"I thought coaches were supposed to set an example":

Coaches' Divergent Roles in Young Adult Literature

he high school sports coach is a prominent figure in US education and society. Whether understood as the bored teacher simply enduring his classes until he can get to practice after school or as a role model for an entire community every game night, coaches hold central images and memories in many students' high school experiences. They are also represented across popular culture in television series and movies; Coach Taylor in Friday Night Lights (Berg, 2006) and Coach Dale in Hoosiers (De Haven & Anspaugh, 1986) stand as prime examples. Of course, due to its intended readership, high school coaches populate young adult literature (YAL) as well. Chris Crowe (2004), in his seminal study of sports-related YAL, wrote that the "best young adult sports novels offer the same benefits, challenges, and intellectual stimulation as any other well-written novel" (p. 9). We agree, hence our shared enjoyment of sportsrelated YAL.

Still, scholarship on YAL, sports-related or otherwise, tends to focus on representations of either the youth or the teachers present in the stories (e.g., Alexander & Black, 2015; Alsup, 2014; Cummins, 2011; Curwood, 2013). This focus probably extends from the predominance of such characters, but it also aligns with who primarily reads and teaches these texts. Still, coaches also often serve as central characters in sports-related YAL, appearing as (supposed) role models—as indicated in our title quotation from Lu in *Ghost* (Reynolds, 2016, p. 134)—as advocates for adolescent-athletes, or as adult antagonists in

conflict with adolescent protagonists. And the inclusion of coaches is significant. As readers navigate their own unique contexts and lived experiences, some (e.g., student-athletes) might take keen interest in fictional coaches, positioning such characters as important mediators for whatever readers are actually experiencing. Therefore, we turned our attention to the representation of coaches in YAL to provide a more complete picture of these characters. In particular, we were interested in the relationships depicted between coaches and adolescent-athletes in these stories. Accordingly, our study was guided by the following questions: a) How are athletic coaches of organized youth sports represented in selected works of recommended contemporary young adult fiction? b) What types of relationships between coaches and adolescent-athletes are depicted in selected works of recommended contemporary young adult fiction?

We begin by outlining social science scholarship on coaching models and relationships and addressing sports-related YAL in the secondary classroom. We then outline our methods and explain our findings before offering implications stemming from our work.

Coaching Models and Relationships

Within social science scholarship examining athletic coaches and coaching, researchers have outlined models for the coach–athlete relationship, identified roles coaches believe they should take on, and determined particular effects those roles have on athletes' motivation and success. For instance, Jowett (2017)

proffered a "3Cs Model" of coach-athlete relationships (pp. 63–64). The model identifies *closeness*—basing the relationship on high levels of trust and respect—*commitment*—intending to maintain a bond with the athlete—and *complementarity*—creating a relationship on friendly cooperation. Similarly, Clark (2016) identi-

[I]t is important to note that sports-related YAL is rarely ever about sports alone.

fied several characteristics for determining coaching efficacy within "The A.U.R.A. Map" (p. 29). For each letter of the acronym, a positive characteristic for a coach's philosophy, principles, practices, and presence is used to describe that coach; that is, coaching philosophy is couched

in terms of appreciative approach, unconditional prizing, relational depth, and authentic responses.

A line of research within this scholarship focuses on coaches' beliefs about their roles. In interviews with coaches, Miller, Salmela, and Kerr (2002) found that participants believed that strong mentorship has a positive effect on the lives of the athletes they coach; as a result, they try to use their mentoring role to support athletes' intellectual competence in their academic career and their personal competence with interpersonal life skills. Banwell and Kerr (2016) also found that coaches believed that mentoring athletes in their personal development was part of their role, particularly around the areas of academic success and self-acceptance. The coaches in their study employed modeling and one-on-one meetings with athletes to meet this mentoring goal. Finally, in their study of African American female collegiate athletes, Carter and Hart (2010) found that these athletes also desired mentoring not only for their athletic skills but also to help them meet their career goals and gain psychosocial support in navigating the college experience.

Other scholars have investigated the effects of the roles that coaches play on athletes' relative success both in and beyond the arena. These effects can be both negative and positive. For example, Gervis, Rhind, and Luzar (2016) asked participants to read several scenarios in which coaches engaged in different levels of emotional abuse of youth athletes. They found that although participants perceived that the

coaches' behavior had a positive influence on athletic performance, they also identified that the behavior had a negative impact on athletes' wellbeing. Kassing and Anderson (2014) explored dissent among high school and college athletes and found that the coach-athlete relationship resembled the superiorsubordinate relationship often found in corporate settings, including dynamics associated with authority and power. In terms of positive relationships, Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2013) found that adolescent soccer players reported that coaches they viewed as "transformational" leaders positively supported their personal/social skills, goal setting, and initiative. Similarly, Jowett et al. (2017) surveyed elite athletes about coach-athlete relationships; their participants reported that coaches who demonstrated components of the "3Cs Model" motivated them to do well across different aspects of their lives.

