

Understanding the Characteristics and Consequences of the Toxic Sports Staff Member (TSSM)
Through the Stories of Male Soccer Players

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Human Kinetics (MHK)

The Faculty of Graduate Studies
Laurentian University
Sudbury, Ontario, Canada

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THESIS DEFENCE COMMITTEE/COMITÉ DE SOUTENANCE DE THÈSE
Laurentian Université/Université Laurentienne
Faculty of Graduate Studies/Faculté des études supérieures

Title of Thesis Titre de la thèse	Understanding the Characteristics and Consequences of the Toxic Sports Staff Member (TSSM) Through the Stories of Male Soccer Players	
Name of Candidate Nom du candidat	Giffin, Cole	
Degree Diplôme	Master of	
Department/Program Département/Programme	Human Kinetics	Date of Defence Date de la soutenance July 12, 2019

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Abstract

The current study examined the characteristics and consequences of the toxic sports staff member (TSSM) through the stories of elite-level male soccer players. The stories of seven participants were collected through a conversational interview that followed an art-based activity (i.e., mandala drawings) and were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis. Six themes related to the characteristics of the TSSM were introduced, they were: passionate, insecure, controlling, rigid to own viewpoints, poor communicator, and selfish. Further, six consequences of the TSSM were introduced, they were: increased negative and decreased positive affective states, lack of player development, creation of a destructive environment, increased team unity, decreased performance, and loss of players. Understanding the characteristics and consequences of the TSSM provides a starting point for understanding negative staff roles within sports. Further, sporting organizations may use the results as a way of identifying and controlling for negative roles within their team.

Keywords: elite-level, soccer, toxic sports staff member, arts-based method

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Robert Schinke, for the continuous support and encouragement to always achieve my highest level of work. From drinking coffee to eventually eating the grinds (sometimes a cup of coffee is not strong enough), the intellect you have passed down to me has been unwavering, thank you. The support of my committee members, Dr. Michel Larivière and Dr. Georges Kpazai, was also much appreciated and helped me to strengthen my master's project.

I would like to acknowledge the continuous support of my family. To my parents, Dan and Tracie, more commonly known as mom and dad. You guided me throughout this project and reminded me to not focus solely on the outcome, but to enjoy the process. Thank you to my brother, Spencer. You were always willing to listen to me ramble on about my thesis while providing insight from a different lens. To my sister, Sarah. Spending time with you helped me clear my thesis-cluttered mind. To my grandparents, Ed and Shirley. I cannot thank you enough for the academic and financial guidance growing up; it made my educational journey much more enjoyable (and yes, beer was included on my monthly budget).

Finally, to my partner, Elizabeth; talking to you is always the highlight of my day. You helped me overcome numerous obstacles, and even though we are separated by distance, you were able to help me celebrate my successes throughout these wonderful two years. This journey would have been darker without your continuous sunshine, thank you.

Thank you all for helping me throughout this part of my life.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A toxic chemical can poison an individual and leave harmful short and long-term effects on the environment in which it is presented. Likewise, a toxic leader poisons an organization and leaves short and long-term effects within the environment that it exists. Although there are many definitions of the toxic leader, each different in a nuanced way. Lipman-Bluman (2005a) coined a popular description of the toxic as one “who engage[s] in numerous destructive behaviours and who exhibit certain dysfunctional characteristics” (p. 18). A toxic leader can slowly deteriorate an organization and as Vreja, Balan, and Bosca (2016) described, an organization that is controlled by a toxic leader could experience reduced productivity, weakened employee performance, and decreased brand equity, all of which negatively affect the workplace environment. Researchers have studied the toxic leader in several contexts, including workplace organizations (i.e., Lipman-Blumen, 2006, Vreja et al., 2016, Walton, 2007), military settings (i.e., Reed, 2004) and political regimes (i.e., Adolf Hitler; Kellerman, 2004).

Researchers in organizational psychology have spent a considerable amount of time studying the toxic leader, and with good reason. The toxic leader can cause employees to become deviant in terms of theft, sabotage, absenteeism, and withholding effort (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). For example, within the United States, employee theft alone is estimated to cost employers \$18 billion annually, however this number is an estimate, as theft may be underreported (Karpp, 2016). Apart from the financial aspect of understanding the toxic leader, researchers have demonstrated the psychological and physical effects that a toxic leader may cause for employees of an organization. A toxic leader may cause changes in blood pressure or cholesterol levels, increased muscle tension, and a heightened awareness of the environment (Fitzgerald, 2002). Furthermore, the toxic leader may cause impaired judgement, irritability,

anxiety, anger, and a reduction in concentration and memory loss for employees of an organization (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007).

Although researchers have extensively studied the toxic leader in a multitude of settings, a toxic member in a sports context remains unexplored, as researchers have focused their efforts on other negative roles. Cope, Eys, Beauchamp, Schinke, and Bosselut (2011) identified the malingeringer, the distractor, and the team cancer roles and explained how coaches perceived them as the most detrimental on a sports team. However, these three roles are limited to athletes and not employees on a sports team. Comparatively, other researchers have examined the implications of negative coaching on a sports team (see Gearity, 2012); however, many sports teams do not focus on one individual to foster team success and instead employ several individuals to support the team's performance (e.g., head trainer, coach, assistant coach, dietician, sports psychologist). Research on negative roles has been limited to athletes and coaches, while sports teams have a surplus of staff available to the team, anyone of which could negatively affect players on that team. To this end, researchers have yet to examine the impact that a toxic member of a sports team can have on a sporting organization.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to expand the information on the negative informal roles within a sports context while focusing on the embodiment of the toxic leader within a sports staff member (i.e., toxic sports staff member; herein TSSM). This expansion of the literature focused on the characteristics and consequences of the TSSM through the stories of elite-level soccer players. Accomplishing the project purpose involved eliciting the stories of elite-level soccer players who operate at the varsity level through the use of conversational interviews. Ironically, the information available on the negative informal roles has come from coaches' perceptions of

negative athletes. Comparatively, this study examined athletes' perceptions of toxic staff members.

Significance of Study

This study expanded on the negative informal roles in sport by empirically introducing the TSSM. This literature expansion includes the characteristics and the consequences of the TSSM from participants located at different schools that participate in Ontario University Athletics (i.e., O.U.A.) male varsity soccer program. This research is significant for multiple reasons.

First, this study acts as a foundation for future research to take place. The researcher demonstrated the characteristics and consequences of the TSSM in an elite-level soccer context. This research acts as an important first step that future researchers can use as a foundational base to build off of. For instance, future researchers can confirm, add to, or deny the findings of this study in terms of different sports, competition level, and gender, thus building a wider base for future research to take place and increasing our knowledge on a detrimental informal role.

Second, this research may lead to increased awareness of the TSSM. Most times a TSSM is present on a team, yet individuals are unaware of who/what that individual truly is and how that person acts. When taking part in the interview, participants in the study voiced their disbelief in how many other athletes have experienced the TSSM. Raising awareness can be the first step in generating knowledge and facilitating change. Therefore, the results from this research may be a first and vital step in raising awareness for the severity of the TSSM.

Third, informal roles are an important topic that are understudied within organizational and sports psychology. Studying informal roles can allow for an understanding of the social dimensions of team, such as cohesion and performance (Carron, Coleman, Wheeler, & Stevens,

2002). Therefore, expanding research on negative informal roles in sport can be vital for the development of social team understanding when a negative informal role, such as a TSSM, is present. Subsequently, understanding this role allows for an understanding of how a team is affected by a negative role, thus hopefully encouraging future researchers to study ways to mitigate this problem.

Finally, this research used art-based methods to explore, understand, and represent elite-level soccer players' experiences with the TSSM. To this end, this research adds to the growing library of literature that employs an art-based method. Using art-based methods produced rich information by aiding in evoking feelings, memories, and information (Harper, 2002). Therefore, although art-based methods are not used often in sports psychology (but are growing in popularity), they should be viewed as a considerable asset and should be continued to be encouraged.

Delimitations

The researcher explored the TSSM by eliciting athletes' stories concerning past experiences with this member. The researcher only recruited elite-level soccer players as participants in this study. This delimitation was guaranteed by verbally obtaining demographic information at the beginning of each interview. This information was not collected through a demographic questionnaire for confidentiality reasons, but instead through the conversational interview. This process is described in more detail in chapter three.

A second delimitation is that participants in the present study were former soccer athletes that once participated in inter-university competition located in Ontario (i.e., the OUA). Having an Ontario setting allowed the coparticipants (i.e., the interviewer and interviewee) to be easily accessible one another. This accessibility also aided the researcher in authenticating results,

through member reflections, in a timely fashion. Further, by having the athletes come from a soccer background, the researcher was able to collect rich data from one context. The soccer context also correlated to the researcher's sport background, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the TSSM in the soccer context.

Finally, only male participants were used in this study. The researcher chose only male athletes because it helped simplify the interpretation process. For example, Seidman (2005) explained that different genders may get different interviewing results than those of the same gender. Moreover, the researcher may not have accurately represented the athlete's descriptions of the TSSM because of gender dynamics between the researcher and participants. Simply put, there can be a false assumption of a shared perspective or a false assumption of an unshared perspective because of gender differences (Seidman, 2005). Furthermore, if female participants were included, analysis on gender differences would have lengthened the interpretation/writing process and subsequently pushed the researchers past the deadline for the completion of this thesis.

Operational Definitions

Toxic sports staff member (TSSM). A toxic sports staff member is a negative informal role that is unstudied in a sports context. The TSSM is not empirically defined in the literature. Therefore, the researcher compared the TSSM to the toxic leader from organizational psychology and the team cancer from sports psychology to create an operational definition.

The TSSM can be compared to the toxic leader due to their formal role within the organization, and is described as a maladjusted, malcontent, malevolent, and malicious person who succeeds by tearing others down by "controlling rather than uplifting followers" (Whicker, 1996, p. 66). The toxic leader inflicts severe and enduring harm on the individuals, groups,

organizations, communities, and nations they lead (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a). Further, the toxic leader can have high human and financial costs by disengaging employees who are more likely to quit and increase the turnover rate in the organization, consequently increasing hiring and training costs (Branham, 2005).

The TSSM is similar to team cancer due to the similar sport context in which they both reside. Although the TSSM is within a sports context, the consequences and characteristics of the TSSM appears more similar to the information presented by organizational psychology researchers studying the toxic leader. The TSSM is an active member of the sporting organization and occupies a formal role (communicated/prescribed by someone) regarding the responsibilities set out by the organization. For instance, the coach has roles related to team success, the sports psychologist may have roles concerning team well-being, and the team trainer may have roles regarding team fitness. Therefore, given the qualities of the aforementioned toxic leader and the context of the team cancer, an adequate definition of a TSSM is: *any employed or voluntary member of a sporting organization (i.e., coach, assistant coach, athletic director, athletic trainer, etc.,) that inflicts serious harm, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, on the followers they lead. This role is not limited to one role in a sporting organization, such as a coach, but includes any faculty position within that sporting organization.*

Sporting organization. A sporting organization is defined as the entirety of a sports team. Anyone who operates on or within the team is part of the sporting organization. For example, the athletes, trainers, coaches, general managers, physiotherapists, team doctors, and sports psychologists are all part of the sporting organization.

Elite-level athlete. Referring to Swann, Moran, and Piggott's (2015) continuum of elite-level performance, an elite-level athlete in this study was any soccer player that played in the lowest tier of competition (i.e., tier one; Appendix A). An elite-level of competition can range from the regional to international level, therefore, to be considered elite, an athlete must operate in (at least) the regional/university, tier one, level. Swann and colleague's (2015) continuum included five different factors for defining elite-athletes in tier one. The first is the athlete's highest standard of competition. An athlete ranked in tier one competes at the regional, university, or semi-professional level. The second factor is the athlete's success at the highest level. An athlete in tier one will, therefore, achieve success at the regional, university, or semi-professional level. The third factor is experience at the athlete's highest level. Swann and colleagues (2015) suggested that tier one athletes have less than two years experiences at the highest level. Athletes in this study played no more than four years at the elite level. The fourth factor for defining an elite athlete is the competitiveness of sport in athlete's country. For tier one, the level of competition should rank outside the top 10 in the country. Finally, the last factor refers to the global competitiveness of the sport. This represents if the sport is competitive on an international level. A sport in tier one is not an Olympic sport and has limited national television audience. Therefore, an elite-level of competition must meet the lowest form of competition on this continuum but can operate anywhere between tier one and tier four. Within this study, each elite-level soccer player participated (or once participated) at the varsity (i.e., tier one) level.

Thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p. 79). Braun and Clarke (2016) suggested a "big Q" strand of thematic analysis that is not "anchored in a particular theoretical tradition" (p. 192). A

researcher can flexibly use this strand of thematic analysis across a variety of ontological paradigms. Subsequently, this is how the researcher used thematic analysis in the present study. More specifically, an inductive thematic analysis technique was utilized to derive codes and themes from the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Photo elicitation. Photo elicitation is a popular method in qualitative research which involves one or more visual images being presented in an interview, by either the researcher or participant, and then asking participants to comment on the visual images being used (Harper, 2002). The researcher utilized a photo elicitation technique by encouraging each participant to bring a photo of the team they played on when they experienced the toxic sports staff member. This produced rich information by aiding in evoking feelings, memories, and information that may not have been accessed through verbal examination alone (Harper, 2002).

Mandala: Mandala is a Sanskrit word for “circle” or “center”, and in the realm of art-therapy a mandala refers to any art form that is executed in a circular context (Henderson, Rosen, Mascaro, 2007). Within this project, a mandala was created by each participant regarding their experiences with relating to the characteristics and consequences of the toxic sports staff member.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, the researcher briefly introduced the toxic leader and research concerning this role. In this chapter, the researcher presents a literature review that addresses the major themes within this study. First, the introduction of group roles is established. Second, formal and informal roles are thoroughly discussed. Third, the author presents the importance of informal roles within sport and organizational psychology. Fourth, the researcher highlights several different informal roles from various taxonomies. Finally, distinct negative roles, including the tyrant, the team cancer, and the toxic leader are discussed. Moreover, the researcher presents the team cancer and toxic leader in detail (i.e., consequences, management techniques, emergence, and characteristics of the cancer), and subsequently parallels the TSSM to these roles.

Group Roles

Roles are defined as the expectations about patterns of behaviours for an individual in a social situation (McGrath, 1984). Roles are an integral component to the structure of efficiently performing groups and researchers show the importance that individual roles can have on a team sports environment (Eys, Beauchamp, & Bray, 2006). For example, high levels of role ambiguity can cause many detrimental consequences, such as increased levels of anxiety and decreased satisfaction within a group/organization (Beard, 1999). The ambiguity stems from a lack of precise, consistent information regarding one's position (i.e., role) within the group (Kahn,

Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Expanding on this, if one athlete experiences role ambiguity on a sports team, the consequences can spread throughout the group. Therefore, it is imperative to understand individual roles due to their impact on the team/group.

Roles contribute to the overall structure of a group (Carron, Hausenblas, & Eys, 2005). Namely, roles are ingrained and formed within a group, and a combination of roles is what develops the group structure. As a result, individuals living, working, and performing in a group, must have an acquired role. For example, in Philip Zimbardo's ethically infamous Stanford Prison Experiment, students were assigned to one of two roles: a correctional officer or a prisoner. Together, it was a combination of the correctional officers and prisoners that contributed to the prison group structure. If both roles operate successfully, that is, the correctional officers enforce the rules, and the prisoners abide by said rules, the simulated prison structure can operate successfully. Otherwise put, general roles and responsibilities must be completed for the organization to run successfully.

Roles can be efficiently utilized to achieve group outcomes, such as effective performance (Carron et al., 2005). However, not all roles operate in the same way towards attaining effective team performance. For instance, roles are classified through sub-categorizations concerning outcomes and functionality. Bales and Slater (1955) divided roles into groups based on their intended purpose. The first categorization derives its meaning concerning the role's intended objectives. Bales and Slater (1955) termed these roles as either task oriented or socio-emotional. Bales and Slater (1955) defined *task roles* as roles that focus on performing responsibilities related to the accomplishment of group objectives and *socio-emotional roles* as roles that promote harmony and integration within the group. For instance, in a sports context, an individual occupying a task role may have the responsibility of being the

team goal scorer. Conclusively, if this individual performs his/her role responsibly, it may lead to the accomplishment of the group objective (i.e., winning). Likewise, an individual with a socio-emotional role may have the responsibility of maintaining overall group moral, thereby promoting harmony within the group. Rees and Segal (1984) further expanded on task and socio-emotional roles by conducting research examining role differentiation in college football teams. Rees and Segal (1984) concluded that both task and socio-emotional roles can be simultaneously presented within several members of the teams. Namely, a player is not confined to occupying a single role, whether that be a task or socio-emotionally oriented. The second major categorization relates to the degree of formalization of the role (Eys et al., 2006). More specifically, a role can fall into a formal or informal category.

Formal roles. Formal roles are those that are directly established by the group or organization and are typically concerned with the group's instrumental objectives (Cope et al., 2011). These roles are concerned with the overall group focus, and individuals are recruited to achieve these responsibilities (Benson, Surya, & Eys, 2015; Cope et al., 2011; Slater, 1955). Once again, during the Stanford experiment, both the correctional officers and the prisoners were considered formal roles because they were directly established by the group (i.e., Zimbardo) and were concerned with the group's instrumental objective (i.e., simulating a prison environment).

Formal role development. Researchers involved in group dynamics have well discussed formal role development. As previously mentioned, formal roles are directly established by the group or organization. A conceptual model that outlines this prescription is the role episode model (REM). The REM was initially proposed in organizational psychology (see Kahn et al., 1964); however, the model has been further adapted to accommodate use in a sports setting (see

Eys, Carron, Beauchamp, & Brays, 2005). Figure 1 is an illustration of the sport-adapted REM model.

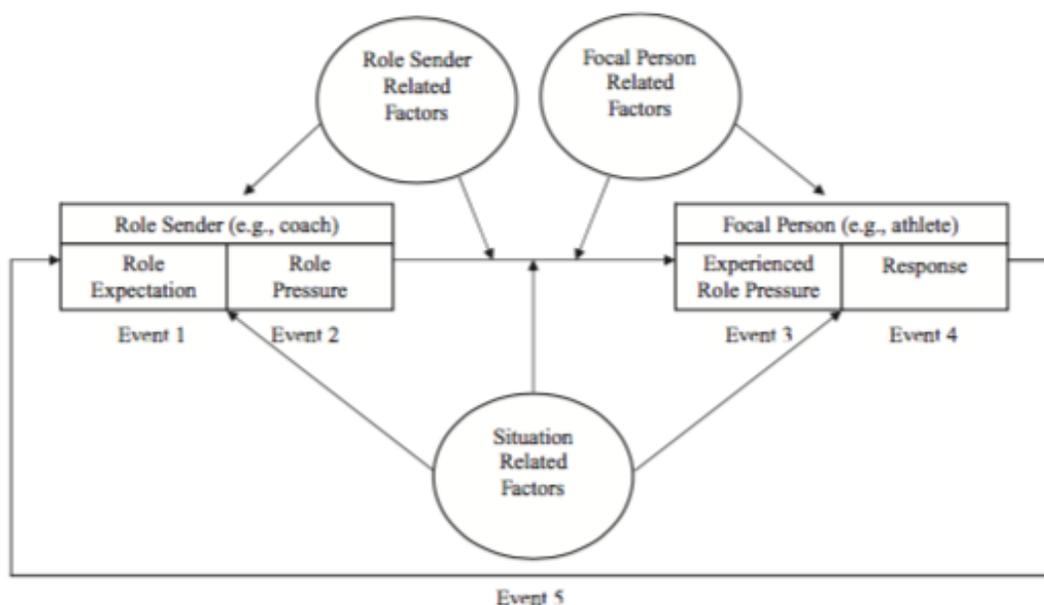


Figure 1. A theoretical framework of factors influencing the transmission and reception of role responsibilities. From "Athletes' Perceptions of the Sources of Role Ambiguity" by M.A. Eys, A.V. Carron, M.R. Beauchamp, and S.R. Brays, *Small Group Research*, 36, p. 385. Copyright 2005 by Sage Publications. Note: Adapted from "Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity" (p. 30), by R. L. Kahn, D. M. Wolfe, R. P. Quinn, J. D. Snoek, and R. A. Rosenthal, 1964, New York, NY: Wiley. Used with permission from the publisher.

Within a sports context, the role episode model fixates on two main actors, the role sender, and the focal person. The *focal person* (i.e., role performer) is, in most cases, the athlete, while the *role sender* is commonly the head coach (Eys et al. 2005). Using the previous example, a team captain would be the focal person while the coach would be the role sender. Together, these two actors participate in five events. The first event involves the role sender communicating expectations to the potential candidate on what the role entails. Following, step two has the role sender exercise role pressure on the focal person. For example, the coach may remind the potential captain candidate about the expectations previously discussed, further urging this individual to satisfy those expectations. Third, the role sender experiences role pressure. Eys and colleagues (2005) reported that this third step where the focal person assesses

whether the communication is clear and consistent, or ambiguous. The fourth step involves the focal person responding or reacting to the role pressure produced by the role sender. For example, the captain candidate may accept or reject the opportunity for captaincy by the coach. Furthermore, it should be noted that depending on the number of factors (i.e., clarity of communication, willingness to accept role, etc.), the focal person may respond in a variety of ways (Eys et al. 2006). The response to the role may be negative (i.e., anxiety in relation to responsibility) or positive (i.e., roles executed successfully). Finally, the fifth step involves the focal person's response being noted by the role sender, and in turn the role sender adjusting his/her role expectations accordingly. In the hypothetical example of a captain and the coach, an example of step five would be the coach changing role responsibilities (i.e., team warmup) if the captain responded negatively to that task. Further, the REM continues in a loop until the role is confirmed by both the role sender and the focal person.

Eys and colleagues (2005) further illustrated three major categories of factors that can influence the degree to how the REM takes place. The first category is *role-related factors*. This factor represents the different sources of role ambiguity attributed to the role sender. Eys and colleagues (2005) provided the example "the quantity and quality of a coach's verbal communication to an athlete might be poor, thereby leading to ambiguity" (p. 386-387). *Focal person-related factors* represent the second category. Like role-related factors, focal person-related factors stem from role ambiguity of the focus person. For instance, if a team captain is new to this form of leadership, s/he may be confused about the responsibilities of captaincy. Finally, the third category is *situation-related factors*. This category represents different factors in which the role sender and focal person cannot control. The length of time spent on a team may be a situational factor that affects the REM. If an athlete is new to the team, s/he may be unsure

about their place in the structure of the team, and therefore may not respond to role expectations accordingly (Eys et al., 2005).

Informal roles. Comparatively, informal roles develop in response to the formal group structure and may not supply all the activities necessary for effective group action (Hare, 1994). These role responsibilities are more social and primarily focus on maintenance and harmony of the group (Carron et al., 2005; Slater, 1955). Informal roles evolve through the “association and interaction between members of [the] group or organization” (Mabry & Barnes, 1980, p. 125). Informal roles are not prescribed like formal roles. Namely, an informal role is a pattern of interpersonal behaviours that a group comes to expect from an individual based on the impressions they form of him/her as they work together (Farrell, Schmitt, & Heinemann, 2001). For example, a prominent informal role in a sports context would be a non-verbal leader. This player leads the team both on and off the playing surface with their actions. This player is not formally prescribed on a team and emerges due to the team dynamics (Cope et al., 2011).

Informal role development. As previously noted, informal roles result from the interaction and association between members of a group. However, the process of informal role development is less understood than formal role development. Cope, Eys, Schinke, and Bosselut (2010) highlighted an informal role episode model (IREM) that attempts to explain the development of informal roles within a group. The IREM differs from the formal REM in several ways. Firstly, the focal person is likely to initiate the informal role episode and not the role sender. The athlete in this case is the focal person and it is their actions with others in the group that leads group members to expect certain behaviours (Benson, Surya, & Eys, 2014). For example, the informal role of the team comedian may arise if a member in the group is continuously “entertain[ing] others through the use of comical situations, humorous dialogue,

and practical jokes” (Cope et al., 2011, p. 24). Subsequently, there is not a role sender telling an individual to be a team comedian, instead, the team comedian initiates the role. Second, informal roles may develop due to multiple role senders instead of a singular individual. Cope and colleagues (2011) highlighted that a “team clown (i.e., comedian) could be endorsed or encouraged by most, if not all, members of the group” (p. 423). Finally, informal roles develop because they are more likely to surround a social aspect compared to formal roles (Cope et al., 2010). Formal roles tend to be task-oriented within a group. For instance, a captain is, in most cases, formally prescribed to handle task specific team responsibilities (i.e., team warmup, organize teammates, etc.). Nevertheless, a team comedian may develop because of social aspects within the team.

Researchers examining informal roles have highlighted that roles are not static and constant in the lifespan of the group, moreover, informal roles may be continually changing, emerging and evolving (Carreau, Bosselut, Ritchie, Heuzé, & Arppe, 2016). Within an outdoor adventure learning context, Carreau and colleagues (2016) targeted and explored informal role development during a canoe expedition. In addition to continually emerging and evolving roles, Carreau et al. (2016) reported how the situation and context can affect the group members informal roles. For instance, one participant of the canoe expedition constantly “self-identified as an ‘energizer,’ which recurred as patterned behaviours throughout the expedition” (p. 201). However, these “behaviours did not appear to be present in stressful situations such as when a canoe swamped in a river section” (Carreau et al., 2016, p. 201). Furthermore, although the participants had “one main informal role, this role was often set aside as they took on temporary informal roles to the circumstance of the event” (Carreau et al., 2016, p. 196). Ultimately, informal roles can develop or become absent given the context of the situation.

In addition to the IREM and contextual factors, personality factors contribute to the development of informal roles (Stewart, Fulmer, & Barrick, 2005). For instance, when examining the development of informal roles in an interdisciplinary health team, Farrell and colleagues (2001) concluded that an individual's personality is a significant consequence on the development of roles within the group. For example, concerning anxiousness about participating in the health team, some members may take on an informal role because it fits their characteristic of dealing with anxiety, while others may be cast into an informal role; such as scapegoat, because it reduces anxiety for other members. The team 'peacemaker' role may be a refuge for someone who uses integration to relieve his or her anxiety. The 'lightning rod' may be a member who uses aggression and dominance to control anxiety. Subsequently, the personality of one individual may make them susceptible to certain roles.

Furthermore, researchers examining the Big Five personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience) found links between personality factors and informal role development. For instance, Stewart and colleagues (2005) constructed a study that consisted of 220 students organized into 45 different teams with each team consisting of 4-6 individuals working together. Using a self-report measure of the Big Five personality scale and task and social roles from Bales (1950) taxonomy, Stewart and others (2005) calculated the correlations between the two. The results from this study were statistically significant, indicating that personality factors do contribute to the development and exercise of informal roles (Stewart et al., 2005).

More recently and within a sports context, Kim, Gardant, Bosselut, and Eys (2018), examined the relationship between athlete personality characteristics and informal role occupancy on sports teams. Kim and colleagues (2018) recruited athletes to self-identify their

believed role occupancy, or use teammate nominations, to determine the roles that the athletes occupied. After which, the authors asked the participants to fill out either the NEO Five-Factor Inventory or the Big Five Inventory to determine the relationship between each role and the individual's personalities. Kim and colleagues (2018) determined that personality characteristics played a significant effect on the informal role occupancy. The team comedian and distractor tend to be more extroverted, while the star player tends to be more agreeable (Kim et al., 2018). Ultimately, in both an organizational and sports context, personality characteristics may be used as a predictor for informal role occupancy.

Although informal roles are ever-changing and may develop through an IREM, contextual factors, and personality factors, McGannon and colleagues (2012) suggested that informal roles may also develop because of the socio-cultural discourse in which they are embedded. When studying Sean Avery and his role as a team cancer on a National Hockey League (NHL) team, McGannon and colleagues (2012) reported that the discourse in which Avery was embedded determined the severity of his action. Although discussed in more detail in subsequent sections, Avery was positioned as both an asset, and a liability, towards team functioning. However, it was the discourse in which Avery was examined that allowed others to perceive him as either negative, or positive. Ultimately, McGannon and colleagues (2012) suggested that informal role development cannot be simply reduced to character flaws or the breakdown in communication in the IREM, as the discourse in which the athlete is embedded may also play a role.

Ultimately, the development of informal roles fluid and complex for many reasons. Informal roles may develop because of the IREM, personality factors, contextual situations, and

a socio-cultural discourse. The scholarly work presented above helps illustrate the complexity in understanding informal roles.

Subsequently, group roles are well researched in organizational and sports psychology. As aforementioned, a role can be characterized by the sub-categories of functionality and outcomes (Bales & Slater, 1955). Role functionality can be further broken down into formal and informal roles while outcomes consist of task-related and socio-emotional related roles. Moreover, Eys and colleagues (2006) observed that these two categorizations of roles (formal/informal and task/socio-emotional) are not mutually exclusive. That is to say; it is possible to have formal and informal task roles as well as formal and informal social roles (Eys et al., 2006). Overall, formal role research has dominated most of the group role literature; however, the lack of research into informal roles should not discredit their importance.

Importance of Informal Roles

Regarding role research, empirical evidence, for the most part, is confined to organizational literature (Eys et al., 2006). Moreover, the examination of formal task-oriented roles has dominated empirically (Eys et al., 2006), often overshadowing the importance of the less researched informal roles. This domination may be because formal roles are communicated to the focal person and often easily observable, while informal roles take time to develop within the group. For example, a captain of a sports team often wears an armband and is referred to by others as the team captain. This role is prominent and one who occupies this captaincy role is well-known on the sports team. Comparatively, the informal non-verbal leader may be hard to recognize on a sports team, as s/he leads by example and not through words. Nonetheless, Mabry and Barnes (1980) argued that roles within a group setting are not solely dependent on communication between group members (e.g., the coach and athlete), but also through the

implicit formation of expectation(s) through experience, both of which are vital in expanding role research. Namely, informal roles exist within groups/organizations, and studying these roles can aid in the expansion of role literature due to the importance they offer.

Through sports psychology literature, McGannon and colleagues (2012) indicated that the lack of research on informal roles is not reflective of the part they play on teams and broader sports contexts. Although empirical evidence supporting informal roles is scarce, anecdotal evidence suggests the importance of the resulting roles and the associated responsibilities without the formal prescription (Cope et al., 2011). Informal roles can, at times, prove decisive to supplement the group's formal structure if lacking the necessary group activities to be effective. For example, in an organization, a peacemaker stands out in sociability and may aid in conflict resolution where current prescribed roles are not able (Farrell et al., 2001, p. 285). Additionally, Cope et al. (2011) described resistance to formal group structure as second important function of informal roles. Resistance can appear negative (i.e., group distraction or distress) or positive (i.e., providing alternative options to majorities opinions), both having a potentially significant effect on the productivity and harmony of the group (Cope et al., 2011). Cope and colleagues (2010) discussed the importance of informal role research, suggesting that consistent anecdotal evidence of informal roles emanates from popular sports literature and that there is a lack of empirical literature concerning these types of roles in an athletic environment. Moreover, Eys and colleagues (2006) described that socially established roles are likely to contribute to cognitive, behavioral, and affective outcomes. For instance, the value of successful execution of social responsibilities within a sports team indicates a strong association between team cohesion and performance (Carron et al., 2002). Namely, team cohesion and desired performance increases as

the team members achieve the individual social responsibilities. Ultimately, informal roles are misunderstood, yet imperative for any team or organization.

