

**The Process of Conflict in the Coach-Athlete Relationship with Elite Female
Athletes: Implications for Continued Participation**

by
Meggie Spicer

Bachelor of Recreation of Sport Studies (University of New Brunswick, 2015)

A Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts in Sport and Recreation Studies

in the Graduate Academic Unit of Kinesiology

Supervisor: Jonathon Edwards, Ph.D, Faculty of Kinesiology

Examining Board: Jeremy Noble, Ph.D, Faculty of Kinesiology, Chair
Terri Byers, Ph.D, Faculty of Kinesiology
Ross Leadbetter, Ph.D, SamtalPartners

This report is accepted by the
Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

August, 2022

©Meggie Spicer, 2022

ABSTRACT

It has been found that there is a lower number of Canadian women athletes competing in both recreational and elite sports in Canada comparatively with male athletes. Causes for dropout such as lack of enjoyment and motivation has been vastly researched in the sport participation literature. Recently, the coach-athlete relationship and conflict in the coach-athlete relationship has become a popular topic involving sport participation. The purpose of this research was to explore the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes to gain insight into the rationale for dropping out of elite sport. A descriptive qualitative method was employed using semi structured interviews. 11 participants were interviewed. Data was analysed by adopting Pondy's (1967) conflict process model. Incongruence power of the coach-athlete relationship and poor conflict management was found to have a significant impact on the manifestation and aftermath of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship.

DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my late coach, Alan Routledge who passed away February 14, 2022. Alan knew how to make every training session enjoyable, even at the worst of times. Alan cared for all of his athletes as people and players while motivating us to be the best we could be. He reminded me how to love soccer again at a time where I considered leaving university soccer. Alan had a large influence on me returning for my fifth and final season of eligibility. The impact Alan had on me in both my soccer career and as a person, will remain with me for the rest of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In conclusion of this research, I would like to thank my study supervisor Dr. Jonathan Edwards. His dedication to this study helped me return to where I was pre-concussion and create a better end product than I had ever imagined. Thank you to my committee members Dr. Terri Byers, and Greg Duquette for your valuable feedback and guidance. I would like to thank my family especially my mother who has always been encouraging and supportive of my return to complete this degree. Finally, I would like to thank all the coaches I had the privilege of having in my career through competitive, university and premier soccer. Their encouragement and dedication kept me competing at the elite level, and my love for the game alive for as long as possible.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	6
Sports Participation Dropout.....	10
Elite Sport Dropout (ESD).....	13
Gaps in the Literature.....	19
Conceptual Framework.....	21
Chapter Three: Methodology/Methods.....	24
Methods.....	25
Recruitment.....	25
Data Collection Process.....	27
Data Analysis.....	28
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion.....	34
Environmental Effects.....	34
Latent Stage of Conflict.....	38
Perceived/Felt Stage of Conflict.....	58
Manifest Stage of Conflict.....	63
The Aftermath Stage of Conflict.....	71
Coach-Athlete Relationship.....	78
Chapter 6: Conclusion, Limitations, Contributions and Future Research Directions.....	89
Limitations.....	92
Contributions and Future Research Directions.....	93
Bibliography.....	95
Appendix A.....	119
Curriculum Vitae	

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Pondy's Conflict Process Model (Pondy. 1967)</i>	21
Table 2. <i>Overview of Participant's Conflict within the Coach-Athlete Relationship</i>	30

List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>The Conflict Process with the Coach-Athlete Relationship</i>	34
--	----

Chapter One: Introduction

Coach-athlete relationships are pivotal to gaining insight into the positive and negative experiences of the athlete and coach. By examining the positive and negative experiences on a spectrum, the positive experiences represent an athlete's enjoyment in the sport which translates into long-term involvement and, ultimately, success. Conversely, having a negative coach-athlete relationship can lead to a negative sporting experience that can lead to athlete attrition or dropout. Thus, understanding elite athlete dropout in sports is important because a significant number of resources go toward producing elite athletes, including personal/family, government, and perhaps private sector sponsorships. Specifically, this research report's focus was on the conflict process in the coach-athlete relationship that leads to elite athlete dropout.

In elite sport, conflict is often unavoidable, making effective communication between coaches and athletes vital (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Furthermore, Wachsmuth et al. (2018) explained that “[d]espite coaches’ and athletes’ best intentions, there will be times when such coaching environments are inevitably disrupted by disagreements, misunderstandings or conflict” (p.371). Although conflict can be positively constructive in the sporting environment (Holt et al., 2012), it can also be harmful (Wachsmuth et al., 2017) and potentially disrupt elite athletes’ participation in sports. Disputes may emanate from disagreements regarding training, injury recovery, underperformance, unmet expectations, and personal life choices (D’Arripe-Longueville et al., 1998; Kristiansen et al., 2012). Therefore, a deeper understanding of conflict management can help prevent interpersonal differences that manifest themselves in the coach-athlete relationship

(Davis & Jowett, 2014), while also being used in the coaching certification and training process (Cushion et al., 2003; Langan et al., 2013; Williams, 2015). The focus of this research report is on elite level of competition.

