pass</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Says ‘sorry’ for bad shot</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Offers Comfort:</strong></td>
<td>Checks if player injured</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding others running space</td>
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</table>
Social Provisions Scale

Child and Adolescent

Source Specific Version

Cutrona, Russell 1981 and revised in 2002 by Cutrona and Dolan,

In answering the next 4 questions, please think about your current relationships with your friends. If you feel a question accurately describes your relationships with your friends, you would say “yes.” If the question does not describe your relationships, you would say “no.” If you cannot decide whether the question describes your relationships with your friends, you may say “sometimes.”

1A. Are there friends you can depend on to help you, if you really need it?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES
1B. Are there friends within your GAA club that you can depend on to help you, if you really need it?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES

2 A. Do your relationships with your friends provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES

2 B. Do your relationships with your friends in your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES

3A. Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your friends?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES
3B. Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your friends in your GAA club?

NO    SOMETIMES    YES

4A. Is there a friend you could trust to turn to for advice, if you were having problems?

NO    SOMETIMES    YES

4B. Is there a friend within your GAA Club you could trust to turn to for advice, if you were having problems?

NO    SOMETIMES    YES

In answering the next set of questions, please think about your current relationships with your brother(s) and/or sisters(s).

Again mark either No Sometimes or YES
5. Can you depend on your brother(s)/sister(s) to help you, if you really need it?

NO                   SOMETIMES       YES

6. Do your relationships with your brother(s)/sister(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

NO                   SOMETIMES       YES

7. Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your brother(s)/sister(s)?

NO                   SOMETIMES       YES
8. Could you turn to your brother(s)/sister(s) for advice, if you were having problems?
   NO  SOMETIMES  YES
In answering the next set of questions, please think about your current relationships with any other adult person in your life who supports you.

9A. Can you depend on other adult(s) you know to help you, if you really need it?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES

9B. Can you depend on other adult(s) within your GAA club to help you, if you really need it?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES

10A. Do your relationships with this adult(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES

10B. Do your relationships with this adult(s) within your GAA club provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

NO  SOMETIMES  YES
11A. Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult?

NO                    SOMETIMES                           YES

11B. Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult in your GAA club?

NO                    SOMETIMES                           YES

12A. Could you turn to another adult for advice, if you were having problems?

NO                    SOMETIMES                           YES

12B. Could you turn to another adult within your GAA club for advice, if you were having problems?

NO                    SOMETIMES                           YES
Appendix 4: Basic Empathy Scale

Basic Empathy Scale: Joliffe & Farrington (2006)

Cognitive Scale = 9 items; Affective Scale = 11 items, Total Empathy Scale = 20 items

1 My friend’s emotions don’t affect me much
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

2 After being with a friend who is sad about something, I usually feel sad
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

3 I can understand my friend’s happiness when she/he does well at something
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

4 I get frightened when I watch characters in a good scary movie
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

5 I get caught up in other people’s feelings easily
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

6 I find it hard to know when my friends are frightened
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

7 I don’t become sad when I see other people crying
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

8 Other people’s feelings don’t bother me at all
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

9 When someone is feeling ‘down’ I can usually understand how they feel
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

10 I can usually work out when my friends are scared
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

11 I often become sad when watching sad things on TV or in films
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

12 I can often understand how people are feeling even before they tell me
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)

13 Seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings
   (Strongly Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (Strongly Agree)
14 I can usually work out when people are cheerful

15 I tend to feel scared when I am with friends who are afraid

16 I can usually realise quickly when a friend is angry

17 I often get swept up in my friend's feelings

18 My friend's unhappiness doesn't make me feel anything

19 I am not usually aware of my friend's feelings

20 I have trouble figuring out when my friends are happy
Appendix 5: Ethics Application Form

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM

For Applicant to complete:

Applicants’ Name: Conor Hogan

Title of Project: An explorative study on the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field

For Ethics Committee use only:

Reference Number: Date received:

Review Date: Outcome:

   Approval

   Provisional Approval

   Deferral
Please complete form and select YES/NO options as appropriate. An electronic version of this form is also available on the NUI Galway website (http://www.nuigalway.ie/research/vp_research/ethics.htm).

An application will only be accepted for review by the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee (REC) if it is completed fully and the relevant enclosures are received. Refer to the accompanying Guidance Notes when completing the form and complete the checklist on the next page before submitting the form. Where you have received permission to do this, or similar research in another institution, please provide evidence of permission with this application.

Please submit your completed application: application form; participant consent form(s); participant information sheet(s); Questionnaire(s); as one single PDF document.

Address to send application: NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee
(Hard copy with signatures) Room 212
Research Office
Business Innovation Centre
NUI Galway

Email address: (pdf) ethics@nuigalway.ie
**SUBMISSION CHECKLIST**

Please indicate if the following have been enclosed by selecting YES/NO/Not applicable options below. Please forward copies of the form and relevant enclosures required as outlined below.

<table>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Electronic Copy of complete application. (single PDF document – with all relevant attachments)</td>
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<td>1 Participant consent form(s)</td>
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<td>1 Participant information sheet(s)</td>
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<td>1 Copy of Confirmation of Garda vetting</td>
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<td>1 Sample letters (GP, Recruitment etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Copy of Risk Assessment Form**</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Copy of Principal Applicant CV (<strong>2A4 pages max</strong>) (plus that of primary supervisor if principal applicant is a PhD student)</td>
<td>X</td>
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* Please indicate if not yet finalised.

** If the study involves the use of a new medicinal product or medical device, or the use of an existing product outside the terms of its product licence

*** If the study includes the use of ionizing or non-ionising radiation, radioactive substances or X rays

**** Please complete for each hazardous procedure

**STUDY DESCRIPTORS**

Select all descriptors that apply to this study:
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<th>Type</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Cross-over</td>
<td>Biological material</td>
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<td>Healthy volunteer</td>
<td>Case-study</td>
<td>Foetal material</td>
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<td>Patient volunteer</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
<td>Hazardous materials</td>
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<td>Persons unable to give consent</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
<td>Invasive procedures</td>
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<td>Children (under 18 yrs)</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>Devices (in licence)</td>
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<td>Observational</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>Medicinal products (in licence)</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
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<td>Devices (outside licence)</td>
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<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Double-blind</td>
<td>Medicinal products (outside licence)</td>
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<td>Randomised trial</td>
<td>Prospective</td>
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<td>Non-randomised trial</td>
<td>Retrospective</td>
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SECTION 1  Applicant(s) Details

1. Title of project:

An explorative study on the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field

2. Principal Applicant: (All correspondence will be sent to this address unless indicated otherwise.)

Family Name: Hogan  Forename: Conor  Title: Mr.

Contact address (for correspondence regarding application): Rosshill House, Rosshill, Galway

Tel: (087) 1005600  Fax:  Email: Hogan_Conor@yahoo.ie
3. Other Investigator(s): N/A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Name:</th>
<th>Dolan</th>
<th>Forename:</th>
<th>Pat</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Professor</th>
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</table>

Department:
UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Sociology and Political Science, ILAS Building.

Institution: NUI Galway

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<th>Institution:</th>
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4. **Principal Applicant:** *(All correspondence will be sent to this address unless indicated otherwise.)*

4. **Other workers and departments/Institutions involved:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Conor Hogan</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department/Institute</strong></td>
<td>UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Sociology and Political Science, ILAS Building,</td>
</tr>
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</table>
5. Funding Sources:

(i) Has any funding been obtained/sought by the investigator in respect of this study?