As researchers investigated informal roles more deeply, different categorizations and role typologies have been developed. Ancona and Caldwell (1992) introduced a “boundary-spanning” role categorization in their typology that differs from the common task vs. socio-emotional and formal vs. informal roles. Subsequently building off Benne and Sheats (1948) taxonomy that introduced the “group building and maintenance” role, a *boundary-spanning role* strives to bridge the gap between the team and other teams, or between the team and other organizations (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Although researchers in organizational psychology, such as Ancona and Caldwell, have empirically examined different roles (Eys et al., 2006), researchers from different fields, such as sports psychology, have been working diligently to understand the characteristics, functionality, and dynamics of informal roles in a sports context. In the subsequent section, five popular typologies will be discussed, thus demonstrating the juxtaposition of the vast research that has been conducted on informal roles in the organizational domain and the little known role information in sports psychology research.

Types of Informal Roles and Their General Function

Researchers have explored informal roles in the literature for some time (e.g., Roethlisberger, 1939). However, much of the literature produced on informal roles is rooted within an organizational setting (Eys et al., 2006). Moreover, inside an organization, the activities and work processes principally occur through informal relationships rather than through a formal group structure (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002; Morton, Brookes, Smart, Backhouse, & Burns, 2004). Often, informal relationships are far more reflective of the way the work happens in an organization (Cross et al., 2002). Krackhardt and Hanson (1993) explained

that even though the formal structure represents the skeleton of the organization, the informal structure determines the organization. Krackhardt and Hanson (1993) described the informal structure as “the real central nervous system, which drives the collective process, the actions, and the relationship inside business units” (p. 104). Ultimately, the presence of group roles and informal structure is well documented in organizational psychology (i.e., Farrell et al., 2001; Hare, 1994; Kahn et al., 1964)

Researchers and practitioners in organizational psychology have developed a variety of taxonomies for classifying informal roles. Benne and Sheats (1948) wrote one of the first and identified 27 informal roles grouped into three categories: Task, building and maintenance, and individual. Twelve roles are present in the task category. These *task roles* represent the different roles needed to complete the group's goal(s) or task(s). The *building and maintenance category* is made up of seven informal roles, all of which aim to the positive, practical functioning of the group. Finally, the *individual category* accounts for the final eight informal roles that are more detrimental or adverse to the alignment of group objectives. Occupants of these individual roles are highly relevant to problematic group training. For instance, group training is exercised to improve group maturity or group task efficiency. If an individual is introducing complications in these areas, it can be harmful to group functioning by impeding maturity or efficiency development (Benne & Sheats, 1948).

Belbin (1981) introduced a second taxonomy that focused on functional team roles. Belbin (1981) observed managers in the workplace for nine years and produced a taxonomy that consisted of eight informal roles, but was later expanded to nine informal roles (Belbin, 1993). These roles include the resource investigator, team worker, co-ordinator, the plant, monitor evaluator, specialist, shaper, implementer, and complete finisher. Belbin did not group his roles

into categories like Benne and Sheats (1948; i.e., task roles, building and maintenance, and individual). Instead, he stressed the importance of individual informal role configuration and team effectiveness. As quoted in the second edition of *Team Roles at Work*, Belbin (2010) believed “teams are a question of balance. What is needed is not well-balanced individuals but individuals who balance well with one another” (p. 73). Otherwise put, a team needs individuals that occupy roles that are diverse and complementary to each other, as opposed to only well-balanced individuals.

Anacona and Caldwell (1992) produced a third prominent informal role taxonomy and are popularized for their conceptualization of boundary-spanning roles. As previously mentioned, boundary-spanning roles are roles that attempt to bridge the gap between the team and other teams, or between the team and the organization. For example, having studied teams within organizations, Ancona and Caldwell (1992) discovered a ‘filtering’ process where place individuals took “information from outsiders and deliver[ed] a smaller amount to the group” (p. 637). Mainly, the boundary-spanning activities that took place played an essential function on how group members perceived the outside world and how the outside world perceived the group (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

As a result of the multiple role taxonomies that exist in an organizational setting, there is an overlap regarding roles. For instance, *the plant* presented in Belbin’s (1981) taxonomy, and *the initiator/contributor* in Benne and Sheat’s (1948) taxonomy both share the function of approaching group problems in different ways, yet hold different names. Moreover, there is also an introduction of new roles with each additional taxonomy that becomes available. Having multiple taxonomies often creates a sense of confusion within the organizational literature. For instance, roles with similar names may provide two different definitions of what the role

classification portrays. Consequently, Mumford, Campion, and Morgeson (2006) developed an encompassing typology to integrate past findings into a comprehensive list. Mumford et al. (2006) described that the typology does not include dysfunctional roles because their goal was to portray roles that contribute to successful team functioning.

The typology that Mumford and colleagues (2006) produced integrates informal roles into categories similar to Benne and Sheats (1948) taxonomy, that is, the task role category, the social role category, and the boundary-spanning role category. The task role category includes the roles of the contractor, creator, contributor, completer, and critic. These task roles share the conventional function of carrying out the work that constitutes the team's objective (Mumford et al., 2006). Mumford and colleagues (2006) described *the contractor* as a role that refers to behaviours related to organizing and coordinating team events; *the creator* as a role that suggests innovative or compelling visions to the team's task-related problems, and *the contributor* as a role that contributes critical information or expertise to the team. *The completer* is a role that aids in the execution of individual oriented tasks within the team, and finally, *the critic* is a role whose behaviours go against the "flow" (Mumford et al., 2006). Refusing to comply with group behaviours, *the critic* creates questions with regards to the way the team chooses to coordinate and organize information related to meeting team objectives (Mumford et al., 2006).

The social role category, as the name implies, deals with the social roles of a group. These roles include the communicator and the calibrator. Mumford et al. (2006) described *the communicator* as an individual whose encompassing behaviours help create a social environment that is positive, open, and conducive to collaboration. Further, *the calibrator* role behaviours include observing the team's social processes, making the team aware of the social processes, and ultimately resolving/suggesting changes to the social procedures (Mumford et al., 2006).

The final category is called the boundary-spanning role category. As previously mentioned, those involved with boundary-spanning roles attempt to bridge the gap between the team and other teams, or between the team and other organizations (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). The boundary-spanning category consists of two roles, the consul, and the coordinator. According to Mumford et al. (2006), the role of *the consul* is to interact with individuals outside the team setting to emphatically market the team positively, gain support from non-team members, and update non-members about the team's current success. Comparatively, *the coordinator* interacts with non-team members to accumulate ideas and information that may improve team decision making (Mumford et al., 2006).

Although multiple informal role taxonomies exist in the literature, most restrict their classification to that of functional roles (e.g., Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Bales, 1950; Mumford et al., 2006), and exclude detrimental/dysfunction roles. One reason for excluding dysfunctional roles may be that the researchers solely want to outline the roles that increase group functionality, therefore putting dysfunctional roles in hindsight. Functional behaviours are essential to both organizational performance and employee satisfaction (Organ & Ryan, 1995); therefore, those behaviours are often put in the limelight. Nevertheless, Benne and Sheats (1948) included dysfunctional roles, found in the dysfunctional/individualistic category.

Benne and Sheats (1948) introduced eight dysfunctional roles, categorized as individual roles in their taxonomy. Those who occupy individual roles attempt to satisfy individual needs that are irrelevant to group tasks and are negatively oriented to group building and maintenance of group and member training (Benne & Sheats, 1948). Individual roles consist of the aggressor, the blocker, the recognition-seeker, the self-confessor, the playboy, the dominator, the help-

seeker, and the special interest pleader. Although these roles are labeled with different names and construed by different roles explanations, they have all are detrimental to group functioning.

Informal roles in sport. As previously mentioned, the context of a situation can affect the way a role is developed (Carreau et al., 2016). For instance, within an industrial/organizational context, Dunphy (1968) presented the roles of the instructor, aggressor, scapegoat, and the idol. Within a therapy context, Sandahl (2011) introduced the roles of the talkative one, informal leader, quiet one, and the person in need. Additionally, within a sports context, Cope and colleagues (2011) described 12 informal roles that frequently emerge. While some of these roles may be comparable to the roles located in organizational taxonomies, some differ. For example, as previously mentioned, much of organizational research produced on informal roles is limited to functionality that contributes to group success. Although having no group dysfunctionality may be ideal for group productivity, it is improbable. Cope and others (2011) identified three informal roles that are perceived as detrimental towards group functioning: the distractor, the malingerer, and the cancer. As the name implies, the distractor may cause a lack of attention for other teammates when present. The malingerer is an athlete who lengthens injury symptoms, both physically and psychologically, for external gains (e.g., sympathy, attention, or access to athletic therapy; Cope et al., 2011). Finally, perceived as the most detrimental to a team's function, the cancer is "an athlete whose negative emotions spread destructively throughout a team" (Cope et al., 2011, p. 24).

Cope et al. (2011) further identified nine other informal roles in sport. These roles consist of: the star player, the comedian, the enforcer, the social convener, the informal verbal leader, the informal non-verbal leader, the team player, the spark plug, and the team mentor. *The star player* is known for his/her behaviours related to their personality, performance, or showmanship, while

the team player is viewed as the “workhorse,” often sacrificing their well-being for team success. *The comedian* applies humour, and comical situations to entertain others. *The enforcer* has a physically intimidating aspect often used as a counter mechanism for an opposing team’s rough tactics. *The social convener* is synonymous to Mumford and colleagues (2006) “contractor,” as both increase group harmony with behaviours related to organizing and coordinating team/social gatherings. *The informal verbal leader* uses verbal commands to lead the team; comparatively, the *informal non-verbal leader* leads the team by example and hard work instead of verbal cues. *The spark plug* is a charismatic role who can motivate a team towards a goal. Finally, perceived as the most beneficial towards team success, *the team mentor* uses wisdom developed through experience with the team to act as a mentor or teacher to lesser experienced athletes (Cope et al., 2011).

Although differences arise between sports psychology and organization psychology, some similarities occur in relation to informal role research. For instance, Benne and Sheats (1948) defined the dysfunctional role the help seeker as an individual who “attempts to call forth sympathy response from other group members or the whole group whether through expressions of insecurity, personal confusion or depreciation of himself beyond reason” (p. 46). Likewise, Cope et al. (2011) defined a similar role, the malingerer, as “an athlete who prolongs psychological or physical symptoms of injury for some external gain (e.g., sympathy, attention, access to physical therapy, p. 24).” With regards to context, the help seeker relates to an organization/workplace environment while the malingerer falls into a sports context. Accordingly, is important to note that paralleling sports psychology to organizational psychology may allow for significant growth in terms of informal role research. As researchers begin to conduct research and construct information on informal roles in sport, the complexity of team

dynamics is further understood. For example, uncovering characteristics and applying management techniques for detrimental roles can lead to resolving a team's negative dynamics if that player is causing dysfunction within the team. Furthermore, strides are being made to uncover and examine relatively new aspects of informal roles, including detrimental roles. For instance, as mentioned earlier, some organizational psychology role taxonomies limit role identification to functionality, excluding negative roles. Cope and colleagues (2011) included negative roles in their taxonomy, indicating that they are also perceived as detrimental to a team's function. Providing evidence that these dysfunctional roles exist is the first step required to move forward and aid in minimizing the implications by and for these detrimental athletes. However, informal roles are infrequently explored in a sports psychology context. Nonetheless, the importance of informal roles, as well as research surrounding them, should not be overlooked.

Researchers that have focused on negative informal roles in sport and suggest that these roles warrant our attention due to the negative influence the role can have on the athlete (see McGannon et al., 2012). For instance, negative informal roles can significantly impact an athletes' psychological experiences (e.g., the cognitive, behavioural, or affective outcomes of distress or role ambiguity), create impaired team processes (e.g., reduced team cohesion), and lead to reduced athletic performance (e.g., drop-out) (Cope et al., 2011; Cope et al., 2010; Eys, Schinke, & Jeffery 2007 McGannon et al., 2012). Therefore, understanding negative informal roles due to the negative consequences they can have on a team/individual is of vital importance.

Negative Informal Roles in Organizational and Sports Psychology

Much of the literature produced on informal roles has focused on functionality to outline the importance that informal roles can have on a group or team (see Benne & Sheats 1948).

However, negative informal roles often represent the elephant in the room that no one wants to recognize. For instance, researchers that study dysfunctional roles note that they primarily offer minimal, if not any benefit to group functionality (i.e., Cope et al., 2010). Therefore, keeping informal roles hidden and out of taxonomies may seem logical. However, given the importance of uncovering negative informal roles (e.g., increased negative athlete psychological impacts; McGannon et al., 2012), this elephant should be embraced, not ignored. This section will focus on three negative informal roles in sport and two negative roles in organizational psychology. The researcher will first briefly discuss the malinger, the distractor and the tyrant. This is because the scholarship surrounding these roles is diminutive. Comparatively, information surrounding the toxic leader and the team cancer is considerably more thorough. Therefore, the author will go into substantial detail concerning these roles.

The malinger and the distractor. Cope and colleagues (2011) described both the malingerer and the distractor as negative informal roles that occur in a sports context. As aforementioned, Cope and colleagues (2011) defined a malingerer as “an athlete who prolongs psychological or physical symptoms of injury for external gain (e.g., sympathy, attention, access to athletic therapy; p. 24) and this athlete is perceived as detrimental by intercollegiate level coaches. Many factors may cause malingering, such as preservation of self-esteem, prevention of loss of an athletic scholarship, personal realization of insufficient ability, need to seek attention, and demonstration of courage by playing hurt (Laskowski, 1993). The distractor, an athlete who distracts or diverts attention away from teammates, is also perceived as detrimental by intercollegiate coaches (Cope et al., 2011). For example, a distractor may focus more on off-field matters and as a result, distract his/her teammates.

The tyrant. Tyrant is a historically rich, negative word, often associated with a cruel, authoritarian-like oppressor. Dating back to ancient Greece, “a tyrant was a usurper who seized power in times of political upheaval and ruled as a monarch” (Dunkle, 1967, p. 152). Both Plato and Aristotle juxtaposed a king and a tyrant, describing that a tyrant often only serves the interest of the ruler (him/herself) while a king puts others first (Hutchins, 1952). Furthermore, Ernest (1918) compared the tyrant to a brutal appetite on a search for power. Ernest (1918) announced that an “appetite of this kind, when it is once engendered, is the tyrant of all other appetites; and every passion is henceforth made to serve the purposes of a lust for self-gratification and self-assertion” (p. 300). Ultimately, the tyrant has a rich history of negativity and oppression.

Within interdisciplinary health research, Farrell and colleagues (2001) described the tyrant as a negative informal role that is occupied by an individual with relatively low sociability, high oppressiveness, and vindictive nature. Farrell and colleagues (2001) expressed that the tyrant becomes especially salient during the storming stage of an interdisciplinary health team. The team begins to struggle at this stage, often because of conflicting views. Much of this conflict focuses on the tyrant's behaviour. As members begin to express their concerns about group functioning, the tyrant often becomes defensive. This tyrant clashes with other members of the team and creates a tense, hostile work environment (Farrell et al., 2001).

Given the rich history of the tyrant and the research produced on it in interdisciplinary health, this negative role can have severe impacts on groups/teams, and other roles may develop to aid in situational problems. For instance, when a tyrant becomes a defensive and vindictive, conflicts surface with a member known as a lightning bolt (Farrell et al., 2001). This lightning bolt role challenges the authority of the tyrant and is known as the “spokesperson for anger and grievances felt but not expressed by other less assertive members” (Farrell et al., 2001, p. 284).

Ultimately, this conflict may cause several new roles to emerge to combat the growing tension. A peacemaker may develop to mediate or repair members self-esteem after a confrontation while a clown may try to counter the growing alienation by creating a more pleasant environment (Farrell et al., 2001). Subsequently, the tyrant is problematic for interdisciplinary health teams.

The team cancer. Researchers have focused on the aspects of the team cancer, a critical negative role that spreads destruction throughout a team (i.e., Cope et al., 2010, 2011; McGannon et al., 2012), however the role is not fully understood. Research produced on this informal role is justified, as “a single, toxic team member may be a catalyst for group level dysfunction” (Felps, Mitchell, & Byington, 2006, p. 176). As previously mentioned, Cope and colleagues (2011) defined a team cancer as, “an athlete who expresses negative emotions that spread destructively throughout a team” (p. 24). Furthermore, by interviewing intercollegiate team sports coaches, Cope and colleagues (2010) provided research that documents the characteristics, emergence, consequences, and management of the cancer role in a sports context. Furthermore, McGannon and colleagues (2012) expanded the team cancer role by examining the role in a socio-cultural context. Both pivotal studies will be explored separately, as similarities and differences arose.

Characteristics of the cancer role. According to Cope and colleagues (2010), five characteristics concerning the behaviours/personality traits are present within a cancerous athlete. First, a team cancer can methodically manipulative both their teammates and coaches (Cope et al., 2010). Second, a cancerous athlete is likely going to lack constructiveness, helpfulness, optimism, is uncooperative, and overly negative. One coach in Cope and colleagues (2010) study expressed the negativity as: “this is the stuff where you are just telling everybody how horrible your day was, talking about negative things, and not being positive about the

workout and your performances, and lashing out at other people” (p. 428). Third, a cancerous athlete is likely to possess narcissistic tendencies. This athlete is likely to be boastful, indifferent to the well-being of others, and more concerned with personal goals (Cope et al., 2010). Fourth, a cancerous athlete is blame shifting and lacks accountability for their actions and mistakes. Finally, a cancerous athlete can be distracting to both athletes and coaches. This athlete can be so distracting that “no one wants to listen to that individual anymore” (Cope et al., 2010, p. 429). Further, players that do not accept their role on a team are likely to engage in these “cancerous” behaviours (Benson, Eys, Surya, Dawson, & Schneider, 2013).

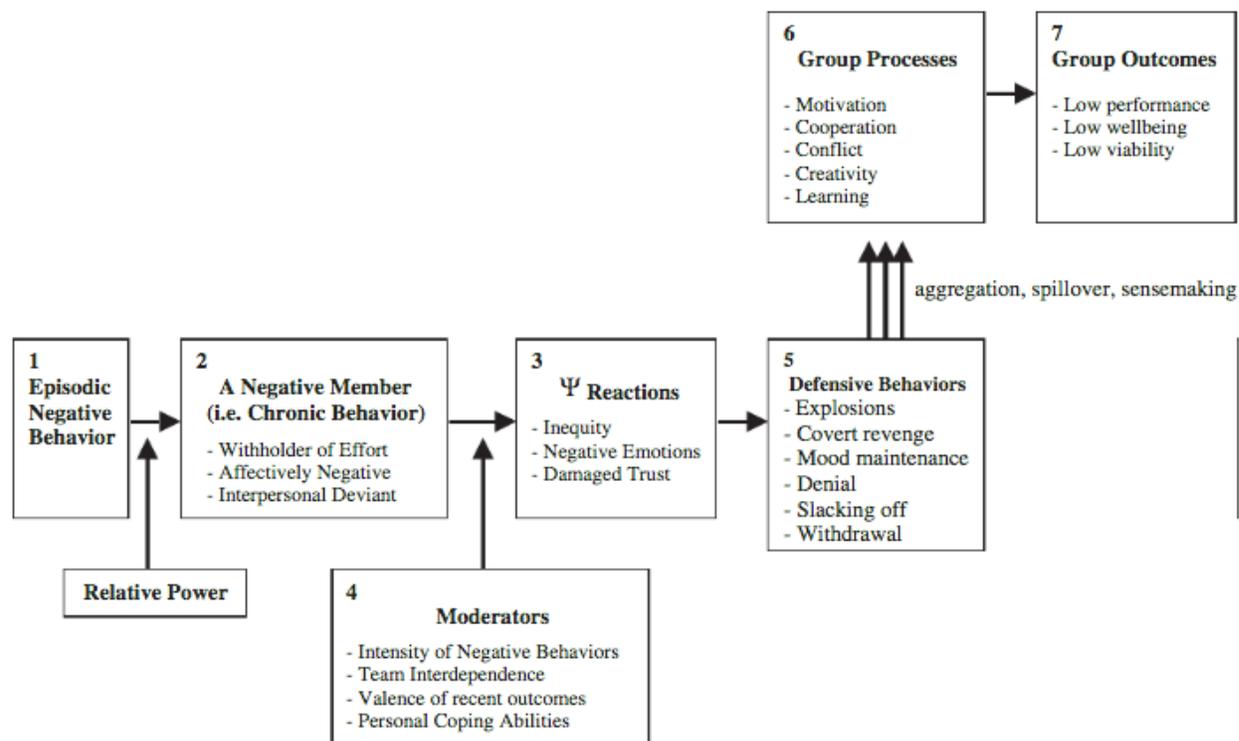
Emergence of the cancer role. According to Cope and colleagues (2010), there are several factors that may impact the emergence of team cancers within a sports context. First, a cancer role is likely to emerge in players who are emotionally immature, lack confidence or have self-doubt (Cope et al., 2010). For instance, when interviewing coaches on their perceptions of the team cancer, Cope and colleagues (2010) uncovered a trend that coaches believed that the level of maturity could play an essential role in the presence of negative behaviours. One coach described “of the ones we have had [i.e., cancerous players] has always been a lack of maturity amongst these people. So maybe it’s a way for them to just show other people how they are” (p. 429). Cancerous players also tend to have narcissistic personalities. For example, five coaches believed that this personality trait can lead to the emergence of cancer role. One coach explained that a player on the team wanted to be the star player but was not the best player. Further “he thinks this [star player role] belongs to him because he has been there for the longest time” (p. 429). In this example, narcissism resides within this individual and may be contributing to the cancer role. Further, self-doubt and inappropriate inclusion tactics can lead to the emergence of a cancer role. Two coaches in Cope and colleagues (2010) study explain that lack of confidence

may cause the cancer role to emerge. Further, there were perceptions that the cancer athlete “attempts to make others worse to boost his/her own confidence” (p. 429). This raises the idea that an occupant of the cancer role may have a performance-approach or performance-avoidance goal orientation; however, this has not yet been explored empirically. Finally, two external factors may further lead to the emergence of the cancer role. According to participants in Cope and colleagues (2010) study, leeway from coaches and external pressure may play a role in the emergence of the team cancer. For instance, consequences for initial negative behaviours of athletes may not be present in some coaches. This leeway may create lenience in the team rules, and a cancerous player may take advantage of this. Further, friends, family, and coaches may provide tremendous external pressure for players to succeed and this may propel the athlete’s negative behaviours (Cope et al., 2010)

Recently, Kim and colleagues (2018) conducted a study that aimed to example the relationship between athletes’ big five personality characteristics and their occupancy of informal roles in interdependent sports teams. As mentioned above, an individual who occupies a cancer role may have negative personality characteristics (Cope et al., 2010). Therefore, Kim and colleagues (2018) described that the first step in understanding the processes by which athletes come to occupy roles on sports teams is to examine the personality characteristics surrounding each role. However, the researchers found no statistically significant results for the cancer role in relation to big five personality characteristics. (Kim et al., 2018).

Consequences of the cancer role. Cope and colleagues (2010) used the bad-apple phenomenon established by Felps et al. (2006) to gain an understanding of the potential consequences of negative roles within a group. A “bad-apple” is a term that outlines how a “single individual’s chronically dysfunctional interpersonal behaviours can negatively affect the

dynamics, processes, and outcomes of an entire group by decreasing performance, satisfaction, and well-being” (Felps et al., 2006, p. 183). This model outlines how dysfunctional individuals’



behaviours can affect group level functioning, processes, and outcomes.

*Figure 2. The Bad Apple Phenomenon Aggregation, Spillover, Sensemaking. From “How, When, and Why Bad Apples Spoil the Barrel: Negative Group Members and Dysfunctional Groups” by W. Felps, T. Mitchell, & E. Byington, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 27, p. 184. Copyright 2006 by Elsevier. Used with permission from the publisher.*

Figure 2 shows an illustration of the bad apple phenomenon. Within this phenomenon, negative behaviours from an individual become chronic (i.e., numbers one and two in figure 2). Felps and colleagues (2006) described that the primary forms of chronic behaviours are withholding effort, being affectively negative, and interpersonal deviance. Further, it is these chronic behaviours that cause potential psychological reactions within other group members (i.e., number three in figure 2). For example, these psychological reactions may include perceptions of

inequity, increased personal feelings of negativity, and decreased trust (Felps et al., 2006). Moderators such as team interdependence, the valence of recent outcomes, personal coping abilities, and the intensity of the negative behaviours can make the situation better or worse (number four in figure 2). For example, if an individual has high personal coping abilities s/he may be better at tolerating the deviant player compared to an individual with low personal coping abilities. The negative psychological states will lead to defensive behaviours (e.g., explosions, slacking off, withdrawal; number five in figure 2). Further, the defensive behaviours produced influence group processes through aggregation, spillover, and sensemaking. (i.e., number six in figure 2; Felps et al., 2006). Finally, group outcomes become influenced (i.e., number seven in figure 2). For example, if an individual has an adverse psychological reaction and handles the situation by engaging in revenge (defensive behaviour), group motivation may drop (group process), and this could create low performance within the group (group outcome). Subsequently, one bad-apple ruins the barrel.

Building off the bad-apple phenomenon, Cope and colleagues (2010) found seven different sub-categories of consequences that a cancerous player may generate on a team. First, the team cancer can cause distractions within the team by “caus[ing] attention to be drawn away from the task for both players and coaches” (Cope et al., 2010, p. 430). Second, as previously mentioned, the cancers negativity spreads throughout the team. This negativity can bring down the team (i.e., morally) and disrupts the flow of team practices. Third, clique formation begins to develop as a result of the team cancer. For example, one coach in Cope and colleagues (2010) study went as far as to include that a team begins to disseminate as a result of the cliques and “there is no way of stopping it” (p. 430) Fourth, team cohesion is affected because of the presence of a cancerous athlete. Many coaches in Cope and colleagues (2010) study felt that a

team cancer has immediate adverse effects on team cohesion. For example, team cancers may be isolated because of their uncomfortable, negative feelings they leave on teammates. On the contrary, some coaches believed that team cohesion was not decreased as a result of a team cancer but increased. For instance, a team cancer may bring a unity to the team and “it creates hope in the team or it creates an environment for the team where people want to help, people want to cure the cancer” (Cope et al., 2010, p. 431). Depending on the viewpoint of an individual, the team cancer may have a positive or negative consequence on a team. Fifth, a team cancer may affect individual and group level performance (Cope et al., 2010). This impact is described as negative. For instance, one coach gave the example that when a team cancer is present on a team, the team may lose more games than they win. Sixth, a cancerous athlete may impact the attrition rate of the team. For example, a team cancer may lead to the withdrawal or dismissal of group members (Cope et al., 2010). Finally, a team cancer can severely impact coach empowerment. This can be both negative and positive. From a negative aspect, dealing with a cancerous athlete can affect confidence and authority levels of a coach. For instance, attempting to deal with a cancer may prove unsuccessful and could affect the recruitment rates of team (i.e., athletes may not want to play for a coach with minimal authority; Cope et al., 2010) However, a team cancer may provide positive consequences for a coach. For example, respect and authority can be established based on how the cancerous athlete is treated (Cope et al., 2010). Although some positive consequences may be present as a result of the cancerous athlete, it is dependent on the coach’s viewpoint and how they handle situations within the team. Nonetheless, a cancerous athlete has primarily unfavorable consequences within a team.

Management of the cancer role. If the cancerous athlete is not managed accordingly, the previously mentioned consequences may begin to slowly increase. For example, if the coach

lacks power in dealing with this athlete(s), recruitment rates, attrition rates, and performance may suffer. Uncovering trends in interviews with intercollegiate coaches, Cope and colleagues (2010) discovered six sub-categories that should be employed to manage cancerous athletes. Two of these sub-categories are related to communicating with the athlete. First, direct communication should be employed to explain the impact of the athlete's negative behaviours. Second, indirect communication may be used to express to the team how harmful actions (i.e., breaking the rules or expectations) may affect everyone. In this circumstance, the team cancer is not singled out. Instead, team communication takes place in a collaborative unit. Third, supervision, by the coach or coaching staff, of the cancerous athlete is a strategy that can be used to intervene with that group member (Cope et al., 2010). Fourth, using a variety of methods of discipline can improve the negative behaviours of a cancerous athlete. For instance, the athlete losing playing time, being benched for some time, or removed from the team are possible methods (Cope et al., 2010). The fifth management sub-category is more proactive where sports organizations pre-screen athletes while recruiting to ensure that coaches do not recruit cancerous athletes. Finally, the last management technique involves tolerating the cancerous athlete while trying to maintain team dynamics. Essentially, one coach said:

they [i.e., the other group members] don't have to like it but if the culture of the program is we get each other and we understand that but you can also be good. If the team can neutralize that informal role negativity then their formal roles never gets affected. (Cope et al., 2010, p. 433)

The study conducted by Cope and colleagues (2010) provided useful information regarding the team cancer. For instance, the characteristics, consequences, emergence patterns, and management techniques presented in this research introduced the team cancer in vast detail.

It was this information presented in Cope and colleagues' (2010) study that allowed other researchers to explore the team cancer in different perspectives, thereby adding to our knowledge of this role. Ultimately, a second article that examined the team cancer did so by employing cultural studies approach.

Culturally constructed team cancer. The cultural studies perspective avoids reducing the psyche, self, and identity to mechanisms and cognition of the mind. Instead, a cultural studies perspective highlights the three factors as simultaneously cultural and social (McGannon & Mauws, 2000). Ultimately, by shifting to a cultural psychology lens, researchers can challenge mainstream sports psychology's assumptions concerning cultural conceptions and identities (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011; McGannon & Spence, 2010).

McGannon and colleagues (2012) used sports psychology to advocate for the conception and exploration of the team cancer role as a socio-cultural construction. It is important to note that from a cultural psychology perspective, a team cancer does not exist in the head, or within the cognition of the athlete. Comparatively, the team cancer is "regarded as the product of the individual, social, and cultural narratives which interact to create meanings concerning cultural identity" (McGannon et al., 2012, p. 27).

Viewing the team cancer through a cultural lens is essential for two reasons. First, McGannon and colleagues (2012) suggested that conceptualizing the team cancer identity as a socio-cultural construction offers added aspects of understanding and opens the idea for further research of negative informal team roles in sports psychology. For instance, studying the team cancer from a socio-cultural perspective allows for the possibility that social and cultural narratives can mold the athlete into the negative role. Second, conceptualizing this negative informal role as a socio-cultural construction allows for additional insights into the meanings and

functions of the team cancer within the political and economic realms of a cultural sports context (McGannon et al., 2012). These insights will be discussed throughout the following paragraphs.