Elite sport programs are the highest-level of programming in a club or sports organization and is showcase for the individual athletes or teams entering the most elevated level competitions (e.g., USPORT, professional sport, Olympics, and/or world championships). Competing in elite programs tend to require more time investment by the athlete and are often the focus of provincial and national sport organizations (Cote & Hancock, 2016). However, even though elite sport programming exists and provides opportunities for athletes to compete at the highest level possible, there is still a significant premature dropout rate—dropping out of sport without being injured or due to age— from the elite level of sports (Brennar, 2016; Eime et al., 2015).

Elite sport dropout (ESD) differs from recreational grassroots dropout, and several possible factors can influence it. Early specialization is a characteristic to facilitate ESD (Cote et al., 2009). Because of the pressure to compete at a specific level, athletes lose their enjoyment and motivation with the sport, which ultimately leads to ESD (Baron–Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; Keegan et al., 2014). Furthermore, self-determination, adherence, the added pressure to perform, and burnout are other common factors that are rationales for ESD (Lonsdale et al., 2009; Newman et al., 2016).

Due to the competitive nature of sport, particularly at the elite level, conflict is inevitable. Competition outcomes are unpredictable, heightening emotions, which can cause hurt feelings, fostering distrust and anxiety (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). As suggested by Potrac et al. (2017), “the study of emotion as a central aspect of social

relationships is a largely neglected feature of the sport coaching literature” (p.129), as these emotions can impact the athlete experience. The unpredictable competition outcomes and high emotions only increase in intensity with elite sports, leading to athlete dropout. However, one area with limited background knowledge is the impact of poorly managed conflict in sports relationships. These relationships can exist between the athlete and parent, manager and parent, or in the case of this report, the athlete and coach. Thus, the quality of the coach-athlete relationship is essential (Olympiou et al., 2008). What is not known from previous research and a recognizable gap is how the conflict process leads to the outcome of athlete ESD.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes to gain insight into the rationale for dropping out of elite sport. This research was guided by the research question: How does conflict in a coach-athlete relationship lead to elite sport drop out in female sports? As Wachsmuth et al. (2018) explained, “Acknowledging that conflict is a psychological process with potential negative intra- and interpersonal outcomes, the literature thus far would seem to focus on preventing conflict in coach-athlete interactions” (p. 372). This research report, then, focuses on understanding the process holistically of the conflict from the perspective of the athlete.

The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC; governing body for the National Coaching Certificate Program [NCCP]) recognize the importance of conflict with regarding coaching. As the NCCP has a specific module for coaches to address and manage conflict. The NCCP has been a national training and certification program for coaches and leaders in sport since 1974 and has been adopted by 98% of National Sport

Organizations (NSOs; CAC, 2021). Specifically, the NCCP Managing Conflict coaching course focus is on conflict management and resolution strategies. This demonstrates the recognized importance of managing conflict within the broader sport system and by the governing body for coaching education: CAC.

To address the above research question, this report uses Pondy's (1967) conflict process model to specifically understand how the experiences of elite female sport athletes lead to dropout from the sport (i.e., the process). It is important to note from Pondy (1967) that,

Each conflict relationship is made up of a sequence of inter-locking conflict episodes; each episode exhibits a sequence or pattern of development, and the conflict relationship can be characterized by stable patterns that appear across the sequence of episode. (p.298)

These episodes can be understood through Pondy's (1967) model. The model is based on the following, "(1) latent conflict (conditions), (2) perceived conflict (cognition), (3) felt conflict (affect), (4) manifest conflict (behavior), and (5) conflict aftermath (conditions)" (Pondy, 1967, p.300).

This research report begins below by providing a literature review discussing the background of the current problem of ESD. The importance of the coach-athlete relationship will be discussed which, will conclude with an explanation of conflict management between the coach and athlete. This will be followed by a description of the conceptual framework applied. The methodology follows, outlining the procedure for data collection and analysis taken to complete this study. Given that this is a descriptive qualitative research report, the findings and discussion will follow the methodology

section. This report concludes with a discussion of the limitations, contributions, and future research directions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Stress, anxiety, depression, and self-defeat are all common negative perceptions that occur in elite sports (Nixdorf et al., 2015). The coach-athlete relationship is the perfect breeding ground for developing such perceptions within elite athletes. Previous research examined the coach-athlete relationship within elite sports, such as perceived emotional abuse. Similar to the conflict literature (Wachsmuth, 2017), emotional abuse in the coach-athlete relationship can harm elite athletes psychologically and their performance (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). Pondy (1967) provided an explanation of conflict from previous literature by stating,

... the term "conflict" has been used at one time or another in the literature to describe: (1) antecedent conditions (for example, scarcity of resources, policy differences) of conflictful behavior, (2) affective states (e.g., stress, tension, hostility, anxiety, etc.) of the individuals involved, (3) cognitive states of individuals, i.e., their perception or awareness of conflictful situations, and (4) conflictful behavior, ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression. (p.298)

In the work of Stirling and Kerr (2013), a qualitative grounded theory approach provided insight into the effects of emotional abuse in the elite coach-athlete relationship, which gave researchers more profound insight into its physical and psychological impact on athletes. Athletes developed low self-efficacy, became less confident, shut down, and became turned off to their sports altogether due to perceived abuse in the coach-athlete relationship (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). This research extends Stirling and Kerr (2013) by examining how participation, mainly athlete dropout, connects with the conflict between the coach and the elite female athlete.