- Funding applied for:  
  - YES [ ]  
  - NO [ ]  
  - Not applicable [X]

- Funding secured:  
  - YES [ ]  
  - NO [ ]  
  - Not applicable [X]

(ii) Name of sponsoring organisation from which funding has been obtained/sought?

N/A

(iii) Does the Investigator(s) have any direct involvement in the sponsoring organization?

- e.g. financial, share-holding etc.:  
  - YES [ ]  
  - NO [ ]  
  - Not applicable [X]

If YES, give details:  

---
NOTE: Where the research programme has already received funding approval, please attach the letter of offer to this application.

6. Proposed start date and duration of study:

**Proposed Start date:**
Commenced Part-Time Research PhD (Child and Youth Studies) October 2014 to complete in September 2020

**Duration (Months):** Data collection (Qualitative and Quantitative) to take place from February 2018 to December 2019
7. Signature of relevant personnel:

**Principal Applicant declaration**
The information in this application form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.

I understand that it is my responsibility to obtain institutional approval where appropriate before the project takes place.

I agree to supply interim and final reports to the Research Ethics Committee from which approval was granted for this project.

I agree to advise the Research Ethics Committee from which approval was granted for this project and any local researchers taking part in the proposal of any material changes to the proposal or any adverse or unexpected events that may occur during this project.

I agree to advise the Research Ethics Committee in the event of premature termination, suspension or deferral of this project and to provide a report outlining the circumstances for such termination, suspension or deferral.

**Signature of Principal Applicant:** [Signature]  **Date:** 19th of December 2017

**Co-Signed by Supervisor where the P.A. is a Student:** [Signature]  **Date:** 19th of December 2017

**Head of Department/Supervisor**

I am fully aware of the details of this project and agree for it to continue as outlined here. I can confirm that the necessary facilities and resources are available to the researcher.
SECTION 2

Study Details

This section must be completed. Applicants are no longer required to submit a study protocol. Instead, the relevant information concerning the proposed study is to be provided in this section.

8. Aims and objectives of study (i.e. the intention of the study, key research questions)

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members (females and males) in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

1. To explore the nature of friendships and perceived availability of support among the youth membership of two Galway City GAA clubs.
2. To measure levels of empathy and identify instances of friendship among youth peer groups involved within the two GAA Clubs.
3. To establish the perceived social benefits as perceived by youth members of their involvement in two GAA clubs.
4. To create messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field.

9. Scientific/theoretical background to study (Approx. 250 words)

Being involved in community sport is beneficial for adolescents’ social development. Not only does sport improve their physical health and help with matters such as obesity, but it gives psychosocial health benefits also (Eime, 2013). By parents, relatives and friends providing social support there can be increased participation and physical activity levels in adolescence. Investigations on physical activity and social support ought to include representative samples of the adolescent population and study the variety of social support in communities and in both structured and unstructured organisations (Mendonça, 2014). By young people partaking in a caring sporting climate they can learn empathy, which is a pivotal cornerstone to living in a civil community (Gano-Overway, 2014).

Feelings of empathy are neurologically rooted in the human beings anterior insula and anterior and midcingulate cortex of the brain. Empathy involves the ability of two or more human beings sharing feelings. It is a basic tenant in human’s social and emotional lives (Bernhardt and Singer 2012). In defining social empathy, Segal (2011) says that it deals with understanding people deeper by experiencing or perceiving their life situations.

Being involved in the dynamics of team sport facilitates a basic experience of human sociality (Gaffney, 2015). Social networks arise from bonds of friendship (Lin,N; Dean, A; & Ensel, W.M, 2017). Friendship is a private yet voluntary mutual relationship of concern that involves communication between two individuals (Rawlins W. K, 2017). Friendly Peers exercise empathy and intimacy (Chow, Ruhl et al. 2013). Social support for groups of people who work towards the same common goal is aided by friendship (Ptacek, 2014). By establishing the GAA Clubs’ Juvenile members’ perceptions of social support and friendship, this study will create new findings within the area of social research.
10. Description of Research i.e. what do you intend to do

Sample:

‘The target population for this study is to aim for 100% uptake of possible participants, but will comprise an even gender (or as even as possible) split of Juvenile GAA players from 12 to 18 years of age in the Castlegar GAA and St. James’ GAA Clubs in Galway City (Approx. 200) as registered in the clubs at the time of the initial data collection from February 2018 to December 2019. Ultimately the actual sample will comprise a sub set of the full sample frame, will be a mixed gender group of those who consented and will only record this population accordingly.’

Research Design:

All data will be collected by the researcher. As per NUI Galway data storage policy, data will be stored on the researcher’s computer which is electronically password protected. All paper data shall be safely stored by the researcher in a locked steel fireproof filing cabinet located in the office of his supervisor in the UNESCO Child and Family Centre, ILAS building in NUI Galway.

All participants will complete a quantitative survey. In order to enrich the quantitative data semi structured interviews using purposive sampling of participants, those who rate at the high and low end of the survey results measure, will be conducted (approx. 20). There will also be observations carried out of the research participants in the study.

Implementation:

1. Conduct a review of the literature based on the key theoretical and methodological issues relating to Social Support, Empathy and Friendship in Adolescents.
2. Contact both GAA Club Chairpersons and inform them of the proposed start date of the study. Both GAA Club Chairpersons have approved the undertaking of the study.
3. Identify and contact parents of Juvenile members of both clubs with an outline of the proposed study and an invitation to partake in the study.
   Host an information session event for ALL juveniles and their parents in both Club houses to avoid potential feelings of exclusion experienced by other respondents. Here, parents will be provided with an outline of the study, have their questions answered and negotiate suitable date and time in order to proceed with research questionnaires of Juveniles. If any parent is unable to attend this information evening they will be posted out information sheets and consent forms for them and their child/children. The researcher will access the home address for parents through the Club Secretary by passing on a set of letters with blank envelopes – the Club Secretary will then fill in the addresses etc – thus ensuring that the researcher does not have access to home addresses of potential participants in the study.
4. Undertake consent process with parents and juveniles of both GAA Clubs.
5. The study will take place across two different time lines. Firstly, a questionnaire and empathy scale will be carried out in the February of 2018.
6. Analyse of questionnaires that will begin to determine the design of subsequent semi-structured interviews.
7. Between February until July 2018 the student (who is also an officer of the club) will observe the adolescent participants as they train, play and prepare for GAA games together. The observation will be of the
8. Analyse of Observations and the final design of semi structured interview questions.
9. Conduction of semi-structured interviews will be undertaken in June and July of 2018. Analyse interviews using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
10. Interpretation of entire data set (Questionnaires, observations and interview data).
11. Overall Analysis of Findings.
12. Write up of Findings.

11. Risks to participants and researcher

(i) List procedures or investigations involving risks to participants’ well-being or safety (what, when, how often; and risks associated with all procedures)

1. A risk of taking part in this research may be loss of anonymity as participants may fear that, if identified, expressing their true opinions about their GAA Club may then have negative consequences for them for example possible de-selection from their playing team. Also, Juveniles who partake in this research may potentially fear a loss of confidentiality resulting in their being rejected or ostracised by their peers during training exercises for having given their opinions about their teammates. For some juveniles, the realisation of their not having robust friendships in or outside of the GAA context may cause them some distress. In addressing these potential risks the researcher will guarantee anonymity by providing pseudonyms to all research participants in order to guard against any such potentials pitfalls in them expressing their true opinions.