McGannon and colleagues (2012) examined how a team cancer of a sports celebrity was developed, supported, and contested within the sports media narratives. Further, the authors were interested in the implications for the celebrity athlete occupying the cancer role. For instance, are there behavioural consequences for the athlete occupying the cancer role? McGannon and colleagues (2012) used media reports of ‘team cancer’ Sean Avery to obtain suitable information regarding these behavioural consequences.

At the time of the incident, Sean Avery was labeled by the media as embodying the characteristics of a team cancer. Studying sports celebrities labeled as deviant – or in this case, labeled as a team cancer – allows for a better understanding of how the media can influence the way athletes are perceived within a specific contextual moment (McGannon et al., 2012). Sean Avery is primarily known for his “sloppy seconds” incident where he made a statement about his ex-girlfriend Elisha Cuthbert. Avery commented on Calgary Flames defenseman Dion Phaneuf regarding his relationship with Cuthbert before a game in Calgary.

McGannon and colleagues (2012) collected articles on Avery that were published in North American newspapers (i.e., Toronto Star, USA Today, etc.) and used ethnographic content analysis to understand the communication of meaning within these articles. McGannon and colleagues (2012) generated systematic categories based on existing team cancer characteristics presented by Cope and colleagues (e.g., manipulative, blame-shifting, negative; 2010). Furthermore, the categories were flexible enough to allow for additional categories and separate connections to emerge between and within existing and new categories. Ultimately, all the

categories and sub-layers of Avery's team cancer behaviours fed in the broader theme/discourse of "moral code of hockey" (McGannon et al., 2012, p. 28).

A discourse is a concept used to refer to various ways of constituting specific meanings to particular groups, cultures, and historical contexts (Foucault, 1978). McGannon and colleagues (2012) emphasized that a hockey moral discourse emerged within the findings. Discussing findings under the hockey moral discourse allows for "illustration of how the media narratives were layered and connected, with sub-themes feeding into the social construction of the team cancer identity in specific, yet complex and contradictory ways" (McGannon et al., 2012, p. 29). Further, discourses actively shape, enable, and constrain identities and behavioural practices (McGannon & Mauws, 2000; McGannon & Spence, 2010; Weedon, 1996). Subsequently, the comparison between Avery and the hockey moral discourse allows for greater understanding of his cancerous actions.

McGannon and colleagues (2012) reported that the moral hockey discourse emerged in two paradoxical ways. The first representing the *hockey moral code as a truth* which guilds hockey players to conduct on and off the ice. The paradox that sport acts like a moral compass that guilds athletes to the right decisions is not unconditional. For example, researchers show that sport prides itself on fair play, ethics, moral values, and subculture; however, certain behaviours in sport demonstrate the complete opposite (McGannon et al., 2012; Volkwein, 1995). For instance, disrespecting opponents, emphasizing winning, and embellishment exposes an immoral behaviour that goes against the hockey moral code. The second way that the moral hockey discourse paradoxically emerged was as an *illusion and hypocrisy*. Comparatively, instead of building strong moral values, the moral hockey code as an illusion/hypocrisy discourse is the notion that sport promotes disrespect towards opponents and emphasizes winning (Andrews &

Jackson, 2001; Coakley & Donnelly, 2009). McGannon and colleagues (2012) examined the themes that emerged through both discourses concerning Sean Avery as a team cancer.

The hockey moral code as a truth discourse means “that particular ideas regarding what a moral code ‘is’ become taken for granted as factual when people talk about a moral code being present with sport” (McGannon et al., 2012, p. 29). For instance, sports building ‘real men’ may feed into the moral code as a truth discourse; however, this is not factual. This moral hockey code is popular within a sports culture. Furthermore, the hockey moral code as a truth feeds into the impression that sport builds character (Bernstein, 2006; McGannon et al., 2012). The hockey moral code is explored through Ross Bernstein’s book *The Code: The Unwritten Rules of Fighting and Retaliation in the NHL*. The book focuses on interviews with current and former NHL players, coaches, and media representatives. One player describes the code as a “living thing’ among players. This code can evolve as the rules change, but the most critical parts of the code are honesty and respect.

Within a sports context (i.e., on ice), verbal aggression is acceptable within a moral standard. For example, some athletes may use “trash talk” to psychologically unbalance their opponents. However, there is a line that separates on-ice strategic verbal aggression from off-ice trash talk. Ultimately, media articles collected by McGannon and colleagues (2012) were used to demonstrate Avery’s off-ice actions as “tasteless, uncouth, potty-mouthed, ignorant, and generally demeaning towards women” (Duhatschek, 2008, para. 3) and crossed the line. Avery, with his sloppy seconds incident among others, “[did] not conduct himself appropriately within the moral boundaries of the NHL” (McGannon et al. 2012, p. 29). In essence, players should not breach the moral code (Bernstein, 2006). However, the remarks made by Avery off the ice were disrespectful and reflected his team cancer personality (McGannon et al., 2012).

Extended characteristics of the team cancer. Within a moral hockey code as a truth discourse, McGannon and colleagues (2012) reported that Avery demonstrated team characteristics that aligned with those researched by Cope et al., (2010), as well as new characteristics not presented by Cope and colleagues (2010). Given the moral hockey discourse (i.e., moral hockey code as a truth vs. moral hockey code as a paradox), different viewpoints of the cancer were examined. Nonetheless, the moral hockey code as a truth will be discussed following the moral hockey code as a paradox. Comparing the two discourses and themes that emerge allow us to get an eclectic view of Avery in his team cancer role.

Avery was positioned as narcissistic, negative, and manipulative within the moral hockey code as a truth discourse (Cope et al., 2010; McGannon et al., 2012). For example, McGannon and colleagues (2012) emphasized that the narcissism characteristic emerged through media sources informing that “he [Avery] put his own needs before the needs of the team, thus breaching the hockey moral code” (p. 31). Furthermore, in addition to the characteristics mentioned above, McGannon and colleagues (2012) reported a new characteristic that emerged through the moral hockey code as a truth discourse. The “classless idiot” is a characteristic portrayed by Avery as a “lacking class and intelligence” (McGannon et al., 2012 p. 31). Moreover, McGannon and colleagues (2012) described that the classless idiot characteristic reinforced Avery’s lack of moral character. For instance, it was classless and idiotic of Avery to verbally assault Dion Phaneuf and Elisha Cuthbert in the sloppy seconds incident. Finally, McGannon and colleagues (2012) reported that by occupying “unacceptable” identities, Avery is a player who lacks commitment. For instance, Avery spent some time interning at Vogue (a fashion magazine) and as a result, does not meet the typical requirements for upholding the hockey moral code. That is, he does not live and breathe the hockey code. Real men are more

interested in hockey (and not fashion) and handle this interest accordingly (Bernstein, 2006; Pringle & Hickey, 2010; Whannel, 2002).

Although the team cancer is predominantly viewed as a hindrance to team functioning, McGannon and colleagues (2012) reported positive characteristics that emerged concerning Avery's cancer role. Within the moral hockey code as a paradox discourse, the researchers positioned Avery's role as beneficial to team functioning. For instance, at the Ice Hockey for Harlem fundraiser, hockey analyst Ron Duguay referred to Avery as the "extra fireplug" that was missing on the ice. Furthermore, Duguay added that "he energizes the team, whether you like him or don't like him" (New York Daily News, 'Ron Duguay: Bring back Sean Avery' 07/01/09). These quotations from Duguay depict Avery as using his energy to positively affect his team (McGannon et al., 2012). For instance, Avery's off-ice trash talk may have the ability to distract opponents and entice penalties against Avery, thus putting his team at an advantage (McGannon et al., 2012). Furthermore, in both discourses, Avery is described as a manipulative; however, in Cope and colleagues (2010) study, only predominantly negative characteristics of the team cancer emerged (i.e., manipulative, narcissistic, etc.) with minimal positive characteristics emerging. Comparatively, McGannon and colleagues (2012) extended the meaning of the team cancer and show that although the team cancer is generally destructive, further positive characteristics may emerge (i.e., using energy to impact the team positively). McGannon and colleagues (2012) further expanded the meaning of the team cancer by highlighting the importance of the discourse in the construction of the cultural identity. Ultimately, when positioned within the hypocrisy discourse, Avery's cancer identity served the team, and himself well (McGannon et al., 2012).

Having a dysfunctional athlete, such as a cancer, on a team can lead to the obstruction of team outcomes by negatively affecting the group dynamics and team performance (Paradis, Carron, & Martin, 2014). Cope and colleagues (2011) first introduced the team cancer, however, following this, Cope and colleagues (2010) explored the cancer role in profound detail. Emerging from these findings were characteristics of the team cancer, development of the cancer role in an athlete, consequences of this role, and management strategies. McGannon and colleagues (2012) further broadened our understanding of the team cancer by exploring the deviant hockey celebrity Sean Avery. By ethnographic content analysis, characteristics emerged that were consistent with previous research by Cope et al., (i.e., narcissistic, manipulative, negative; 2010). However, a new theme emerged titled the “classless idiot.” Moreover, the cancer role emerged differently contingent on the moral code discourse involved. For instance, in the moral hockey code as a truth discourse, Avery’s cancer identity was negative to team functioning. Comparatively, in a moral hockey code as a hypocrisy discourse, Avery’s cancer identity was functional in that he provided extra energy to the team. Subsequently, the meanings and implications of the identified team cancer characteristics were dependent on the socio-cultural context from which the team cancer identity arose (McGannon et al., 2012).

Although the team cancer is a negative informal role within a sports context, it is adequately suited to be representative of a cancerous athlete. More specifically, researchers have studied the team cancer as residing within athletes, and only athletes. Researchers have yet to examine the consequences that a negative informal role residing within staff member may have on a sports team. However, within an organizational context, researchers have been studying the effects of negative informal staff members for some time.

The toxic leader. A toxic leader can be described as a leader “who engage[s] in numerous destructive behaviours and who exhibit certain dysfunctional characteristics” (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, p. 18); however, there is no universal definition of a toxic leader. For example, Lemmergaard and Lewis (2013) described the toxic leader as a “normal by-product of organizational life that can have serious negative effects on individuals and their organizations” (p. 15) while Whicker (1996) explained that a toxic leaders are “maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent and malicious people . . . [they find] glory is turf protection, fighting, and controlling others rather than uplifting followers” (p. 66). Regardless of the definition, the toxic leader has been studied by many within organizational psychology.

An autocratic leader style may be related to a toxic leader persona (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006); however, a toxic leader can have much more of a destructive impact. For a leader to be considered toxic, the behaviours and qualities of the character must inflict some reasonable, severe, or enduring harm on the followers and their organization (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a). Through the negative impact of their decisions and actions, toxic leaders are one of the primary sources – if not the most important one – of dysfunctional behaviours, policies, and programs in any entity (i.e., group, organization, or society; Vreja et al., 2016). Furthermore, Lipman-Blumen (2005b) emphasized that leaders can be intentionally, or unintentionally toxic. For instance, deliberate injury of others or followers for personal enhancement is intentionally toxic. Comparatively, careless actions which cause significant adverse effects, is unintentionally toxic.

The characteristics of a toxic leader. Toxic leaders may destroy individuals, organizations, and nations that they lead on the basis of deeply-embedded personal characteristics, ideals, and values (Lipman-Blumen, 2011). One characteristic embedded within a

toxic leader is a lack of integrity. This “lack of integrity marks the leader as cynical, corrupt, hypocritical, or untrustworthy” (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a p. 21). Furthermore, sometimes a toxic leader may be amoral and lack the ability to discern right decision from wrong decisions (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a). They may think that they are making right decisions in the place of wrong ones. Another dysfunctional personal characteristic is an enormous ego present in the toxic leader. This ego can blind the leader to shortcomings of their character and limits the capacity for self-rejuvenation (Lipman-Blumen, 2011). Further, an important part of successfully leading an organization is having the ability to learn from past mistakes and ensuring that they are corrected for the future. A toxic leaders arrogance prevents them from acknowledging their mistakes and instead leads them to blaming others. To this end, blaming others is partially due to the toxic leader placing themselves atop a workplace hierarchy and thinking that they can do no wrong (Schilling, 2009). A toxic leader often makes snap judgements through emotional outbursts (Walton, 2007). Moreover, the toxic leader’s position within an organizational context, greed is a common characteristic. Lipman-Blumen (2011) claimed that it is the “avarice that drives leaders to put money and what money can buy at the top of the list” (p. 22), often disregarding the well-being of employees. Furthermore, a reckless disregard and insensitivity for cost of their actions to others, as well as, themselves develops because of toxic leadership. Cowardice leads the toxic leader to shrink from difficult choices. Finally, toxic leaders may have a “limited cognitive ability and judgement that results in a failure to understand the nature of relevant problems” (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a p. 22). For instance, the toxic leader’s limited cognitive ability can create an impairment of competence in leadership situations.

Lipman-Blumen (2011) emphasized that these personality characteristics are not fully exhaustive. Furthermore, sometimes dysfunctional personal qualities can be coupled with

admirable personal qualities. For instance, a toxic leader may, in some circumstances, be an intellectual anomaly working at a business firm and creates impressive profits for the business. Therefore, as aforementioned, a toxic leader may be toxic in some situations but useful in others. A second positive characteristic of a toxic leader is his/her to resemble a charismatic, passionate leader in their ability to sell a desirable future (Conger, 1989). It may be the exemplary qualities that attracts followers to the toxic leader. For instance, a leader with a high intellect may pose as attractive to some followers because of their ability to think in tough situations. Walton (2007) further suggested that the reason followers may be attracted to toxic leaders is the leader's high level of intensity and enthusiasm for his or her objective. For example, in a business context, a toxic leader's objective may involve higher sales or increased workflow; comparatively, in a sport setting the toxic leader's intention may merely be to beat the competition. In both cases, if the toxic leader's followers align with similar personal objectives to those of the leader, and that leader is enthusiastic, those individuals may continue to operate under his/her toxic influence. Ultimately, although positive characteristics are present, the "amalgam of dysfunctional personal characteristics and destructive behaviours usually creates a powder keg simply awaiting a match" (Lipman-Blumen 2011, p. 338).

Finally, Reed (2004) presents the idea that a toxic leader may be missing character qualities altogether, thus increasing their toxicity. For instance, within a military context, Reed (2004) emphasizes that a toxic leader lacks one of the fundamental values of the Army, respect. It is this lack of respect that the toxic leader presents upon his/her subordinates.

Consequences of a toxic leader. The consequences of destructive, toxic leadership at the organizational and subordinate level are plentiful. For instance, a toxic leader can cause reduced productivity due to increased absenteeism, weak performance of the employee's due to lack of

commitment and dissatisfaction, decreased brand equity due to reputational damage of the organization, and demotivation due to constant belittlement (Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Thoroughgood, Tate, Sawyer, & Jacobs, 2012; Vreja et al., 2016). Einarson, Aasland, and Skogstad (2007) described that when a worker is demotivated, their performance decreases. Further, destructive behaviours may include leaving their followers worse off than they found them (i.e., intimidating, demoralizing, undermining, and elimination), playing to the basest of fear, misleading followers through the deliberate untruths and misdiagnoses, identifying scapegoats, and stifling constructive criticism (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, Jones; 1996), all of which can lead to a decrease in the follower's psychological well-being (e.g., increased depression, increased apathy; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001).

The toxic leader focuses on control and coercion rather than persuades and commitment through rules, leverage, and threats (Padilla, Hogan, Kaiser, 2007). Because of the constant threats, followers question their job security within the organization (Pelletier, 2010), and a culture of fear is established (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a). Moreover, the toxic leader's personal values are often endorsed and encouraged; therefore, if followers' values conflict with the toxic leader's, one may feel alienated (Kipfelsberger & Kark, 2018).

Organizational psychology researchers have demonstrated that workplace deviance increases by subordinates who report working for abusive supervisors (i.e., one possible subset of a toxic leader; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). These behaviours, often seen as counterproductive, tend to be attributed to negative reciprocity. For example, an employee may attempt to balance the scale of perceived injustice by inflicting harm back to the company (Walton, 2007). Furthermore, abusive supervision may increase psychological distress for followers (e.g., depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion; Tepper, 2002). Reed (2004)

introduced the consequences of toxic leadership in a military context, stating that “they are an anathema to the health of units” (p. 68). Over time, toxic leaders deteriorate unit cohesion and deflate spirit de corps (i.e., group spirit; Reed, 2004). Furthermore, Reed (2004) cautioned against toxic leadership, as those who serve under toxic leaders may become disenchanted with the Army, or worse, might take the successful toxic leader as an example to emulate.

Nonetheless, Lipman-Blumen (2011) suggested some ideas as to why/how the followers of the toxic leader perceive him/her as they do. Referencing Sidney Hook’s *Hero in History* (1943), Lipman-Blumen (2011) suggested that the historical moment, or context of the situation, plays a vital role in how individuals perceive the toxic leader within an organization. For instance, the characteristics, behaviours, talents, and tactics of a leader may fit so well in a moment that the leader is viewed as having exceptional leadership capacities (Lipman-Blumen, 2011). However, if the context does not demand an appropriate leadership style, the leader may be perceived differently. For example, an individual with an autocratic leadership style may be effective if the structure in a setting is lacking (Bass, 1990). However, if a suitable structure is present, the autocratic leader can be abusive, create fear among staff, and make individual decisions instead of consulting the team first (Bass, 1990). Therefore, the toxic leader may be warranted in specific contexts. Comparatively, conditions may be present where the toxic leader creates havoc in the organization.

As previously mentioned, the consequences of a toxic leader can have negative, and in some instances positive, impacts on his/her followers. However, the impact of the toxic leader is “a function of the intensity and duration of time the target (i.e., follower) is subjected to the toxic leader’s harmful action” (Lipman-Blumen, 2011 p. 340). For instance, some short, but very intense, toxic actions can be produced by the toxic leader, causing chaotic and disastrous

impacts. Likewise, some long, less intense, toxic actions can be produced that spans over weeks, months, or years (Lipman-Blumen, 2011). Therefore, although the nuances and characteristics of a toxic leader may not be perceived as harmful right away, over time, they can produce destruction within an organization.

Management of the toxic leader. In a military context, Reed (2004) suggested that the best management strategy of the toxic leader is to be proactive and look for the phenomenon before it becomes imminent. For instance, catching a toxic leader in an initial job interview may prevent that individual from becoming part of that organization. Further, Lipman-Blumen (2005b) suggested that to manage the toxic leader, the follower must act courageous in the face of uncertainty. This adjustment takes the form of internal management (i.e., managing one's emotions) as opposed to external management (i.e., managing the leader). For instance, in Albert Camus's philosophical essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, there is a term coined the absurd. The absurd is essentially the disharmony in our existence. That is, the absurd is the confrontation of our human desire for order, meaning, and purpose and the human inability to find any of these (Camus, 1955/1991). Camus further elaborates that the only way to fight this absurd is to revolt, otherwise known as accepting the idea of perceived unfairness, oppression, or indignity in the human condition. Likewise, Lipman-Blumen (2005b) described that one way to manage the toxic leader is to:

accept that life is uncertain, that its meaning may never become totally clear, that anything can happen, but that we must go forward nonetheless ... if we are to come face-to-face with our own capacity for toxic leadership and free ourselves from toxic leaders, who manipulate our fears. (p. 36)

Lipman-Blumen (2005b) further elaborated on this idea by stating that once we recognize our own personal strength, we see the leader within, as opposed to an external leader. It appears that the way to manage a toxic leader in one's life is through personal growth and acceptance of perceived injustice.

In her book titled *Toxic Leader* (1996), Marcia Whicker suggested some steps that followers of toxic leaders may take to neutralize the effect(s) that a toxic leader may have on a workplace. These steps include putting everything in writing, as one may need documentation in the future; identifying trustworthy leaders in the organization and reaching out to them, and taking a long-run view, thus trying to ignore petty slights and actions displayed by toxic individuals. Sutton (2007) added that leaders could take a personal approach to manage themselves by facing their past, being an authentic self, and avoid mistreating less powerful people. The idea being, if the toxic leader will recognize themselves as the problem within an organization, these personal-approach solutions may aid in restructuring the toxic organization. However, in most cases, the toxic leader is unaware of their effect on the organization, as they are motivated by self-interest, and not the interest of others (Reed, 2004).

As researchers in organizational literature have demonstrated, a toxic leader is primarily detrimental to any business or organization, as s/he reduces productivity due to the increase in absenteeism, creates weak performance of employee's due to lack of commitment and dissatisfaction, and decreased brand equity due to reputational damage of the organization (Vreja et al., 2016). Furthermore, toxic leadership can simultaneously increase workplace deviance (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007) and decrease group cohesion and spirit de corps (Reed, 2004). However, given the toxic leaders sometimes high levels of enthusiasm, a higher production of work may take place. Subsequently, although sometimes positive, a toxic leader can pose severe,

accrescent problems within an organization. One way they do this is by serving as a model for the toxic manager.

The toxic manager. Toxic managers are a subset of toxic leaders (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). Toxic leaders often shape toxic managers and create a negative work environment by destroying morale, impairing retention, inducing an environment of control, and interfering with cooperation and information sharing (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). Moreover, toxic managers can be unpredictable, explosive, and disrespectful to their staff. Kimura (2003) described that a toxic manager takes the credit for others successes and blames others for their shortcomings. Subsequently, if the individuals with authority (i.e., leaders, managers, etc.) are toxic within an organization, it is likely that the whole organization is toxic.

The toxic organization. Researchers that have examined toxic organizations have described them as largely ineffective and destructive to the employees that operate there (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a). An organization that is considered toxic thrives on control and exists in a constant state of crisis, however, change will not occur until a disaster occurs. That is, until a disaster takes place within the organization, the organization will continue to operate in a toxic manner.

Researchers described that those who operate in a toxic organization often possess many negative characteristics. These include manipulative and self-centered agendas that decrease the ability to achieve operation goals and commitments, problem-solving processes that are driven by fear, poor internal communication, vast amounts of waste that result from poor decision, poor interpersonal relationships, and abnormally high, rapid turnover rate in employees (Coccia, 1995; Johnson and Indvik, 2001; Zimmerman, 2002). However, the most significant sign that an organization is toxic is the location where the toxicity stems. For example, having toxins present

within a workplace does not necessarily make it a toxic organization. In the same sense that a cancerous athlete can be managed on a sports team, a toxic employee can be managed in a workplace. It is when toxicity is present within a top-down phenomenon that creates a toxic organization. The higher up a person is, the more widely spread is the pain, and the more people there are who behave in the same way (Finkelstein, 2005; Frost, 2003).

Toxic culture. In a healthy work environment, the toxic leader and toxic manager would most likely be recognized as toxic and subsequently be removed from the organization from an authority figure (given that they are noticed by a superior; Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). However, in a toxic organization, toxic leaders and managers create a culture that embraces and rewards toxicity. For example, Appelbaum and Roy-Girard (2007) described the ‘Enron scandal’ as an example of how a toxic culture operates and spreads within a toxic organization. Enron is an example of an organization that turned toxic because of toxic leadership and toxic managers. More specifically, The CEO of Enron, Jeffery Skilling, is an example of how a toxic leader can encourage a toxic culture/environment and strives for control. Appelbaum and Girard (2007), among others, described Skilling as:

obsessed with creating controls and managing risk, while at the same time pressing for lofty earnings growth and deriding employees who were not “creative” enough to give him what he wanted. He created a company of ‘greedy-backstabbers’ through his ruthless review process and huge monetary rewards (p. 20).

Another example of a toxic individual within the Enron company was Andrew Fastow. Fastow was employed as the former chief financial officer who contributed to the toxic culture of that organization. He created a toxic culture through a “do as I tell” mentality, thus leading employees to follow his reigns to keep their jobs and avoid punishment. For example, Fastow

would label employees as disloyal if they resisted his attempted orders to perform illegal accounting procedures (Appelbaum and Girard, 2007). Ultimately, if a toxic leader is present in an organization, a negative culture will be able to and thrive throughout the company, while a positive culture may begin to deteriorate (Appelbaum and Girard, 2007). As in the case with Enron, the toxicity started in the CEO, made its way down the hierarchical ladder to the financial department, where it slowly began to poison the rest of the organization until it could no longer function (Note: Enron declared bankruptcy in 2001).

Gap in the Literature

Sports psychology researchers understand the team cancer as empirically residing within an athlete on a sports team (see Cope et al., 2011; Cope et al., 2010; McGannon et al., 2012), and organizational psychology researchers understand that the toxic leader exists within a workplace/business domain (see Appelbaum & Roy-Girard; Lipman-Blumen 2005ab, 2011; Pelletier, 2010; Whicker, 1996). However, research on the team cancer and toxic leader reveals that (a) the cancer role has only been studied as residing within an athlete; not a sports staff member, and (b) organizational psychology researchers have only studied the toxic leader as residing within an organizational context; not a sports context. Given these significant differences, information concerning the TSSM role remains entirely uncharted in sports psychology literature. Therefore, in the present thesis, the researcher aimed to demonstrate the consequences and characteristics of the toxic sports staff member.

Chapter Summary and Research Questions

The researcher provided a review of literature that provides a substantial amount of knowledge concerning this project. Some key takeaways are offered as a refresher before the research questions are presented. First, formal roles are formally prescribed within a group, while

informal roles can develop because of personality factors (Stewart et al., 2005), contextual factors (Carreau et al., 2016), group member interaction (Mabry & Barnes, 1980), informal role episodes (Cope, et al., 2010), and socio-cultural factors (McGannon et al., 2012). Second, informal roles have been frequently explored in organizational psychology but not in sports psychology. Third, the author discussed Cope and colleagues (2011) list of informal roles in sports. Fourth, most informal roles are limited to functionality and so do not include negative roles; therefore, the author discussed five negative roles that are present within sports psychology and organizational psychology. These include the distractor, the malingerer, the tyrant, the team cancer, and the toxic leader. Finally, after a thorough review of the literature concerning the team cancer and toxic leader, the researcher provided uncharted research gaps pertaining to the TSSM.

Ultimately, the TSSM may be similar to the cancerous athlete presented by Cope and colleagues (2010, 2011) and McGannon et al. (2012), and the toxic leader heavily researched by Lipman-Blumen (2005ab, 2011). However, given the contextual differences between the toxic leader and the staff cancer (business vs. sports), and the role differences between the cancerous athlete and the TSSM (the team cancer is embedded in an athlete vs. the staff member), a gap exists concerning the TSSM. Therefore, the present research objective is to expand the information on the informal roles, specifically concerning the TSSM. The following research questions are of interest: 1) What are the general characteristics of a toxic sports staff member? 2) Within a sporting organization, what consequences does a toxic sports staff member elicit.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The researcher begins the chapter by discussing the research paradigm and rationale for use of a qualitative methodology. After which, the author discussed his positionality in the research. Following this, the author covered the context setting, research site, and the research participants involved in the study. Finally, the author presents the remainder of the chapter. This

includes: the methods used for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations taken by the researcher, and how authenticity was ensured within this project.

Research Paradigm

Critical realist ontology. The research positioned this research within a critical realist, henceforth CR, worldview. CR became popularized through the work of Roy Bhaskar during the 1970's and 1980's, offering a scientific alternative to both positivism and constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Bhaskar's central question for understanding reality was what possible properties do people (and societies) possess that might make them possible objects for knowledge? In the following section, the researcher describes the CR paradigm including the ontology, epistemology, and methodology associated with this worldview.

Within a CR perspective, the explanation of social phenomenon is achieved through identifying the mechanisms that produce them (Archer, 1995). Mingers, Mutch, and Willcocks (2013) deconstructed CR and explained that it is *realist* because there is "an existing, causally efficacious, world independent of our knowledge" (p. 795). Moreover, it is *critical* because CR recognizes that one's perceptual and theoretical lenses always limits access to this world (Mingers et al., 2013). Further, "it [CR] accepts epistemic relativity (that knowledge is always local and historical), but not judgmental relativity (that all viewpoints must be valid; Mingers et al., p. 795), thus acting as a sound midway between realism and relativism.

To understand nature as real but employ science to understand it, critical realists view the world in two dimensions: transitive and intransitive. A critical realist postulates that epistemology, or the constitution of knowledge, relates to a 'transitive domain' of fallible, theoretical interpretations of knowledge of reality. Alternatively, ontology is taken to be a direct representation of the intransitive domain, or reality beyond one's knowledge. The intransitive

domain constitutes events that are independent of our perceptions and “these events would exist whether or not they were observed or whether or not there were even observers” (Mingers, 2006, p. 20).

A simple analogy to describe the transitive and intransitive domain is to imagine an uncompleted puzzle. The transitive domain can be represented by each puzzle piece, and each puzzle piece is represented by a participant’s knowledge of an experience. The more puzzle pieces (i.e., stories) one collects, the better chance one will have to solve the puzzle (i.e., intransitive domain), thus revealing a picture of what the one is studying. However, the hook is, that no matter how many puzzle pieces one collects, there will never have a complete picture of what one is intending to study. The puzzle is somewhat viewable but completely unsolvable in its entirety. Only fragments of the truth may be known, but the whole truth remains a mystery.

Primarily, the intransitive domain (a theory-independent realm) can be described or discovered in the transitive dimension (Marshall, 2012). Otherwise put, there is an existence of a real domain beyond the actual/subjective domain that will be elicited by participants. Ultimately, the TSSM exists independently of the mind (i.e., intransitive); however, we can gain information about this reality through socially produced knowledge of this role (i.e., the transitive domain). Nonetheless, the knowledge elicited by athlete’s concerning the TSSM will be fallible and will not represent the TSSM in its entirety, but only represent the TSSM from the stories that the participants have had, and subsequently shared with the researcher. There is an independent, unknowable, single reality of the TSSM beyond our multiple socially constructed perceptions.

Within the CR ontology, reality is intransitive, yet also stratified into three levels: empirical, actual, and real (see figure 3). The empirical level contains events that are observed or experienced. At the empirical level, researchers can measure events because they are mediated

through human experience and interpretation (Fletcher, 2017). The actual level refers to events that do (or do not) occur. In the actual domain, events occur whether or not we experience or interpret them (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2001). Events in the actual domain consist of all possible events generated by the causal mechanism, only some of which are realized, and are therefore manifested into the empirical domain (Mingers, 2004). Finally, the real domain contains experiences, events, and causal mechanisms (i.e., structures and mechanisms that may be observable or unobservable that produce events or non-events). Fletcher (2017) stated that the causal mechanisms in the real domain are the inherent properties in an object (or structure) that act as the causal forces to produce events at the empirical level.