Coach-Athlete Relationships

The literature regarding the coach-athlete relationship is extensive, covering various topic areas such as relationship maintenance (Hajo & Norberg., 2020; Rhind et al., 2021), communication (Avcı et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2019) and several more. One topic is the interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete (Hampson & Jowett, 2014; Jowett & Cockerill, 2002; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete or the coach-athlete relationship is the mutual interrelation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours between coach and athlete (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007; Jowett, 2017). In elite sport, the potential for conflict heightens within the interpersonal relationship between the coach and athlete. Conflict management can significantly impact conflicts' outcomes (Maltarich et al., 2016).

Interpersonal conflict in sports is a problem, and it acts as an internal personal barrier to sports participation (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Aside from depression and stress, research has given limited attention to the process of conflict within the sport experience as a personal barrier. Conflict can be disruptive to relationships (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Though it occurs interpersonally, it exists in the coach-athlete relationship, impacting the delivery of the sport experience (Lim et al., 2011). A coach can contribute to an elite athlete's decision to discontinue their participation in sport, usually due to a lack of enjoyment or motivation (Butcher, et al., 2002; Keathley et al., 2013).

The impact coaches have on athletes is significant (Williams, 2015). They are important determinants of the athletes' overall psychological wellness, motivation, performance, and engagement in their sports (Matosic et al., 2016). Coaches shape their athletes both in and out of their sport environments. This section reviews the impact

coaches have on their athletes, the emotional toll the impact can have on athletes, and motivational training environments for athletes.

Coaches have the optimal opportunity to foster athletes' development in sports due to their passion for the game (Lafrenière et al., 2008). This passion can be harmonious, directly relating to a positive coach-athlete relationship—or it can be obsessive. Obsessive passion negatively affects the coach-athlete relationship and the athlete's commitment (Lafrenière et al., 2008). It can also lead to negative coaching styles such as verbal abuse.

The coach-athlete relationship significantly impacts an athlete's motivation (Smith et al., 2016). Negative coaching behaviours have revealed outcomes that significantly increase athlete burnout, anxiety, insecurity, and willingness to cheat (Amorose & Nolan-Sellers, 2016; Jimenez et al., 2019; Matosic et al., 2016; Roxas & Ridinger, 2016). Student-athletes revealed that their coaches affected their overall well-being (Roxas & Ridinger, 2016). The impact went as far as affecting their satisfaction with their choice of school. Athletes reported being mentally and verbally abused by their coaches; However, the coaches felt that this behaviour was normal and would achieve top performance from their athletes (Stirling & Kerr, 2013).

Female athletes reported emotion as a poor strategy for motivation to perform well in their sport. They reported low motivation, poor body image, and depression resulting from their relationships with their coaches, which negatively influenced their development (Baker et al., 2000). Roxas and Ridinger (2016) suggested that elite coaches such as those with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) adopt a certain abusive coaching style as a culture, such as excessive yelling and humiliation. Pressuring

athletes to perform and insisting they train while injured can be frustrating and disheartening (Roxas & Ridinger, 2016). This can cause athletes to lose passion for their sports. Some student-athletes had reported being yelled at and criticized for their schoolwork, friends, and other variables external to their training environments (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). This made them feel marginalized and neglected, decreasing their enjoyment of their sports. Poor coach-athlete relationships or perceived low competence in coaches negatively impacts motivation (Amorose & Nolan–Sellers, 2016).

To understand motivation and enjoyment in an athlete’s training environment, consider the achievement goal theory (Isoard–Gauthier et al., 2013) regarding optimum athlete retention in the context of a coach-created training environment. This training environment for the athlete is based on goal approach or avoidance. One interpretation of the achievement goal theory is that athletes can be negatively affected (avoidance) and positively affected (task) within training environments. The avoidance goal approach involves avoiding failure—focusing the training on avoiding situations where athletes will seem incompetent and not perform worse than in the past. The task goal approach focuses on bettering a skill or improving based on previous performance instead of focusing on the outcome (Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2013). Negatively affected athletes can have ESD impacted sport careers (Larner et al., 2017).