2. The researcher under the direction of his supervisor will ensure that all aspects of participants’ identification are adequately disguised. Upon a review, any sample characteristics or description that increase the likelihood of identification of respondents will be removed from the thesis report. The Distressed Persons Protocol (see Appendix 1) will be put in place to provide appropriate help and support for participants at any stage of the research study. ‘The researcher will check in on the research participants regularly throughout the fieldwork (once every two months). The researcher will check in on the research participants regularly throughout the fieldwork (once every two months). He will affirm and reassure the participants informally on an ongoing basis and will monitor their level of well-being during the research and, if needs be, will report any unusual reactions (such as a youth becoming distressed, upset or walking off during fieldwork) to the research to the GAA Clubs’ Health and Well Being Officers and to Dr. John Canavan, Child Protection Officer in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI, Galway.’
(ii) List procedures or investigations involving risks to researcher’s well-being or safety (what, when, how often; and risks associated with all procedures)

The investigator is aware of the emotional risks he may encounter during fieldwork.

Emotional exhaustion and being overwhelmed by the nature of the interviewee’s experiences can be harmful (Mc Cosker, 1995). In the event of emotional distress, the researcher will liaise with his supervisors to reduce the number of weekly interview schedules and speak to the Student Counselling Service at NUIG to receive support and advice on how to progress with the study.


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<td>Case control</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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(please specify)

Forms of Recording

- Video
- Audio
- Photography
- Notes
- Electronic recording

13. Size of the study (including controls):
(i) How was the size of the study determined?

A total sample size will be the aim to get (of circa 200 members from the clubs registrar aged between 12-18 years of age) for this study. There will be 100 respondents from each club with 50% of each club’s respondents being girls, and the other half boys.
(ii) Was there formal statistical input into the overall study design?  

| YES | NO |

(iii) What method of analysis will be used?

Descriptive statistics of the quantitative data will be analysed using SPSS to summarise patterns in the responses of the youth participating in the study. In order to examine differences in mean scores and significant differences (p value) in scores amongst participants before and after the programme, and also amongst different subgroups of participants, parametric techniques such as t-tests and ANCOVA will be used. This is assuming that the data is continuous and is normally distributed. A paired-samples t-test will be used to compare the mean scores of the same group at two points in order to determine any gain in scores made by a group between pre-programme and post-programme time periods.

Qualitative data will be transcribed in full and analysed using NVivo software. A thematic analytical approach will be utilized to write up the findings based on deduction and induction.

14. Where will the study take place and in what setting?

The study will take place in two locations namely, St. James GAA Club (Mervue) and Castlegar GAA Club, (Roscam) both situated in Galway City. The data will be collected in the participating youths GAA clubhouses. In the event that any participant is unable to attend either location the research participants will be able to complete their participation in a safe location chosen by their parents or guardians. The data analysis will take place in the UCFRC at NUI Galway and will be undertaken by the researcher.

5 Geographical location; laboratory, hospital, general practice, home visits etc.
15. Does the study involve:

(i) distribution of a questionnaire?  YES: ☒  NO: ☐

If YES, please append a copy of the questionnaire to this application. Please indicate whether the appended questionnaire is:  Non-validated: ☐  Validated: ☒

(ii) the use of a existing medicinal product or medical device?  YES ☐  NO ☒

If YES, is this medical product or device being used within the terms of its current product licence?

YES ☐  NO ☒

If NO, please complete Annex 1 of this application.

(ii) the use of a new medicinal product or medical device?  YES ☐  NO ☒

If YES, please complete Annex 1 of this application.

(iii) the use of ionising or non-ionising radiation, radioactive substances or X rays?

YES ☐  NO ☒

YES, please complete Annex 2 of this application.

16. Peer Review/Critique\(^6\)

Has the protocol been subject to peer review?  YES ☒  NO ☐

If the review formed part of the process of obtaining funding, please give the name and address of the funding organisation:

N/A

\(^6\) If you are in possession of any referee or other scientific critique or reports relevant to your proposed research, please include copies with your application form.
If the review took place as part of an internal process, please give brief details:
The protocol has been peer reviewed by a member of the Staff Team of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre NUI Galway

If no review has taken place, please explain why and offer justification for this:
N/A

17. Does the study fall into any of the following categories?

Pilot: YES [X] NO [ ] Not applicable [ ]

Multi-centre study YES [ ] NO [X] Not applicable [ ]

*If this is a multi-centre study, please complete the following details, otherwise go to question 18.*
(i) Which centres are involved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Department/Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Which ethics committees have been approached, and what is the outcome to date?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Department/Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(iii) Who will have overall responsibility for the study?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Department/Centre</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

(iv) Who has control of the data generated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Department/Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 3 Recruitment of participants

18. How will the participants in the study be selected?

All participants from the ages of 12-18 years of age who attend both GAA clubs (registered as at January 2018) will be invited to take part in the study. All participants must be paid up members of their clubs at the time of commencement of the fieldwork. Both clubs were chosen for this research as their membership includes juvenile members from both densely populated and diverse cultural communities within Galway city.

19. How will the participants in the study be recruited?

(Please append advertisement materials to application)

Potential participants will be informed about and invited to participate in the study prior to the attendance at the information session. The researcher who is delivering the information session will send an email six weeks in advance informing attendees about the information session and the research study; inviting them to participate.

Parental/Guardians who wish to participate will receive an Information Sheet (Appendix 2) as well as a consent form to sign (Appendix 3). Similarly, participants who wish to participate in the study will be sent an Information Sheet (Appendix 4) and if they choose to partake in the research they will then fill out the consent form (Appendix 5).
20. What criteria will be used for inclusion and exclusion of participants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All members of the Castlegar and St. James’s Juvenile GAA clubs between the ages of 12 and 18 years will be invited to participate in the study. Inclusion will be by means of completed and signed Consent Forms, one by the parent/ guardian who is most known to the GAA Club in question and a separate one by each youth participant (between 12-18 years of age) who are willing to partake in the study. In order for each young person to participate in the study they and their parent (most known to the GAA Club) must both sign their respective Consent Forms. In cases where the youth consents to take part but the parent does not, the young person will not participate in the study.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those who opt out or do not return a completed Consent Form will be excluded from the study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Exclusion criteria:

21. How many participants will be recruited and of what age groups?

| 200 female and male members (aimed for the total sample) aged between 12-18 years of age from both clubs. This is the total sample. |  |

22. If applicable, how will the control group in the study be:

(i) Selected?

| N/A |  |
(ii) Recruited? (please append advertisement materials to application)
N/A

(i) Inclusion criteria:
N/A

(ii) Exclusion criteria:
N/A

24. If applicable, how many controls will be recruited and of what age group?
N/A

25. Are the participants/controls included in this study involved in any other research investigation at the present time?
YES: [ ] NO: [x]
If YES, please give details


26. Will participants receive any payment or other incentive to participate?

   YES: ☒   NO: ☐

(i) If YES, give details of incentive per participant?

On completion of the study as recognition for their support all respondents will receive a reward of a day trip excursion to Croke Park (the home of the GAA), a ‘Thank You’ card and a summarised 2 page feedback sheet at the end of the study.

If YES, what is the source of the incentive?

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre in NUI, Galway are sponsoring the event.
SECTION 4  Consent

27. Is written consent for participation in the study to be obtained?

YES: ☒  NO: ☐

If YES, please attach a copy of the consent form to be used (*Guidance on consent is given in the Guidance Notes*)

If NO written consent is to be obtained, please explain why


28. How long will the subject have to decide whether to take part in the study?

(If less than 24 hours, please justify)

Potential participants will be given six weeks to decide whether they would like to take part in this study.

29. Does the study include participants whom are not competent English speakers and/or do not comprehend spoken or written English?