This scholarship reinforces the importance of coaches in athletes' lives, but it also illustrates that the particular roles that coaches assume affect the relationships available to coaches and athletes and that how a coach defines those roles has material effects on the sporting and schooling experiences of athletes. Further, coach—athlete relationships are disparate from teacher—student relationships because power, success, and situation factor into those relationships in fundamentally different ways. The findings from this social science scholarship on the lives of practicing coaches can be seen in the various fictional coaches we analyzed in our collection of sports-related YAL.

Sports-Related Young Adult Literature in the Secondary English Classroom

We conceptualize sports-related YAL as consisting of narratives in which the milieu of sports is both prominent and contributes to the story's progression. Multiple sports action scenes are commonly featured in sports-related YAL, and the protagonists of such stories tend to be athletes themselves. Their experiences in and around the athletic arena typically contribute to their development as characters while advancing the plot of the story. However, it is important to note that sports-related YAL is rarely ever about sports alone. Rather, "fine YA sports novels are about people and the complications that entangle them, not about games" (Brown & Crowe, 2013, p. 79). In that way,

though sports-related YAL might hold the greatest appeal for the sports minded, a passion for sport is no prerequisite.

The study of sports-related YAL in the secondary English language arts (ELA) classroom has garnered considerable attention in recent years. A number of scholars have advocated using it as a vehicle to promote critical readings of sport and society. Scholars have pointed to specific titles and described meaningful classroom activities that can facilitate the exploration of racism (Zwillenberg & Gioia, 2017), assimilation (Gonzales, 2016), (dis)ability (King, 2016), bullying (Coombs, 2016), and other sociopolitical issues. Such scholarship underscores the fact that sports-related YAL is about so much more than sports alone. Further, it illustrates how sports-related YAL can support the exploration of wide-ranging sociopolitical issues relevant to the lives of students today. making it a valuable asset in the ELA classroom.

Scholars have also critically examined representations of various populations in sports-related YAL, helping teachers to consider how novels in the subgenre depict specific groups of people in the sports world, including lesbian athletes (Mason, 2014), female athletes playing male-dominated sports (Whiteside, Hardin, DeCarvalho, Carillo, & Smith, 2013), adolescent-athletes more broadly (Lewis & Rodesiler, 2018), and even coaches (Crowe, 2004). We focus here on Crowe's analysis of fictional athletic coaches, as his work is foundational to our current study. Crowe divided coaches into two camps: mentors and dementors. Citing works such as Football Dreams (Guy, 1980) and Stotan! (Crutcher, 1986), Crowe highlighted the ways in which some coaches—those he labeled as "mentors" (p. 79)—serve as positive role models, reflecting "society's hope of what coaches should be" (p. 92). Crowe also contended that some fictional coaches are depicted as "dementors" (p. 82), referencing books like Running Loose (Crutcher, 1983) and others that feature a coach whose unethical behavior is spurred by an all-consuming desire to win.

With this study, an analysis of athletic coaches and their relationships with adolescent-athletes as depicted in selected works of more recently published realistic fiction for young adults, we seek to build upon and extend Crowe's (2004) analysis of the depiction of athletic coaches in young adult sports fiction.

Methods of Investigation

We employed a criterion-driven sampling of young adult literature to explore our guiding research questions. A work of literature had to meet each of the following criteria to be included in our study: a) the book had to be a work of contemporary realistic fiction for young adults; b) it had to be published between 2008 and 2017; c) it must have received awards

and/or recommendations from multiple reputable outlets or organizations (e.g., YALSA, Kirkus Reviews, Booklist); and d) it must contain multiple scenes depicting an official coach of organized sports for adolescents. The first criterion helped us narrow the scope of our study, pushing contemporary realistic fiction for young adults to the forefront and excluding works categorized as, say, historical fiction for young adults (e.g., The Berlin Boxing

[S]ports-related YAL can support the exploration of wide-ranging sociopolitical issues relevant to the lives of students today, making it a valuable asset in the ELA classroom.

Club [Sharenow, 2011]). The second criterion ensured that we were considering recently published novels, though it meant excluding highly acclaimed novels published just outside the 10-year window that remain popular in the present day (e.g., *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* [Alexie, 2007]). The third criterion was important because awards and recognition tend to precede greater exposure and increased popularity. We wanted to see how the sports-related YAL today's students may be encouraged to read depicts athletic coaches and their relationships with the adolescent-athletes in their care. Finally, the fourth criterion was essential; it would be difficult to analyze the depiction of athletic coaches in a novel if coaches are not adequately featured in said novel.

Beyond the firm criteria described above, we sought to account for the representation of different sports across the novels chosen for this study rather than limit consideration to only the most popular sports (i.e., football, basketball, and baseball). Sports featured in the novels we selected include cheerlead-

ing, track, rugby, and gymnastics, as well as football and basketball. Additionally, though men's sports historically dominate media coverage (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015), we strove to represent coaches of both young men and young women across the books selected for analysis, recognizing that sports-related YAL titles that challenge this gender binary are very

The coach is, for the most part, depicted as carrying out the chief duties of the job: helping adolescents develop their athletic abilities while also looking out for their health and wellbeing.

rare. As a result, half of the books included in this study feature coaches of female adolescent-athletes. We also sought to include novels that introduce diverse characters. Looking across the novels we selected, diversity can be found in the socioeconomic status, physical ability, age, race, and ethnicity of prominent characters. See Table 1 for the full list of novels included in this study.