Internal factors can also impact the coach-athlete relationship and create conflict. The process of conflict between coaches and athletes can negatively influence athletes’ continued participation if it is handled poorly (Maltarich et al., 2016; Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Coaches play a significant role in how their athletes reach their goals (Lafrenière

et al., 2008). Failing to reach goals—or setting unrealistic goals—can lead to a loss of interest, motivation, and a sense of self-defeat (Lafrenière et al., 2008).

Coaches impact their athletes in all aspects of sports and personal development as both athletes and people (Erickson & Côté, 2016). Countless coach-athlete duos exemplify the importance of solid coach-athlete relationships, such as Bob Bowman and Michael Phelps or Alex Ferguson and Cristiano Ronaldo (Yang & Jowett, 2016). A strong coach-athlete relationship has been found to develop over time (Antonini Philippe et al., 2011), with both the coach and athlete working together towards the same goal. Negative aspects in a coach-athlete relationship, such as conflict, can be threatening (Wachsmuth et al., 2017), impacting the athlete’s continued participation.

Sports Participation Dropout

For this research, “sports dropout” is about an individual who discontinues in the sport due to dissatisfaction with different facets of the sport. Dropout in sports can occur for many reasons. Among these reasons are burnout, excess deliberate play, and deliberate practice from a young age (Wall & Côté, 2007). Dropout in sports may reflect dissatisfaction, negative experiences or even be due to joining another sport (Crane & Temple, 2015). These reasons are true for both elite and recreational sports. More common reasons for dropping out of recreational sports include lack of disposable income (Rosso & McGrath, 2016), gender (O’Reilly et al., 2018; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011), ethnicity (Kanters et al., 2013), lack of enjoyment, and lack of ability (Crane & Temple, 2015).

Researchers have tried to justify mass-participation dropouts (e.g., Butcher et al. 2015; Møllerløgken et al., 2015; Wall & Côté, 2007); however, this is difficult to

generalize because there are different reasons (Butcher et al., 2002). Dropout is a problem in recreational youth soccer (Møllerlækken et al., 2015). Nearly a quarter of participants drop out of youth soccer yearly—even though soccer is the most popular sport in the world. Møllerlækken et al. (2015) identified this through a meta-analysis across Spain, the United States, France, Portugal, and Norway. This research found that age and sex impacted this statistic (Møllerlækken et al., 2015). Dropout rates were ordinary and stable from ages 10 to 18, but most frequently among females (Møllerlækken et al., 2015). It was found that coaches had a much more substantial impact on girls dropping out than boys. In soccer and other popular sports bringing in high enrollment at the grassroots level, something must be occurring following the development stages to lead to these dropout rates (Møllerlækken et al., 2015).

Sports dropout also occurs at different stages in an athlete's pathway for several reasons (Fraser–Thomas et al., 2008; Guzman & Kingston, 2012; Wall & Côté, 2007). When an athlete discontinues a sport, it is often a reflection of their internal motivation (Calvo et al., 2010). Coaches play a significant role in creating climates for elite athletes to help maintain their internal motivation. These climates are composed of personal variables such as motivation, enjoyment, and self-esteem and external variables such as peers and parents. Coaches can impact internal motivation within the athletes' sports experience (Atkins et al., 2015). Conflict within the sports experience and developing the coach-athlete relationship can negatively impact these variables and influence dropout rates (Pereira et al., 2014).

Variables such as the relative age affect (Delorme et al., 2011)—the calendar year age group segregation of athletes into specific categories— impact ESD in team sports

(Delorme et al., 2009; Lemez et al., 2014). Age groups provide structure in leagues and sport organizations, but they can also be a source of dissatisfaction through the loss of motivation (Delorme et al., 2011; Söderström et al., 2015). For example, this could be attributed to children born in December being placed in the same category as children born in January of the same calendar year. However, these children could be separated by nearly 12 months of physical development and growth (Delorme et al., 2011; Fraser–Thomas et al., 2008; Söderström et al., 2015). Age groups are categorized to allow for equality in competition while maximizing the amount of potential competition (Delorme et al., 2011). However, players born in the first two quartiles of a calendar year have a greater chance of being selected for elite teams and specializing in their sports (Lemez et al., 2014). The relative age effect in female athletes promotes their discontinuation in sports more prominently during their younger years. This becomes evident in older team sports (Hancock, 2017). This increases the likelihood of players born in the last two quartiles of a year to dropout once they progress past the grassroots level programs. This can be due to frustration, impacting athletes' motivation to continue participating in sports.

Previous studies related to sport participation dropouts globally tend to use quantitative research data collection and analysis (Crane & Temple, 2015). Types of quantitative methods used included web-based and in-person questionnaires, meta-analysis, and systemic reviews. These studies allowed categorization and numeric values to be established in sport participation research. Based on previous research, the specific reasons for dropping out of sport were found as being interpersonal motivation (Calvo et al., 2010), lack of enjoyment (Jaakkola et al., 2016), perceptions of competence, and

physical factors (Delorme et al., 2011; Fraser–Thomas et al., 2008; Söderström et al., 2015). It is unclear if these reasons apply to elite sport dropout specifically.