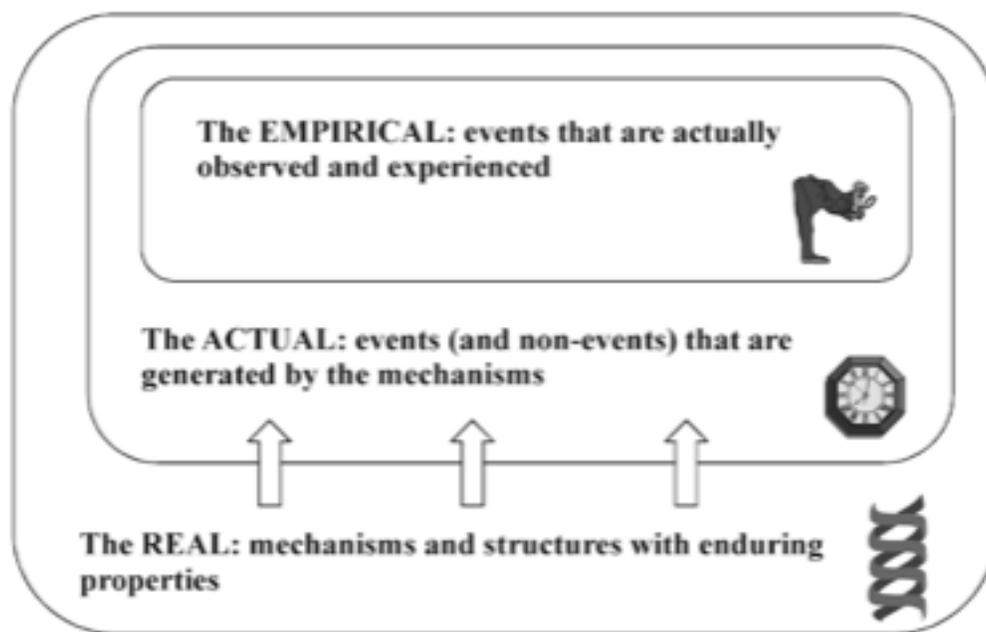


Figure 3. Bhaskar's Stratified Ontology. The Real, the Actual, and the Empirical. From "Philosophical Foundations: Critical Realism" from *Realising Systems Thinking: Knowledge and Action in Management Science* by J. Mingers p. 23. Copyright 2006 by Springer Nature. Used with permission from the publisher.

One way of understanding stratified reality of critical realism is through the "iceberg" analogy (see figure 4). Fletcher (2017) discussed that the iceberg is not meant to suggest that one level of reality is more real than the others, but all the levels are part of the same reality. For

instance, the empirical level contains events that are experienced or observed and is represented by the visible tip of the iceberg. Likewise, the real level contains causal mechanisms that cause the empirical events to occur. This level is unknown, unobservable, and unseen, therefore located at the bottom of the iceberg.

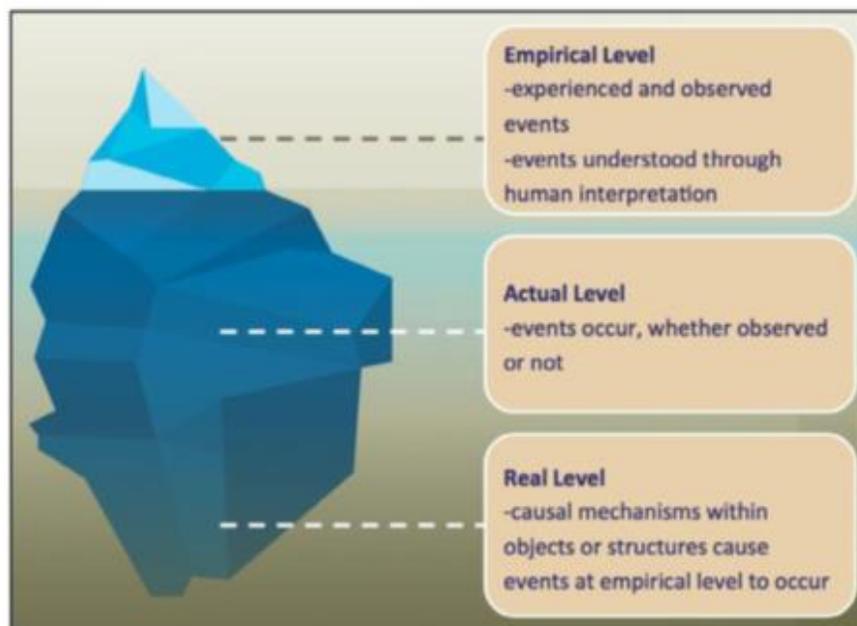


Figure 4. An iceberg metaphor for CR ontology. From “Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method” by A. Fletcher, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20, p. 183. Copyright 2017 by Taylor & Francis. Used with permission from the publisher.

Concerning the three domains, the main assumption of critical realism, whether social or natural, “is the existence of generative mechanism that create events” (Aastrup and Halldorsson, 2008, p. 751). Otherwise put, the primary goal of CR is to explain social events through reference to causal mechanisms located within the real-level domain. Concerning this research, the primary goal was to understand the causal mechanisms (i.e., specifically the characteristics and consequences,) relating to the elite-level athletes’ stories of the TSSM. This involved relating the participants stories of the TSSM (i.e., empirical domain) back to an overall fallible

description of the characteristics and consequences of the TSSM (i.e., the real domain). For instance, the material and immaterial structures that CR deals with (such as the TSSM) are always subject to be “critiqued and possibly changed” (Panelli, 2004, p. 18). Therefore, although the researcher presents one reality on the TSSM, in terms of characteristics and consequences, this reality is always subject to challenge and change.

Critical realism epistemology. Epistemology can be broken down into the question “what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the would-be knower and what can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Crotty (1998) described epistemology as a theoretical perspective of looking at the world and making sense of it. Additionally, everyone may have a different way of looking at the world and making sense of the knowledge received. However, the epistemological stance that a researcher chooses will ultimately affect the way one goes about his/her research.

CR provides an ideal meeting point for a constructivist epistemology and realist ontology. For example, a critical realist believes in a mind-independent reality (i.e., realist) but uses social interpretations (i.e., from participants) to collect knowledge regarding that reality. Further, CR accepts that the empirical world is socially constructed (Easton, 2010). However, critical realism also agrees with the interpretive paradigm in acknowledging that the methods used to gather knowledge are always fallible and “bound up with imperfect observational methods – be they sensory (autoethnography, phenomenological), discursive (interviews, focus groups, etc.) experimental (randomized control trials) or otherwise” (Wiltshire, 2018, p. 7). Ultimately, critical realists believe that “knowledge is a social product, produced through antecedent social products” (Bhaskar, 1975, p. 5).

As previously mentioned, one of the essential facets of CR is that ontology is not reducible to epistemology. Otherwise put, human knowledge can only capture a small part of reality. Returning to the puzzle analogy, to reduce ontology to epistemology would be to view the unfinished puzzle as a complete picture. Moreover, although the uncompleted puzzle may provide one with an image, it does not capture the puzzle in its entirety. Therefore, stating that the totality of the image is capturable by an incomplete puzzle masquerades the actual reality of the image the puzzle depicts. Likewise, human knowledge or scientific discovery cannot capture the entirety of reality.

Importantly, this is where CR deviates from both positivism and constructivism. For instance, Bhaskar (1975) coined the term ‘epistemic fallacy’ (p. 27) to critique positivism and constructivism in research. Committing an epistemic fallacy is the reduction of ontology to epistemology, that is, researchers limit reality to what can be empirically known (i.e., through experimentation; Fletcher, 2017). Comparably, a researcher with a constructivism perspective views reality, in its entirety, as constructed through human discourse.

CR does not reduce ontology to epistemology. Instead, critical realists attempt to find the truth about a phenomenon while avoiding judgmental relativism (i.e., all beliefs are an equal truth) and retaining the view that human knowledge is socially produced. Ultimately, the knowledge gathered using a critical realist paradigm relates back to the previously mentioned stratified ontology. For instance, the information collected from participants in this study concerning the TSSM relates to the transitive, empirical level; or just the tip of the iceberg.

The knowledge produced (to capture reality) exists within a social domain. However, social constructionists alone cannot capture the world in its entirety because with a critical realist viewpoint there is a world that exists independent of humans (Easton, 2010). Therefore, in

accurately capturing a phenomenon, a critical realist aims to “re-establish a realist view of being in the ontological domain whilst accepting the relativism of knowledge as socially and historically conditioned in the epistemological domain” (Mingers, 2006, p. 19).

The researcher positioned the current project within a critical realism. Therefore, the knowledge produced in this research was constructed through participants stories concerning the TSSM at the empirical level, thus appertaining to a critical-realist paradigm. Critical realists posit that a standard error in research is to regard ontology as something that can only exist within an epistemological realm (Mingers, 2006). Therefore, the researcher does not reduce ontology to the knowledge collected. That is, the findings are not the reality of the TSSM in its entirety. Instead, the knowledge produced in this study only constitutes a fragment of the reality viewed through one’s lens.

The Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research attempts to understand phenomena in context-specific, real-world settings in which findings and “phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally” (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) described that qualitative research is employed to understand a social setting viewed from the perspective of the research participant. On the other (more objective) hand, quantitative research is more concerned with determination, prediction, and generalization of findings (Hoepfl, 1997). Furthermore, a quantitative research approach leads researchers to regard world information as made up of observable and measurable facts (Glesne, 2016). Glesne described that the social facts produced with a quantitative research approach are done so in an objective manner. That is, there a disconnect between the research and the experimentation methods that take place.

Stake (1995) explained that three significant distinctions separate qualitative and quantitative research:

- (1) The distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry;
- (2) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher; and
- (3) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (p. 37)

Given these distinctions, the researcher took a qualitative research approach for completion of this study. Understanding these distinctions was useful in supporting the researcher's decision. For example, concerning the dissimilarities mentioned above, this study departs from a quantitative research approach in the following ways. First, the central premise of this research was to understand the TSSM in reference to the research questions (i.e., characteristics and consequences) For instance, a quantitative approach may be used to seek a cause and effect relationship regarding the TSSM; however, a qualitative approach helped elicit rich, textured stories concerning the TSSM. Second, a qualitative research approach embraces a personal role within the research. For instance, a quantitative researcher strives for objectivity to allow for minimal researcher "bias" on the results. Comparatively, a qualitative researcher embraces the personal biases, subjectivities, and idiosyncrasies in a reflexivity portion that undoubtedly goes against a quantitative research objective stance. Essentially, by being cognizant of personal subjectivity, the researcher positions him/herself within the research. This reflexive account allows the audience to understand where the researcher is coming from and aids in the elimination of unknown biases. Finally, in connection with knowledge constructed or discovered, most qualitative researchers embrace that knowledge is constructed (Stake, 1995). Human construction of knowledge further appears because of sensory experience of external stimuli presented to the individual (Stake, 1995) For example, the participants in this research

shared their perceptions of the TSSM which they constructed from personal stories with that role. With the three distinctions that separate qualitative and quantitative research mentioned above, the researcher concluded that a quantitative approach was unlikely to produce the rich data need to answer the proposed research questions. Therefore, the researcher utilized a qualitative research approach positioned within a critical realist paradigm for this study.

Situating Myself

Reflexive practice is an important concept that was explored to establish positionality within the research. For example, different researchers will conduct the same research in different ways based on the past experiences that the researcher has had. Reflexivity is an essential element in the creation of knowledge (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011). Both the researcher and the research participant(s) contribute in shaping the conclusions and knowledge communicated in the research. Subsequently, how I, the author, influence the current research will be discussed in the following section.

I was first presented with the topic of reflexivity in a graduate-level qualitative thesis class. The deep personal reflection was daunting. I often lost myself in trains of thought dating back years into my early life. However, I soon realized that reflexivity is a necessary task in positioning myself in work I complete.

Other researchers have written about the complexity, challenges, and fear of reflexivity in the past. Finlay (2002) compared reflexivity to a muddy swamp. Elaborating the murkiness of swamp often leads to confusion in self-analysis and self-disclosure with “the researcher getting lost in endless narcissistic personal emoting or interminable deconstructions of deconstructions where all meaning gets lost” (Finlay, 2002, p. 226). However, although access to one’s biases, motivations, and reactions to research may be strenuous, reflexive practice can be beneficial to

the discipline of qualitative research. For instance, in a study undertaken to gather information about how qualitative social work researchers' experience and incorporate reflexivity into their work, Probst (2015) found that participants described reflexivity as a benefit for ethics of the study. Further, participants in this study found that using reflexivity helps promote trust, integrity, and equity for those being studied. Moreover, additional benefits included increased accountability, trustworthiness, clarity, support, and personal growth (Probst, 2015).

Reflexivity can be understood as the awareness of the influence that the researcher has on the topic or subjects being studied, while also acknowledging how the research experience is affecting the researcher. Edge (2010) described prospective reflexivity is concerned with the effect of the researcher on the research. This subsection of reflexivity is more frequently accounted for in the literature, as it is “focused on the self and intersubjectivities” (Mann, 2016, p. 28). For instance, instead of seeing my influences as contaminations or biases to the data, prospective reflexivity will help me increase my “capacity to understand the significance of the knowledge, feelings, and values that [I] brought into the field to the research questions that [I] came to formulate, to the analytical lenses that [I] chose to employ, and to [my] findings” (Attia & Edge, 2017, p. 35).

Ultimately, engaging in prospective reflexivity throughout this project allowed for the bi-directionality of information between the researcher and the research, as well as the research and the researcher. Following this paragraph, the researcher presents his prospective reflexivity, otherwise put, the researcher's effect on the research. This reflexivity was completed by creating a list of questions, ultimately acting as probes, and then subsequently writing everything I could think of to answer that question (listed below). This ‘brain dumping’ technique was useful in generating ideas which I could then further expand on through self-reflection.

How has my personal history led to my interest in my research topic? Much of my life has been completely immersed in sports. From soccer to football to cross country – if it can be played, I have played it. All the sports, and sporting organizations, I have been involved with over the years have had a variety of staff on hand for many different reasons. For instance, when playing soccer competitively for Laurentian University, the team had access to physiotherapists, athletic trainers, coaches, and academic advisors, all of which had their own impact towards the team.

The time spent playing sports has put me in direct communication with many of the individuals responsible for producing an effectively functioning sporting organization. Most of these experiences have been positive. Comparatively, some of these experiences have been negative. Likewise, my teammates have experienced the same negativity as myself, giving me the impression that the negative individual could be viewed as toxic within the team.

Although unknowing at the time, my anecdotal experiences with those negative individuals shaped my interest in the topic of the toxic sports staff member. Experiencing a phenomenon such as a TSSM has created an interest in exploring the empirically misunderstood role. Furthermore, I experienced the TSSM when participating on a competitive soccer team. Therefore, my soccer background has led me to exploring this role within a soccer context. Ultimately, to sum up this phenomenon, it was my anecdotal experience with a TSSM that led me to this research topic.

What do I think about the toxic sports staff member? Initially, due to my experience with a TSSM, I thought of them as only negative. The way they poison a team, in my personal experience, cannot be viewed in any other way. However, upon an extensive literature review, I began to realize that due to my personal experience with a TSSM, I was biased in thinking that

s/he was only negative. For instance, McGannon and colleagues (2012) demonstrated through their research that a cancerous athlete can be beneficial to team functioning by increasing energy or enticing the opposing team to commit penalties. Furthermore, within an organization, a comparable negative role, the toxic leader, can be so enthusiastic that s/he produces exceptional profit for the business (Walton, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that predominantly negative informal roles can, at times, elicit positive characteristics.

Reading literature that goes against my initial beliefs has allowed me to re-position myself with an open mind. Viewing the TSSM with a closed mind would have only partially provided me with the information needed to supply a valid representation of this negative role. Therefore, although primarily negative, the TSSM may have favorable characteristics for team functioning.

Reflexivity could be understood from the investigator's research paradigm. Finlay (2002) communicates that a researcher must examine their own personal motives implicated in their research topic. Therefore, it is of vital importance to discuss the researcher's views and relate them back to the research paradigm in which the researcher chose. My motivation for wanting to investigate the TSSM is almost purely due to the negative experiences I have had with that informal role. However, it is imperative to note, concerning my ontological stance, that although my experience was entirely negative, that the view I held was only one aspect the TSSM. A researcher with a critical realist paradigm believes that social constructions can capture one part of the world, but it cannot capture the world in its entirety (Easton, 2010). Therefore, my view of the TSSM may only be a piece of a complex puzzle. Seeing only one part of this puzzle distorts the complete picture of the TSSM, however, obtaining perceptions from elite-level athletes will

allow for a more comprehensive view of this informal role. Although my motivations for the TSSM are justified, I understand that this is not what the role consists of in its entirety.

How do I influence this research? I conducted this research from the vantage point of an athlete. As mentioned above, I played competitive soccer within the OUA for four years. Therefore, it was essential to consider that my vantage point of this research is from the lens of an athlete, and not an impartial third party. I remained as impartial as possible; regardless, because I have been in the shoes (or cleats for a better term) of a soccer player, I was sentimental with the athlete(s); I cannot rid myself of my biases. Every story has multiple sides, and I only portrayed the side of the athlete because of similarities to the participants. Failure to recognize this would have led me to commit a fundamental attribution error – an over-emphasis on dispositional explanations for behaviours while under-emphasising situation explanations (Ross, 1977). In short, my personal history with soccer led me to view the TSSM through the lens of an athlete. However, given the theoretical framework of critical realism, this project was only one viewpoint of the TSSM. Therefore, as future researchers continue to explore the TSSM through different lenses, different results will be presented. Importantly, we must become aware of our dispositional characteristics, as well as surrounding environmental characteristics, before we label phenomena as factual conclusions.

Reflection. Along with being reflexive, the researcher will be continuously reflective along his work. Kemmis (1985) proposed a definition of reflection as:

“a dialectical process [that] looks inwards at our thoughts and thought-processes and outward at the situation in which we find ourselves; when we consider the interaction of the internal and external, our reflection orients us for further thought and action.

Reflection is thus a 'meta thinking' (thinking about thinking) in which we consider the relationship between our thoughts and action in a particular context. (p. 141)

Moreover, Knowles, Gilbourne, Cropley and Dugdill (2014) added that the reflective practice is a complicated procedure which allows experience to be converted into learning. However, reflection is a complex process that includes the whole person, including emotions, and thus a simple definition is often elusive (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004).

There is a range of benefits that come with engaging with reflective practice. Firstly, the researcher can increase his/her self-awareness by engaging in self-reflective exercise, documenting activity, and understanding his application and techniques (Anderson et al., 2004). This awareness may allow for a bi-directional understanding of how the researcher impacts his research and how the research impacts the researcher. Further, Anderson and colleagues (2004) explained that reflective practice might allow an individual to overcome internal conflicts or uneasiness. This reflection may also allow the individual to find resolutions to those conflicts.

The researcher ensured a reflective practice by using a reflective journal. This reflective journal was utilized used to ensure that the researcher's experiences, opinions, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings observable as a part of the research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation process (Ortlipp, 2008). This is important and beneficial, as the use of a reflective journal made the messiness of the research process visible to the researcher (Ortlipp, 2008) The researcher used these reflections as an integral part of the research process. For example, after the first interview the researcher realized that he spent more time thinking about how he would respond to the participant than he did listening. Through reflective practice, the research realized this error and actively spent more time listening to understand, as opposed to listening to respond, during the next interview.

Context Setting

The purpose of this section is to explain the context in which the study was grounded. The Canadian sports environment, elite-sport context, and soccer context will be discussed to enhance the understanding of where the participants originate from, as well as where the TSSM operates.

Canadian sports environment. The Canadian sports environment can range from the international to the recreational level. Concerning this study, the sports are centered within an interuniversity sports environment. The Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS; now more frequently referred to as U-Sports) represents 55 universities and over 11,000 student-athletes. Further, the “infrastructure can be, at the highest level of many sports, used as an immediate step between high school and club levels to an Olympic or professional level (Canadian Interuniversity Sport, 2013). The CIS is made up of four regions. These include the Atlantic University Sport (AUS), Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CW), the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ) and the Ontario University Athletics (OUA). Moreover, The OUA is made up of 20-member institutions from across Ontario. The OUAs primary goals are to govern fair play and ethical support, create opportunities for student-athletes, promote university sport as vibrant and important, and celebrate student-athletes, coaches, sports leaders and OUA successes (Ontario University Athletics, 2014).

Elite-sports context. The OUA is considered as an elite-level of competition because it fits the continuum presented by Swann and colleagues (2015). Elite-level student-athletes in the OUA strive for success in both academics and athletics (Ontario University Athletics, 2014). Further, the OUA is the largest inter-university conference in Canada, thus making it one of the most competitive (Ontario University Athletics, 2014).

OUA soccer context. Athletes that participate in the OUA can play a variety of sports. A popular sport that is played worldwide, and subsequently played in the OUA, is soccer. Within Ontario interuniversity sports, the league that represents university soccer is called the OUA Soccer Conference (Ontario University Athletics, 2014) Eighteen schools have a men's soccer program in the OUA, making it one of the largest available sports. These schools are divided into two different divisions, the OUA East and the OUA West. The season for soccer is relatively short, lasting roughly two-months (if you make it to playoffs). Therefore, outside of school, each team spends most of its' time practicing or competing. Competition usually takes place twice a weekend (once Saturday, and once Sunday), apart from some games that are scheduled differently (mid-week games or once a week games). Each team is guaranteed 16 regular season games, while the top six teams qualify for a playoff position. The rules of the OUA Soccer Conference follow the rules of the Canadian Soccer Association (i.e., FIFA; Ontario University Athletics, 2014).

Research Participants

Qualitative methods are used to achieve a depth of understanding (Patton, 2002) and a significant amount of data saturation (i.e., obtaining a thorough understanding of phenomena via data collection methods until no new information can be collected; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Moreover, it is imperative to recruit the most representative research participants to obtain the precise depth of understanding concerning the topic of study. For instance, recruiting baseball players to garner an understanding of how to increase soccer skills in mature soccer players does not align with the focus of the study. Therefore, the proper research participants need to be assiduously recruited to conclude the findings from the research accurately.

The researcher interviewed seven male soccer players for this study. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) suggested having enough data to tell a rich story, but not too much as it may inhibit complex engagement with data in the time available. To this end, the researcher interviewed seven participants to tell a rich story and not inhibit complex engagement with the data.

The research participants for this study were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. Purposeful sampling is a technique used to identify and select information-rich cases that provide a useful contribution to the research being conducted (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, purposeful sampling aids in the identification and selection of individuals that are exceptionally knowledgeable about an experience or phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

A specific purposeful sampling strategy that was utilized to choose applicable participants was criterion sampling. The logic of this sampling design is to select participants that meet predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 2002). Concerning this research, the predetermined criteria for participants was that each participant must be an athlete (or former athlete) for an interuniversity men's soccer team (i.e., elite-level of competition). All seven participants in this study resided in Ontario, Canada.

Participant recruitment. The researcher recruited participants for this study in multiple ways. First, the researcher emailed members of a university soccer team (for confidentiality reasons this team will not be disclosed) with a description of the study and recruitment poster. After the desired number of participants was met (maximum of two from each school for confidentiality security – if every soccer player came from one school then there is a high risk that the individual whom they are talking about could be found out and face consequences) the researcher conducted the interviews. After the researcher interviewed the two participants, it was encouraged that the athletes participate in a snowball sampling technique. This strategy involved

each participant reaching out to male friends that play for different university soccer teams within the OUA. Further, these two participants were asked to inquire with each friend if they were interested in the study, and whether the researcher could contact them via email. The prospective participants agreed, therefore allowing the researcher to send each athlete a recruitment poster and explain the study in detail. Subsequently, this process repeated itself three times until the researcher recruited seven participants.

Research Site

Research participant comfortability was vital factor when conducting interviews. It is often easier to conduct interviews with participants in a comfortable environment as opposed to an uncomfortable one, as an uncomfortable environment may restrict participants from sharing information with the interviewer (Turner, 2010). Talmage (2012) suggested that factors such as noise level, use of a tape recorder, seating arrangements, and access to restrooms, among other factors, may be controlled by the researcher to provide a comfortable environment for the participant(s). Therefore, to provide maximal comfortability for each participant, the researcher met each participant at his/her chosen location. In doing so, the researcher encouraged the participant to be active in choosing the research site.

Each meeting with participants took place at a different site. One participant was interviewed at the researcher's home (this was the participants decision), two participants invited the researcher into their home, while the other four meetings were conducted via Skype. Reflecting on this, in the researcher's opinion, in person interviews were the most efficient way to interview. The researcher was able to recognize non-verbal body language and use this to probe in different situations. For example, at times, one participant moved around extensively

when talking about adverse situations. This encouraged the researcher to be selective in his questioning to ensure participant comfortability.

Methods of Data Collection

This project was approved by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (LUREB; Appendix B). Hence, after approval the researcher used three different methods to facilitate data collection: 1) photo elicitation, 2) mandala drawing, and 3) a conversational interview; each of which is described in detail in the following sections. The researcher and each participant reviewed the consent form and the operational definition of a toxic sports staff member before data collection began. Once the participants were comfortable, and the consent form was signed and understood (e.g., procedure, rights), the co-participants began the project. First, the researcher asked the participant to provide and describe a photo of the team where they experienced a toxic sports staff member (each participant chose their picture in advance of the first meeting and not on the spot). Following this description, the researcher walked the participants through a mandala drawing activity. Finally, the researcher encouraged the participants to describe the mandala to him in a conversational style interview.

Creative and art-based research. Art based research is a method that has grown in popularity within qualitative research (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2013; McGannon, Schinke, Ge, Blodgett, 2018). Jones and Levy (2004) communicated that art-based research “adapts the tenets of the creative arts as part of the methodology ... the arts may be used during data collection, analysis, interpretation and/or dissemination” (p. 1-2). Although some may shy away from art-based methods and stick to more verbal or written forms of data collection, the researcher of this project used art as a way of creating communication between each participant and himself. By

doing so, an art-based method (i.e., mandala, described below) supported three strengths within this research.

First, the art-based method provided the researcher with new approaches and a different perspective concerning this research (Dunn & Mellor, 2017). Engaging in art-based methods encouraged the researcher and participants to see, imagine, understand, articulate, and inquire in different ways. For example, eliciting an affective photo during research, on which I elaborate shortly, produces rich information by aiding in evoking feelings, memories, and information (Harper, 2002). Therefore, by producing a visual stimulus during the research, the interviewee had an effective time retrieving memories concerning stories of the toxic sports staff member, thus promoting deep engagement during the interview portion of the study. As a benefit to researchers, Eisner (2008) suggested that by using an art-based method, the researcher may do a better job of generating questions or raising awareness of important complex issues, such as a toxic sports staff member. Ultimately, art-based methods encourage participants to show rather than just tell about their lives (Riessman, 2008), thus creating different perspectives, while also increased the researcher's awareness concerning the complex issue of the TSSM.

Second, art-based methods can add value when answering research questions that cannot be answered in detail by using traditional research methods, such as interviews or questionnaires (Dunn & Mellor, 2017; Kara, 2015). Further, art-based methods helped engage the senses and provoked a strong, affective response for the researcher and participants (Lawrence, 2008). To this end, if the researcher employed only a conversational interview with no art-based method, he might not have accessed the emotional and symbolic aspect of each participant's experience concerning the toxic sports staff member. Further, by combining an art-based method with a

conversational interview, the researcher achieved a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the toxic sports staff member in a soccer context (Coemans & Hannes, 2017).

Finally, in using an art-based method, the power imbalance between coparticipants was kept to a minimum. Otherwise put, research was conducted with the participant rather than on them (Coemans & Hannes, 2017). Using an art-based method encouraged each participant's comfortability while increasing their confidence and empowering them to share their story (Anwar McHenry, 2011). This research was about understanding the toxic sports staff member through elite-level soccer players stories, and by engaging in an art-based method, the researcher and participant created rich dialogue while maintaining balanced power between co-participants.

The researcher used two different creative/art-based techniques to probe and collect data from each participant, all of which are addressed in the subsequent sections. First, the researcher invited participants to elicit a photo of the team they played on that employed the toxic sports staff member. Second, the researcher and participant then took part in a mandala drawing session. Subsequently, each mandala was utilized as a probe for the final data collection method, a conversational interview.

Photo elicitation. Photo elicitation is a popular method in qualitative research. Photo elicitation involves the researcher or participant presenting one or more visual images in an interview and then encouraging participants to comment on the visual images being used (Harper, 2002). Photo elicitation produces rich information by aiding in evoking feelings, memories, and information that may not have been accessed through verbal examination alone (Harper, 2002).

Within this research project, the researcher employed a photo elicitation technique in order to evoke feeling and memories that participants translated onto paper during the mandala

drawing session. Each participant chose a photograph of them with the team that they competed on in which employed a toxic sports staff member. By encouraging the participants to choose a photograph, they had more power to guide the researcher in the interview (Noland, 2006), thereby reducing power imbalances and increasing participant comfortability (Anwar McHenry, 2011, Coemans & Hannes, 2017).

The researcher encouraged each participant to describe the photo that they chose in detail. This description was probed to include at least the year on the team, level of competition, and lead into asking if the participant was actively playing or retired. This photo elicitation was used as a means to ensure that each participant met the demographic for the study and also evoke memories of the TSSM. These demographics included playing on an elite-level interuniversity soccer team, being a male, and experiencing a toxic sports staff member. Conclusively, the researcher ensured that all demographics were met. After which, the researcher and participant began the second portion of the study, a mandala drawing session.

Mandala drawing. Mandala is a Sanskrit word for “circle” or “center,” and in the realm of art-therapy, a mandala refers to any art form that is executed in a circular context (Henderson et al., 2007). Mandala can be broken down to the root “manda” which means “essence,” and the suffix “la” which means container. Thus, sometimes mandala is used to represent a “container of essence.” Carl Jung, the first psychotherapist to use mandalas as a therapeutic tool, appreciated the benefit of using mandalas, referring to them as the graphical representation of the center, or the “self.” Jung (1968) described the mandala as “signify[ing] nothing less than a specific centre of the personality” (para. 126). Jung suggested that the mandala allows for psychological integration of the conscious and unconscious while promoting self-reflection.

Today, mandala drawing has grown in popularity and is being used as a method for a variety of research objectives that includes helping individuals decrease depression and anxiety (Henderson et al., 2007), increase self-awareness (Cox & Cohen, 2000), increase wellness in college students, nurses, and health professionals (Marshall, 2003; Pisarik & Larson, 2011), and learn about the sport experiences of Aboriginal youth (Blodgett et al., 2013) Importantly, mandalas are a fluid art based method; people can attribute different meanings and gain multiple understandings (MARI, 2011). Having fluidity in data collection is essential, as a complex issue such as toxic sports members has divergent beliefs of characteristics and consequences.