With 10 novels selected, we conducted

a hermeneutical, thematic analysis (Prasad, 2002; Schwandt, 2015) driven by the research questions established above. We read and reread each novel separately, independently making notes and developing thematic codes across the text set in an iterative and recursive manner. As we continued to assign codes independently, we considered how they aligned with and were distinct from one another, then collapsed or grouped them as necessary to build understandings of the representation of athletic coaches and their relationships with adolescent-athletes in contemporary realistic fiction for young adults. When we reconvened to compare our respective findings, we identified common ground, talked through analytical and interpretive discrepancies, and established mutual understandings.

Athletic Coaches in Contemporary Realistic Fiction for Young Adults

Our analysis across the 10 award-winning and recommended works of contemporary realistic fiction for young adults selected for this study revealed the de-

piction of five distinct types of relationships between the athletic coaches and adolescent-athletes featured:
a) coach-athlete; b) mentor-protégé; c) counselor-client; d) victor-victim; and e) master-puppet. Each type of relationship and the specific representations of coaches corresponding with each dyad are explained in the following sections. Association with a specific relationship type is based upon the coach's primary role. We acknowledge that for some, such as Coach Brigs in *Leverage* (Cohen, 2011), this role was the only one depicted in coaching relationships with adolescent-athletes; for others, multiple roles were portrayed, demonstrating characteristics of relationships beyond their primary relationship role.

Doing the Job: Coach-Athlete Relationships

Though any relationship between a coach and an adolescent-athlete might technically be of the "coachathlete" variety, the type of relationship to which we are referring is distinct from those described below in that the coach's role is limited primarily to helping adolescent-athletes maximize their athletic potential. The coach is, for the most part, depicted as carrying out the chief duties of the job: helping adolescents develop their athletic abilities while also looking out for their health and wellbeing. This relationship accurately imitates how many coaches approach their roles in youth and college sports (Carter & Hart, 2010; Vella et al., 2013). For example, in Not if I See You First (Lindstrom, 2015), Coach Underhill encourages Parker Grant to try out for the track team despite her visual impairment (p. 41). At practice, he adjusts his instruction to fit Parker's needs, as the best teachers do: "I'll call you from the fifty-yard line and then run backwards to stay ahead. Nothing fancy—I'll just say right or left if you're veering too much. Just adjust in the direction I say, all right?" (p. 107). And though Underhill is adaptive, he is also quick to hold Parker accountable when necessary, like when her attempt to run on the track independently, guided only by her friend Molly's voice on a cell phone, ends with bodies crashing to the ground: "You are never doing that again! . . . They'd never allow that in competition, so it's pointless and downright stupid!" (p. 294). Underhill's reaction may be harsh, yet it is evident that he holds Parker's health and wellbeing above all else.

The coach-athlete relationship is also evident in *The Running Dream* (Van Draanen, 2011). Coach