Elite Sport Dropout (ESD)

Scholars have often defined “elite” with different criteria (Polman, 2012). Some have argued that becoming an elite expert at a sport is a timely process and takes ten years of deliberate practice, while others have argued that it can take as little as two years (Swann et al., 2015). Some have referenced the term “elite” as a professional athlete or Olympic champion only (Grant & Schnempp, 2013). What is important to note is that the understanding of “elite” is exclusive compared to scholars who have broadly referred to “elite athletes” as varsity athletes (Swann et al., 2015). A more inclusive understanding of “elite” is an athlete who has played on a competitive, high-level sports team (Voss et al., 2010) such as varsity (or intercollegiate athletics) or a club team. For this research, “elite” will be defined according to Voss et al. (2010) as anyone who played sports competitively past the recreational level. Thus, in the context of this research, that includes athletes who have tried out for and made high-level competitive teams such as intercollegiate, club and professional teams. ESD can be understood within the context of age grouping, motivation, social pressures and conflict, as well as gender demographics.

Athletes drop out of sports prematurely after they have reached the elite level (Brennar, 2016; Enoksen, 2011; Koukouris, 2005). The primary goal for elite sports is to improve international sporting performance (De Bosscher et al., 2016). Becoming elite can require an athlete to commit to focusing on only one sport. The period in which an athlete commits to focus on only one sport can occur at different age groups, which is often dependent upon the sport. This is referred to in the literature as early and late

specialization. An example of an early specialized sport would be gymnastics, where athletes both begin and compete at a very young age. Gymnasts typically also retire at a younger age compared to other sports. Sport participation literature generally favours late specialization after the age of 12, as it lessens the chance of injury and dropout (Jayanthi et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2019).

Early specialization can cause athletes to lose interest in their sports (Wall & Côté, 2007). Becoming an elite athlete would involve devoting more time to the sport, leading to stress injuries or burnout (Brennar, 2016). Directing all athletic focus to the same repetitive training can become redundant to an athlete. Further, elite sports become more of a challenge as adolescents transition to secondary school (De Bosscher et al., 2016). Balancing the demanding schedules of both academics and athletics can cause stress and influence ESD (De Bosscher et al., 2016; Ryba et al., 2016).

Fraser-Thomas et al. (2008) conducted a quantitative study that used close-ended-question interviews with swimmers who had dropped out of their sport and analyzed the factors influencing their decision. Once athletes had hit certain milestones in their careers, such as entering varsity, joining more elite teams, or starting dryland training, many lost interest and motivation (Fraser–Thomas et al., 2008). Another influential factor was having former elite athletes as parents. Athletes with parents who were former elite athletes often felt either pressured or driven by the success of their parents. The swimmers who had dropped out were also more likely to be the younger among their age groups (Fraser–Thomas et al., 2008). The implications of this study called for qualitative research into ESD to gain further understanding (Fraser–Thomas et al., 2008)

Competitive swimmers completed a questionnaire regarding intentions to drop out in Volp and Johaan's (1987) study. They found that many swimmers who had dropped out prematurely were athletes who had experienced more conflict regarding performance ability (Volp & Johaan, 1987). Variables such as conflict require deeper study to determine their impact on dropout. For this research, barriers in an athlete's career, such as interpersonal conflict, have drawn attention to continued participation by female athletes in particular (Paradis et al., 2014).

There are pressures of high importance as athletes move up to elite levels and struggle to stay within their sports, such as maintaining an elite status and high athletic identity (Franck et al., 2018). As athletes progress into more elite programs, more time commitment is expected. As athletes devote more time to their sports, they develop closer relationships within their sports environments. These relationships—including relationships with their coaches—can impact their enjoyment (Schmidt & Stein, 1991).

The dropout rate gets higher in track and field as athletes become more competitive in their training. The typical age for ESD in track and field at a competitive level is 17 (Enoksen, 2011). Female track-and-field athletes are more likely to drop out of the elite level than males (Enoksen, 2011). A study based on Norwegian female elite cross-country skiers discovered that the more competitive female skiers were, the more likely they were to have eating disorders to gain a competitive edge by carrying less weight (Pettersen, et al., 2016). This can lead to premature ESD as female athletes cannot healthily continue their training regime.

Female athletes tend to place more importance on activities such as friends and school outside of sports as they age, which leads to dropout (Molinero et al., 2006). It is

essential to many young women that they are perceived as feminine and can drop out of sports to avoid being perceived as masculine (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). ESD can be attributed to personal and situational factors. Personal factors include intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (Robinson & Carron, 1982). Situational factors include the support received from family and friends or sport policies and regulations such as uniform and age restrictions (Robinson & Carron, 1982).

Dropout occurs as female youth grow older (Findlay et al., 2010; Møllerlækken et al., 2015). Pereira et al. (2014) assessed the dropout patterns of competitive female gymnasts. Pereira et al. (2014) concluded traditional reasoning for dropping out of sports such as injury, parent dissatisfaction, and training demands. The relationship between athletes and coaches also emerged as a factor (Pereira et al., 2014). The coach-athlete relationship impacted parent dissatisfaction, influencing the female athletes to drop out of competitive gymnastics.