Given the benefits of using mandalas as a method for data collection, the researcher utilized mandala drawing to encourage self-reflection and gain multiple understandings regarding the experiences that each participant had with a toxic sports staff member. More specifically, each participant was encouraged to create a mandala concerning what they think to be the characteristics and consequences of the toxic sports staff member. To this end, the researcher wrote the two research questions at the top of each participants page to ensure that the participants focused their mandala on the characteristics and consequences of the toxic sports staff member. The researcher briefly described a mandala drawing procedure and encouraged each participant to draw any thoughts, symbols, or words that came to mind concerning the TSSM. The researcher provided various coloured pencil crayons to participants in order to transfer their thoughts on the provided paper. Each participant had as much time as they needed to create their mandala. After which, the mandala was used as the focal point of the conversational interview, whereby the researcher encouraged each participant to describe the symbols or words that were created.

Conversational interview. The researcher utilized conversational style interviews to collect participants' stories regarding the TSSM. Sometimes referred to as responsive interviewing, if successful, the technique can provide the researcher with access to the observation of others (Braun & Clarke, 2013). More specifically, the researcher utilized a conversational interview to generate an understanding of the characteristics and consequences of the TSSM. However, it must be understood that both conversational partners, the interviewer/ee, locally produced the interview data together. Otherwise put, the interview data collected reflects the reality of the characteristics and consequences TSSM and jointly constructed by the interviewee and interviewer. The interviewee is the individual that has had experiences regarding the TSSM, and the interviewer is always subjectively attached to the research.

Each interview was conducted individually with only one interviewer and one interviewee at a time. The location of the interview was either chosen by the participant or conducted on Skype (sometimes the interviewee and interviewer were too distant for an in-person interview). A combination of the conversational interview and encouraging each participant to choose their preferred location ensured interviewee relaxation by shaping to the individual situation and context (Hannabuss, 1996).

The interviews began after each participant had finished their mandala drawing. First, the interviewer reaffirmed to each participant that the interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed, ensuring that the participants understood and verbally consented before the audio-recorder was turned on. This was a precautionary measure to guarantee that each participant understood and consented to the data collection steps. Every participant approved to have the interview audio-recorded.

Second, after turning on the recording device, the researcher initiated a conversation regarding each participants mandala drawing (e.g., size, shape, word, colour). Each participant began on any shape, symbol, or word they wanted and subsequently moved through each symbol at their own pace and direction. This progressive, self-directed movement was beneficial for the researcher, as participants created a fluid story as they moved through their symbols at their desired direction and pace. For example, in some interviews, the participants had drawn their symbols in a particular order where one symbol leads to the next and so on. Although the researcher employed more of a soft-spoken listening role, he also prompted each participant to describe their specific and personal thoughts concerning certain aspects of their stories. For example, a common question that the researcher asked, in situations that warranted this question, was “how did that make you feel?” Questions such as the one above explicitly demonstrated that the interviewer was not only interested in the data, but also the interviewee. To the researcher, this increased participant comfortability and data richness.

Finally, once the participants had finished going through each symbol, the researcher asked if the participant had anything more to add. In some cases, the participants had more information to add, in which they were encouraged to speak longer. If the participant had completed telling their stories, the researcher turned the audio-recording device off and then thanked the participant for their time

Thematic Analysis

The researcher analyzed the collected data by employing a thematic analysis (TA) technique. TA is a method used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report themes (or patterns) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Using TA allows a researcher to organize and describe data in rich detail while simultaneously interpreting various aspects of the research

topic. For example, a researcher can generate themes similar in conversational interviews with different participants while interpreting how those themes relate to the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One of the main strengths of TA is its flexibility in research. For example, a researcher can use TA in many epistemological positions as well as projects that are independent of theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2006) communicated that TA can be a method for reflecting reality and unpicking the surface of reality, thus aligning with a critical realist perspective.

More specifically, the researcher used an inductive thematic analysis (ITA) in this project. This form of thematic analysis is strongly linked to the data collected (Braun and Clarke, 2012) For example, the themes that the researcher generates came directly from the text and are related to the two research questions. Further, Braun and Clarke (2006) communicated that the themes may bear little relationship to the questions asked in the interviews but are used to answer the research questions. This aligns with the conversational interview method of data collection, as questions were not structured in advance. Moreover, the researcher was not trying to fit themes to a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytical preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, this data driven approach cannot be freed from the epistemological or subjective constraints of the researcher. Accounting for this, the researcher was continuously reflexive and reflective to position himself within the research.

Ethical Considerations

Participants taking place in the study were concerned about confidentiality in discussing interactions with previous sporting organization staff members. To minimize this concern, participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The information collected was secured, encrypted, and stored in the qualitative research lab. Only the researcher had access to

this information. Further, the results from the seven participants were amalgamated into one story (described in results). To this end, individual stories cannot be recognized as only one combined story is present.

Secondly, the researcher ensured informed consent from each participant before data collection took place. Informed consent is imperative to specify to the participants which data will be collected and how that data is to be used (Hoeyer, Dahlager, & Lynöe, 2005). Moreover, clarifying the nature of the study through the consent form aided in creating a participant-researcher understanding of how the study will take place.

Third, openness and integrity are essential in professional research. Therefore, the researcher was open about data collection, scientific merit, and risk within the study. These were communicated to each participant before data collection commenced. Further, participants were encouraged to stop speaking at any time if they got uncomfortable in talking about their experiences. Each participant had the right to do so and this was verbally communicated before the study took place and was in writing on the consent form.

Finally, the researcher accounted for the possibility of emotional distress that takes place during interviews on sensitive topics. Some participants had poor experiences with a TSSM and asking them to re-verbalize this experience brought back acute emotions (i.e., sadness or anger). Therefore, the researcher provided, and encouraged the use of many different counselling services within the area. Importantly, every participant was able to deal with their emotions throughout the entirety of this research project.

Authenticity

The researcher situated this project within a critical realist ontology and epistemology. The author ensured authenticity in his analysis by utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) fifteen-

point checklist for a successful thematic analysis. The first criterion in this checklist relates to the transcription and accuracy of the data. More specifically, Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended transcribing the data to an appropriate level of detail. Therefore, the author assured appropriate detail by checking the transcripts and verbal tapes for collaborative accuracy (the words on the transcription and tapes match). Furthermore, once transcribed, the author sent each transcription back to the participant to verify that it was accurate. All seven participants confirmed that their transcription was word for word what they said. Criteria two to six refer to the thematic coding process. The second criterion refers to the equal attention given to each data item. The author ensured this by coding each data item without leaving any behind. The third criterion refers to a thorough and inclusive coding process. This was guaranteed by avoiding anecdotal experiences and instead by analyzing all the data collected. The fourth criterion relates to the collation of all extracts from each theme. This criterion was ensured by combining all extracts under possible themes and then retaining the exemplary themes. That is, the author retained the themes that were best suited for answering the research questions. Criterion five involved checking each theme against each other and to the original data set. This was preserved by ensuring the data collected for each was representative of the focus of the theme. The sixth criterion involves internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive themes. This criterion was ensured by reading the data grouped under each theme to evaluate coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness. Criteria seven to 10 represent data analysis. Criterion seven pertains to data analysis and interpretation. More specifically, Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated that the data should be analyzed and not merely paraphrased. The author followed this criterion by engaging in constant questioning about possible data set meaning. In doing so, the author went beyond the superficial meaning of data and avoided paraphrasing. The eighth criterion relates to ensuring the analysis and data

match. To accomplish this, the author employed a ‘critical friends’ technique and asked his thesis supervisor for his opinion (described below). The ninth criterion pertains to communicating a convincing and well-organized story about the analysis and topic. This was achieved by completing a careful, deep interpretation of the data and then organizing it in a template to communicate a fluent story. The tenth criterion involves keeping a balanced presentation of analytic narrative and illustrative extracts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The author followed Braun, Clarke, and Weate’s (2016) recommendation of a 50:50 ratio between data extract and analytic narrative. The eleventh criterion relates to allocating the proper amount of time for adequate analysis. The author respected this criterion by not rushing any part of the analysis. Criterion 12-15 represent steps to ensure a sound written report. The twelfth criterion relates to an explanation of assumptions and approaches used to conduct the thematic analysis. As aforementioned, the author previously stated his ontological and epistemological position in the beginning of this chapter. The thirteenth criterion represents accurate claims between what is done and what is shown to be done. This was accomplished by keeping a detailed report of what is done and was reported accordingly. The fourteenth criterion involves using language that is representative of the researcher’s epistemological positioning. The researcher was adherent of this and with the help of his supervisor avoided methodological misalignment. Finally, the last criterion involves the author staying active in the research process. Otherwise put, the author ensured that the themes were not merely emerging, but the author actively created the themes.

Rigor

Smith and McGannon (2017) demonstrated that within sport and exercise psychology research, rigor is a necessary “marker of excellence sought through method” (p. 3). Moreover, when using TA as a method, Braun and Clarke (2016) advocate for a “rigorous, *deliberate*, and

reflexive process” (p. 202; emphasis in original) for keeping the quality of TA intact. The researcher ensured rigor by encouraging participants to engage in member reflections after data analysis was completed.

Member reflections are a reframed version of member checking (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This reframing is beneficial because member checking, although notoriously famous, is riddled with problems. Smith and McGannon (2017) described one problem relating to the paradigm in which an author is working. To elaborate, within the author’s paradigm of critical realism (i.e., epistemological constructivism positioned within ontological realism), one cannot capture the social reality in its entirety. Member checking is used to help sort out the trustworthy from the untrustworthy interpretations, and it is essential that the researcher demonstrate how the method of member checking has contacted the social reality. However, because the social reality is independent of the mind, the actual reality is unable to be accessed. Therefore, the researcher is unable to accurately sort out the trustworthy from the untrustworthy because of the actual social reality is inaccessible. As a result, the method of member-checking is too problematic and unreliable to ensure qualitative rigor.

Comparatively, member reflections are “not about verifying results, finding correspondence with the *truth* (emphasis added), or getting at the independent reality” (Smith & McGannon, 2017, p. 8). Instead, member reflections aim to generate extra information, data, and insights concerning the understanding of the research. To this end, the researcher and participant(s) engaged in member reflections to explore subsequent gaps or similarities in the results of the study (Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013). This allowed the researcher to go beyond if he “got it right” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844) and encouraged opportunity for collaboration and elaboration with participants. With some exceptions, most participants agreed with the

analysis of the data and expanded on certain aspect that appeared nebulous upon first discussion; therefore, increasing the depth and richness of understanding (Bloor, 2001). Two of the seven participants, arguably the busiest two, were unable to reach and did not take part in the member reflections.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed description of the research paradigm employed for the study. Further, the chapter outlined the rationale for using a qualitative methodology. From here, the author described the research site, research participants involved in the study, and an overview of the information needed to complete the study. Finally, the remainder of this chapter covered methods used for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations taken by the researcher, issues of trustworthiness, researcher positionality, and possible limitations within the study. The information presented in this study will be continuously updated. This involves updating and removing information as needed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore the characteristics and the consequences of the TSSM. The current study explored the characteristics and the consequences of the TSSM through the stories of seven former OUA male varsity soccer player collected through conversational interviews. To answer the two research questions (i.e., 1. What are the general characteristics of a toxic sports staff member? and 2. Within a sporting organization, what are consequences of a toxic sports staff member?) the researcher used an inductive thematic analysis

(see Braun et al., 2016). The researcher begins the chapter with a description and rationale of creative non-fiction, the method used to represent the research findings. Creative research accounts were developed as a composite vignette; therefore, a brief description of composite vignettes and their rationale follows. Following the description of composite vignettes, the researcher presents the description of the first vignette, followed by the vignette, which, for clarity, is followed by the discussion of the vignette. After the first vignette, a description of the second vignette is introduced, followed by the second vignette, and continued by the discussion of the vignette. This structure - vignette description, vignette, vignette discussion – is repeated for vignettes three and four. Finally, this chapter ends with a chapter summary.

Creative Non-fiction

Creative non-fiction is a method that is used to tell a story that is grounded in research data and draws on literary conventions (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2016). Popularized from new journalism in the 1960s and 1970s (see Talese, 1971), creative non-fiction is used to show rather than tell readers stories they wish to hear (Smith et al., 2016). In this project, the researcher drew on a creative non-fiction method for the multiple strengths that it offers in comparison to more conventional methods of data representation (i.e., using data extracts only).

First and foremost, by using creative non-fiction, the researcher maintained ethical integrity regarding participant confidentiality. If the researcher portrayed the results with verbatim, individualized, context-specific data extracts, specific stories might have been identifiable by individuals reading the results. Comparatively, by using a form of creative non-fiction (i.e., composite vignettes described below), the author increased participant confidentiality by amalgamating the seven participants' stories into a single non-fiction story told by one individual.

Second, Smith and colleagues (2016) described creative non-fiction as a “useful medium for bearing witness in that a story can not only offer testimony to truth but also implicate others by calling on the reader to become witness of others, that is, to share the story with others” (p. 63). One goal of this thesis is to raise awareness of the truth of the TSSM occurring in elite-level university soccer. In the words of the participant, “I am not shocked, I am not surprised, but I am disheartened by the fact that it [the TSSM] is so common that this model was able to be developed.” The TSSM is common within men’s soccer teams, if not all sports teams. Therefore, the researcher hopes that by portraying participants’ experiences through a creative story, others – researchers, sporting organizations, and everyday individuals - may understand the severity that the TSSM can have on individuals participating in university sport.

Third, creative non-fiction encourages the reader to emotionally inhabit the lifeworld and experiences of participants exposed to the severity of the TSSM (Clayton, 2010). The researcher hopes that by using creative non-fiction data representations, the reader can emphatically put themselves in the participants’ shoes to gain a shared understanding of what participants experienced. Only then will others have insight into the complexity and nuances of the TSSM.

Finally, creative non-fiction helps provide a personally rewarding analytic dimension to the research (Smith et al., 2016). Creative non-fiction encourages personal reflection and adds an exploratory aspect to the research where the researcher not only found out more about his topic, but he found out more about himself. Richardson (2000) said it best, “by writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it.” Reflectively speaking, through the data collection, data analysis, and results writing portion of this thesis, the researcher became disturbed by the content he collected, and subsequently had to write about, he became a volunteer soccer coach. Understanding the TSSM is an important first step, but without change,

we allow toxic individuals to continue to negatively impact players and teams. Therefore, along with raising awareness concerning the severity of the TSSM, the researcher practiced self-reflection and understood that he also wanted to be part of the change. That is, he wanted to provide soccer players with a positive sports staff member and hopefully diminish the number of TSSMs in the Sudbury area. Small change is still change.

Composite Vignettes

As aforementioned, the researcher used an inductive thematic analysis to construct themes from the participants' interviews. However, instead of representing the results like commonly practiced, wherein verbatim data extracts are inserted directly into the results section from each participant, the researcher chose to portray the results in four composite vignettes. Developing composite vignettes involves the researcher amalgamating multiple participant voices into a single, synthesized story (Blodgett & Schinke 2015; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). Within this thesis, the vignettes were developed using the stories of seven participants who shared their TSSM experienced with the researcher.

The researcher constructed each vignette by first using the results of the thematic analysis to construct a skeleton outline. The researcher and his supervisor discussed the skeleton outline and made changes until each theme was represented and could be linked to an overarching story. This point is salient, as creative non-fiction must have and communicate an important point or message (Smith et al., 2016). Therefore, by first ensuring that the skeleton portrayed the overarching story of the TSSM, the researcher ensured that each theme contributed and aligned to the overarching story, and thus provided a clear outline of the important point of the research.

After the structure of the skeleton was determined, the researcher reviewed the data representing each theme and subtheme. During this process, the researcher extracted keywords,

quotes, and stories that represented each theme and subtheme. Smith and colleagues (2016) communicated those using creative non-fiction need to select the information that needs to be told to meet a specific purpose, not to tell the ‘whole’ story of the research project. With this in mind, the researcher chose the data extracts that best represented each theme, which then in turn best represented the characteristics and consequences of the TSSM (i.e., the two research questions that guided this researcher project).

Following Smith and colleagues (2016) guidelines for producing creative non-fiction writing, the researcher then re-organized the data extracts to represent participants’ experiences regarding each theme and subtheme; linking the two to create a storyline. This step involved fitting together direct quotations and contextual examples from each participant into an amalgamated story for each theme as told by one ‘character’ (Smith et al., 2016). The researcher and his supervisor consistently reviewed the vignettes to ensure that “the content was comprehensive, fluid and multifaceted” (Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, & Ge, 2016, p. 39).

Stage One: The Beginning of the Characteristics

The first vignette is an introduction to the beginning stages of TSSM. Three themes are introduced during this vignette and represent the initial characteristics of the TSSM. The first theme within this vignette focuses on the TSSM’s high-level of passion when met by the university soccer player. This positive passion characteristic is a driving force behind why the player registered for school at the university, as the TSSM ensured that the athlete had a favourable experience when visiting the school. Two subthemes discussed within this vignette are the TSSM’s positivity and high motivational qualities. The initial first impression masqueraded the toxic characteristics of the TSSM. Following the description of the passion theme, adversity is introduced. Although adversity does not classify as a characteristic theme, it

does act as a trigger for the second theme, insecurity. The TSSM becomes insecure about his position on the team and views the adversity as entirely outside of his control. The subtheme for insecurity is the TSSM questioning his role on the team. To mitigate the insecurity and adversity, the TSSM increases his control of players, the third theme introduced within this vignette. Two subthemes of control are on-field control and off-field control. The TSSM maintained on-field control through micro-management and reduced playing time if the player challenged his decisions. Finally, the TSSM maintains off-field control through rules and using leverage from people in positions of power, scholarship, and objects (i.e., houses). Within all four vignettes, the TSSM will be referred to as a “he,” the reason being that the TSSM was male in all seven of the participants’ stories.

Finally, it is important to mention two things before the results are presented. First, it is crucial to consider that these results are not factual. These results come from the stories of elite-level soccer players and only represent the TSSM through one lens. Within a critical realist paradigm, all results are fallible because one does not have access to reality in its entirety. Therefore, these results only present a speculative glimpse of the TSSM through stories told by athletes and should not be considered as the absolute truth. Second, although the researcher began this project intending to look at many different toxic staff member roles (e.g., coaches, sports psychology consultants, trainers), the stories from athletes were limited to the roles of the coach and/or assistant coach(es) on each team. This limited range of roles may be due to the context that the research was conducted. For example, soccer teams within the OUA do not have a lot of financial resources; therefore, most teams only hire individuals for essential positions, like the coach and assistant coach. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that every story concerning a TSSM told by participants was either a coach or assistant coach. As a result of this,

literature relating to poor athlete-coach relationships and athlete maltreatment will be included in each discussion.

Results. He was the nicest person at the time when I came up and visited during high school. I wanted to go to that university, and he put me up in a hotel and brought me to dinner and all that fancy stuff. I accepted my offer to the university because my first impression was that he was positive and motivating; it seemed like a good fit. He was a good motivator in a sense where he was all about life where you work hard you get the result, and the thing is, he absolutely loved us. His passion for the game was admirable too. He loved to see success, he loved to see players buying into the program, he appreciated hard work and effort and positivity. He had that willingness to push players past their limit and he rewarded us when he saw hard work, but only certain people respond to that push sometimes. He commended us often, but I could sort of see it, I could see the negativity. He was friendly, but when I came up, he knew nothing about the university. He made up 200,000 different facts, and I fact checked all those two or three days later, and none of them were correct. This was a red flag; the negativity was there but almost masqueraded by the initial first impression. Looking back at it, I didn't know any better at the time, I was coming right out of high-school and wanted to continue my soccer career. I didn't want to quit my passion, I love soccer, but if I knew what was to come, I never would have joined the team.

When we began the year, the team was doing pretty well. Overall, it seemed like things were clicking, we started the season strong with a couple big wins, but soon, I'd say about three weeks in, we started to deteriorate; I could tell something was changing. We had a string of losses, but that's inevitable, right? Teams lose sometimes. He couldn't handle the adversity. He fell apart as the season progressed and eventually gave up. He might have been losing his handle,

it could have even been coming from a place of insecurity and feeling outside of his locus of control. I think there was to encouragement to stay up at the top of the table, because there always is. We played on an elite team in the OUA where there is always a winning mentality, you have to win to be successful. He might have thought, "how am I going to keep my position on the team without having the results to back me up?" You can't entirely control the results, and that is something he wanted to control. He sought to assert control in other areas; he needed control in other areas. He tried to regain that sense of control over the team. He needed a monopoly on the players in every single aspect of our lives.

Control was one of the biggest characteristics I noticed, he needed control of us. He needed to control everything around him, how the players felt, individually, and as a team. He would control us on the field by micromanaging our decisions. During games he would yell at us non-stop from the sidelines, things like "pass here, run here," as if I don't know how or I am not going to. When he yelled at me I always questioned myself, he put those negative thoughts that I was not good enough in my head; he left no room for me to have my own thoughts or freedom. I couldn't react the way I wanted to during games or practices because in the back of my head I knew that even if I did something well it wouldn't be good enough for him unless he told me to do it. I like to express myself without thinking while I play; I've been playing the game for 15 years of my life. I overthink when I am being micromanaged, and it causes my performance to spiral downward. I try and block it out, but sometimes it gets to me, and the few times that I have let it get to me, I have had the worst performances of my life. I would get the ball and think, "let's wait and listen to what he has to say" or "last time I did this and got yelled at so I shouldn't do it again." I know some of my teammates can hear it the whole game and allow it in. It created self-doubt, which caused an extra second on the ball because you have to stop and think before

you do anything. Soccer should be automatic, it should be smooth flowing, and that's cut out through micromanagement. I wanted to have more freedom, but you can't speak up, because when players said "this isn't right" they didn't play for the rest of the year. He wanted us to know that he was the boss and we couldn't challenge that. I tried it once. I wanted to take a free kick, so I just asked nicely, and he said "no, no free kick." I shrugged a bit, and he kicked me off the field. I made my way to the other side of the bench, and I didn't get to see the pitch until the 80th minute, but by that time the game was already lost. He then looked at me and subbed me back on. I thought like "what the f*** am I doing?" there is no point in playing now. He was sending a message that the game is lost so now you can go on; I control when you play. He wanted to have the cache over us and controlled what we did on the field. He tried to maintain that "I am on top and you are on the bottom" and nothing steps over it.

He didn't just want control on the field, he wanted it off the field also; he wanted to control every aspect of our lives. He exerted this control over us with little rules, like a curfew or how intense we needed to be on the bike after a game. I think curfews are fine, but with him it was a curfew or a rule just for the sake of a curfew or a rule. I remember on our recovery days we would went to the gym to bike and he would say, "not a single person can below 90 RPM." We just played two games on the weekend and biking helped our legs recover. There was no purpose to that rule other than him controlling what we did in the gym. I can remember another time at the beginning of a season he said to us, "I know you guys are young males, all you're going to do is go out and do drugs and get drunk and talk to girls so this is why I am forbidding you from talking to the girls' soccer team." Another time he told us "I am forbidding you from going out during the week, and I am forbidding you from participating in student led activities on campus." He had no trust in us and so he stopped us from doing things that we wanted to do.

Along with the rules, he used leverage to control us. I remember me and couple teammates rented a house from him. I was excited, I thought, “wow he wants to put me up in a house that he owns.” I thought it was promising, but it was a bad idea. I remember one time he came over to check out the house and it was super messy. He said, “this might have consequences,” and when he saw that the rest of the house wasn’t up to his standard he threatened us by saying “if you're room isn’t clean or your kitchen isn’t clean or you don’t take out your recycling maybe you don’t play this weekend.” Every year he rented this house out to young players on the team looking for a place to live. I think he used the house as a tool to control us, to keep an eye on us outside of school and soccer and to make sure all spheres of influence were controlled by him. He also used leverage through the athletic director and scholarship money. He emailed the team and said we had to stay in the summer. I couldn’t believe it; I kept the email from him that said, ““if you guys don’t stay in the summer you're going to lose some of your scholarship money.” I wasn’t getting a lot of money but some of my teammates were. One of my teammates went up to him and asked, “are you going to find me a job? Are you going to find me a house?” He responded with, “I can’t make any promises.” Some guys could go home and make like \$15,000 in the summer but he demanded we stay. It was frustrating because the financial aspect is important for us; that money was our main source of income for the year. I don’t know if doing that is within the OUA rules; my teammates said it wasn’t. We wanted to go to someone higher up, but he made it clear that the athletic director was on his side. He looked directly at the team and said, “good luck talking to the athletic director, he’s got my back.” He used leverage like that, and it deterred us from going to the athletic director. We were scared to go because we didn’t know if anything would come of it or if we would get in trouble. We were scared because we thought we were going to get reprimanded.

When we did have enough courage to approach the athletic director and ask, “am I going to lose my scholarship if I go home in the summer” he responded with, “I can make no promises, I leave that up to his discretion.” It was criminal the speech that he would give every young player who wanted to go back home. A homesick player who was playing at an elite level back home would be forced to stay here and play with a lower quality team, but we weren’t allowed to challenge his philosophy or else we’d hear “if you don’t do this, this is going to happen.” It was a bad situation, he was on top looking down at us; he was towering over everyone.

Discussion. “The Beginning of the Characteristics” provided insight into the first of four stages of the transformational process of coach to toxic staff member. When interviewed, all seven participants described the head coach, or the assistant coach, as the toxic member on the sports team. Reed (2004) described that there is no specific behaviour that deems a leader to be toxic, but instead it is the cumulative effect of the de-motivational behaviour on morale and climate over time. Throughout the four vignettes, the TSSM is gradually transformed from a charismatic individual, to the center of toxicity, and this toxicity is displaced throughout the team climate. This first vignette offered a partial answer to the first research question: What are the general characteristics of a toxic sports staff member? Three themes representing characteristics were prominent in the first vignette: passion (subtheme: positive), insecurity (subtheme: questioning one’s position on the team), and the need for control (subthemes: on-field control and off-field control). These themes will be discussed in relation to their subthemes and the literature. Furthermore, this discussion will demonstrate the first stage of how the coach was transformed from a once positively perceived member of the sporting organization into a TSSM. This first research question is further explored in the discussion of the second vignette.

Passionate. The vignette begins with the composite player, herein referred to as the player, outlining how the TSSM appeared passionate, positive, and friendly when he first arrived at the university for a formal tour. This theme outlined that a TSSM is not entirely negative; in fact, he has passionate attributes that serve to benefit the sporting organization. For example, he enticed the athlete into registering into the university because he demonstrated passion when representing the university. That is, the player had the intention of playing soccer at the university level, and the TSSM's positive qualities may have served as a method of selling the athlete a vision of a desirable future in which they can see themselves playing at the university level.

Positive. When the player first arrived at the university, the TSSM demonstrated positivity through attention and rewarding effort. The player viewed the TSSM as a passionate and charismatic individual as a result of the enthusiasm that he portrayed for hard-work and effort. This result is similar to how a toxic leader is viewed as positive and overly enthusiastic in an organizational setting when employees are rewarded for hard-work (Lipman-Blumen. 2005a). Furthermore, the TSSM appeared similar to a toxic leader because he was able to sell a vision of the desirable future to the player, so that the player bought into the program (Conger, 1989). The TSSM invited the player out for dinner and arranged a hotel for him to create an illusion into how the sporting organization is confidently managed. The TSSM created a desirable future for the player looking to play for their sporting organization by interacting in a positive, charismatic manner. The TSSM was providing a positive message through hotels, food, and enthusiasm to persuade the athlete to come to the school. That is, the participant became aware, and content, with how positive and passionate the TSSM presented himself, and this passion attracted the player to the program.

This finding coincides with literature Walton's (2007) literature on a toxic leader, where the author described that a toxic leader can have great appeal and attract followers because of their high level of engagement, energy, and enthusiasm. Initially, the TSSM appeared motivating and appreciated hard work and effort. The player viewed this passion as a positive characteristic of the TSSM and may have fallen into a trap of an ideal world proposed by the TSSM. However, the player realized that as the season wore on, the TSSM's negative traits were masqueraded by the initial first impression. Although the TSSM initially presented positivity, the destructive behaviours that followed were similar to that of the toxic leader, in other words, he was a "powder keg simply awaiting a match" (Lipman-Blumen 2011, p. 338). The TSSM passionately described surface features of the university program and sold the athlete on registering for the school. The TSSM appeared passionate, positive, and friendly in order to coerce the player to buying into the program. However, the player realized that the TSSM used positivity and passion to deceive the player and this characteristic covered a time bomb of negative characteristics that, when detonated, fueled a top-to-bottom power hierarchy.

Insecure. As the season progressed, the player described the toxicity of the TSSM increased when he (the TSSM) faced accumulated adversities, such as a string of losses, over an acute period of time. Given the structure of playing two games per weekend in the OUA, this period could have been one or two weeks (i.e., two or four games), but is not directly stated by the player. The adversity that the TSSM faced may have sparked fear and insecurity which later impacted the well-being of the athlete. This finding is similar to Donnelly (1997) who described that pressures on a coach may lead to decisions that go against the well-being of the athlete. For example, if the TSSM was unable to meet the expectations established by the athletic director, he may be fired from his position at the school. As a result of being fired from his position, the

TSSM's credibility in his role is reduced, thus impacting his ability to obtain another job. Further, a sudden job loss may trigger an identity crisis, especially if one is passionate about what they do. As previously mentioned, the TSSM has passion for the game of soccer; therefore, if he feels fear and insecurity as a result of adversity, he may question his job, credibility, and identity. Stirling and Kerr (2009) suggested that in culture of sport that idealizes and athletic performance above the best interest of well-being (e.g., the OUA) power is more likely to be used negatively. More specifically, in this culture, job security and career advancement depend largely on athlete performance (Donnelly, 1997). From a situational perspective, losing one's job, credibility, identity, and future opportunities would be destabilizing for anyone; however, attempting to combat his insecurity and fear, the TSSM negatively enforced control over the player.

Questioning one's position on the team. Resulting from the adversity, the TSSM questioned his role on the team, and subsequently, may have questioned his identity as a staff member. This finding is interesting because researchers studying the toxic leader described that the insecurity is a consequence for followers of the toxic leader and not the other way around (see Milosevic et al., 2019). Remaining impartial, one can understand the TSSM's worry, as elite-level teams within the OUA focus on performance outcomes above all else. Athletic directors hire coaches, and coaches recruit the top-level players in order to achieve success. There is a systemic mentality where one is not successful unless winning. Similar to the external pressure causing the emergence of the team cancer (Cope et al., 2010), the TSSM may become toxic as a result of external pressure. This pressure may stem from the stress of choosing the right personnel to achieve the expectations set out by the university. For example, after a string of losses, the TSSM may question if he chose the right athletes to represent the team. The

athletic director may question the TSSM's competency if the TSSM fails to meet the standards of the university. Therefore, if a sporting organization had a win over everything preference, it could increase stress levels of the TSSM when he fails to win.