Table 1. Featured young adult novels

Title, Author, & Date of Publication	Brief Synopsis	Awards & Recommendations
Leverage by Joshua C. Cohen (2011)	An unlikely friendship between football player Kurt Brodsky and gymnast Danny Meehan is forged in a school where bullying has deadly consequences and performance-enhancing drugs are supplied by football coaches hellbent on winning.	 YALSA Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2012 Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth, 2011 Starred review, Booklist, 2011
Box Out by John Coy (2008)	During an unexpected promotion to his public school's varsity basketball team, sophomore Liam Bergstrom must travel his own road as he grows increasingly uncomfortable with Coach Kloss leading the team in mandatory prayer sessions.	 Booklist Top Ten Sports Books for Youth, 2009 Starred review, Booklist, 2008 Chosen as a Junior Library Guild Book
Foul Trouble by John Feinstein (2013)	The top high school basketball player in the country, Terrell Jamerson, and teammate Danny Wilcox, a talented player in his own right, navigate life as big-time college basketball prospects while college boosters, coaches, and agents close in fast.	 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2014 Starred review, <i>Kirkus Reviews</i>, 2013 Starred review, <i>Booklist</i>, 2013
Exit, Pursued by a Bear by E. K. Johnston (2016)	Hermione Winters, captain of the high-profile cheerleading squad at her high school, leans on her friends, family, and coach as she enters her senior year managing the trauma of being drugged and raped at the annual summer cheerleading camp.	 Canadian Children Book Centre's Amy Mathers Teen Book Award, 2017 YALSA Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, 2017 A Booklist Best Book, 2016
Not if I See You First by Eric Lindstrom (2015)	As established in "The Rules" she wrote after losing her vision, Parker Grant does not want to be treated differently because she is blind. She has enough problems to deal with, including the death of her father, lost love, and track-team tryouts.	 Handi-Livres Prize: Best Teen Youth Book, 2017 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2017 A Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book, 2015
Darius & Twig by Walter Dean Myers (2013)	Darius, a writer, and Twig, a middle-distance runner, are best friends making their way in Harlem, and their day-to-day experiences with gang members, a sketchy uncle, and the sordid underbelly of the sports world has them growing up fast.	 ALA Coretta Scott King Author Honor, 2014 Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth, 2013 A Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book, 2013
Ghost by Jason Reynolds (2016)	Castle Cranshaw, aka Ghost, can run. His physical talents are obvious to Coach Brody, an Olympic gold medalist who sets out to hone Ghost's track skills and teach him that he cannot outrun his past or the anger he unleashes upon his peers.	 National Book Award Finalist, Young People's Literature, 2016 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2017 Starred review, <i>Kirkus Reviews</i>, 2016
All American Boys by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely (2015)	The lives of Quinn Collins, a white basketball player, and Rashad Butler, a black ROTC member, collide when Quinn sees a cop beating Rashad. Struggling with the racism rocking their community, the teens must decide whether to act or sit idly by.	 Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Literature, 2016 ALA Coretta Scott King Author Honor, 2016 YALSA Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, 2017
Winger by Andrew Smith (2013)	Ryan Dean West, a 14-year-old junior enrolled in a rich-kid boarding school, is stuck in the dorm for troublemakers, which only makes it harder to balance school, life, and rugby, not to mention his relationship with Annie Altman, his best friend.	 YALSA Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2014 Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth, 2013 A Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book, 2013
The Running Dream by Wendelin Van Draanen (2011)	After a leg amputation, track star Jessica Carlisle befriends Rosa, who lives with cerebral palsy. With the support of her family, friends, and coach, Jessica returns to the track with a prosthesis and the motivation to give Rosa the gift of her first race.	 Schneider Family Book Award, 2012 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2012 Golden Sower Award—Young Adult, 2013

Kyrokowski (aka Kyro) is a selfless figure who plays a key role in helping Jessica Carlisle return to the track after a leg amputation, going so far as to work with members of the track team to develop the "Help Jessica Run" campaign, a fundraiser for purchasing a

Despite poor modeling and questionable judgment, Coach M's multidimensional depiction is distinguishable from coaches presented as irredeemable, one dimensional figures—those driven to win at all costs and those serving their own personal interests[.]

prosthetic leg she can use to compete (pp. 144-145). And when preparing for the River Run, a 10-mile community race in which she vows to push her friend Rosa's wheelchair so she can experience the thrill of crossing the finish line, Jessica relies on Kyro's guidance: "I stick to Kyro's plan. I alternate running and lifting. I'm sore a lot. I ice my legs after hard runs. I hydrate the way he wants me to" (p. 302). Adhering to Kyro's plan pays off, as Jessica triumphantly meets her goal, pushing Rosa across the finish line and discovering a newfound belief in herself (pp. 331-332).

Not all adults in a coach-athlete relationship with adolescents in the books we analyzed are depicted in such a flattering light. In Winger (Smith, 2013), the coach-athlete relationship is evident between Coach McAuliffe (aka Coach M) and Ryan Dean West (aka Winger), yet the coach has his flaws. When it came to rugby, "Coach M was a die-hard traditionalist . . . and everything had to be perfectly maintained that way, from the words we used . . . when we were around him, to the clothes we wore during practice" (p. 82). But Coach M's old-school sensibilities were evident in other facets of his work as well. As Winger explained, "[H]e could cuss you out with the most vicious obscenities" (p. 82), a coaching practice that is often frowned upon these days. Yet Coach M coaches up the rugby team, pushes for reconciliation between Winger and his former roommate JP after their conflict in practice, and expresses concern for Winger's injuries (pp. 161–164). Coach M's emphasis on Winger's wellbeing extends through the first half of the next game when, as a precaution, he benches him (pp. 203–204).

However, Coach M's character is muddled further when his pursuit of victory appears to win out over his concern for player safety. Down 3–0 at halftime, he apprehensively puts Winger back in the game, cautioning, "Ryan Dean, mind your head" (p. 205). Despite poor modeling and questionable judgment, Coach M's multidimensional depiction is distinguishable from coaches presented as irredeemable, one-dimensional figures—those driven to win at all costs and those serving their own personal interests—which we identify as "victors" and "masters" in forthcoming sections.

Advising Youth Athletes: Mentor-Protégé Relationships

In this relationship, the coach draws from knowledge and experience to mentor adolescent-athletes in life beyond the athletic arena. This type of relationship reflects what many young athletes report as the ideal interaction with coaches, namely that their coaches serve as mentors to guide and support them across career, psychosocial, and athletic aspects of their lives (Carter & Hart, 2010). For instance, in Foul Trouble (Feinstein, 2013), good friends and teammates Terrell Jamerson and Danny Wilcox have become top college basketball prospects, so they begin experiencing all of the (often suspect) pressures and practices related to the college recruiting process. Coach Wilcox, Danny's father, plays a significant role—not only advising Terrell and Danny about their options, but also giving them strategies for protecting themselves from the less scrupulous college coaches and recruiters.