Conflict Between Coaches and Athletes in Sports

The coach-athlete relationship dramatically depends on working toward a common goal (Smith et al., 2016). This involves teamwork and strategizing to reach their goal. Realistically, conflict is unavoidable in relationships, especially in sports (Hamm-Kerwinn & Doherty, 2010). However, little is known about how the process of conflict can impact an athlete's continued participation in the sport. This section will review how conflict can appear in sports and its impact on an athlete's social environment and sport experience. It will review two models regarding the process of conflict.

Encountering conflict can fracture a relationship (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Hamm-Kerwinn and Doherty (2010) indicated that conflict in sports is universal and

unavoidable, developing from various scenarios. There are several stages of conflict: latent, felt, perceived, manifest, and aftermath (Pondy, 1967), providing significant opportunities for intervention.

There are prominent types of conflict in the sports-management literature, such as bias (Kroshus et al., 2015; Burton, 2015), favouritism (Edwards & Washington, 2013; Iacoviello et al., 2017; Laurin, 2016), and peer conflict (Hamm–Kerwinn & Doherty, 2010; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). In recent years, the interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete has been a popular research topic (Hampson & Jowett, 2014; Jowett et al., 2017). A coach can positively or negatively impact an athlete's development and increase or decrease an athlete's exhaustion with a sport (Davis et al., 2018). Coaches can also positively or negatively affect athletes' social environments within sports (Davis et al., 2018), creating the potential for conflict. Knowing that poorly managed conflict can damage a relationship (Wachsmuth et al., 2017), this research has focused on conflict within the coach-athlete interpersonal relationship.

Interpersonal conflict is a dynamic process of perceived disagreement and negative emotions between two people as a barrier to reaching the desired objective (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). Several potential variables, such as family influence, attitude, and personality, can affect the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship (Barki & Hartwick, 2001). This type of conflict can impact an individual's well-being and overall sport experience (Davis et al., 2018), potentially influencing them to discontinue their participation in sports.

Coaches constantly try to improve their athletes through feedback (Carpentier & Mageau, 2014). This feedback has great potential for perceived interpersonal conflict by the athlete (Davis et al., 2018). It can impact the athlete in all areas of their life outside of sport. Interpersonal conflict can lead to mental disorders such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression because they contribute to daily stress (Wickham et al., 2016). It is essential to achieve a greater understanding of the process of conflict to allow sport organizations to manage the risk of premature ESD.

Resolving interpersonal conflict requires changing the motivational states of the coaches' and athletes' differing attitudes. This involves reanalyzing objectives and deciding the best resolution (Webb et al., 2017). In other words, coaches and athletes need to compromise to solve interpersonal conflict. Lin et al. (2016) discussed that although compromise is a valuable solution for interpersonal conflict, it involves sacrifice. Sacrifice can lead to anxiety. Regardless of the nature of the sport, the parties involved should consider every action involved as a "we" action instead of an "I" action. These actions can either be in gameplay or in preparation training. Having an "us" approach allows for a relational focus instead of a personal one (Lin et al., 2016). Lin et al. (2016) found that individuals who had a perspective that included all parties involved had greater well-being and psychological health.

Coaches play a significant role in shaping the athletes' overall sport experience. Their coaching styles and approaches are influential to their athletes' psychological well-being, motivation, and performance (Lin et al., 2016; Matosic et al., 2016). Successful female athletes have discontinued their sports careers because of poor relationships with their coaches (Kristiansen et al., 2012). Upon reaching elite levels, successful female

athletes have become disengaged from their sports after dealing with several coaches and repeated injuries from overtraining (Kristiansen et al., 2012). Understanding conflict management and interpersonal conflict between coaches and athletes can help ensure a positive relationship between them (Davis & Jowett, 2014; Matosic et al., 2016). The impact on participation in this interpersonal conflict is lacking in the literature on conflict in sports.

Gaps in the Literature

There is currently a gap in the sport participation literature surrounding the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship explicitly with female athletes. Female athletes are less likely to continue in sport than male athletes and continue to drop out at a higher rate (O'Reilly et al., 2018). It has been noted that the coach can act as a link in sport participation dropout, and that conflict can have a negative impact on the coach-athlete relationship (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Furthermore, Wachsmuth et al. (2017) discussed how emotions are heightened in the elite sport environment. This would suggest that conflict too would have heightened emotions within coach-athlete relationships in elite sport. It is unclear how and when the conflict process in the elite sport environment becomes detrimental to elite athlete attrition. This research intends to fill some of these gaps by holistically examining the process of the conflict that can arise through the coach-athlete relationship, which results in the athlete deciding to leave their sport, particularly that is gender specific.