YES: ☐  NO: ☒

If YES, give details of special arrangements made to assist these participants
30. Please attach a copy of the written participant information sheet

If NO information sheet is to be given to participants, please justify

Appendix 4

31. If you are recruiting from vulnerable groups (Children under 18 years of age; People with learning difficulties; Unconscious or severely ill participants; Other vulnerable groups e.g. persons with dementia, psychological disorders, etc.), please specify and justify

The study is interested in accessing the perceptions of youth in relation to the benefits of GAA membership in terms of friendships and social relationships. As it is seeking to access the direct voice of young people therefore, the recruitment of young people is critical to this study, in some cases, it may involve more vulnerable youth.

Some of the participants in the study may have some level of learning difficulties. It is important to take an inclusive approach with these young people and not stigmatize them by excluding them from the participation in the study. The survey will be read out to them if reading is a challenge, and anyone with physical difficulties will be provided with a scribe to complete to assist in completing the survey. As the researcher volunteers in both GAA Clubs in question, to his knowledge and having double checked with senior officials in both clubs, there are no potential participant or parents/guardians of potential participants who are non-English speaking. However, if this changes throughout the study the researcher will collaborate with their supervisor to accommodate any non-English speakers.

Each and every participant who agrees to partake in the study will have read an Information Sheet on the study and will have signed a consent form also. Their parents/guardians will also have read an Information Sheet and signed a consent
(ii) What special arrangements have been made to deal with the issues of consent and assent for vulnerable participants?

The participant information sheet will be provided verbally as well as in written form to every potential participant outlining the research being conducted and the process.

Also, parental as well as the young person’s informed consent is being sought. In order for each young person to participate in the study they and their parent (most known to the GAA Club) must sign their respective Consent Forms.

(iii) In what way, if any, can the proposed study be expected to benefit the individual who participates?

It will allow them to understand, assess and value the role of peer friendships within the context of their participation in their sports. It will also give them an opportunity to assess how they value relationships of worth throughout their lives in general and to increase their own self awareness when relating to others in the future. This study will also provide individuals who participate in the study with the opportunity to have some input into the future direction and social support within their GAA Clubs. Also, it will be disseminated across the GAA club system via GAA Administration.

32. Are women of childbearing potential included in this study?

*Answer this question only where invasive or other interventions are planned which could be a risk to a pregnancy*
If YES, does the study description/participant information sheet address the following:

- scientific justification
- negative teratogenic studies
- warning participants that foetus may be damaged
- requirement for initial negative pregnancy test
- forms of contraception defined
- duration of use to exceed drug metabolism
- exclude those unlikely to follow contraceptive advice
- notify investigator if pregnancy suspected.

If NO, please explain
SECTION 5  

Details of interventions

33. Does the study involve investigations and/or interventions on either participants or controls?

(Please tick YES/NO as appropriate. If YES, details should be available in the protocol)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigation/Intervention</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-completion questionnaires</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews/interview administered questionnaires</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/audio tape recording</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal physical examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venepuncture*</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arterial puncture*</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biopsy material*</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other tissue/body sample*</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please see Guidance Notes
|                                                                 | YES | NO |  
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|-----
| Imaging investigation (not radiation)                           |     |    | x   |
| Other investigations not part of normal care                    |     |    | x   |
| Additional out-patient attendance                               |     |    | x   |
| Longer inpatient stays                                          |     |    | x   |
| Local anaesthesia                                               |     |    | x   |
| General anaesthesia                                             |     |    | x   |
| Other – please detail                                           |     |    |     |

Please indicate and justify where treatment is withheld as a result of taking part in the project.

N/A
(i) Will treatments provided during the study be available if needed at the end of the study?

YES: [ ] NO: [ ] Not applicable: [X]

(ii) If NO, is this made clear in the participant information sheet?

YES: [ ] NO: [ ]

If NO, please give reasons


34. Does the study involve the use of a new medicinal product or medical device, or the use of an existing product outside the terms of its product licence?

YES: [ ] NO: [X]

*If YES, please complete Annex 1 of the Application Form.*

35. Will any ionising or non-ionising radiation, or radioactive substances or X-Rays be administered to a participant?

YES: [ ] NO: [X]
If YES, please complete Annex 2 of the Application Form.

36. Where research conducted in a general practice setting, will all GPs whose patients will be involved, be required to sign to indicate that they are aware of and in agreement with the planned project?

YES: [ ] NO: [ ] Not applicable: [x]

If NO, please explain why not

______________________________________________________________
SECTION 6  Risks and ethical problems

37. Are there any potential risks to participants or to the researcher?\(^7\)

   YES: [ ]  NO: [ ]

If YES, please complete Annex 3 for each procedure for which a potential risk occurs.

38. Could this study cause any discomfort or distress, either physical or mental?

   YES: [ ]  NO: [ ]

If YES, estimate the degree and likelihood of discomfort or distress entailed and the precautions to be taken to minimise them. Please include other potential causes of embarrassment to the subject that should be explained prior to obtaining consent (e.g. state of undress etc.).

Although no discomfort to participants associated with this research is envisaged, there is a risk that participants may feel emotional distressed while answering questions. As this research touches on their peer to peer relations and may information involving their overall playing team set up, in some cases this may illicit negative thoughts or feelings.

If a person becomes upset, the researcher will put in place the NUIG Protocol for Distress Participants (Appendix 1) which mainly includes steps such as giving space to the distress person, making clear that participants can continue in another time or opt out of the study at any time if they wish to do so.

Study participants may be concerned about the impact that taking part might have on their free time spent amongst their GAA club network. The level of time taken up from the GAA club gathering will be kept to a minimum however and is not expected to be above 30 minutes for each administration of the survey. Participants selected for and opting to participate in the semi-structured interviews will be guaranteed that the interviews will not run over 30 minutes.
39. What particular ethical problems or issues do you consider to be important or difficult with the proposed study?

Please indicate how you plan to respond to these ethical problems

3. Participants will be informed that taking part is voluntary and that they can opt out of the whole study or any one phase of the study if they experience distress or simply wish to do so. In order to minimise any possibility of harm for participants, the researcher will monitor all aspects of the research process for any signs of distress. The Protocol for Distressed Persons has been put in place (see Appendix 1). Furthermore, providing an information sheet (see Appendix 2) with locally available resources and support services during and after focus group and interview engagement will aid in the event of participants feeling upset by their involvement in the research.

4. Confidentiality and anonymity: Electronic and hard copies of signed consent forms containing participants’ information will kept by the researcher and securely stored and participants will be informed that only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the data. Data will be held so that participants cannot be identified from computer files (i.e. no name, address, or other potential identifier). Pseudonyms will be used and identifying information, including specific statements which could potentially be traced back to a particular participant, as well as names will be removed in order to ensure the anonymity of participants when making the final study ready for publication.

5. In relation to the researcher, emotional exhaustion and being overwhelmed by the nature of the interviewee’s experiences can be harmful (Mc Cosker, 1995). In the event of emotional distress, the researcher will liaise with his supervisor and speak to the Student Counselling Service at NUIG in order to receive support.

6. Dealing with suspicion of abuse/neglect: A Child Protection Protocol for this study has been put in place (see Appendix 6). Any child protection or child safety concerns will be handled in accordance with Children First National Guidelines for Child Protection (2011), and the NUIG Child and Family Research Centre Child Protection and Welfare Policy (2011). The designated child protection person in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre is Dr John Canavan. Where disclosures are made during research in Castlegar GAA Club grounds Mr. Ronan McNulty will be consulted. Ronan is the Child Protection Officer for both the Castlegar GAA and for St. James’ GAA Clubs and is also a member of the Garda Síochana.
SECTION 7

Indemnity

Product liability and consumer protection legislation make the supplier and producer (manufacturer) or any person changing the nature of a substance, e.g. by dilution, strictly liable for any harm resulting from a consumer’s use of a product.