Early in the novel, Terrell makes an error in judgment and decides to join some of the "hangers-on"—who typically use their closeness to high school athletes to influence their college decisions, which results in compensation for them—to a party during some downtime at a tournament. They convince Terrell it would be okay to experiment with marijuana. Coach Wilcox can tell that Terrell is under the influence when he returns to the hotel, and he immediately moves to protect Terrell from his mistake. However, he also does not allow Terrell to escape the consequences; he benches both Terrell and Danny for the next game (pp. 75–76). In this way, Wilcox demonstrates that his care for athletes as people is

more important than winning a game. Moreover, since Wilcox knows Terrell personally, he understands that others highly influenced Terrell's decisions, so he wants to mentor his protégé on how to navigate the recruiting minefield. He tells Terrell that he wants to meet with him and his mother to discuss how to avoid people who tell him he can have anything he wants because he is a star and how to instead surround himself with people who could actually help him (p. 77). Coach Wilcox repeatedly supports his athletes as they grapple with making their college decisions.

Similarly, Coach Franzen (aka Jack), who leads the women's high school basketball team in Box Out (Cov. 2008), takes on the mantle of mentor for Liam Bergstrom (aka Bergie) after a falling out with Coach Kloss, the men's basketball coach. As Liam struggles with his decision to confront Kloss, Jack uses literature as a way to assist Liam in coming to terms with his decision and the consequences of quitting the men's team. By assigning Liam to read Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855/2008) and pointing him specifically to "Song of Myself" and "One's Self I Sing," Jack demonstrates an awareness of the conflicts—both external and internal—Liam is enduring (Coy, 2008, p. 216). Jack's mentorship helps Liam find peace in doing right by himself when it is not the popular choice among friends, family, and his former coach. With Jack's support, Liam sees himself in Whitman's advocacy of self-knowledge and acceptance: "My road. Not Mom's. Not Dad's. Not Mackenzie's. Not Jack's. Not Whitman's. My road" (p. 241). Moreover, as good mentors do, Jack refrains from telling Liam what to do or how to feel and, instead, provides resources that could help him build his own realizations and draw his own conclusions.

Jack also recruits Liam to work with the women's team as a way to help him find his own success on and off the court. Once Liam agrees, Franzen gives him three simple rules—respect yourself, respect your teammates, and no inter-squad dating (p. 178). By basing his coaching philosophy on respect, he reveals that he cares about athletes as more than just basketball players, which is in direct opposition to Coach Kloss's mentality that the team is more important than individual players. Franzen also demonstrates his desire to mentor athletes beyond basketball by the way he begins each practice. Players are responsible for bringing a reflection activity to sharpen their focus

on internal processes before the first drill (p. 232). In these ways, Jack serves as a mentor for both the athletic and psychosocial aspects of his protégés' lives.

Supporting the Lives of Youth: Counselor-Client Relationships

In this relationship, the coach more intimately counsels adolescent-athletes through emotional hardships they are experiencing in their personal lives. Such a

relationship is related to a "student first, athlete second" perspective about student athletes, which influences how coaches view their responsibilities (Banwell & Kerr, 2016), determine the emotional needs of their athletes, and employ their own experiences to support them (Clark, 2016). The intimacy of the counselor role

The intimacy of the counselor role defines its distinctness from the often more detached mentor role.

defines its distinctness from the often more detached mentor role. For example, Coach Wilcox did not discuss with Terrell the possible consequences related to drug use, as a counselor might do. Rather, he focused on directing Terrell to make better decisions about the people with whom he associated. A coach embracing a counselor role would have approached Terrell's situation disparately, perhaps encouraging Terrell to reflect on why he made the decision to attend the party instead of returning to the hotel. In *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds (2016), Coach Brody contrastingly establishes himself as someone who wants to counsel Castle Cranshaw (aka Ghost) and other athletes in their lives by not only advising them on using track to garner college scholarships and disciplining them for behavior in and out of school but also by helping them atone for potentially self-destructive decisions.

For example, Brody convinces Ghost's mother to give permission for him to join the track team by promising that if he gets in trouble at school—something Ghost is prone to do and that his mother worries over—he would be off the team (pp. 27–28). However, when Ghost does get into trouble by fighting, Brody speaks with Ghost about the fight and seems to understand that something is happening internally for Ghost beyond simply rebellious adolescence.

Therefore, he decides to share some life advice and keep him on the team: "'Trouble is, you can't run away from yourself. . . . Unfortunately,' he said, 'ain't

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Ghost learns as much
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athlete.

nobody that fast'" (p. 51). Brody sees the emotional hardship that Ghost is fighting against and wants to continue his counseling relationship with Ghost through track.