Due to the roles of the athlete and coach, there is a power dynamic between the coach and the athlete, where the coach has and use their power in control of the team and

athletes (Potrac & Jones, 2009). Athletes are impacted and adjust their behaviour in accordance to appease the coach (Norman & French, 2013), and previous research has suggested that there is evidence to support that athletes in team sports will basically do what the coach says (Rylander, 2016). Cushion et al. (2006) indicated that in order to understand the effectiveness of a coach it is important that it be recognized the power dynamic that exists between the coach and the athlete, however, research that has explored coaching has ignored or oversimplified this aspect of the relationship. This is an identifiable gap in the literature, that this current research can make a contribution to.

What is unclear from the research is the behaviours or the situations that cause conflict in elite sport, which is an identifiable gap. Negative treatment of athletes by coaches can cause athletes to enjoy their sport less and become anxious about training (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). Thus, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of how certain behaviours can be perceived by athletes and the impact they have on the athletes' perceptions of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship as it can lead to elite sport dropout. Literature has covered preventative measures on conflict in the coach-athlete relationship as noted by Wachsmuth et al. (2018), but there is minimal research on the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes specifically.

There are opportunities for intervention during the stages of conflict, as outlined below by Pondy (1967), that have not been explored in enough depth to understand how to manage conflict in the coach-athlete relationship. Pondy's Conflict Process model explains in length how each stage of conflict progresses. When applied to conflict in the coach-athlete relationship, this model simplifies the break down of each stage of conflict, allowing parties to better understand how to manage conflict. This research project aims

to explore how the process of conflict within the coach-athlete relationship can affect elite female athletes' continued participation in sports.

Conceptual Framework

To understand conflict between the elite athlete and coach, this research drew on the Conflict Process Model (Pondy, 1967; Slack & Parent, 2006). Initially, this model was used to examine conflict within an organization. However, for the purposes of this research report, I have employed it within the context of the interpersonal coach-athlete relationship in the elite sport organization setting. This is because the coach-athlete relationship develops within the structure of the sport organization. Pondy's Conflict Process model (1967) considers the five stages: the Latent Conflict, Perceived Conflict, Felt Conflict, Manifest Conflict, and Conflict Aftermath, along with the Environmental Influences that can be influential in the conflict process. Table 1 below provides a definition for each stage within the context of this research.

Table 1

Pondy's Conflict Process Model (Pondy. 1967)

Stages	Definition	Examples
Environmental Influences	The environment in which conflict is taking place can impact the trajectory of the conflict by either alleviating or increasing the severity of the conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Political • Training environment • Technological • Regulations
Latent Conflict	The latent stage in Pondy's model is where there is a potential for conflict. For example, separate subunits in an organization working together but with different	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches and athlete behaviour • Athlete performance

	goals have the potential for latent conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between parties • Relationships
Perceived Conflict	Perceived Conflict is understood where one or more of the parties involved are aware of the potential for conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favoritism • Hidden agenda for Coach • Coaching behaviour
Felt Conflict	The third stage, felt conflict, is where negative emotions such as hostility and frustration emerge as a result of the conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singling out • Benching • Humiliation • Coaching behaviour
Manifested Conflict	The fourth stage of the model is manifest conflict, which is the outbreak of the conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury • Shouting • Conflict response • Avoidance
Conflict Aftermath	The model's final and most crucial stage is conflict aftermath, which is essential as it represents how the parties deal with the conflict. This can either resolve an issue or create the potential for further conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor mental health • Elite sport dropout

It is important to note that Pondy (1967) included environmental factors as impacting the development and process of conflict. Furthermore, Wachsmuth et al. (2018) explained that “environmental factors can restrict coaches’ and athletes’ attempts to manage difficult interactions constructively (e.g., power distributions and low-quality relationships)” (p.373). Pondy (1967) explains that the conflict process is not a closed system as such the external environment can play an important role in having an influential affect on the conflict process. The environment in which conflict occurs could

either alleviate the conflict or induce further conflict such as team morale during training, external pressures, the competitive environment, and pressure to perform. As mentioned above, the elite sport environment can heighten emotions as competition is intense and outcomes are unpredictable (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Heightened emotions are saturated throughout the elite sport environment in all of training, team communications and gameplay. This leaves an opportunity for conflict to escalate and lead to ESD. For the purposes of the research report, I have used a modified version of the above model to ensure that it is suitable for the research setting that I am exploring.

Chapter Three: Methodology/Methods

For the purposes of the research, qualitative research methods were employed. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process for exploring a social or human problem through a distinct methodological approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that taking a qualitative research approach builds a complex, holistic picture of the phenomenon in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, Crotty (1998) suggested that qualitative research is a meaningful way of conducting social research and a means of generating meaning, feeling or interpretation of the world (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Smith & Chaddick, 2012). Qualitative research in the context of sport has been conducted in a number of ways, as researchers have used it to inquire into elite sport policy processes and change (e.g., Green & Houlihan, 2005), the conflict of volunteer and professional staff in sport organizations (e.g., Doherty & Hoye, 2011), and the coaching of athletes within the context of prescribed curriculum (e.g., Lang & Light, 2010) to name a few.