Controlling. The player described that the TSSM felt as though he lost control of the outcome of games; therefore, to regain control, he must enforce more control onto the player's life. This finding supports the research from Milosevic and colleagues (2019) and Walton (2007) that when reputation, personal status, or control is challenged, the toxic leader becomes vulnerable and increases their power through negative characteristics. The TSSM felt the pressure to perform, and when he feared that he could not achieve the expectations set out by the university, he ensured that the player felt the same destabilizing pressure he did. Whickers (1996) described the toxic leader as "controlling rather than uplifting followers" (p. 66). Likewise, The TSSM increased his control over the player, which destabilized the player's ability and performance, and subsequently grounded him at the bottom of the hierarchy because he was insecure about his position on the team.

On-field control. The player described how the TSSM controlled his ability to play soccer by micromanaging his on-field actions. Instead of encouraging the player to play freely, the TSSM attempted to regulate every move. Through this intrusive regulation, the player was unable to foster individual autonomy through his playing style. This finding is similar to Walton's (2007) finding that a toxic leader exerts unnecessary and intrusive micro-management on followers. The player was unable to exert judgment on the field or question the TSSM's orders. If the player questioned the TSSM, he was punished through reduced playing time. This on-field control silenced the team through fear of punishment and increased the TSSM's control over the player because he was afraid to speak up. Accordingly, to Stirling

(2009), this punishment is a form of non-contact abuse which can cause physical discomfort for the player. However, it appears that the TSSM's intention was not to abuse, but to maintain control over the team.

Players seldom had time to make individual decisions on the field without hearing the TSSM attempt to manage their actions. This finding aligned with what White (2010) described excessive micro-management where a manager “oversees workers too closely and spends an “excessive amount of time supervising a particular project and telling people what to do and how to do it” (p.72). The player perceived his performance to decrease as he tried to manage his thoughts and those of the TSSM; thus, taking away from his ability to focus on the game. The player was unable to challenge the thoughts of the TSSM's because if he did it triggered further dysfunctional, toxic behaviour through the form of unnecessary punishment, such as reduced playing time and physical fitness.

Off-field control. This finding is novel and not fully understood in terms of literature. To date, most of the research on the toxic leader is described in the workplace, with some spillover effect carried into the quality of life at home (see Wagner, Barnes, & Scott, 2014). The toxic leader controls employees at work with rules, leverage, and threats (Padilla et al., 2007), once the employees leave the organization for the night, the control ceases. However, this differs for the player because the TSSM maintained off-control through rules, leverage, and threats in an attempt to control every sphere of the athlete's life. The TSSM restricted the player from talking to the girls' team, he forbid the player to take part in student-led activities on campus, and he threatened to redact the player's scholarship if he did not obey his order to stay in the summer. The TSSM created these rules and threats in order to maintain control over every aspect of the player's life.

Although this off-field control finding is new in terms of literature relating to the toxic leader, researchers studying athlete-coach relationships described that a coach can have a negative influence over many areas of athlete's lives, including academics, diet, and social experiences (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). However, this athlete maltreatment is viewed from the lens of an athlete, and not a coach. If one were to view this need for control from a coach's perspective, we may realize that the pressure set out by the university to perform (the same pressure which is causing the insecurity) is the root cause for this TSSM's need for control. The TSSM may have felt that if he could control the player, he could control the adversity, diminish his insecurity, and strengthen his position within the team. The player responded to these rules with confusion and looked to personnel with more authority than the TSSM for guidance. However, the athletic director facilitated the TSSM's control by giving him the power to make crucial decisions. By giving the TSSM total power in making important decisions, the gap between the TSSM and the player increased, and the TSSM increased his control.

Stage Two: Increased Control and Inflated Negative Characteristics

The second vignette acts a continued transformation of the TSSM role. Three characteristic themes are introduced through the stories of the player during this second vignette. The first theme represents the TSSM rigidity in their own viewpoints. The TSSM is rigid to his own viewpoints through rejecting opinions and firm ideals, the two subthemes. Following the first theme, the second theme of poor communicator is storied. Two subthemes within this theme are ambiguous communication and negative communication. Finally, the player described the third theme of the TSSM, selfishness. Within this theme, two subthemes are storied, accepting credit from the player and deflecting blame onto the player.

Results. He was strict with his own principles, stubborn with his own ways, and firm with his own ideals. I have played soccer for 15 years of my life; I know different tactics, formations, and systems that can be used for different teams. I understand how the game works and so I think that my feedback as someone who is on the field should be valued, or at least heard. One game we lost pretty bad, so I approached him with the idea of trying something new, I said, “maybe we could play a new formation or play defensively to avoid getting scored on.” He told me that we were going to continue to play in a 4-4-2 formation. He was very strict with his principles and made it clear by saying, "this is my team, this is how I want to play, you have to listen to me." He shut the door to growth by thinking he knew everything. He was childish and insecure to not value the opinions of the players that he chose to represent him across four or five seasons; he didn't value our opinion and was never open to new ideas. He thrived in that "you have to listen to me, I don't have to listen to you" mentality because he was on the top of the team hierarchy and we were on the bottom. He rewarded players who had the same ideologies as him to push the idea that his ideology was the right one. I remember he once named a captain that not a single man on the 27-roster squad was a fan of or saw him as a leader on our team because he was an incompetent player, but he picked him out to be our captain and our leader on the field. He enabled and encouraged that toxic ideology. That negative mindset was shared between that captain and that staff member and we couldn't interject because he thought his opinion was blessed, whereas a player's was that of a pion. He never considered feedback from us; delivering and being able to receive feedback is what drives development. He would brush off when any player from below made a suggestion by saying “you don't know what you're talking about, I am the one who sees the game, the whole field, you're on the field for a bit, I see the whole thing, I make the moves.” He rejected ideas, criticism, and feedback unless it came

from the those above him. I couldn't interject and say "hey, I thought we should try this" because it was quickly put back in my face. As an academy coach and someone with my coaching licenses, I was peeling my skin off watching our practices unfold. I saw things that could be improved on and when I brought them up he would say, "thanks, but you're a player, and I am above you. I am the one who is hired here, I am going to say what we are going to do, and you should stop talking" and then I didn't see the field that weekend because he thought I was plotting against him.

We lost rapport with him in terms of what he wanted and what he thought we should do. There were no clear objectives or expectations, which caused a lot of disconnect and ambiguity between us. During practices, he tried to explain a drill and immediately didn't like what he saw. He re-explained what he wanted us to do, and then five minutes later we were still not able to get the drill. He wouldn't try to explain it again because he got frustrated, so instead we ran laps around the track. Punishment in the form of physical activity was his solution to every problem, laps instead of practice. Another time we lost a playoff game because he never told me the tactics that he wanted. I was running as hard as I could, pressuring everybody, and we were tied 0-0 at the end of regulation time. Because it was a playoff game we went to extra time, two fifteen-minute halves. Half way through the second extra time I found out that we were trying to play for penalties, but that is something that should've been told to me at the beginning of extra time. I would've switched to a more defensive mode, but I had no idea. We lost that game 1-0 because of a goal that was scored in the dying minutes of extra time. After that I felt that I let my teammates down because I didn't know the full plan, so I apologized to them a couple weeks later but only four people knew what the original plan was. We had some players that knew the

plan and others that didn't. I didn't have any idea of what he wanted me to do, I thought one thing, and he thought another; there was a complete disconnect.

When he did try and communicate, his stories were disjointed, they didn't quite relate to the situation, and he never really got to a conclusion during any speech. All of his speeches seemed to be an effort to motivate us to push on, but they wound up often serving the reverse effect. We would come away laughing or be more confused than when he started. We would come off at half time hoping for a discussion or solution to things we saw on the field, but we became more frustrated because he didn't see the same things that we saw; we never knew what he saw. For example, during halftime of one of our games, he said "you know, if there were a league based entirely where the rankings are based on niceness, you guys would finish like third or fourth" So we took that as is that good or bad? Do we want the fair play, are we not pushing for the fair play? Do you want us to be in last place? Is first place good? This was in the middle of a game, we were so confused! I'll never forget that because we were against another OUA side who were taking the game seriously and we were coming away from that at half time scratching our heads. He was extremely ambiguous and gave us no direction for the second half.

He was not positive when he spoke and would rather shout at us on the field instead of give constructive feedback; there was never a positive comment. I am a passionate player; I am eager, so during one practice when we were fooling around and our passing wasn't poor, I yelled a little bit to get everyone motivated. I think it is important to have players than rally the team back together and get everyone motivated, it boosts the morale. He came up to me and aggressively yelled, "I want you to get the F off the field." I understand that sometimes it is important to be aggressive, but there are also times where it is not needed. I didn't know what I did wrong so I grabbed my stuff and left; he made me think that I was the problem because he

yelled at me and kicked me off the field. Some people don't respond to yelling, and some people do, but he was always negative. I have had coaches that have yelled at me, you have got to take it with a grain of salt sometimes, but this was constant negativity, and it made me question why I was there if it was going to be negative all the time. I remember at the beginning of the season during an exhibition game, I was playing on the wing and I beat a guy on a nice move. I moved around him and quickly sprinted down the line. I crossed the ball in, but it was a little tight to the keeper, not the greatest cross. Overall the play was really good, I got a lot of players out of position and it was a real confidence builder for me because I was a rookie on the team. At halftime, he came over to me and said "that was absolute garbage, you should be ashamed of yourself, that was ridiculous, where were you putting that ball?" I kept thinking in the back of my head that I just did a great play, if I hadn't beat those guys we never would've gotten that chance, but he completely ignored everything I did well. He yelled and belittled me, and I had to take it. I was young and it was the first time I'd played there so I didn't say anything; I was too scared. I remember my friend made a mistake in a game once so the following practice we did a walkthrough on how the game went and he yelled and belittled him till the point where my friend was almost in tears. He kept screaming at him and then a couple of the older guys on the team were like "woah calm down on him." I thought this player was going to retaliate and punch him in the face. Someone else may have been able to diffuse that situation by giving constructive feedback and talking in a calm demeanor, like "this is what you did right, and this is what you did wrong, let's work on it together." But he couldn't deliver useful feedback; my friend quit the team after that season.

His decisions were not for the team, they were for him; he didn't make moves for the unit, he didn't make moves for people on the bottom, he made moves for himself. When he

appointed our captain, it wasn't for us, it was for him. The captain is a middle man between players and staff members; he is a leader on the team, but I didn't see him as a leader. He was chosen because he someone who would be a yes man who could take the heat of the players and not care. That was a selfish decision that only benefitted the him and the captain. All the decisions he made were with himself in mind and not the team as a whole; he put himself above the team. He thought if things were going right it's because of him and if they were going wrong it's because of everyone else. Once we lost a game because he played a player in a position that they've never played before. I think if it went well he would said "I made that decision, that was my decision," but it didn't he would blame us. He looked at us after the game and said "what's going wrong?" He looked for a cause to the problem everywhere but within himself. It blew my mind because every game that didn't go as planned he blamed us. He was unaware of his own faults, and we were punished for it. Like at that practice, he couldn't communicate his expectations so he made us run laps. It wasn't our fault we didn't understand, it was his, but we were punished. I was confused because he blamed me for causing a lot of the problems and said I was the reason why we weren't winning; he thought there was something wrong with me. It was too stressful being blamed for everything so I eventually quit the team. I knew I wasn't the problem because they had a worse season after I left; he had a total lack of introspect.

He accepted credit when things went right, but deflected the blame when things went wrong, like a faulty umbrella. Have you ever used a faulty umbrella before? A faulty umbrella protects you from the sun but does nothing against the rain. He was convincing himself that he was the reason when we did something well and that he was protecting us in certain situations, but any moment we were rained on he was not there. He chose his moments to cover us as a team like "look guys, I'm looking out for you," but whenever things went south it was never on

him, the umbrella was gone, and we were rained on. He was only an umbrella when it suited him; he was only a protector when it benefitted him. He didn't care about us; he cared about accepting credit and looking good. One season we organized all the practices for an entire year. The veteran players decided what to work on, who to play, what formations would suit the team, and the staff did nothing. That year he won an award at athletic banquet and took all of the credit. We got no recognition for the work we put in. He cared more about the golden egg than the goose that was producing the golden egg. He pushed for results that were beneficial for him or the people above him, but he never considered my experience.

Discussion. “Increased Control and Inflated Negative Characteristics” provided insight into the second stage of the transformational process of coach to toxic staff member. Within the first stage, the player described the coach as passionate, and motivating, leading the player to register at the university. However, as adversity and destabilizing pressure, such as the responsibility to win games, set in, the coach transformed from positive to oppressive, and needed control in every aspect of the player's life. The TSSM maintained control, both on and off the field, through rules and micromanagement. This need for control confused the player, as this negative characteristic was a drastic shift from the previous positive coach that enticed the player to stay at the university. Within vignette two, three more characteristics of the TSSM were introduced. This second vignette adds to the answer to the first research question: What are the general characteristics of a toxic sports staff member? Three characteristic themes of the TSSM are introduced in the second vignette: rigid viewpoint (subthemes: rejecting ideas and firm ideals), poor communicator (subthemes: ambiguous communication and negative communication), and selfish (subthemes: deflecting blame and accepting credit). These themes will be discussed in relation to their subthemes and the literature.

Rigid viewpoints. The vignette began with the composite player explaining how the TSSM increased his control by devaluing the opinions of players and establishing the notion that he was the top of the hierarchy. The TSSM established a position of dominance wherein an unequal position of power was created between himself and players. Considering the TSSM is on top of the hierarchy, he may feel as though he does not need to listen to the player's opinion, and this effectively silences the player. This finding is akin to the finding described by Kellerman (2004) where a toxic leader is "unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times" (p. 41).

This characteristic is a radical switch from when the player first met the TSSM. When the player first encountered the TSSM, they saw eye-to-eye because they were standing on even ground. The player described the TSSM as passionate and motivating, but as a result of the destabilizing pressure experienced by the TSSM, which was subsequently placed onto players through controlling measures, the TSSM now sees himself atop the self-created hierarchy. The player can no longer see eye-to-eye with the TSSM but instead is caught looking up at him as if they were standing on uneven ground. This caused the player to feel distanced from the TSSM, however, while looking upward, the player saw behind the mask of the TSSM and viewed the negative characteristics that were not entirely present upon the first impression.

The player described that the TSSM disregarded the views of those below him. The player described that TSSM viewed opinions of the player as coming from a place of inferiority because the player occupied the bottom of the team hierarchy. The player described that the TSSM viewed him not as an integral part of the team that can provide feedback to increase team functioning, but as a subordinate that should take orders and complete them without question. This characteristic is supported through the work of Lipman-Bluman (2005a) in relation to the

toxic leader stifling constructive criticism and teaching followers to comply with, rather than question, the leader's judgement. The player storied that the TSSM demanded he unquestionably take orders, possibly because at the end of the day it is not the player's reputation on the line, but the TSSM's, and the TSSM had no problem doing retaining his viewpoint to maintain a good standing reputation.

Rejecting. Farrell and colleagues (2001) described that when the informal role of the tyrant becomes defensive when member bring up concerns or conflicting rules. This result is supported when the player described when he approached the TSSM with a suggestion to switch formations because the one they were using was not working and immediately met with "you have to listen to me," from the TSSM. Through dismissing the player's viewpoint, the player described that TSSM made him feel as though his opinion was not valued and insignificant. The TSSM may have maintained his viewpoints, and disregarded the player's viewpoints because his job, identity, and competency were on the line. The TSSM faced tremendous pressure to achieve the expectations set out by the university and there was a systemic mentality that to be successful one must win. This pressure could impact the TSSM's credibility, job security, and identity; therefore, the TSSM may have thought that listening to the viewpoints of athletes could lead to failure, which then would have a direct effect on his livelihood. The TSSM only accepts feedback from those above him, such as an athletic director, and not those below. The TSSM may wish to take ideas from the player but finds more safety in feedback from those above. For example, if the feedback comes from an athletic director, there is minimal risk in implementing it because if the changes from the feedback do not work, the blame can be attributed to the individual in the position of power because they recommended it. However, if the TSSM implemented feedback from an individual with minimal power, such as a player, and the changes

from the feedback were unsuccessful, the only person at fault would be the TSSM because he should have had better discretion. Therefore, through the TSSM's lens, the risk was not worth the reward.

Lipman-Bluman (2005a) described that the toxic leader leaves followers worse off than they found them by demoralizing them. This finding relates to how the player described that if anyone from below voiced their opinion and suggested feedback they were demoralized by having their ideas pushed back into their face and punished by decreased playing time. This finding adds to the literature by showcasing how punishment, such as decreased playing time, is used by the TSSM to control rather than uplift followers. This finding also aligns with athlete maltreatment literature, wherein athletes face psychological neglect through rejection of their coach (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). However, what is not understood is why the TSSM demoralized the player for providing, what seemed to be, constructive feedback. An answer may be speculated from literature in organizational psychology. Walton (2007) described that when one challenges the toxic leaders "omnipotence," that challenger will become subject to sabotage and penalization to increase the leader's sense of power. Therefore, if the TSSM viewed the player's feedback as a challenge to his competency and power, he may have rejected the player's ideas and penalized the player through demoralization and decreased playing time in an attempt to protect his power. The TSSM viewed the feedback as a challenge to his place in the hierarchy and not as constructive feedback. This rigidity furthered the gap between player and TSSM because he used penalization to demonstrate that he should not be challenged, and this threat of penalization silenced the player because the player was afraid to speak up.

Firm ideals. The player described the TSSM's ideology as firm and unable to be adapted to situational demands. For example, the player described that the TSSM maintained a 4-4-2

formation for every game, including games where a more defensive formation may have beneficial. Research from Kipfelsberger and Kark (2018) regarding the toxic leader's inflexible way of seeing the world supports this finding. Kipfelsberger and Kark (2018) further argued that toxic leader's have low cognitive flexibility. High cognitive flexibility would involve having the ability to shift one's attention in order respond to the environment in a new way (Good & Sharma, 2010). However, those with low cognitive flexibility, sometimes referred to as cognitive inflexibility, are unable to produce novel or changed responses (Vacchiano, Strauss, & Hochman, 1969). Kipfelsberger and Kark (2018) suggested that those who are cognitive inflexible are rigid and close-minded with their viewpoints. Therefore, the TSSM may also possess cognitive inflexibility due to his inability to change his ideals to respond to the environment in a new way. This inflexibility is exemplified through the player's story of the TSSM maintaining formation of the team even though it was not successful in a previous game.

The TSSM maintained and promoted his ideology by selecting an individual with like-minded views for a position via captaincy. The player described that the team disagreed with the choosing of the captain because he failed to be a leader (i.e., one role of the captain) and was an incompetent player; however, the TSSM rewarded that player with captaincy. This finding is supported with literature from Lipman-Bluman (2005a), wherein a toxic leader fails to recognize and/or promotes incompetence. The player described that the TSSM and the captain shared negative mindsets, building off of previous research from Lord and Brown (2004) who described that individuals who beliefs are consistent with those of a destructive leader are more likely to commit to the leader's cause, and therefore prosper. As the TSSM asserted more control through rejecting the player's opinion and rewarded toxic behaviour (i.e., captaincy), he created a division amongst the team; those who agree with him and those that do not.

Poor communicator. The player described that the TSSM had poor communication skills because he was ambiguous and negative when he spoke. For example, the player described that the TSSM tried to explain drills in practice but could not communicate in a way that fostered player understanding. As a result of the player not understanding the expectation of the drill, he was punished by the TSSM with physical activity (i.e., running laps). This finding relates to literature in organizational psychology and sports psychology, as toxic leaders and negative coaches can be perceived to have poor communication skills (Gearity & Murray, 2011; Lipman-Blumen, 2005a). However, toxic leaders can also be perceived to have good communication skills (Babiak, 2010). Therefore, the player may have viewed the TSSM as a poor communicator because the player was viewing him through a toxic lens. For example, the player's opinions were consistently rejected by the TSSM and the TSSM promoted a player who had toxic qualities to a captaincy position. Therefore, because the player viewed the TSSM as toxic, he may have been biased through his lens. Nonetheless, the player describes poor communication with two subthemes: ambiguous communication, and negative communication, both contributing to the player's inability to grasp what the TSSM was attempting to communicate.

Ambiguous communication. The player described that the TSSM could not communicate objectives or expectations, and when he tried, communication was ambiguous and disconnected from the player's viewpoint. The player described that when the TSSM tried to communicate with the player the central premise, or take away, was entirely unknown. For example, the player explained that after a during halftime of one of the season games where the player was frustrated with how the team was player, the TSSM said, "if there were a league based entirely where the rankings are based on niceness, you guys would finish like third or fourth." This player described that this communication lacked a solution to the player's frustration, and further confused the

team as they took the field for the second half. Researcher's in organization psychology how found similar findings supported that toxic leaders have similar ambiguity communicating objectives within a workplace which adds to employee frustration (Kipfelsberger & Kark, 2018).

The player explained that he was unable to understand the drills described by the TSSM because the TSSM failed to communicate in a manner than outlined the main drills objective. As demonstrated in vignette three and it's following discussion, the inability to communicate drills to the player impacted the player's physical soccer development. Within this breakdown of communication there is a loss of process to outcome. The TSSM expected the player to deliver results (i.e., winning) to ease his own stress load. However, the adversity of multiple losses shifted the TSSM's from attention from player development to winning to minimize his feelings of insecurity. While focused solely on the outcome (i.e., winning to minimize adversity), the TSSM forgot about the process (i.e., successful explained practices that can translate into successful games) and subsequently could not communicate his expectations effectively with the player. Furthermore, the player was then punished with physical activity (i.e., running laps) because the TSSM thought he was not listening to his orders when in reality the players was unclear of the TSSM's expectations because he was not focused on the process.

Negative communication. The player explained that aside from ambiguity, the communication from the TSSM was highly negative. For instance, the player described that during a low-intensity practice he tried to boost the team morale by yelling in a motivating manner and this caused the TSSM to scream "get the F off of the field." Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) described that a toxic develops a habit of throwing temper tantrums, shouts, and belittles employees openly. Furthermore, by examining at the sexual harassment and abuse amongst Canadian Olympians, Kirby, Greaves, and Hankivsky (2000) described that 25% of the athletes

studied reported being insulted, ridiculed, slapped, hit, or made to feel like a bad person by authority figures in sport. Comparatively, Gervis and Dunn (2004) reported that shouting, belittling, threats, and humiliation were the most common forms of emotional abuse faced by elite athletes. Therefore, negative communication is a common finding within negative informal role research and the current study supports this finding, as the TSSM negatively communicated with the player through yelling, swearing, and belittling. This communication was exemplified when the player's friend was yelled at for a mistake until he was almost in tears.

The player described that members on the team have individual differences when it comes to communication. That is, players respond to communication in multiple ways; some players respond to yelling, while others do not. Subsequently, the TSSM fails to understand the individual differences and communicates with a one size fits all negative style. As mentioned above, this finding may be because the TSSM is not focused on the process, but rather the outcome. He may be fixated on finding a solution to the cause of his insecurity and may not think that focusing on the idiosyncrasies of every member on a 27-man team an important task.

The player described that along with negativity and belittling, the TSSM was pessimistic when he communicated. The player explained that during one game he successfully beat a player 1v1, took the ball down the line without losing it, and crossed the ball into the box that created a scoring opportunity; however, the TSSM focused on the only negative aspect of the play which was the ball being too close to the keeper. Focusing on what went wrong over what went bad is similarly in organizational psychology research. A toxic leader is more pessimistic in commenting on things done wrong as opposed to things done right when communicating with employees (Wasylyshyn et al., 2012). The TSSM may have disregarded the process, and when the outcome was not achieved, he became angry with player. What the player did wrong was

same thing preventing the TSSM from achieving the outcome he needs for to diminish his insecurity (i.e., a successful performance). Therefore, the TSSM verbalized his frustration in an attempt to mitigate the player's error. The player described that through this negative, pessimistic focus on mistakes, the player was scared to speak against the TSSM. The TSSM decreased his confidence in his ability through focusing on mistakes by only focusing on the things he did wrong until the player was silenced from defending himself and stripped him of his autonomy as a soccer player. The TSSM did not show concern for the player's well-being, similar to how the toxic leader has a lack of concern for the well-being of subordinates (Reed, 2004), but was more focused on achieving his outcome.

Selfishness. Whicker (1996) described that a toxic leader has selfish values wherein they complete objectives to benefit themselves and not the followers they lead. This result is supported through the player's description that the TSSM did not make moves for the team, but instead, made moves for himself. More specifically, the player explained that through the example of the TSSM appointing the team captain. The team captain is supposed to be a middle man between players and staff member, a bridge so that a team is effectively functioning and everyone is on the same page. However, the player described that the TSSM picked the negative player to be the captain not because it benefitted the team, but because it benefitted himself. We must remember that the TSSM felt insecure because his credibility and reputation were on the line if he did not achieve expectation set out for him. The TSSM was not focused on providing for the player, but did everything he could to minimize his insecurity on the team, and therefore the player described him as selfish through two subthemes: deflecting blame and accepting credit.

Deflecting blame. The player described that TSSM's deflected blame onto the player through the inability to see his own faults. For example, the player explained that during one game the TSSM played another player in his wrong position. The player was not familiar with the idiosyncrasies of this position, and as a result, the team lost the game. However, the player described that the TSSM failed to look within himself for a mistake, and instead shifted the blame onto the team.

Cope and colleagues (2010) described that the team cancer shifts blame to avoid being held responsible for their actions. However, the TSSM may shift blame because of a more deeply rooted issue. The player described the TSSM as having entrenched ideals, and therefore, may view his opinion as the correct one. Through his lens, the TSSM believed that his opinion cannot be wrong because his ideology is the correct way of seeing the world. Therefore, when a mistake is made on his part, the blame is deflected. Through these entrenched ideals, the TSSM is unable to be changed or adapt to the adversity.

The TSSM externalized blame onto the player and then punished the player with physical activity to maintain control through fear and intimidation, similar to a toxic leader controlling employees through fear and intimidation (Hornstein, 1996). For instance, when the team could not understand the practice drills due to the TSSM's ambiguous instructions, he blamed the athletes and then punishing the athletes through physical activity (i.e., running laps). At this point, the player has already described his fear of speaking up due to rejecting and belittlement of the TSSM, so there is not much left to do except accept the punishment and move forward. Furthermore, the player described that he felt like he was personally blamed for the problems the team was facing. Comparatively, a toxic leader identifies scapegoats within an organizational context (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a), to protect the notion that their idea is always right. The TSSM

identified the player as a scapegoat to externalize problems onto the player instead of taking accountability for mistakes, possibly because taking accountability for team mistakes may jeopardize the TSSM's role on the team. This externalization is strategic so that the TSSM does not look foolish with his own selection to those above (e.g., the athletic director). Therefore, he picks a player that is fearful of speaking up or creates a player that is fearful to speak up through rejection of their ideas and belittlement of their mistakes.

Accepting team credit. The player described that the TSSM deceived him into thinking that he protected him, when in fact the TSSM absorbed the credit for team success. This finding is supported by research in organization psychology in which the toxic leader both take credit for the efforts of others in order to look like a positive member of the organization (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a). Success can produce a positive look for the TSSM and strengthen his security on the team; therefore, he may attribute success to his doing and not that of the team to make a case for why he is needed within an organization. Aligning with the toxic leader, the TSSM is motivated primarily by self-interest (Reed, 2004), and sees no wrong in accepting credit from and deflecting blame onto the player, especially when the player has had his voice and feedback muted through rejection and belittlement, thus leading to increased TSSM control.

Stage Three: Initial Team Deterioration with Minor Optimism for Change

Vignette three introduces how the characteristics of the TSSM consequently impact the surrounding players. The first theme within this vignette is the player's increased negative and decreased positive affective states. The subthemes introduced are: increased player confusion, increased player sadness, increased player fear, increased player apathy, and decreased player confidence. The second theme within this vignette is the lack of player development. This lack of development includes physical and moral development. After this, the third theme is introduced,

the creation of a destructive environment. This theme includes three subthemes: absent winning mentality, increased team divide, and lack of fun for players. Finally, the vignette is concluded with a positive consequence, increased team unity. The subtheme discussed within this theme is player revolt.

Results. Being around a toxic member was tough, it affected me physically and emotionally. My emotional state was hard to notice, and it was never talked about it as much as it should've been; there was a stigma around talking about it. The longer I played on the team, the more I noticed my emotional state changing. The way he excluded me was confusing. I wasn't included in team meetings, meetings that were supposed to be the core of the team. I was part of the team but purposefully left out; I don't know why. Those who didn't share his ideology felt alienated from the rest of the team; we didn't feel like an important member on the team. I thought that at first, it must just be me, right? I remember calling my parents at home a lot and asking, "is this the situation, is this what university supposed to be like?" I was confused, and playing on the team became really uncomfortable. I felt like this every year, and once the season came to an end in my last year he stopped talking to me; I don't know why. I thought maybe he stopped talking to me because I'm a graduating senior on the team and no longer any use to him. I thought maybe I did something wrong. I felt terrible; I was confused because I put so much effort into every training session. I did everything I could to benefit the team. I worked hard to come back from injury as quick as possible, it takes a lot of work, especially being in school. I don't know why he stopped talking to me.

He was hard on people, and at first, I didn't really think much of it. He spoke with a lot of emotion and didn't necessarily think about what he was saying. He would say things behind my back when I made a mistake and thought that I couldn't hear them; he was an angry dude. He

made me feel like I was the problem why the team wasn't succeeding. I have had hard coaches, but it started getting to the point where he was really making me doubt myself and become sad. Some of my teammates said that they had borderline depression because they woke up and were miserable going to practice; they said it was a chore. He was the cause of that sadness and depression, that's how it was for me. If something you love is not going the way you want it and that's what motivates you and drives you and gets you up in the morning then that's not good; it's a total loss of joy for the sport. One of my teammates loved soccer, but he focused too much on soccer and started doing poorly in school; I think soccer was holding everything together. He knew that he had to do well in school to be eligible to play soccer. He got yelled at all the time for little mistakes like messing up a pass, we all did, but he started going south when soccer started to slip. I heard from some of my teammates that when things started getting worse he started doing drugs. For me I had a hard time getting up in the morning, I was worn down. When I first visited the university in high school I was excited to pursue my passion for soccer, but as soon as that passion seemed like it was ending and crashing down around me because of one member, I became really sad.