Brody's role as counselor continues throughout the story as Ghost decides to shoplift some new track shoes because he is embarrassed by his inferior gear. When Coach Brody finds out, he disciplines Ghost by not giving him a uniform before the first meet, indicating that he will need to re-earn it. In the ensuing

conversation, Brody reveals to Ghost that he grew up in the same neighborhood and dealt with some of the same serious family issues that Ghost has endured. He provides more life advice, telling Ghost, "[Y]ou can't run away from who you are, but what you can do is run toward who you want to be" (p. 155). This advice impacts Ghost, and he agrees to return the shoes and apologize personally to the shop owner. Through the relationship Brody establishes with Ghost—both as a coach and as a counselor—Ghost learns as much about himself on a personal level as he does about himself as a track athlete.

The coach-as-counselor is a role Coach Caledon also embraces in *Exit*, *Pursued by a Bear* (Johnston, 2016). As a highly successful coach of a co-ed cheerleading team, Caledon pushes her athletes hard to improve, but in mutually respectful ways. The novel begins with the high school cheerleading team arriving at a competitive summer camp and senior cocaptain Hermione Winters reflecting on her final year at the camp. Caledon gives them an opening camp speech, which she apparently gives every year, but Hermione finds it "reassuring," and it reminds her of "how excited" she is about her final camp experience (p. 4). Near the end of the camp, however, Hermione

is drugged and raped at the closing social, horribly altering her senior year.

The next scene involves her waking up in the hospital with only a hazy recollection of what occurred. Hermione describes her view of Caledon as she approaches with the police:

I can tell that Caledon wants to rush in, pick me up, and make sure I'm okay. She stays outside of my personal space, though, and I'm so grateful for the breathing room that I want to vomit again, except I've got nothing left. (pp. 53–54).

A counselor knows that rape victims are wary of anyone touching them after their assault, and it seems that Caledon understands this. She also recognizes that details of the assault are not often something a victim wants to hear immediately, so she asks Hermione's permission before allowing Hermione's best friend and co-captain, Polly, to relate them (p. 57). Once Hermione learns that she is pregnant and is considering an abortion, Caledon reveals her desire to fulfill a counselor role. She herself is a single mother, so Hermione asks her about her own pregnancy, and she directly tells her:

"It's not the same." She holds the stack of cones in her hand and leans back against the stage looking at me with a serious face. "You and I, we're not the same. Not even close. I said yes, and you didn't even get asked the question." (pp. 123–124)

The reader learns from Hermione that Caledon rarely discloses experiences from her personal life, so it seems that she knew Hermione needed to hear that story in that moment. A good counselor knows when to relate personal experiences to help clients understand that they are not alone in their experiences. Caledon and Hermione's relationship shows the importance the counselor role can have for building positive coach—athlete relationships, as opposed to more negative interactions, to which we now turn.

Winning No Matter the Cost: Victor–Victim Relationships

Of all the relationships we discuss, the victor–victim relationship aligns most closely with Crowe's characterization of coach as "dementor" (2004, p. 82). In this relationship, the coach prioritizes winning in the athletic arena to the detriment of the adolescent-athlete, often working to achieve those ends by relying

on emotional abuse that has been found to have negative effects on young athletes (Gervis et al., 2016) and that occurs too often in organized sports. Two coaches featured in the novels we analyzed were plainly depicted with this win-at-all-costs mentality: Coach Brigs in Leverage (Cohen, 2011) and Coach Carney in All American Boys (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015).

In Leverage, Coach Brigs, head of the Oregrove High School football team, is the epitome of the winat-all-costs coach. The shortcuts he takes to victory are numerous. He gets Kurt Brodsky to join the team by paying a stipend to the fullback and his foster guardian (pp. 24-25). He asks teachers to raise players' grades (p. 211). He gives Kurt and his teammates steroids (p. 120). He even goes so far as to encourage hurting opponents to gain a competitive edge (p. 241). In addition to those corrupting actions, Brigs's disregard for the wellbeing of adolescent-athletes is evident throughout the novel. He emasculates players in a misguided form of motivation (p. 104). He dangles his connections with college recruiters to coerce players' compliance (p. 211). He even hurls homophobic slurs at players (p. 240). As such actions and others indicate, Brigs is embroiled in a victor-victim relationship with adolescent-athletes; he will stop at nothing to win football games and, in his quest for victory, he repeatedly abuses the emotional and physical wellbeing of Kurt and his teammates—even to the point of attempting to ignore a gang rape by star players.

While Coach Brigs may be an extreme example of a coach who maintains a victor-victim relationship with adolescent-athletes, Coach Carney is no less guilty. In All American Boys, Carney's first speech to the Springfield Central High School basketball team comes on the heels of a black student at the school, Rashad Butler, being violently assaulted by a white police officer, Paul Galluzzo. As tension grows within the school after the assault, Carney demands team unity and urges players to leave all other concerns at the gymnasium entrance: "There's all kinds of pressure going on out there, at school, in your lives back home. You leave it all at the door of this gym. In this gym we're only Falcons, you hear me?" (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015, p. 138). Carney couches his words as concern about players being selfishly preoccupied with college scouts, but Quinn Collins hears his coach's words as condemnation of discussing racism and

police brutality—issues on everyone's mind following the brutal assault.