(Please refer to Page 8 of the ‘Guidance Notes on Completing the Application Form’ for information on indemnity.)

For questions regarding the University’s Indemnity Policy please email: bernadette.costello@nuigalway.ie

40. Arrangements for indemnification/compensation

(i) What arrangements have been made to provide indemnification and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, a participant for negligent harm?

(ii) What arrangements have been made to provide indemnification and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, a participant for non-negligent harm?

As above

\footnote{Where there is more than one institution/organisation involved in the study, each institution/organization is responsible for its own indemnity cover, and confirmation of such cover must be appended to the application.}
(iii) Will an undergraduate student be involved directly in conducting the project?

YES: □  NO: ☒

41. In cases of equipment or medical devices, have appropriate arrangements been made with the manufacturer to provide indemnity?

YES: □  NO: □  Not applicable: ☒

If YES, please give details and enclose a copy of the relevant correspondence with this application


42. In cases of medicinal products, have appropriate arrangements been made with the manufacturer to provide indemnity?

YES: □  NO: □  Not applicable: ☒

If YES, please give details and enclose a copy of the relevant correspondence with this application


SECTION 8

Confidentiality

43. Confidentiality

If any personal information (e.g. name, address, identification number, etc.) is collected during the course of this study, what measures will be taken to ensure this information is not made public?

No personal information will be collected save for dates of birth and initials to allow for identification of participants. An anonymous ID will be generated for each participant and best practice data storage protocols will be followed.

44. Anonymity

What measures will be taken to ensure that the identity of participants will not be disclosed and that a participant’s statements or results cannot be linked to the participant’s identity?

A unique ID code for each participant that is not linked to personal identification markers will be used in the study.

45. Will the study include the use of any of the following?

Audio/Video recordings

☐ YES:  x NO:
Observation of participants:  YES:  NO:

(i) What arrangements have been made to obtain consent for these procedures?

Signed informed sheets and consent forms from parents and youth will be utilised as a matter of course. Participants will be directly asked whether they have read and understood all aspects of the information sheet on the research and the consent forms. Participants will be able to consent or opt out of the study at any time.

N/A

46. Will the study data be held on computer?

[ ] YES:  [ ] NO:

If YES, will the data be held so that participants cannot be identified from computer files (i.e. no name, address, medical chart number or other potential identifier such as GMS or RSI number)?

[ ] YES:  [ ] NO:

If NO, please give reasons

404
47. Will records (preferably paper records) linking study participant ID with identifying features be stored confidentially?

Please refer to our guide on Data Retention and the guide from the Data Protection Commissioner (both on the REC website)

YES:  
NO:

Please give details of arrangements for confidential storage

All records detailing personal information about participants will be stored in an encrypted file held by the Principle Investigator, Mr. Conor Hogan. The files will be held on Mr. Hogan's password protected computer, which is located in the Postgraduate room in the ILAS building on the NUIG campus. Any hard copies of information relating to participants will be stored in a locked compartment in the Postgraduate room.

For how long will records be retained prior to destruction?

Data will be held for a minimum of five years in line with current NUI, Galway research ethics requirements.

48. Will the participants’ medical records be examined by investigators in the study?

x
YES:  NO:

If YES, will information relevant only to this study be extracted: YES:  NO:  Not applicable:

(i) If extra information is extracted, please justify

(ii) What, if any, additional steps have been taken to safeguard the confidentiality of personal medical records?

49. Will research workers outside the employment of NUI Galway examine medical or other personal records?

YES:  NO:  X

If YES, it is the responsibility of the Principal Applicant to ensure that research workers understand that:

Information obtained about and from research participants is confidential to the study and must not be divulged except in legitimate methods of study data presentation or exceptional circumstances as discussed and agreed with the principal investigator.
Please ensure that you complete the checklist on the front cover of this application form and include all relevant enclosures.

THANK YOU.
Risk Assessment Form – procedures involving human subjects

In the Department/ Institute/ Center of:

Procedure no.:

Title of Procedure:

Name of Assessor(s):

Assessment Date:

9. Approval of Procedure

☐ Granted

☐ Subject to conditions (see below)

☐ Refer to Hospital Ethics Committee
10. Comments and/or conditions

11. Signature

Signed: ___________________________  Date: ____________

Signature of Head of Department/Centre
References:


Lin,N; Dean, A; & Ensel, W.M (2017) Social Support, Life Events, and Depression, Academic Press Inc.
Mendonça, G; Cheng, L. A; Mélo, E. N; de Farias Júnior, J. C; Physical activity and social support in adolescents: a systematic review, Journal: Health education research 29(5) 822-839


Appendix 6 Objectives 1-4 Graphs

Objective One:

Themes/Objectives - 1. Friendship

- Trust
  (Trust, Trusting people)
- Self Awareness:
  (Someone You Can Be Yourself Around, Feeling Good)
- Respect
  (socialising /real life talking', 'loyalty', 'fun', 'Inclusion', 'Sharing', 'Kindness', 'Honesty', 'Face to Face', Common Interest)
- Leadership:
  ('Support', 'Being Helped')
Objective Two:

1. Friendship

Understanding of Empathy:
(Confusion, If someone is feeling down. Unsure understanding, Feeling bad for someone, When something bad happens, Understanding a person’s sad or hurt feelings, Understanding another’s mental state, Seeing things from another person’s point of view, Understanding another’s emotions and opinions)

2. Empathy

Empathy as a Positive Thing

Empathy in Sport:
(Helping someone in sport who needs help, Feeling sorry for a losing team, Unsure understanding of empathy in sport, When a team mate struggles in training, When someone misses a score, Avoid passing to someone, Clapping for allies, Not getting on with teammates, Understand someone, Sympathy in sport, Does not understand empathy in sport)
Objective Three:

Themes/Objectives

1. Friendship
   - Understanding of Empathy:
     (Confusion, If someone is feeling down. Unsure understanding, Feeling bad for someone, When something bad happens, Understanding a person’s sad or hurt feelings, Understanding another’s mental state, Seeing things from another person’s point of view, Understanding another’s emotions and opinions)

2. Empathy
   - Empathy as a Positive Thing
   - Empathy in Sport:
     (Helping someone in sport who needs help, Feeling sorry for a losing team, unsure understanding of empathy in sport, When a team mate struggles in training, When someone misses a score, Avoid passing to someone, Clapping for allies, Not getting on with teammates, Understand someone, Sympathy in sport, Does not understand empathy in sport)
Objective Four:

Themes/Objectives

1. Friendship
   - Trust
     (Trust, Trusting people)
   - Self Awareness:
     (Someone You Can Be Yourself Around, Feeling Good)
   - Respect
     (Socialising /real life talking', 'loyalty', 'fun', 'Inclusion 'Sharing', 'Kindness', 'Honesty', 'Face to Face', Common Interest)
   - Leadership:
     ('Support', 'Being Helped')

2. Empathy
   - Understanding of Empathy:
     (Confusion, If someone is feeling down. Unsure understanding, Feeling bad for someone,When something bad happens, Understanding a person’s sad or hurt feelings, Understanding another’s mental state, Seeing things from another person’s point of view, Understanding another’s emotions and opinions)
   - Empathy as a Positive Thing
   - Empathy in Sport:
     (Helping someone in sport who needs help, Feeling sorry for a losing team, unsure understanding of empathy in sport, When a team mate struggles in training, When someone misses a score, Avoid passing to someone, Clapping for allies, Not getting on with teammates, Understand someone, Sympathy in sport, Does not understand empathy in sport)

3. Social Support - Perceived social benefits of being involved in the GAA
   (Being friends, Fun, Mutual respect, Team work, Online friends, Winning, the art of conversation, Fun in GAA ,being more involved, Getting to play what you love, Knowing your teammates, having double or more friends, As the school day is only a few hours long. As you choose GAA over school you choose GAA friends of over school friends, Body language, Long term friends, Fun and serious, Similar interests, Life pressures and the Importance of communication)

4. Messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education fields
Appendix 7: Base Interview Questions

Interviewer: “So I'm going to ask you a few introductory questions. You can just say ‘yes’ or no to them or just nod your head. Communicate your answer. Then, after that I'll ask you about friendship and empathy. Throughout the interview you can stop me as I speak or interrupt me to ask questions or give comments.”