After my first year before everyone went home, he told us that we would lose our spot on the team, our scholarship, the trust of the staff members, and that we would never play again if we went home in the summer. He came up to me and my friend and said, "you two haven't been performing well and you don't want to stay in the summer, so I may have to look for other players." He really scared a lot of players with those threats; he used fear as a motivator to control us. I felt unsafe when he told us to do fitness, but I didn't want to speak up and say what was on my mind because I thought I he would punish me. I remember during training camp there was a 42-degree heat warning in effect and he made us run a 40 minute ten-kilometer run. At the

beginning of the run, he briefed us by saying that the weather was just another excuse, and we should still be able to complete the run in that time frame. That run ended in four cases of heat exhaustion and one hospitalization post-run. We shouldn't have run in that horrendous weather condition, but he made it clear that that if we didn't complete any task he told us to we wouldn't play. If any player didn't follow his instructions he would voice his opinions all at once in an emotional outburst and then the player would wind up off the team through mysterious circumstances. For the rest of that season, fear was ingrained within our team. I think I made a lot more mistakes because I was scared to do anything. When my friend made a mistake that cost us a goal he was yelled at until he almost cried. I was afraid to make a mistake because I thought he was going to yell at me or belittle me in front of all the older guys. I was hesitant to ask him questions because I thought he would scream at me. One time he said to one of my teammates, "don't ask me stupid questions," but I always thought that there are no stupid questions, you know? A team has to communicate, that is a part of what makes a good team and there was no way around it, but everyone was too scared to communicate or ask questions because if he felt challenged by someone he would scream at them. Sometimes, he used physicality to make his point. One away game we didn't get the result we needed, and he came in the locker room and starting slamming all the lockers, damaging physical property of the university, kicking our bags, throwing garbage bins, and then he broke a piece of equipment in the bathroom. One of my teammates went to the athletic director to report the fit and our athletic director immediately swept it under the rug. We were hoping that it would be enough to reprimand him but instead we were told if he found out whoever reported him that player would be kicked off the team. Then he said we were all to stay off the pitch, we weren't allowed to train on our own or with the

team, and practices would be cancelled until a confession came forth. He propagated a culture of fear for everyone on that team; we were scared.

I always questioned my ability and never let my body feel free to do whatever it wanted to do. The way he belittled my playing hurt my confidence. He told me I wouldn't be good enough to make the team the following year. He shifted the way I thought in terms of my abilities and made me believe that I wasn't a good player. Every time I made a good play it was ignored, but every time I made a bad play he would yell at me and pick apart everything I did wrong. Even after good games he found the negative things about the game to bring us down. I don't think he believed in my abilities and I started to do the same; he played those thoughts in my head. I could do something 99% right and then there is that one thing I did wrong and he would point it out. He put my mindset that I wasn't good enough. He caused lot of self-doubts and a lot of uneasiness about how I played; I had no confidence. I always thought I was going to screw something up? On the field I would get the ball and think "I am going to screw up" or "don't mess up," and I'd take an extra second to decide what to do because of those thoughts; soccer should second nature. The major determinant of how someone is going to play is confidence. You have to be able to play a dangerous pass with confidence. I've seen players on my team, the most skillful players, go from doing amazing things, to not even be able to control a ball. There was a lot of lost self-confidence on our team. I could see it in our play, I could see it on our faces, and I could see it in our grades. No one felt supported by the staff member, and it translated into self-doubt in our ability and confidence problems. We weren't the same players as when we first came into the program.

I wanted to give up because of all my negative thoughts and emotions. I felt mentally drained, and I wasn't as motivated as in my first year. I woke up and it felt like going to soccer

was a chore. My moral attitude went down because I thought about going to training and I knew it would be the same directionless practice as the day before. When you constantly do the same thing over and over again it becomes repetitive, it loses excitement. It was hard to get excited for practices and games when the players that aligned with him thought we were babies for not liking him. I wasn't excited to be at practices because he was negative and pessimistic, I had no willingness to succeed because I didn't want him to have recognition, I had no desire to get in the gym in off-hours because if he doesn't put in effort then why would I, and I no desire to get to the change room early and have everything ready to roll for the games because neither did he. I showed up and hoped it was over; I wasn't motivated to go to soccer. I could see it in some of my teammates as well. From the start of the season to the end of the season, heads up, to eventually, heads down. We had no desire to play on the team anymore.

Our lack of motivation affected our training sessions; they lacked intensity. We were unmotivated to be there, and we were going through the motions. The practices weren't fantastic either, a lot of the time it was just scrimmaging, and it was directionless. There were times where he came to practice and tried to explain a drill to us but we could understand it. We could tell he threw it together last minute, but you can't throw stuff together at the last minute because there is no structure. Some of the drills didn't make sense, they didn't work on anything specific because they were thrown together at random. I have been playing competitive soccer for a long time, I know what drills work and what drills don't. He would try to explain them to us but we didn't understand what to do. He would then get frustrated and we would spend all practice running laps. That's a good practice for a cross country team, but it doesn't help soccer players with their technical aspect. One season we lost the first six games we played, he was angry and told us "practice on Tuesday, 7 o'clock, bring your running shoes, don't bother bringing your cleats." I

was a little excited because I thought that he was going to make us do fitness to snap out of it, to get us going. We did a warm up and after one lap he said, “surprise! We’re not running, we’re going bowling!” I think he was trying to get the team to bond, but it was the wrong time. We needed a well-organized practice, or a well-organized fitness session, and he made us go bowling. I remember another time, directly after two losses in a row, I was really frustrated because he showed up to and told us that he forgot to come up with a training schedule, so we scrimmaged for an hour and a half and called it a practice. When you lose back to back games you need to break down what went wrong during the games and work on those specific things. Instead, we just jumped right into just playing. That didn't foster development, and it didn't help us become better. There was a technical aspect that was needed, but it was missing. He wasn't well versed in systems, and never took feedback, so we did the same things for every game and lost. He had minimal soccer qualifications and couldn't develop players, and it was evident in his practices. After the season, we have a long off-season, it starts near the end of October and lasts about the beginning of April, and then most people go home for the summer. The off-season is a great time to develop the team and prepare us for the upcoming season. We had training sessions but we did work on much, it was more for fun or to keep the team together. Players would show up hungover and he wouldn't care, which was surprising given how controlling he was during the season. I know from personal experience that other teams around the world, and even in our division have specific training sessions to work on specific things to get better for the next season; we didn't work on much and it showed in our play. We had talented players, but a team needs both talent and tactics; we could've been a really good team if he wasn't there.

He strived to pry athleticism and athletic development out at all means necessary without thinking twice about how the characterless athlete developed. He didn't see these two things as

necessary parallels because his moral compass was non-existent. I believe that a great staff member not only produces great players but above all else, they develop good humans; he failed at both of these. I felt like a lack of integrity and a lack of personal responsibility motivated the toxic character. There were a lot of false promises. I saw him make promises to players for scholarships that he didn't follow through on, he made promises to house players that he did not follow through on. He had no problem encouraging us to go out and injure players that we knew were talented. He encouraged us to push the referee into making certain decisions. He encouraged us to take dives if we weren't getting in our positions on the ball. Most disturbing, he encouraged us, above all else, to get down on our fellow teammates if they weren't performing to his standard. A complete lack of integrity that was encouraged onto players. I could see those players with the same ideologies as him believing that these morals were okay when they were awful, nightmarish. His lack of morals further snowballed toxicity, increased the divide between players, and it is what contributed to the development of a destructive environment.

He made the environment extremely destructive. We were a competitive elite-level soccer team, but we had no winning mentality, it didn't exist. We had one at the beginning of the season when we were doing well, but as the season progressed we fell apart and gave up. We noticed he was okay with mediocracy. Like I said before, he showed up to training and told us that he forgot to come up with any sort of training schedule. Even when we went bowling, I felt like he quit on the team, it felt like he gave up on us. He didn't put the effort in; he didn't care, and it affected us. I wanted to win, so I would yell at my teammates to do better, to play better. He yelled at me for encouraging my teammates to do better; it's draining when you're trying to do the best you can, and try to get others to do the best they can, but you get punished for it. He lost my drive to help people do better, I stopped caring. Even the older guys would say

“I’m going to do this half ass today” because it was clear that he didn’t want to put in the effort to win. If he doesn’t put in the effort, why should the team? If he was really willing to make the team better and succeed, he would have put more effort into the team, but he never did. Near the end of the season I didn’t want to succeed to prove a point that he made poor decisions. We just didn’t care about winning; there was no winning mentality

I found it hard to get up in the morning because I felt like soccer became a chore. I was mentally drained; I would get up for soccer after a full nine-hour sleep and think "awe, really, I just want to sleep in all day." I wasn’t having fun playing the sport I loved playing as a child. I was frustrated because, as a little kid I would wake up and run, I had energy; I was excited about soccer. Eventually, I didn’t want to go to training because I knew it was going to be a waste, we weren’t going to work on anything, and we weren’t confident in what we’re doing. He lost my interest in practice and I was never excited to play soccer. I was always nervous because I thought he would yell at me if I made a mistake; it put a lot of pressure on me. The whole team was bummed out about it. We were no longer interested because we weren’t having fun: I couldn’t wait for it to end.

Mid-way through the season we started to deteriorate as a team, and we stopped bonding as a unit; we became cliquy. Everyone was against each other, and we broke down completely. For team events, half the team would go and half of them wouldn’t, it created a big team divide. Players wouldn’t talk to each other in the locker room. He knew there was a little bit of division, and he rivaled us against each other. I think that a little bit of healthy competition is good on a team, but this was really negative and one-sided, the coach always picked one side over the other. During practice he would put all of his favourites on one team, and all the other players on another team. I never thought that’s was good idea, I thought he should have mixed guys up, but

he didn't and he created a divided team. His favourite players had a longer leash and got it a little better than the players he didn't like. He prided himself on that creating one group of players against another group of players. He believed in separating groups and isolating players based on where you stood in his hierarchy. Reserves with the least amount of playing time were sectioned off in one-quarter of the field, reserves that were bit-part players were sectioned off in another quarter of the field, and starters were all on the other half of the field. Those reserves that were low in his hierarchy got little to no practice time, the bit parts subs would get two or three drills, and the first team would be training, followed by an end of training scrimmage. He wouldn't even talk to the players who were low in his hierarchy; he didn't even look at them. The divide translated over to our games when players on the field wouldn't send a through ball to other players because they were having an off field-tiff against them. It was really uncomfortable, there was no team chemistry.

I was shocked when I first joined this team because I am a big believer in a team as a family, and if you're fighting or divided, then it doesn't work. When my friends and I joined the team, there was a division between the younger guys and the older guys that developed into cliques. We noticed this right away, so when my friends and I got into a position of seniority on the team, we fought tooth and nail as the more veteran players to keep a high level of cohesion. We tried our best to increase our team unity. We were all getting together for team functions without the toxic member, and it seemed to help a lot. Everybody blended together, and the cliques started to disappear. As the veteran players, we had to be willing to positively interact with the younger players because we quickly found out that younger players, especially in their rookie and second year, would lose all hope because of this toxic member. A lot of lost self-confidence in soccer and school. They were falling off all over the place because their

confidence on the field had been shattered by the toxic member. I used my attitude to the best of my ability to explain to the younger players what was going on and how best to break the cycle if you were stuck at the bottom. I did everything I could humanly possible to facilitate player-to-player cohesion by incorporating everyone, not just singular players. I took over tours for the university because he couldn't be trusted to do the tours anymore. We turned a divided team in my rookie year into a fantastic, cohesive unit, despite the toxic staff member. It was clear that he was more interested in changing us than changing himself, so we did what we could to make our situation better; we developed a unity against him. We realized that we didn't entirely need him for everything. We stopped listening to this him; he never had anything constructive to say anyway. He yelled and belittled us, what's the point of listening to that? We told new players, "don't listen to him, or else you will feel bad about yourself." We stopped listening to him when we went out on the field, his words filtered through one ear and out the other. A lot of us would switch positions when we got out on the field because he placed us in our wrong positions. During the winters, he didn't organize any practices, so we started running our own winter practices. We introduced our own playing styles and ideas to the younger players and got smooth practices in. Everything seemed to be moving well as soon as we took control of the team. We started going above him and brought stuff up to the athletic director concerning his toxicity. Unfortunately, everything was immediately swept under the rug. He found out about this and punished us; he made it clear that he was in control and did everything he could to increase it. He realized we were against him, and this furthered his insecurity, so he tightened his control to avoid losing his handle over us. We all signed a petition to get rid of him, but nothing ever came of it; we were truly against him.

Discussion. “Initial Team Deterioration with Minor Optimism for Change” provides insight into the third stage of the transformational process of coach member to toxic staff member. During the first stage, the player arrived at the university he felt welcomed by the TSSM. The TSSM demonstrated that he cared about the player’s experience by ensuring that the player had a comfortable sleeping arrangement and was well fed. Through these positive experiences, the player was eager to represent the school and viewed the TSSM as a positive, respectable, and motivating individual. However, as the TSSM began experiencing adversity and destabilizing pressure, such as the responsibility to win games, he transformed from positive to oppressive and needed to control every aspect of the player's life. He maintained on-field control and off-field control through rules and micromanagement. During the second stage of the toxic transformation, outlined by vignette two, the player began described further negative characteristics, such as rigid viewpoints, poor communication, and selfish actions. Vignette three showcases the four consequences imposed by the TSSM: increased negative and decreased positive affective states (subthemes: increased player confusion, increased player sadness, increased player fear, increased player apathy, and decreased player confidence), lack of development (subthemes: lack of physical development and lack of moral development, development of a destructive environment (subthemes: absent winning mentality, increased team divide, and lack of fun for players), and increased team unity (subtheme: player revolt). This vignette partially answers the second research question (i.e., Within a sporting organization, what consequences does a toxic sports staff member elicit, and how do the consequences impact the sporting organization?) by introducing the consequence themes that were storied by the player. This research question is also explored in vignette four. These themes will be discussed in relation to their subthemes and the literature.

Increased negative and decreased positive affective states in players. As mentioned above, negative sports members of the focus on performance outcomes, and not holistic development (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The TSSM failed to realize the psychological impact that he had on players because his viewpoint was directed at achieving performance outcomes. As a result of the negative characteristics of the TSSM, such as the need for control, selfishness, and poor communication, the player began described increased negative affective and decreased positive affective states. Four increased negative affective states include increased player confusion, increased player sadness, increased player apathy, and increased player fear, while the decreased affective state was decreased player confidence. The player experienced these states as consequences due to the increased negative characteristics of the TSSM, specifically his control over the athlete. The once positive coach that convinced the athlete to register at the university, was now negative affecting the athlete's mental health. The player, who was charmed by the TSSM in stage one of the process, described how he had increased negative affective states, such as confusion, fear, and sadness, as the TSSM pushed him deeper to the bottom of the team hierarchy through control and rejection. Although studies on informal roles describe that a negative informal role predominantly causes negative psychological impacts (see Cope et al., 2010; Cope et al., 2010; Eys et al., 2007; McGannon et al., 2012), there is minimal work that offers a view into the transformational shift from positive to negative. This result elucidates the severity of the psychological impact caused by a TSSM as he shifted from positive to negative, and likewise caused the player's psychological state to switch from positive to negative. This shift in emotional states helps to highlight the transformational process of the TSSM by demonstrating the full emotional effect that this member had on the athlete.

Increased player confusion. The players described feeling alienated and uncomfortable within the team as a result of the TSSM excluding him from important team events, such as team meetings. The player, who once felt as though he was at forefront of the TSSM's attention when he was considering registering at the university, was now excluded from team meetings because of their conflicting ideologies. The player described that the TSSM did not invite him to the meetings that was for the core of the team, and therefore, the player felt as though he was unimportant. The TSSM's ideology is rigid and unchangeable, and he excluded the player as a means to silence and avoid the player's different conflicting views; the player cannot conflict with the TSSM if he is not present. Similarly, Kipfelsberger and Kark (2018) described that followers of a toxic leader may feel self-alienation if their values conflict with the values of the leader. However, the player did not self-alienate, but instead, was alienated by the TSSM, which induced a state of confusion for the player as to why this alienation occurred. This finding supports the work of Stirling and Kerr (2008) who described that athletes may perceive the removal of attention as just as, or more damaging, than verbal or physical outbursts from the coach.

The TSSM continued to alienate the player by avoiding conversation with him but provided no justification as to why. The TSSM may have viewed the player's opinion as a threat and avoided him to destabilize the player voice. However, the player described that he internalized this avoidance by thinking that he committed a wrongdoing, which furthered his state of confusion because he was under the impression that he did everything he could to benefit the team. For example, the player described that put maximal effort into training and returned to play from injury as quick as he could; however, the TSSM still avoided communication with the player. Returning from injury is a challenging both physically and mentally due a fear of

reinjury; the player thought that he would receive praise or feedback from putting his body on the line. However, the TSSM failed to communicate with the athlete and this furthered his state of confusion.

Increased player sadness. The player explained that the TSSM spoke more with emotion and not logic by making snap judgments, such as yelling at the player for mistakes instead of providing constructive feedback. As a result of these emotional outbursts focusing only on the mistakes the player made, the player described that he felt like he was the problem as to why the team was not succeeding. The TSSM wanted to achieve high personal objectives, such as winning games, to increase his feeling of security on the team. The player expressed that he felt like he was not contributing to the TSSM's expectations with mistakes; therefore, the TSSM may have made snap judgments in an attempt to fix the players' mistakes. The player described that the TSSM was careless and not constructive in his communication with the players because he watched a teammate get constantly get yelled at for making minimal mistakes, such as a misplayed a pass. This finding is similar to how a toxic leader is careless with employees when talking providing feedback (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a) and also aligned with Raakman, Dorsch, and Rhind's (2010) explanation of indirect abuse. More specifically, indirect abuse is when a behaviour takes place in the presence of players but not directly at them. The TSSM had an impact on not only the player who he was yelling at, but also the players who were watching these behaviours transpire. By yelling at one member of the team, the TSSM can indirectly negatively affect many members of the group.

The TSSM may have failed to notice this sadness because he was predominantly focused on attaining his expectations. The player described that TSSM's emotional outbursts began to weigh him down and increase his feelings of sadness and depression. Similarly, athletes who

have a poor relationship with their coach have perceived experiences of decreased moods, such as increased sadness (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The player may have felt like he could no longer please the TSSM and became emotionally disengaged from the sport. The player described that the TSSM affected his emotions outside of soccer, such as waking up and immediately feeling worn down. This finding is similar to how a toxic leader decreases employee motivation to work through continuous belittlement of mistakes (Chan et al., 2008; Thoroughgood et al., 2009). The player explained that the same member that facilitated his desire to register for the school through a positive first impression increased the player's sadness through yelling and communicating mistakes.

Increased player fear. The TSSM's negative communication, such as threats that the player would lose his spot on the team if he did not obey the TSSM's orders, impacted the player by creating a culture of fear on the team. The TSSM transformed from vignette one where he threatened playing time, to vignette three where he threatened the players spot on the team, thus threatening his total team security. The player described that he no longer felt as though something might be wrong, but that there was something wrong because of through these extreme threats. However, the player described that he was scared to speak up because he thought the TSSM would go through with the punishment. Similarly, Jones (1996) described that followers of a toxic leader avoid disagreements and confrontation with a toxic member due to their fear of reprisal. The same destabilizing pressure that caused the TSSM insecurity in vignette one, was now passed down to the athlete and prevented him from going against the TSSM due to fear of reprisal.

The TSSM issued threats to maintain control over the player, which induced the player's fear and increased the hierarchical gap between player and TSSM. Within coach-athlete

maltreatment literature, an athlete may express fear if they are being intimidated by the coach or if they fear losing their athletic career should they report their coach's bad behaviour (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Similarly, when the toxic leader issues threats, it leaves followers of that leader questioning their job security (Pelletier, 2010). Likewise, the player questioned his security on the team as a result of the TSSM's threats that he would lose his spot if he did not obey him. However, it may be easier for an employee to transition to another job if s/he leaves an organization because of a toxic leader (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a). A university soccer player will have a more difficult time transitioning to another university team because of relocation, transfer credits, and eligibility. Therefore, the threats of the TSSM caused the player to face a dilemma of quitting the team, and subsequently the sport, or obey the TSSM's orders and play in fear. The player chose the latter due to his passion for soccer and knew the difficulty of changing schools. Similarly, when working with a toxic leader, employees are left with two options, conform or leave (Mehta & Meheshwari, 2014). A combination of the academics, relocation, soccer identity, and eligibility may have caused the player to feel captured by the TSSM and unable to leave.

The player described that TSSM increased fear over him by following through with threats, such as cutting players who did not listen to him off of the team. The player may have viewed this unstable through these threats and questioned if he could be next. According to Pelletier (2010), those in positions of power, such as the toxic leader, can increase follower fear through threats that cause one to question their security. Similarly, the TSSM used cutting players to foster fear and create intimidation in the player that left him questioning his place on the team. The TSSM used fear to send a statement of power and the player described that he was willing to obey orders because he feared that the TSSM would punish him by cutting his position on the team or yelling at him. Padilla and colleagues (2007) described that those who live in fear

are easier to control, likewise, the TSSM's actions supported this claim as he induced fear in the player through threats as a way to increase his control over him.

The TSSM also used destructive physicality, such as kicking player bags and turning over garbage cans, to make a point that he was angry that the team did not achieve the result he wanted. This finding is akin to emotional abuse faced by retired swimmers in Stirling and Kerr's (2008) research. More specifically, Stirling and Kerr described that coaches can cause emotional abuse for athletes through acts of aggression such as hitting and through objects in the presence of an athlete. The player once described the coach as a passionate member who convinced him to register at the university. Alternatively, this description switched from passion coach to a TSSM who used physical manifestations to spark fear in athletes. With the case of physicality, the TSSM was aware of the consequences of his careless actions, as they seemed premeditated in an attempt to increase fear in the player. He used physicality to demonstrate to the team that he was angry, and when a player reported his outburst to the athletic director, the TSSM created fear in the player by issuing a threat that whoever reported him to the athletic director would be kicked off of the team. Through issuing the threat, the TSSM maintained his control over the player by creating insecurity the player's position on the team.

Increased apathy. Stirling and Kerr (2013) described that a negative coach can increase motivation of athletes through fear of reprisal or decrease motivation through belittlement (e.g., punishing athletes for not playing with effort). Within this study, as a result of the negative thoughts and emotions caused by the TSSM's poor communication and threats, the player described that his motivation to play soccer decreased. The player, who constantly walked on eggshells as to not upset the TSSM, described that he lacked interest continuing to play soccer. This result is familiar in organizational psychology, as the toxic leader's destructive behaviours

decay the motivation of followers (Pelletier, 2010). Likewise, the destructive behaviours of the TSSM, such as belittling, rejecting ideas, and deflecting blame, worked to decrease the player's motivation to play. The player described that at the beginning of the season he was motivated with his head up because the TSSM welcomed him to the program with positivity and passion, however, as the TSSM increased his control by alienating the player and rejecting his ideas, the player's motivation decreased.

Decreased player confidence. Through negative language and control, such as belittling and micromanagement, the TSSM caused the player to question his athletic ability and decreased his confidence. The player described that TSSM belittled him by telling him he was not good enough when he made a mistake and this communication shifted the way the player saw his abilities. The player then questioned the moves he made on the field because he thought that the wrong move would result in being yelled at by the TSSM. The player's self-doubt was not caused by his own ability, but by acting reactively and out of fear propagated by the TSSM; he was walking on eggshells. The player feared verbal punishment from the TSSM, which decreased his confidence in his ability and subsequently led to decreased performance. This finding of decreased confidence is akin to the finding to presented by Kusy and Holloway (2009), who described that those individuals who face attack on self-esteem display low confidence and a reduced sense of self-efficacy leading to a deterioration in individual performance.

The once confident player coming into the program was belittled for his mistakes by the TSSM until his confidence decreased. With low confidence, the TSSM increased his control over the athlete (due to the player's fear of reprisal if he spoke up; Jones, 1996), and could use him to achieve his own objectives. The player described that he wasn't the same player as when we first

came into the soccer program as a result of this decreased. Likewise, the TSSM was not the same member he was when we introduced the player into the program; he transformed from positive to toxic.

Lack of player development. The player described that he failed to develop physically or morally because the TSSM was too focused on his personal objective, such as winning, and failed to pay attention to the athlete's development. Ironically, if the TSSM focused on the athlete's development, it would have likely aided him in achieving his objectives, such as winning. Developing players physically and tactically would increase their ability to achieve objectives and may have minimized the negativity and negativity of the TSSM. However, the adversity experienced by the TSSM outlined in the first vignette increased the TSSM's negative characteristics, which blinded him from noticing the athlete's failure to develop. Moreover, the TSSM would be unlikely to develop the athlete because of his inability to communicate effectively. For example, the player described that the TSSM failed to describe soccer drills to the player and this left player confused on what to do. The player's confusion frustrated the TSSM to the point where the TSSM ordered the players run laps for the remainder of the practice. Furthermore, the decreased motivation described by the athlete as a result of the belittling, shifting blame, and rejecting viewpoints, prevented the athlete from playing and practicing with intensity. A similar finding was found in organizational psychology, that is, when a follower of a toxic leader experiences low motivation, their work ethic suffers (Schilling, 2009).

Lack of physical development. The player described that the TSSM failed to develop the players on the team in a physical aspect through directionless, un-intense, and lack of practices. Kipfelsberger and Kark (2018) argued that a toxic leaders high degree of selfishness and

willingness to put one's needs ahead the needs of others can lead to the inability for the follower to develop. This current result provides insight into this observation as the TSSM was previously described by the player as selfish because he accepts credit for the team's success as his own. Therefore, the TSSM wanted to achieve his personal objectives to diminish his insecurity concerning his position on the team and did not focus his efforts on the athlete's physical development.

Milosevic and colleagues (2019) suggested that toxic leaders lack competency in the fields they lead, and as a result, fail to develop followers. The results of the current study support this finding through the players description that the TSSM lacked the technical competency to create effective practices fostered athlete development. Furthermore, when the TSSM became frustrated with the athlete for not completing the drills at practice, possibly due to the TSSM's lack of soccer competence, he punished the athlete with physical activity. However, Lipman-Bluman (2005a) suggested that the competence of toxic leaders should not be underestimated, as many times they are leaders who have "the right stuff" but the wrong intensity and communicate their objectives through self-interest. Similarly, the player described the TSSM as a poor communicator and selfish. The TSSM may have been competent but could not communicate effectively. Regardless of if the TSSM was or was not competent, the player described that the TSSM did not increase the team's technical ability through poor practices and punishment, and subsequently this decreased their competitive performance. This decreased competitive performance was evident, as the player described losing six games in a row.

The player described that during the winter months, once the season had ended, the TSSM failed to develop the player because he did not create a practice outlines. This finding is interesting because the TSSM reduced the amount of control that he had over the player during

the winter months. For example, the TSSM did not punish the athlete for showing up to winter practice hungover. This finding goes against research on toxic leaders that described a toxic leader as controlling every aspects of the organization at all times (see Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007, Lipman-Bluman 2005a). This may be because during the winter months there is no competition (i.e., season games) and therefore the TSSM does not feel insecure about his team position. Regardless, the TSSM failed to develop the player in the winter months due failure to organize practices.

Lack of moral development. The player described that the TSSM was focused solely on athletic development, and as a result, the TSSM failed to develop the athletes' integrity. Pelletier (2010) described that a toxic leader who lacks integrity unethically bends or breaks rules, and demands others to bend or break rules to meet company agendas. This current result supports this claim as the player described that he was encouraged to injure players, persuade the referee, and get down on his fellow teammates. Furthermore, Lipman-Bluman (2005a) described that a toxic leader's poor decisions are a result of amorality; in other words, they are unconcerned with right or wrong. The TSSM may have encouraged the athlete to commit these unethical acts because he is unable to discern right from wrong and was focused on reducing his insecurity concerning his position. The player expressed that through the TSSM encouraging these immoral acts, players with similar ideologies, such as the captain, believed that they were okay. According to the player, this immoral encouragement furthered toxicity because it created a divide within the team; one group of players that thought it was okay to act unethically, and another group that did not.

The creation of a destructive environment. The player described that as a result of the TSSM's negative characteristics, such as excessive control, selfish actions, and poor

communication, that the team environment became destructive. This finding is supported by Appelbaum and Roy-Girard (2007), who communicated that a toxic leader is the most important role in creating a toxic environment. Furthermore, Milosevic and colleagues (2019) similarly described that when tactics, such as control, are used, toxic leaders increase the toxicity of the organizational environment. The player described this destructive environment through three subthemes: absent winning mentality, lack of fun, and increased team divide.

Absent winning mentality. The player expressed that although he was on a competitive team, there was a lack of winning mentality. The player described that as the season progressed, and they continued to perform poorly, the team gave up. This result is supported by findings in organizational psychology, where when a toxic leader is present, the organization faces decreased performance from employees (Lipman-Bluman, 2005a; Pelletier, 2010). This finding is also supported within sports psychology literature; as when a team cancer is present, the team faces decreased performance (Cope et al., 2010). However, the player then described that the TSSM failed to respond to this decreased performance by being okay with mediocracy, forgetting to come up with a training schedule, and substituting practice for bowling. This insight is novel because this result suggests that the TSSM gave up and no longer cared about his reputation, possible due to his acceptance that the team would not win games. This finding differs from the research on the toxic leader, wherein the toxic leader does everything s/he can to maintain the company's reputation and success (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Lipman-Bluman, 2005a). The player describes that this absent winning mentality of the TSSM had impacted him because he no longer cared put in the effort to succeed, such as motivating his teammates to push forward. The player explained that he saw older players on the team performing half-paced as a result of the TSSM inability to put effort into the team. The player

may have felt confused as to why a competitive elite-level team had no winning mentality. Further, researchers have described that when an employee of a toxic member perceives injustice, they retaliate against that member through sabotaging operations, such as reduced effort (Mehta & Meheshwari, 2014; Tepper, 2000). Likewise, the player described that near the end of the season, when all hope was lost, he wanted to purposely fail to make a point that the TSSM made poor decisions for the team.

Lack of fun. The player described that soccer became a chore for him and expressed this by stating that he would rather sleep all day than wake up and go to practice. He compares this feeling to a feeling he had when he was a child. The player described that when he was a child he had energy and enthusiasm for soccer; he would wake up with excitement for the sport. However, the player expressed that when the TSSM failed to organize proper practices and punished the player through yelling at mistakes, he lost the player's interest to practice. Similarly, Stirling and Kerr (2013) described that when athletes have negative perceptions of their relationship with their coach, their enjoyment and interest for their sport is decreased. This loss of interest contributes to the uncaring attitude of the player and results in the player not having fun on the team.

Team divide. The player described that the team begin to deteriorate as a result of the TSSM's negative characteristics. More specifically, the player explained that the TSSM used the team division to rival the team against each other. For example, the player explained that the TSSM accomplished this by putting players that aligned with his ideas on one team, and players that did not on another. This finding is akin to the finding presented by Lipman-Bluman (2005a) wherein a toxic leader maliciously sets employees against one another for personal gain.

The player explained that through this inner-team rival, the team became more cliquy, and this was evident when players would not talk to each other in the change room. This result was also found in research on the team cancer and negative coaching in a sports context; wherein small exclusive groups developed within the team as a result of the negative role(s) (Cope et al., 2010; Gearity & Murray, 2011). However, the player described that TSSM continued to increase team divide by separating players based on where they stood in his hierarchy. That is, players that do not play much are considered at the lower station of his hierarchy while starting players are higher up. The player described that the team divide translated over to the games and decreased the team performance. For example, players that were quarreling with one another did not pass to each other on the field. The TSSM may have increased the team divide in order to have a group of players that were on his side. For example, by having a group of player aligned with his thoughts and decision, the TSSM may feel that his insecurity is diminished; he has players willing to stick up for him if anything were to happen.