Wrestling with his own thoughts about racism and the beating he witnessed, Quinn tries to embrace his coach's stance: "Wouldn't we have been better thinking that way? All of us. What did we really gain by talking about this—Paul, Rashad, what happened—

digging it up and making everyone feel like shit?" (p. 140). The words of English Jones, one of Quinn's teammates, reveal that Quinn received the message just as Carney intended:

> "Coach Carney won't let us talk about [the assault]," English explained. "Says we gotta focus on the team and our season, and that's it, and to leave all this stuff at the door. Said he'd bench anybody who brought it on the court." (p. 158)

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in open dialogue about racism and its manifestation in their school and community, Carney actively silences players in the name of winning. And with students and community members planning to rally in response to police violence against people of color, Carney's next mandate conflates activism with partying as an unnecessary distraction for his players: "No parties, and no protests, you hear me?" (p. 224). However, after much contemplation, Quinn can look beyond wins and losses and see the bigger picture:

. . . Coach kept telling us to leave everything at the door, but I was thinking about it the other way around. How did the team stay a team back out the door? How did the team stay a team out in the street? (p. 221)

Given Quinn's concerns about the team staying together outside the gymnasium, it should come as no surprise that Quinn eventually breaks the mandated silence and marches in protest (p. 292), defying his coach and taking steps toward a more equitable future.

Using Youth Athletes: Master-Puppet Relationships While coaches in the victor-victim relationship shortchange adolescent-athletes in favor of winning,

coaches in the master-puppet relationship do so for their own personal gain. In this relationship, the coach directs the central adolescent-athlete with personal beliefs or benefits prioritized over the adolescent-athlete's interests or concerns. Such relationships often disrupt the motivational processes of the athlete (Jowett et al., 2017) and reflect how many practicing coaches behave (see, for example, the recent FBI investigation into the unethical and illegal actions of

Our analysis of these 10 contemporary YA novels reveals a set of nuanced relationships represented between coaches and athletes, including three positive coaching roles and two negative roles.

NCAA basketball coaches [Staples, 2017]). This relationship is evident in *Box Out* (Coy, 2008), *Foul Trouble* (Feinstein, 2013), and *Darius & Twig* (Myers, 2013).

In *Box Out*, it becomes evident that Coach Kloss knowingly prioritizes his own beliefs over players' concerns when he addresses Liam's discomfort with pre-game prayers: "Bergie, I checked out our prayers with a couple of people. They said it's fine" (p. 131). Kloss's deception

is confirmed when Liam calls Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU) to see if a publicschool team's coach can lead pre-game prayers. Liam receives the following response from an AU representative: "No, the law is clear on that. A coach can't lead such prayers" (p. 124). Still, Kloss's manipulation continues. When Liam's communication with AU comes to light, Kloss accuses Liam of wrongdoing, making harsh allegations that more accurately apply to himself: "You put yourself first. You thought you were better, more important [than the team]. What you did was wrong, dead wrong" (p. 168). By that point, Liam is willing to stand up to his coach and end the master-puppet relationship. Refusing to be manipulated any longer, Liam quits the varsity basketball team.

A coach's manipulation of an adolescent-athlete for personal benefit is also evident in *Foul Trouble*. In this case, the gain is financial. Concord High School men's basketball coach Barrett Stephenson is dating Terrell Jamerson's mother, and he is quick to give

Terrell input when it comes to choosing a college to attend. When Terrell expresses a preference for Duke University, Stephenson cautions, "I'm not sure you should rush into [a commitment] just to get it over with. It's too important to rush. You want to be sure so you don't make a mistake" (p. 159). Though the advice seems reasonable, reporter Bobby Kelleher reveals Stephenson's motivation: "I have sources granted, biased ones—who say Stephenson will make a lot of money if he delivers you to [the University of] Atlanta" (p. 188). In time, Kelleher's sources prove to be accurate. Terrell expressly values education, yet Stephenson disregards Terrell's wishes and steers him toward an institution that, though short on academic rigor, boasts a job for Stephenson if he can get the star recruit's commitment. In time, Terrell spurns Stephenson and Atlanta, opting instead to attend Harvard University, where he stands to get the education he desires.

Though perhaps more subtly than novels described above, *Darius & Twig* depicts another master–puppet relationship. When first meeting Coach Day, readers learn that he gave Manuel Fernandez (aka Twig), a successful middle-distance runner, \$85 running shoes (p. 2). The act may first be read as altruistic, yet it grows more questionable as the story unfolds. For example, readers can deduce that Day got the shoes from "a consultant for athletic programs" (p. 107) that he introduces to Twig later in the novel:

"So Coach Day brings this guy up to me. Mr. Day introduces the guy as Eddie and says he's an old friend," Twig said. "Then this guy starts asking me what size shoes I wear, and what kind of sweats do I like and stuff like that, and right away, I'm not feeling good about him." (p. 106)

Twig's unease is warranted, but Eddie is not the only questionable figure Day introduces to him. There's also "a short, kind of weird guy named Herb" (p. 132). As Twig's friend Darius explains, "Coach Day said that Herb was 'connected' with a number of colleges" (p. 132). After a brief grilling from Darius, which irritates Day (p. 134), Herb indicates that, indeed, he profits off adolescent-athletes. With Day introducing sketchy characters into Twig's orbit and projecting racist and dehumanizing stereotypes onto runners (pp. 43 & 145), readers can deduce that Herb is not the only one profiting off the talents of adolescent-athletes. Darius grows wise to that fact as well, noting, "I started thinking they were trying to sell my

man, not get him a scholarship" (p. 151). Just as Stephenson views Terrell in *Foul Trouble*, Day sees Twig as a meal ticket.