Interviewer: So, there’s only ten or so questions, and we might start thinking of other things as well throughout, so, basically there beside you is your survey, and I notice you have a lot of (whatever they answered in their individual survey) in the first part, so if you want to read or think about any of the questions while your thinking and then you have a list of your names you can then talk about them?

I: So, I want you to take a few minutes, to read out a few of the questions, or think out load if you want. And just tell me why you picked, what you wrote down, and also the answers and what you’ve written down more generally.

I: Okay, and is there any other areas there that you want to address within the survey?

I: Right, so that’s the first kind of part looking through that survey. Now, it’s really within this second part, open kind of questions. Part two (of this interview) is exploring more of how you think about friendship generally, So, that could be all aspects of your life including school, at home, maybe you go other clubs, maybe you spend times with other friends outside of the club and school, online, who knows? And friends through the GAA, and also looking at empathy, and I will explain what I mean about empathy later on. So, just the first question then. So tell me what good friendship means to you? Or give me your definition or how you feel it in your own words?
I: Okay cool, that’s a real good answer for the first question, well done. So, next one then, so friendship in GAA clubs in general, do you think it’s important or not, explain?

I: Ok cool, now talk to me then about making or sustaining friends in the online world, describe your feelings on this?

I: So online, do you have friends online or have you kept friends online that you maybe know from the GAA club initially or may have left the GAA club or anything, what are your thoughts on that?

I: Brilliant, so I suppose again, leading onto the next question. Do you notice any differences in any other young people, not necessarily you have to be friends with these people but young people you know, with making and sustaining friends online as opposed to the real world, so not even just friends in your GAA club now but young people that you might see now, that you know are making and keeping friends online as opposed to friends in the real world, can you explain this please?

I: Okay, cool. So, back to your GAA club and having friends in your GAA club, what do you think of making and sustaining friends in other areas of life, including school, so, again other areas in life outside of school

I: So, How do you feel having friends in your GAA club is, in comparison to other friends in other areas of your life?

I: Okay, cool, brilliant. You have given me so much information, and I’m actually more than half way through now. Now, we’ve talked a lot about young people there and people your age and stuff. Just wondering about adults. I’m just wondering, other than a parent, or an adult relative in your life, What, in your opinion, is the likelihood or not of being friendly with an adult?
I: So what’s your relationship like with your coach or manager in your GAA club in general?

I: Alright, cool. So I mentioned earlier on about, and we’re coming close to the end now and I’m thankful for everything but if you want to go back on any of the stuff I asked or maybe you want to pop in other suggestions, or other opinions, that’s fine too. But we’re very, very close to the end. So, I’m interested in learning your opinion about empathy, and with empathy I mean being able to identify with another person or another young person, this is really important, understanding where they’re coming from or being able to walk in their shoes. So, it can be positive or negative things. So, what do you think is your understanding of the term empathy? And you can give examples or just give sentences or whatever. Off you go, take your time.

I: So, think in sport of general now, what would empathy look like in sport? In your mind.

I: Okay, wonderful, really well explained and in your own words, excellent, and again I just mentioned there a few moments ago that we’re on the final question. It’s an open question now, so anything else that you might be able to tell me that I should have covered, or anything you want to share to me about friendship or empathy, because you’ve done the survey now a couple of months ago and you’ve done the interview now almost, so is there anything you want to pop in there, or talk about with regard to friendship or empathy in general?

I: Okay, cool. Thanks a million, that’s a brilliant, brilliant interview, really well done thought about, thanks so much.
Appendix 8 Distressed Persons Protocol:

Study: An explorative study on the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field

Distressed Persons Protocol:

Research that elicits stories of personal experience is by its very nature probing, particularly where emotive issues are discussed (e.g. parenting; child-rearing; division of responsibilities; immigration). The possible occurrence of feelings of distress or of a participant becoming uncomfortable with the topics depends on the person, their characteristics and personality, and their individual experience. Distress is therefore difficult to predict.

The methods of data collection for this study are surveys, individual semi-structured interviews and observations.

In the event of a participant indicating distress during interviews, the researcher will immediately follow the Distressed Persons Protocol.

If a participant indicates that they are uncomfortable or experiencing emotional distress, or if they exhibit behaviours suggestive of such, the following course of action will be taken:

1. The participant will be immediately asked whether they want to continue with the survey or interview session/interview, discontinue at this time or withdraw from the study.

2. If the participant decides to discontinue at this time, they will be asked if they would like to continue at another time using a different venue and different method to speak about the
problems or issues they are facing (e.g. face to face, phone call).

3. The participant can withdraw if they choose to withdraw and the researcher will reassure them that existing data will not be used if they so wish.

4. Researcher and participant can decide if another person (practitioner or partner) should be informed of the situation to ensure participant safety and well-being.

5. The participant can decide to seek further help from their local general practitioner or any other services as suggested on the Adult Contact Information Sheet (see Appendix 3).

6. Time will be given to ensure that the participant’s distress or upset has diminished sufficiently by asking the participant how they feel prior to concluding the meeting.

7. If the participant wishes to return to the research/interview, they are free to do so after distress has diminished sufficiently and they have been reassured that they can discontinue or withdraw from the study at any point if they so wish.
Appendix 9: Sample letter to Respondents who participate in the Study

Student Researcher,

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,

National University of Ireland,

Galway

Dear Club Member,

I am writing to you to invite you to take part in UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway’s study on the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) juvenile clubs. The study aims to find out the support, friendship and empathy among those from 11-18 years of age that are taking part in the GAA in both the Castlegar and St. James’ GAA clubs in Galway. The study aims to find out about the support you get from or give to people and the friendships that may, or may not, be in Juvenile GAA Clubs.

I will also invite some of the young people who are taking part in the study to talk to me and tell me their opinions through them and I doing a short interview (that will take a few minutes to do) once a broad questionnaire has been freely filled out by all young participants.

If you choose to be part of this study remember that there are no right or wrong answers to any questions that you will be asked. The questions are there for you to give your opinion, and all types of answers from young people are welcome as I am keen to gain a wide range of opinions.

You are free to choose to be part of this study as it is totally voluntary. You may wish to stop taking part in this study at any time after you have begun and you are allowed to do that also.
Please take time to read the enclosed information sheet carefully and to think about whether or not you would like to take part.

If you have any questions about the study then please do contact me. My email is Hogan_conor@yahoo.ie and I will be happy to discuss with you any questions you may have. Alternatively you can e-mail me.

Please fill in the enclosed form if you are interested in taking part in this study and send it back to me in the pre-paid envelope provided or by emailing me to let me know.