Increased team unity. The player described that the when he first joined the team it was divided, primarily between younger players and older players because the TSSM rivaled teammates against each other. However, as the player aged and transitioned from his rookie year to a more veteran year (i.e., third or fourth year), he described that he attempted to foster team cohesion by getting the team together without the presence of the TSSM. The player became more independent and realized that the TSSM was the reason for the initial team divide, therefore, he tried to mitigate this by fostering a team of inclusion by including all players in team activities. The player described that through this inclusion, the team became united as one, instead of separated into cliques.

Player revolt. The player described that the increased unity allowed the player to realize the TSSM was not entirely needed for team success. For example, the player described that the TSSM did not produce constructive criticism that improved on the player's performance. Instead, he focused on what the player did wrong; therefore, the player did not need to listen to him because the TSSM failed to contribute to the player's development. The TSSM's poor communication, such as the confidence destroying belittlement that was used to control the player, was now being ignored because the player realized it served no purpose. The player explained that he attempted to protect the new players coming into the program from the consequences of the TSSM in order to maintain an increased sense of unity. The TSSM encouraged team divide; therefore, the player established team unity in an attempt to mitigate the divide.

As the team became closer, the player described that the players attempted to take control of the team and took the team. The player described that the team stopped listening to the TSSM and organized their own practices without the presence of the TSSM because the current practices were not developing the players. As soon as the team became united, it seems as though the winning mentality reappeared. The player, who braved the storm of the TSSM who caused increased sadness, confusion, and fear, was now motivated for change. He described that the team went above the TSSM and talked to the athletic director concerning the behaviour they faced. The team felt a heightened sense of injustice due to the TSSM and signed a petition to get rid of him. Similarly, the finding is supported by researchers who described that a toxic leader negatively influences follower's perception of injustice (Mehta & Meheshwari, 2014; Tepper, 2000). However, within athlete maltreatment literature, this finding is understudied. Stirling and Kerr (2009) described that athletes will rarely speak up for to report any sort of abuse because

the person in superiority influences the athletes' decision through repercussions. The player attempted to retaliate his perceived injustice, but was stopped by the athletic director, and who subsequently informed the coach that players were revolting against him. Walton (2007) described that concerns about loss of power, status, and control are enough to trigger dysfunctional, toxic behaviour. Likewise, when the player attempted to revolt against the TSSM, the TSSM's insecurity was heightened, and subsequently, the player described increased control from the TSSM to avoid losing his handle over the team. Although the player thought he braved the storm and witnessed a sunny day because of increased team unity, he was simply in the eye of the storm, and more negative consequences were on the way.

Stage Four: Chronic Consequences Resulting in a Final Team Deterioration

Two themes are introduced in "Chronic Consequences Resulting in a Final Team Deterioration." The first theme introduced is the decreased performance of the player. Two subthemes represent the player's decreased performance: decreased academic performance and decreased sport performance. Following theme one, the second theme introduced, loss of players. The theme is represented by two subthemes: decreased players coming into the program and increased player turnover. More specifically, more players are quitting, and less high-quality players are coming into the program.

Results. Soccer was a big part of my university experience, but soccer was only played for two months. The academic portion was a full eight months and it was my number one priority! School was hard on its own, but balancing school with soccer was difficult. I was busier, and I had more on the go compared to an average student. Back in high school, playing sports made my school life more successful. I had practices and games six or seven times a week, but the crowded schedule forced me to allow time for my studies. I knew that if I wanted

to continue playing sports, I had to keep up my grades. When I started university, it was totally different. I'd come home mentally and physically drained because of his negativity. School was draining enough, so pairing that with the exhaustion of soccer was debilitating. I was an A student my first year, then I started getting a couple B's, and then the B's transitioned to C's. I couldn't get myself motivated for soccer or for school because of him, and my grades were really affected.

Our performance gradually deteriorated until midway through the season we fell off completely. We started strong; we had a couple of successful games. The more we lost games the more controlling he got. I noticed our practices were poor and he spent more time yelling than actually developing us. I saw players lose motivation to play; my friend told me that he didn't want to be at the school anymore. We knew we were going to miss playoffs so the older players on the team stopped trying; they gave no effort. He became more toxic and controlling, and we stopped performing. The season was awful; I believe we only won one game, tied maybe three or four, we were right at the bottom of the table. In our last two seasons, we sat second last. We never got results, even in those all or nothing scenarios where a win would have allowed us to continue to push for a playoff spot. The playoffs are the goal of every team; the season games are just a warm-up for the playoffs, but we never performed. We couldn't contend for a playoff spot in second last place. Our performances were being displayed, and at the end of the year, we were a laughing stock. I remember once I got into a fight, not a physical fight but an argument, with a teammate over how we were supposed to press the other team. I did exactly what I was told to do, and he did exactly what he was told to do. We both did the right thing, but we were told two completely different methods of pressing. He told us two different things, so we weren't on the same page; it impacted how we played. Our chemistry was a little ruined after that. I

thought my way was right and he though his way was right. When a team is divided it's doesn't play effectively together. I remember inside the locker room players wouldn't talk to each other, and once we got on the field those players wouldn't pass to each other.

I was confused being part of a team that was always below 500. He continued to preach at us and say, "as long as we do our things, we will be successful," but we never were because he forced his ideals onto the way we play, rejected feedback, and organized terrible practices. For him to suggest and preach that if we continue to do his things we will be successful was beyond frustrating, almost comical. I had the worst games of my life, the worst seasons of my life, and nothing changed for me; I questioned why I stuck around. Even when I felt like I had a good game or made a good play he belittled me and he caused me to doubt my abilities. He never came up to me and said, "you did really well today," he never said anything positive, he would yell at me. I wasn't having fun; it's not fun to have someone yell at you for everything you do. I would think, "what is the point, why am I playing?" Like I said before, I lost motivation. I didn't want to succeed to prove a point that they made poor decisions and our terrible record resembled that attitude. Other teams were excited to play us because they knew it was an easy win. We knew that we weren't making the playoffs, so why bother? Our season always came to an end before it should have. I think we had good quality players on the team, but we rarely had good game together. We should've been golfers instead of soccer players because we ended up on the golf course at the end of the season; we were always out early.

Other organizations and teams noticed when we started doing poorly, and our poor results deterred people from wanting to work with the organization. Athletes don't want to play for a team that is always losing games. We had a heavy losing record so I think that deterred players from wanted to play for our team. Good quality players at the school told me personally that they

wouldn't play because of this member; they didn't like him. Every other team in the league was recruiting, and he didn't; there was no progression for the club. He completely neglected our development by not recruiting players in the offseason. We used to have a strong recruiting line with a high-level academy team where players coming out of high school would come to our university, train with our team, and then be encouraged to join the squad come September. We had Alumni that played for both our university team and the academy team; it was an important line of communication for us. A big part of improving as a team is getting those lines of recruitment and bringing in talented players partnerships with different clubs. I remember when I came up to practice with the team in high school there were a lot of players from this academy team at the practice. I thought "wow, these guys are good;" I was actually nervous that I wouldn't make the team the following year. But, if you don't take care of your players, your assets, your goose that lays the golden egg, they won't take care of you. Slowly, there were less and less of the academy players coming up to practice, until one day there was none. I found out that one of my teammates that came from that academy team was so sick of his b***** that he talked to the academy director back home and told him that the university soccer program is nothing worth coming to. He never insulted the school and said that players could get a good education, but if you wanted to play soccer here you would be better off not coming. He told the academy director to send good players to a different school where they would be developed appropriately. He had nothing against the school, the facilities, or the professors, it was just the toxic member that pushed him. I am sure it wasn't just that player either because the academy team director called our school and said, "I've heard some rumbling and I think the situation isn't going too well up there." Within about a year, our whole recruitment line came crashing down. Quality players weren't coming in, no effort was made to go recruit quality players, and the

reputation of the soccer program suffered. I understand that it is tough to compete when we don't have the best players coming in the program, but it felt like he made no attempt to recruit. I gave him everything I could on the field, but because he didn't do his part we never succeeded. We had an entire group of people who were on the field representing the core of the organization not wanting to be there. We were a laughing stock; we lost almost every game we played. He made me ashamed of where I was; I couldn't wear any of the stuff anymore. I was hopeless; I didn't want to play anymore.

The control, the belittling, the yelling, poor grades, always losing, it all became too much for some members on the team. He was too much, and so soccer had to go. I had a friend who decided in his second year that he wasn't going to play soccer and focused on himself. All it took was one year for him to quit; I should've done the same thing. Some people can handle it more than others, and I thought I could tough it out, but eventually I didn't want to play anymore; I felt defeated. I always loved playing soccer, it was my first real passion, but within the context of the team, I felt alienated. I wasn't included in team meetings so I felt like he didn't want me there. He stripped me of my self-worth, and I had doubts about everything that I did; I couldn't play if he were there. I tried to balance the stress of school, playing two games every weekend, training three or four times a week, and then when you have to deal with another stressor, like him, it becomes too overwhelming. Soccer had to go; I had to pay attention to me, I focused more on myself and my education. I wasn't the only player that decided to quit; he caused a lot of people to leave. I had friends, really good players, OUA all-star caliber players, quit because of how they were treated. One of my friends completely dropped out of school. He said he only came to school to play soccer, so I asked him, "why don't you just switch schools?" He said that "I can't transfer to another university because I will miss a year." Soccer was holding everything together

for him, and as soon as it started going south, he gave up. Every year seven or eight people would quit because of him, young and old. It was extremely high turnover, but do you expect? If you want to strip the toxic member of his power, you just have to quit. Then you're no longer under his control.

Discussion. “Chronic Consequences that Lead to a Final Team Deterioration” provides insight into the fourth stage of the transformational process of coach to toxic staff member. Throughout initial three stages, the coach transformed from a positive, passionate coach, to a TSSM that the player described as controlling with entrenched ideas that psychologically impacted the player through negative emotional states, such as increased fear and sadness. The player described increased negative consequences that the TSSM had on the team such as a lack of physical and moral development and the creation of a destructive environment. Reed (2004) described that those who serve under a toxic leader might become disenchanted with the organization they represent due to resentment caused by the TSSM. Vignette four showcases similar disenchantment through two final consequences of the TSSM: decreased performance (Subthemes: academic performance and sport performance) and loss of players (subthemes: decreased players coming into the program and increased turnover rate). This vignette adds to the answer of the second research question (i.e., Within a sporting organization, what consequences does a toxic sports staff member elicit, and how do the consequences impact the sporting organization?) by introducing the consequence themes that were storied by the player. These themes will be discussed in relation to their subthemes and the literature.

Decreased performance. Stirling and Kerr (2013) described that as a result of an abusive athlete-coach relationship, an athlete can perceive decreased performance. This finding is supported in this research, as the player described that his academic and sport performance

suffered as a result of the TSSM. However, the player also described that it was not simple individual performance that suffered, but team performance also decreased. The player compared the start of the season where the team started strong, to the end of the season where they lost more games than they won. The player explained that the TSSM became more controlling as the team continued to lose games. As a result of losing, the TSSM may have faced tremendous external pressure that increased his need for control over the player. This external pressure to perform is similar to the pressure that Cope and colleagues (2010) described as a possible cause of the team cancer. However, due to the team cancer being a player, they exerted less control over other members of the team. For example, a team cancer cannot control team formation, punishments, practices outlines, or other teammates playing time. Comparatively, the TSSM had more control by making team related decision, such as playing time, team punishment, and practice outlines. The TSSM increased his control over players the more the team lost because the poor performance increased the destabilizing pressure the TSSM faced. For instance, during the first vignette, the TSSM exerted control through on-field micromanagement, such as telling the players what to do and how to do it while they were playing. However, continuous losses increased the TSSM's pressure to perform, therefore he increased his control over players by rejecting their ideas, belittling them for speaking up, and creating a culture of fear where it was not okay to challenge his decisions. This finding of need for control is similar to how a toxic leader is concerned with the position of control and uses it to protect his position (Milosevic et al., 2019). Within this discussion, the consequences of that increased control is revealed through sport performance and academic deterioration.

Decreased academic performance. The player described that although soccer was a big part of his time at the university, the academics were more important. He showcased this by

juxtaposing the length of the two; soccer is played for two months, while school is a full eight months. The player described that the pairing of school and soccer was debilitating and exhausting, and he became demotivated. At this point, the player would have experienced numerous psychological states, such as increased fear, sadness, and apathy, and these states could have been affecting other areas of his life, such as school.

Milosevic and colleagues (2019) described that when a follower of a toxic leader is demotivated, they often face considerable difficulty in performing their duties. However, much of the literature on the toxic leader focuses on the leader's effect on the duties performed workplace; in other words, employees have a hard time completing workplace duties when they are not motivated. Cortina and colleagues (2001) further suggested that a toxic leader can negatively impact a follower's psychological well-being which could be linked to deterioration in other aspects of the follower's life other than work (e.g., relationships). Likewise, not only was the player affected on the soccer field, but he was affected in the classroom. This finding is exemplified through the player's description of his grades transitioning from A's to B's and finally to C's; similar to how ingesting a poison has systemic effects on the whole body, the TSSM affected the whole life of the player.

Decreased sport performance. The player explained that the team transitioned from successful at the beginning of the season, to unsuccessful midway through the season. As the TSSM transitioned from positive to toxic throughout the four vignettes, the performance of the team followed a similar trend. The player described that the TSSM spent more time yelling at the players on the team during practice and he expressed that players lost their motivation to play. For example, the older players on the team gave up because they knew they were going to miss the playoffs. This finding of decreased motivation causing players to lose their enthusiasm to

play and is consistent with the findings of Einarson and colleagues (2007), who described that a toxic leader decreases the motivation of follower through negative communication which leads to decreased performance in the workplace. The players may have become frustrated with continually losing games and failing to develop. The solution to the problem may have been simple in the player's eyes (i.e., an effectively run practice) but out of reach because of the TSSM's rigid viewpoint and silencing tactics through belittling prevented the players from making suggestions. Therefore, as a result of the player's inability to speak up with suggestions for an effective practice, which may have increased their motivation to play, and were silenced and demotivated.

Cope and colleagues (2010) described that when a cancer role is present on a team, the team may experience decreased performance on an individual and group level (i.e., losses) and this can lead to a divided team. This finding is exemplified when the player described that the TSSM's contradicting communication impacted the way that he played. For example, he was told one how to press the other team, while another player was told a completely different way of pressing. When the two players tried to press the team and were not on the same page, they became argumentative with each other. The player expressed that this contradictive communication caused the two teammates to become more divided, which negatively impacted their performance because they were not thinking in a similar way.

The player went on to describe how the TSSM preached at the player that the team would be successful if they (i.e., the team) continue to do "their thing." There was a divide between what the player thought should happen to prevent losing, and what the TSSM implemented. The TSSM may have wanted to perform successfully to increase his credibility and decrease his insecurity on the team, however, as the player described, his firm ideals, rejecting attitude, and

poor practices prevented him from increasing the player's performance that would lead to those goals. Therefore, the TSSM may have thought that his tactic would lead the team to success and did not want to change because he had firm ideals.

The player expressed that even when he felt like he had a good game, the TSSM belittled him for his mistakes and increased his self-doubt because he did not perform in the way that the TSSM wanted him to perform. Kusy and Holloway (2009) described that when an individual's self-efficacy is reduced by a toxic member, that individual experiences a deterioration in performance. Likewise, this self-doubt (or lack of self-efficacy) may have further affected the player's performance, as he was belittled to the point where he believed that he was not a good player. The player described that the season always prematurely came to an end before it should have. That is, the team did not consist of bad players, but the way they were developed did not contribute to increased performance. As a result of the TSSM's inability to develop players, the player described that the team always missed out on playoffs.

Loss of players. The player described that other teams and organizations (i.e., academy clubs) noticed their poor record and this deterred people from wanting to work with the organization. For example, athletes want to win, and this losing record was large enough that athletes did not want to come to this school. As mentioned in vignette one, the TSSM wanted a positive reputation and would do anything to ensure this. When faced with adversity, which triggered insecurity in his reputation and credibility, the TSSM increased control over the player through rules and micromanagement. However, as the control increased, and the player faced the growing consequences of the TSSM's toxicity, the team's performance was hindered, and now the team's reputation is decreased to that of a losing team that consistently fails to make playoffs. The positive coach who was mentioned in the first vignette could entice players to register at the

school and play for the program. However, the positive coach may have went after unsuspecting new fresh players that demonstrated a need for fulfillment, such as a player that eagerly wanted to play on a soccer team. This finding is supported by Lipman-Bluman (2005a) who described that a follower may feel accepted by the toxic leader due to their ability to satisfy an internal needs, wish or aspiration. Therefore, players who had high aspiration of playing varsity soccer may have been easily recruited, while those who had low aspirations were not. Nonetheless, the player described that through decreased recruitment and increased players turnover, the team slowly collapsed.

Decreased players coming into the program. The player described that recruitment suffered in two ways. First, the player explained that the TSSM failed to recruit players to play for the program. When a toxic environment experiences decreased or weak performance, the reputation the organization suffers (Vreja et al., 2016). Furthermore, the awareness of the presence of toxic behaviours by those external to the organization can negatively affect an organization to attract candidates (Sutton, 2007). This finding is supported through the player's description that talented players would not represent the soccer team because they did not like the TSSM's behaviours or the losing record. The players may have seen the risks outweigh the reward. For example, the risks of belittlement from the TSSM may have outweighed the joy of playing soccer. The toxicity of the TSSM shifted from within the team environment, to a larger scale, where students within the school environment could notice its effect, and this toxicity prevented them from representing the school. This lack of players coming into the program may have furthered the TSSM's insecurity because one, his current players were not achieving his standards, and two, players that could be a solution to his insecurity (i.e., talented players within the school could help the team get wins) did not want to represent the team.

Second, the player described that the TSSM collapsed a recruiting line with an academy club. For example, the player expressed that another player on the team was fed up with the TSSM failing to develop players, so he called the academy club team back home and suggested he stop sending players to the school. Tepper (2000) described that when a follower of a toxic member experiences perceived injustice, the follower will retaliate against the member that caused the perceived injustice. Tepper's finding was demonstrated through this description of the player informing the academy clubs coach about the TSSM. The player may have felt tricked or deceived as a result of the TSSM and this led to a feeling of injustice. For instance, he relocated to the university because the TSSM appeared passionate and promising of a good season, now he was not developing as a player, getting belittled, and experiencing tremendous psychological impacts (e.g., fear from threats, sadness). Importantly, the member that experiences the perceived injustice will retaliate against the person that inflicted the injustice (Tepper, 2000). The player described that the former academy player did not talk down the school, facilities, or professors, but instead described that it was the TSSM that was the problem, the one who caused the injustice.

As Reed (2004) described, the only way to determine whether a leader is toxic is to look at the cumulative effect of de-motivational behaviour on morale over time. This finding is exemplified by through the player's expression that he no longer wanted to wear the teams clothing anymore (e.g., track suits, sweaters) because he was ashamed of where he was (i.e., a team with a heavy losing record). The player, who came into the program excited to play, was now demotivated, sad, and confused. The TSSM shifted a destabilizing personal pressure to perform through micromanagement, belittlement, and control onto the athlete, who then caved under the pressure. The TSSM had a reckless disregard for the cost of his actions, a result that is

also found by Lipman-Bluman (2005a). As a result of the reckless disregard, the player felt hopeless and unmotivated to play, which further impacted the team's performance because when one is unmotivated to play, effort is hard to come by.

Increased player turnover. As a result of balancing all the negative stressors, such as belittling, decreased grades, and decreased performance (i.e., "always losing"), the player described soccer had to go. This was the case for many on the team, for example, the player explained that after one year playing on the team, his friend quit. The results suggest that player may have realized that the TSSM was the cause of the negativity, and because he could not get rid of the TSSM (due to a previous attempt that failed), he had to quit.

Thoroughgood and colleagues (2012) explained that a toxic leader increases the employees' intention to quit because of the negative consequences put on the employee (e.g., psychological distress). Similarly, within coaching literature, athletes may cope to the adverse effects by thinking about or going as far as quitting the team (Gearity & Murray, 2011). Akin to these findings, the player described that the TSSM caused many negative consequences on the team, and this caused him to think about quitting, thereby supporting the above claims. For example, the player described that the TSSM made the player feel worthless, increase his self-doubt, and caused him to feel alienated from the team. Through alienation from the rest of the team, the player described that he felt that he was not wanted by the TSSM, further contributing to his want to quit. He may have wanted to have a feeling of acceptance with a group of individuals, but could not achieve that feeling on the team, so his only option was quitting. If one individual quits a team, it is no indication of a TSSM and could be attributed to the player's inability to cope to a negative situation. However, Zimmerman (2002) described that those who work in a toxic organization cause an abnormally high, rapid turnover rate through manipulation

and self-centered agendas. Likewise, the current results support this claim, as the player described that every year seven or eight players would quit the team. Not only is this number abnormally high for a soccer team (usually players do not quit, they graduate or fail to remake the team), but it is rapid. Therefore, the team was left in a state of lacking quality players, not only were good players are failing to come in due to a decreased brand reputation, but players were leaving because they did not want to represent TSSM and were defeated from battling the negative consequences. This player loss could further the TSSM's state of insecurity because he does not have the talent to beat opposing teams, or it could act as a trigger to deceive players. For example, he may increase his positivity to manipulate players to join the team. However, the process of members quitting an organization, and the effect of a high turnover rate on a toxic leader is currently unstudied. Furthermore, the players who quit may have viewed quitting as retaliation, a way to fight back against the TSSM. For example, the player described that if one wants to strip the toxic member of his power, one just has to quit.

Chapter Summary

The chapter began with a description of creative non-fiction and composite vignettes, the methods used to present the results. After this description, the results from stage one (i.e., The Beginning of the Characteristics) were introduced, followed by the discussion for those results. After stage one, the results from stage two (i.e., Increased Control and Inflated Negative Characteristics) were introduced, followed by the stage two discussion. Then the results from stage three (i.e., Initial Team Deterioration with Minor Optimism for Change) were presented, followed by the stage three discussion. Finally, the results from stage four (i.e., Chronic Consequences Resulting in a Final Team Deterioration) were introduced, followed by the stage four discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The objective of the current study was to use the stories of elite-level male soccer players to develop an understanding of the TSSM. The research questions that led this project were: 1) What are the general characteristics of the toxic sport staff member? and 2) Within a sporting organization, what consequences does a toxic sports staff member elicit? The summary of the findings in relation to both these questions are presented next.

Summary of the Findings

In regard to the first research question, the study identified several characteristics of the TSSM, both positive and negative. These characteristics were presented within the first two vignettes. The first vignette presented three characteristic themes, and vignette two introduced the last three characteristic themes. First, the TSSM is passionate until adversity, such as a string of losses, is presented. Second, once the TSSM experiences the adversity, he becomes insecure about his position on the team (Subtheme: questioning his role on the team). Third, in an attempt to mitigate this insecurity, the TSSM becomes controlling over players (subthemes: on-field control and off-field control). Fourth, the TSSM's maintains his rigid viewpoints over the team (subthemes: rejecting and firm ideals). Fifth, the TSSM is a poor communicator (subthemes: ambiguous communication and negative communication). Finally, the TSSM is selfish (subthemes: deflects blame and accepts credit). Resulting from these six characteristics, six consequences were introduced. First, the player faced increased negative and decreased positive affective states (subthemes: increased confusion, increased sadness, increased fear, increased apathy, and decreased confidence). Second, the TSSM contributes to a lack of player development (subthemes: physical development and moral development). Third, the TSSM created a destructive environment (subthemes: absent winning mentality, increased team divide,

and lack of fun for players). Fourth, there may be an increased team unity in an attempt for players the problem of the TSSM (subtheme: player revolt). Fifth, the team experiences decreased performance (subthemes: academic performance and sport performance). Finally, the team experiences a loss of players (subthemes: decreased players coming into the program and increased turnover rate).

Applications

First, this research could be used as a guide for recognizing TSSM's within a sporting organization. The player described that all the toxic characteristics and consequences were present within the sporting organization, however, this was oblivious to those in power controlling the situation (i.e., the athletic director) Lipman-Bluman (2005a) described that organizations could become an incubator for toxic or dysfunctional behaviour by failing to recognize when a toxic member is present. Therefore, the results of this study may be used as an indication tool to recognize those who posit toxic characteristics. Furthermore, once recognized, the organization can deal with the toxicity accordingly. This could include a re-training the toxic individual or firing the toxic individual, thereby mitigating the effects of that toxic member before they take place.

Second, the player described that he approached the athletic director concerning the TSSM's destructive actions (i.e., physical damage to property). The athletic director could have mitigated the toxicity by demonstrating that the destructive behaviour was wrong. However, nothing was implemented by the athletic director, and the TSSM continued to impact the team negatively. Organizations should take the complaints of their players seriously, as they are likely to be the first to be impacted by the TSSM. Furthermore, following the players' complaints and concerns, it is recommended that an organization should formulate checks and controls for the

identification of the TSSM and intervene accordingly when approached by a member effected by the TSSM.

Finally, the player described numerous consequences of the TSSM and how he affected players at the group (e.g., decreased performance, high turnover rate) and the individual (e.g., increased emotional states, decreased grades). If an organization witnesses individual or group dysfunction, an effort should be made to help the victims. Often times a victim affected by a toxic member is scared of speaking up due to fear of reprisal (Padilla et al., 2007). Likewise, the player in this study was silenced from speaking up through fear. Therefore, efforts should be made to help victims, listen to their viewpoints, and hopefully, fix the problem.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This section pertains to the limitation and future directions that could be explored to continue to expand the knowledge around the TSSM. Limitations are of the current study, followed by future research ideas. This project acted as an introductory research piece to explore the TSSM. Therefore, only one population of participants were explored, these being elite-level male soccer players. Understanding the nuances of the TSSM takes time, and to understand the nuances in multiple sports, playing levels, and genders would be time costly, especially given the time-frame of a masters-level thesis. Although this adds empirical evidence on what we know concerning the TSSM, this information only appears in elite-level male soccer players. Therefore, one limitation of this research is that it was only conducted within one specific context. However, this limitation should not overshadow the importance of this new information on the TSSM. Instead, it should act as a starting point for future research (described below) concerning this role.

A second limitation, as perceived by the researcher, was the researcher's inexperience in conducting and analyzing interviews. Although he did a sufficient job, this was his first time conducting high-level research. An experienced researcher may have been able to take the interviews to another level of depth through further probing of athletes' stories. Reflecting on this, the researcher views this inexperience as a partial limitation, but also an experience that can be used to accelerate the quality of his future research. Above all else, this was a learning experience.

A final limitation was the time available to complete this project. This time limitation is due to situations both in and out of the researcher's control. First, the researcher worked full-time last summer (2018) to pay for school. Working full-time prevented the researcher from working efficiently on his thesis. Secondly, the ethics board approval took longer than expected to be approved. These time constraints meant that the researcher had to rush his data collection and data analysis. Given more time, the researcher may have been able to reach a deeper level of analysis.

This research was eye-opening. The stories shared were compelling and emotional; however, this is only the first insight into the severity of the TSSM. Within a critical realist paradigm, the role will never be understood entirely. Nonetheless, there are future areas of research that scholars can explore that may help increase the knowledge of such a toxic role.

First, future research can be directed at understanding how a TSSM emerges within a sporting organization and how this role can be managed. Both of these areas of research could be important in mitigating the effects of the TSSM. For example, understanding how a TSSM emerges within an organization may provide an understanding of how to stop or alter the emergence pattern. In doing so, the toxic individual may be recognized and not hired, or the

toxic qualities can be slowly dealt with until that individual's toxicity is no longer a problem. Comparatively, if we understood how to manage a TSSM, the negative characteristics of that role could be controlled or altered as to prevent the negative consequences from transpiring.

Further, this research was only conducted using elite-level male soccer players. Future researchers may want to look into the impact of the TSSM on different sports teams or individual sports, different sexes, and different levels of competition. By examining different contexts (i.e., different sexes, sports, and playing competition), researchers may be able to find similarities or differences of the TSSM and add to the growing literature on informal roles. To this end, different contexts will allow for a more accurate representation of TSSM.

This research demonstrates how the organizations may be one of the root causes of negative member development. Organizational focus on performance outcomes instead of holistic athlete development may lead members to become insecure about their positions within organizations if they are failing to reach those outcomes. Future researchers may find interest in studying holistic athlete centered models and, if successful, implement these programs into current Ontario athletics organizations, such as the OUA.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this study has provided the identification of six characteristics and six consequences of the TSSM. This study acts as an introduction to the severity that the TSSM can cause within a sports team. More specifically, it showcases a transformational process of positive coach, to toxic staff member. However, it only showcases the TSSM through the eyes of an athlete, and as a result of this and the theoretical framework, all results should be viewed as stories and not facts. Researchers should explore the more in depth the potential impact of the

TSSM and ways to mitigate this member to make the experience of athletes in university sports more successful and enjoyable.

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Appendix A: Continuum of Elite-Level Athlete

Variable/score	1	2	3	4	
A. Athlete's highest standard of performance	Regional level; university level; semi-professional; 4 th tier leagues or tours	Involved in talent development; 3 rd tier professional leagues or tours	National level; selected to represent nation; 2 nd tier professional leagues or tours	International level; top tier professional leagues or tours	Within-sport comparison
B. Success at the athlete's highest level	Success at regional, university, semi-professional, or 3 rd /4 th tier	National titles or success at 2 nd /3 rd tier	Infrequent success at international level or top tier	Sustained success in major international, globally recognised competition	
C. Experience at the athlete's highest level	<2 years	2-5 years	5-8 years	8+ years	
D. Competitiveness of sport in athlete's country	Sport ranks outside top 10 in county; small sporting nation	Sport ranks 5-10 in country; small-medium sporting nation	Sport ranks top 5 in country; medium-large sporting nation	National sport; large sporting nation	Between-sports comparison
E. Global competitiveness of sport	Not Olympic sport; World championships limited to few countries; limited national TV audience	Occasional Olympic sport; World championships limited to a few countries; limited international TV audience	Recent Olympic sport with regular international competition; semi-global TV audience	Regular Olympic sport with frequent major international competition; global TV audience	

Continuum of elite-level athlete in sport psychology research. From "Defining elite athletes: Issues in the study of expert performance in sport psychology" by C. Swann A. Moran & D. Piggott, Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 16, p. 10. Copyright 2015 by Elsevier. Used with permission from the publisher.

Appendix B: Laurentian University Research Ethics Board Approval Form



APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL /	New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Modifications to project /	Time extension
Name of Principal Investigator and school/department	Cole Giffin, Human Kinetics, supervisor, Rob Schinke		
Title of Project	Understanding the characteristics and consequences of the Toxic Sports Staff Member through the stories of elite-level soccer players		
REB file number	6016088		
Date of original approval of project	January 25, 2019		
Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)			
Final/Interim report due on: (You may request an extension)	January 25, 2019		
Conditions placed on project			

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.

Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, Laurentian University Research Ethics Board