Discussion and Implications

Our analysis of these 10 contemporary YA novels reveals a set of nuanced relationships represented between coaches and athletes, including three positive coaching roles and two negative roles. We concur with Crowe (2004), especially by recognizing the prominence of coach characters in YAL and problematizing the representation of different coaches appearing in YAL. More important, however, our identification of these five types of relationships extends Crowe's work, which only separated fictional coaches into the two categories of mentor and dementor, albeit with different types of examples. Our work, on the other hand, illustrates the complexity of how divergent fictional coaches, both positive and negative, are often portrayed in YAL and how such framings hold implications for various constituents.

Given the complexity of coaches portrayed in YAL, the findings we present may serve as a reminder for teachers to be mindful of the messages students receive about athletic coaches through sports-related YAL, particularly since we assume that the authors who crafted these representations of fictional coaches sought verisimilitude. Are students receiving a balanced diet when it comes to the depiction of coaches, or do the novels they read reinforce a narrow view of coaches, be it negative or positive? A steady diet of negative representations can fuel damaging stereotypes, yet encountering nothing but positive portrayals could foster an unhealthy belief that coaches are infallible and beyond reproach. The threat of the latter is not to be downplayed, given multiple reports of instances where coaches and other trusted authority figures avoided appropriate scrutiny when grossly abusing athletes in their care (see Hauser, 2018; Kwiatkowski, Alesia, & Evans, 2016). Therefore, considering our findings, we encourage teachers to weigh the depiction of coaches and their relationships with adolescent-athletes when selecting works of sportsrelated YAL to incorporate in the ELA classroom.

As important as it is for teachers to be mindful of the representations of coaches that students encounter, a protectionist stance alone will not suffice. Rather, by teaching students to interrogate depictions of coaches and their relationships with adolescent-athletes, teachers can prepare students to critically read any coach they encounter, whether in literature or in life. Such critical readings might involve analyzing coach—athlete power dynamics using questions like the following: Whose voice and interests are prioritized, and how so? Who is silenced, and how so? Who benefits from this relationship, and how so? Who suffers from this relationship, and how so? Teaching students to question the actions and motives of coaches on the pages of sports-related YAL may be a step toward preparing them to advocate for them-

selves and others, should they experience or witness abusive coaching practices. Therefore, instead of simply embracing a protectionist stance, teachers looking to best serve students might do so by preparing them to read coaches—real and fictional—from a critical perspective.

When it comes to analyzing sports-related YAL in the ELA classroom, and specifically examining relationships between coaches

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and adolescent-athletes, our findings may also provide a helpful heuristic. Though generalizability is limited, the relationships outlined in the findings of this study are not wholly unique to the books in our text set. For instance, the mentor–protégé relationship is not limited to *Foul Trouble* and *Box Out*; readers can also find this relationship in a novel such as *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Accordingly, teachers can introduce students to the types of relationships described here and invite them to examine fictional coaches through

those lenses to support their analyses and aid discovery.

For researchers, our analysis of athletic coaches in sports-related YAL might prompt investigations into the depictions of other adults who, though perhaps not classroom teachers, are prominent in the lives of youth that populate YAL. How, for example, are band directors, speech and debate coaches, drama directors, or other adults who lead adolescents in extracurricu-

lar activities represented in YAL, and what types of relationships with adolescents are depicted? Similarly, teachers might also consider our heuristic as a map to be used by middle and high school readers to identify how fictional adults in these other extracurricular roles wear the mantle of coach, mentor, counselor, victor, and master in their relationships with fictional youth.

In teacher education, reading and discussing sports-related YAL with an eve on the depiction of athletic coaches stands to help practicing and prospective teacher coaches envision the kinds of relationships they want to have with adolescent-athletes and identify the types of behaviors they want to avoid or emulate. Discussion around titles featured in this study can help coaches weigh their comfort with relationships beyond the strict coach-athlete variety (i.e., mentor-protégé and counselor-client relationships) and position them to critique the abusive practices of Coaches Brigs, Carney, Kloss, Stephenson, and Day. Further, engagement with award-winning and recommended sports-related YAL in a teacher education program may raise practicing and prospective teachers' awareness of the recognition these novels garner and help them see their value in the classroom and in the hands of the students they serve. Teachers who cling to the canon may be quick to dismiss YAL, and those who identify as sports-averse may disregard sportsrelated literature outright. However, deep engagement with sports-related YAL has the potential to chip away at such narrow views, illuminating the range of important topics and themes these stories address and the broad appeal they hold for so many readers.

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