Thank you very much for reading this letter,

Yours sincerely,

Conor Hogan,

Hogan_conor@yahoo.ie
Appendix 10: Sample letter to Parents/ Guardians Who Participate in the Study

Student Researcher,

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,

National University of Ireland,

Galway

Dear Parent,

I am writing to invite your child to take part in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway’s study on the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) juvenile clubs. The title is entitled: ‘An explorative study on the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field’

The study aims to discover the social support, friendship and empathy in young people that are taking part in the GAA between 11-18 years of age in both the Castlegar and St. James’ GAA Clubs in Galway. The study is important, as it gives your child/ children an opportunity to express their opinions and feelings regarding social support, friendship and empathy in your child/ children’s Juvenile GAA Club. The resultant findings of this research will inform other GAA Clubs across the country, and possibly governmental policy on the afore mentioned issues.

Young participants in this study will firstly be invited to fill out a comprehensive questionnaire. Once this questionnaire has been filled out by all participants and the findings have been assessed, I will invite
some young people to partake in an interview. Those that take part in the interview will be asked a series of open ended and unstructured questions in a time frame no longer than 30 minutes. The information that the young people give me in interviews will be used to help me to explain the results of the study better and to give other people in similar clubs information to help them learn about social support, empathy and friendship within GAA juvenile clubs. There are no right or wrong answers to this – as I am keen to gain a wide variety of opinions. Your child’s decision to partake in the study is completely voluntary and you may decide at any time to cease your child’s involvement in the study if and when you so wish. All participants in this study will be rewarded with a day excursion to Croke Park, the GAA’s national headquarters, where they will be able to tour the GAA museum and play about on the pitch.

Before you decide on whether or not you would like to do the questionnaire, please be aware that your child may be asked to share their views at a later time during an interview with me. Please take time to read the enclosed information sheet carefully and to think about whether or not you would like your child/children to take part.

If you have any questions about the study then please do contact me. My email is Hogan_conor@yahoo.ie and I will be happy to discuss with you any questions you may have. Alternatively you can write to me and use the pre-paid envelope provided.

Please fill in the enclosed form if you are interested in taking part in this study and send it back to me in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Thank you very much for reading this letter,

Yours sincerely,

Conor Hogan,

Hogan_conor@yahoo.ie
Appendix 11: Information Sheet to Respondents Aged 15-18 Years Of Age (females and males) who Participate in the Study

Student Researcher,

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,

National University of Ireland,

Galway

Who Am I?

Conor Hogan is a PhD candidate from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, at the National University Ireland, Galway. Our research centre works with children, young people and the people involved in their lives to reveal the things that matter to children, and what can be

What is the study about?
The study aims to find out about the support you get from people and the friendships that occur in Juvenile GAA Clubs.

What will I have to do?

Your involvement in the study will be during your own free time. You will be invited to take part in a survey. The survey will involve questions about how and who supports you.

What are the benefits?

The findings of the study might help coaches, managers and club officers to provide more positive and meaningful GAA Clubs and friendly experiences for young people so that they might become active like you. It also aims to make GAA Clubs friendlier places for all other members to be part of.

What are the risks?

You might decide that you don’t want to answer a question. If this happens, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to.

What if I do not want to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to take part or to stop your involvement in this study at any time.

What happens to the information?
The information that is collected will be kept private and stored securely and safely on the researcher’s computer. The computer is protected with a password. Your name will not appear on any information. You will be assigned a fictitious name when the information is being written in a report by the researcher. The information that is gathered in the study will be kept for seven years. After this time, it will be destroyed.

Who else is taking part?

Young people aged 11-18 years from the St. James’ GAA and Castlegar GAA Clubs will be invited to take part in the study.

What if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely event that you feel you do not understand anything in the survey, you may ask the researcher and he will gladly explain it to you.

What happens at the end of the study?

At the end of the study the information will be used to present results. The information will be completely anonymous. No student’s name appears in any of the results. All data gathered from the research will be stored securely and safely by the researcher (Conor Hogan) in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre in NUI, Galway for 7 years. Information that is stored on computer will be stored by (Conor Hogan) on a computer that is password-protected.

What if I have more questions or do not understand something?

If you have any questions about the study you may contact the researcher. It is important that you feel that all your questions have been answered.

What happens if I change my mind during the study?

At any stage should you feel that you want to stop taking part in the study, you are free to stop and take no further part. There are no consequences for changing your mind about being in the study.
If you have questions or concerns about the research please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Conor Hogan by post c/o: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway or by email: Hogan_conor@ayhoo.ie.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independently and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie
Appendix 12 Parents/ Guardian of Participants Consent Form

I am doing an explorative study to establish the social Support, empathy and friendships among youth membership of the Castlegar and St. James` GAA clubs.

Student Researcher:
Mr. Conor Hogan

Please Initial Box:
I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated ____/__/___ and have had the opportunity to ask questions and query anything that has been afore mentioned by the named researcher.

I am completely understood the information provided by the researcher and I was afforded adequate time to contemplate my child/ children`s participation in this research.

I understand that my child/ children`s participation in the study is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time.
I understand that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

I agree that my child/children can take part in this study.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _________________________________

Signature:___________________________

Date: __________/_________/__________

For researcher’s use only

Participant Identity Number: ________
Appendix 13 Information Sheet to Respondents Aged 11-14 (females and males) Years Of Age who Participate in the Study

Student Researcher,

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,

National University of Ireland,

Galway

Who Am I?

Conor Hogan is a researcher from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, at the National University Ireland, Galway. Our research centre works with children and young people to understand their every day experiences and how to improve children’s lives.
What will you have to do if you decide to take part?
You will be invited to take part in a survey. A survey provides statistics so that we can learn about a large group of people. The survey will involve questions about how and who supports you. If you decide to take part then your involvement in the study will be during your own free time.

Is there anything that will upset you if you decide to take part?
Sometime for some children taking part in a study like this can be distressing or upsetting. If you feel like this, please let Conor know. You can stop taking part at this time.

Conor will also give your parent/ guardian names of people that they can talk to about how you feel and they will make you feel better.

What if I do not want to take part?
You don’t have to take part! There is no pressure to take part at all, but if you do participate in this study it is important to know that it is voluntary and you can choose not to take part or to stop your involvement in this study at any time.
What is the study about?

Conor is trying to learn about the support you get from people and the friendships that occur in Juvenile GAA Clubs.

Will anyone know that you are taking part or what you told us?

We are the only ones that will know your name and that you are taking part in the study.

We will never use your real name.

The only time that we will have to tell someone what you say is that if you tell us if someone is hurting you or harming you in any way, Conor wants this stop immediately.

What if I have more questions or do not understand something?

If you have any questions about the study you may contact Conor Hogan (the researcher). It is important that you feel that all your questions have been answered.
If you have questions or concerns about the research please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Conor Hogan by post c/o: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway or by email: Hogan_conor@yahoo.ie.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independently (on your own) and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie
Appendix 14 Information Evening and Parent/ Guardian Information Sheet:

You are being invited to take part in a research study carried out as part of a PhD degree at NUI, Galway. The title of the research project is ‘An explorative study on the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field’

Who Am I?

Conor Hogan is a PhD candidate from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, at the National University Ireland, Galway. Our research centre works with children, young people and the people involved in their lives to reveal the things that matter to
**What is the project about?**

In this project we are trying to find out what are the Juvenile Club member’s perceptions of social support and friendship in both Castlegar and St. James’ GAA clubs.

As you are a parent/guardian of one (or more) of either the Castlegar and St. James’ GAA clubs, therefore, your child’s/children’s participation in this research is very important to the success of this study. I believe that asking your child/children what they think is worthwhile. This is why your child/children are being invited to take part in this study.

**If you decide to allow your child/children to take part, what does this involve?**

If you decide to allow your child/children to take part, they will be expected to:

- Sign a consent form indicating that they understand what is expected of them and that they agree to take part.
- Fill out Questionnaires in February, 2018.
- As a result of the findings of the questionnaires, 20 participants will be chosen for interview. The interviews will take place in June, 2018.
- These interviews will be for a maximum of 30 minutes on social empathy and support amongst young people in the GAA.
- Once the findings are discovered, the participants will be informed by being given a 2 page findings report.
Will the information be kept confidential and will anyone know what I have said?

I will be the only person who will facilitate the questionnaires and interviews. I will also be the only person who will analyse the information for this study. The findings will be published as a thesis and may also appear in research journals or in other publications. It will also be available to any interested person or organisation.

The young people’s information will be kept confidential and all of those involved will be afforded complete anonymity. There will be no invasive or intimately personable questions asked during interview, should they be selected for interview as a result of the questionnaire’s findings. The young people can withdraw from the research at any time. To ensure the young people of their anonymity I will assign pseudonyms to the participants in the study. All participants in the study will be asked to agree to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

The research being carried out will be covered by data protection and the freedom of information legislation. The information collected as part of this study may be stored in an archive in the future. Should an archive be established then the information collected in this study will be stored there under the following conditions: every effort will be made to ensure information is anonymous. This means that the identity of participants will not be known to anyone who views the information. Access to the collected information will be restricted to researchers and information will be analysed only for academic purposes.

Do you have to take part?

Taking part is voluntary. Young people are under no pressure or obligation to take part in this research. Young people can cease their involvement in the study at any time. By taking part your child/children has the opportunity to give their opinion and share their experiences regarding social support and
friendship in their Juvenile GAA Club, which may potentially inform government policy regarding these issues. If your child/children agree to take part they (and you) will be asked to sign a consent form. They (and you) will also receive a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep for your records. Please remember that if you agree to allow your child/children to take part in this study you can change your mind about participating at any point without needing to give a reason.

What if you have more questions or want to talk to someone about this?

I will gladly answer any of your questions or talk you through the study. If you would like me to do so please contact me.

Conor Hogan
PhD Student Researcher,
UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,
National University of Ireland, Galway
Email: Hogan_conor@yahoo.ie

If you have any reservations or complaints about this study and/or wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee.

Chairperson,
Research Ethics Committee,
C/o Office of the Vice President for Research,

National University Ireland, Galway

Email: ethics@nuigalway.ie
# Appendix 15: Participant Consent Form (11-14 Years’ of Age)

As I’ve read the information sheet and am happy with the information I’ve been given, I agree to take part of the study.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I completely understood the information provided by the researcher and I was given enough time to think about being part of this research.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I can remove myself from it at any time.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I agree to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of other participants.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I understand that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I am happy to be recorded and am happy to take part in the study.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix 16: Participant Consent Form (15-18 Years’ of Age)

I am doing a study that seeks to explore the social Support, empathy (put yourself in someone else’s shoes) and friendships among youth membership of the Castlegar and St. James` GAA clubs.

Student Researcher:
Mr. Conor Hogan

Please Initial Box:
After reading the information sheet dated ___/___/___ I am happy to say that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and query anything that has been mentioned before now by the named researcher.

I completely understood the information provided by the researcher and I was given enough time to think about being part of this research.
I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I can remove myself from it at any time.

I agree to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of other participants.

I understand that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

I agree that I will take part in this study.

Name of Participant: _________________________________

Signature:___________________________

Date: __________/_________/__________
Appendix 17: Contact Information Sheet

Contact Information Sheet

The following are local services you can contact in relation to a) health issues and b) information, advice and support

a) **East City Primary Care Centre (General Practitioner)**, Doughiska Road, Doughiska, Galway

Phone 091 336300

b) **ARD Family Resource Centre**, Cumasú Centre, Doughiska, Galway

Phone 091 768 852 Email martina@ardfrc.com

Further support services available in your area can be found at [http://www.supportme.ie/index.php](http://www.supportme.ie/index.php)

The following is a list of services of national organisations that offer **FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL** support services.

If you are distressed or upset please don’t hesitate to get in contact with them.

1. **Abate Counselling** - Leading Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Service Providers, who are professional, caring and confidential. Counselling and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) providers. Support for Depression, Anxiety & Mental Stress, Relationship Difficulties, Marital Breakdown, Abuse, Bereavement, Financial Stress, Emotional Distress, Addiction, Phobia, Grief, Loss, Workplace issues,
Anger Management and many other issues.

Email info@abatecounselling.com Phone 1800 222 833 Website: http://abatecounselling.ie/

2. **Samaritans** - Provides confidential and non-judgemental emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including feelings that could lead to suicide.

Email jo@samaritans.org Phone 116 123 or 091 561222

Website: http://www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-galway

3. **GROW** - Mental Health Organisation which helps people who have suffered, or are suffering, from mental health problems. Members are helped to recover from all forms of mental breakdown, or indeed, to prevent such happening.

Email info@grow.ie Phone 1890 474 474 Website: http://grow.ie/get-help-now/

4. **Aware (Depression and Anxiety)** - The organisation provides a range of services including group meetings offering support and information, a telephone and email support service, and a number of programmes based on principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Email supportmail@aware.ie Phone 1800 80 48 48 Website: https://www.aware.ie/

5. **Pieta House** - Provides a free, therapeutic approach to people who are in suicidal distress and those who engage in self-harm.

Email info@pieta.ie Phone 1800 247 247 Website: http://www.pieta.ie/

6. **Shine** - National organisation dedicated to upholding the rights and addressing the needs of all those affected by mental ill health, through the promotion and provision of high quality services and working to ensure the continual enhancement of the quality of life of the people it serves.

Email phil@shineonline.ie Phone 01 541 3715 Website: https://www.shine.ie/

7. **COPE Galway** - Homeless Service and Domestic Violence Services

Homelessness http://www.copegalway.ie/homelessness-contact-us

Domestic Violence Email watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie Phone 091 565985

Website: http://www.copegalway.ie/cope-domestic-violence
Child Protection Protocol:

**Study:** An explorative study on the perceptions of empathy, friendship and support of the Gaelic Athletic Association Juvenile members in order to establish potential messages for policy and practice in the youth sports sector and related education field

As outlined in the NUI Galway Child Protection Policy (2011) and adopted by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, the following reporting procedure has been put into place, should the researcher receive disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse. The researcher will:

1) Inform the participant who has made the disclosure that the information cannot be kept confidential as it will have to be passed on to the appropriate authorities

2) Listen carefully to what is being said and record the details in writing as soon as possible
ensuring that the record is kept safe and secure

3) Inform the Designated Child Protection Officer (Dr John Canavan) about the disclosure immediately (not more than 24 hours afterwards). The matter will be treated as an urgent priority

4) Not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised Otherwise

The participant, who made the original disclosure, will be kept informed about the post-disclosure process so that they can be reassured about what to expect.

Where an adult makes a disclosure of abuse that occurred during his or her childhood, that disclosure will also be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer, as the alleged abuser may still pose a risk to children.

In the event of the participant becoming distressed during disclosure, data collection will be interrupted and the researcher will follow the Distressed Persons Protocol (Appendix 3) and also provide the participant with the Adult Contact Information Sheet (Appendix 4).

Castlegar and St. James’ GAA Clubs have been advised of the researcher’s Child Protection Protocol. In addition to contacting Dr John Canavan in the event of a disclosure being made, the researcher will also inform Mr. Ronan McNulty who is the designated child protection person in the Castlegar and St. James’ GAA Clubs.