This research employed descriptive qualitative research design for this report. Descriptive qualitative research creates a comprehensive summary of a specific event experienced by a specific group of people (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). This design was used because descriptive qualitative research summarizes the desired focus of gaining insight into understanding what, where, when and why of a phenomenon (Colorafi et al., 2016). This qualitative study will contribute to understanding continued sports participation by elite female athletes. There is a gap in the literature that explicitly explores female athletes' ESD. Due to its' nature, qualitative research on this topic will

allow an in-depth discovery of female attrition in elite sport through examining the coach-athlete relationship and specifically, the process of conflict in that relationship.

Methods

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were selected for this qualitative descriptive study because they allowed for elaboration on concepts related to the conflict in the coach-athlete relationship. Conducting a semi-structured interview consist of researchers asking initial predetermined questions that are then followed by additional questions during the interview to gain further information relevant to the study (Bernard et al., 2017; A. Edwards & Skinner, 2009; Jones & Gratton, 2015). It is understood that semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured and unstructured interviews. This allowed specific questions to be asked to collect assumed foreseen information and open-ended questions to collect unforeseen information (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This enabled the participants to describe their experiences to the researcher (Neergaard et al., 2009). For example, semi-structured interviews allow for information to be collected regarding the athlete's perceptions of when they thought the conflict was unresolvable and decided to drop out of elite sport. Qualitative interviews were appropriate for this study, as they allowed the athletes to elaborate on all stages of their conflict experiences regarding their coach-athlete relationship.

Recruitment

The study participants were all former elite female athletes who have dropped out of their sport due to their relationship with their coach. As a result, ethics approval through the University of New Brunswick Research Ethics Board was sought and approved (REB#2018-146). Recruitment of participants occurred by word of mouth (e.g.,

snowball sampling) and through emails (e.g., purposeful sampling). Recruitment of the study's population occurred through the researcher's network of individuals who have dropped out of elite sports as a result of the conflict in their interpersonal relationships with their coaches. This sampling approach is known as purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is understood as the gathering of data intentionally from specific individuals or sites which are recognized to best inform researchers about the phenomenon being explored (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, snowball sampling was used through suggestions from the initial participants of other elite female athletes to interview. Snowball sampling is gaining further participants from the initial few participants gathered. For example, if the study begins with three participants, and each participant were to suggest two more participants, the potential sample size will have become nine (Goodman, 1961).

This study did not include participants who have dropped out of sports due to injury or other reasons. Twelve interviews were conducted for this study, out of which eleven were used as the one outlier interview did not fit the study criteria. The participants included in this study have dropped out prematurely from elite sports due to reasons such as stress and anxiety from negative experiences involving their coach. This inclusive definition encompasses the literature regarding high-enrollment sports mass-participation dropout, the relative age affect, and early specialization.

Recruitment was within the population of Canadian females over the age of 19-35 who prematurely dropped out of elite sport before age 25. This was so the incidents leading to ESD were recently recalled by participants. Characteristics required for this study included having played elite level sport meaning competitive, varsity, or non-recreational

level aligning with the inclusive definition of elite according to Voss et al. (2010). The justification for choosing elite athletes is that once an athlete has reached the elite level in a sport, they should theoretically continue participating apart from injury and age (Côté et al., 2009). As discussed in previous chapters, women are of particular interest to this study because they are less likely to participate in sports than men (Heritage, 2013). Before the interview process, an email recruitment letter was sent to several female former elite team sport athletes.

Data Collection Process

The interviews took place at the locations of the participants' choosing, over the phone, Zoom, or via Skype at a time of convenience. Interviews lasted from 25 minutes to an hour and a half in length depending on how much detail and elaboration the participants shared about their elite sport experiences. The interviews were composed of open-ended questions that asked athletes' to describe their experiences with the conflict process within their relationships with their coaches. Open-ended questions facilitated conversational flow in the interview process, allowing genuine data to be collected (Patton, 2015). Riddick and Russell (2008) stated that open-ended questions, also known as unstructured questions, consist of asking a respondent a question that does not possess a set answer.

The interview questions focused on factors influencing conflict in the coach-athlete relationship (see Appendix A). Questions were developed by analyzing previous research, such as Pondy's (1967) Conflict Process Model and the stages of conflict. Mock situations were discussed regarding potential conflict within the coach-athlete relationship and how conflict could progress through each stage. Questions were

developed by focusing on stages of conflict that would allow the participant to elaborate as much as possible on each response. Data collected focused on the athletes' perceptions of the conflict process. The researcher took notes during the interview process to record any ideas or observations. These notes helped categorize the data based on the participants' emotions, facial expressions and reactions to questions. The notes were also used to record future potential prompt questions regarding what the participant was explaining at the time without interrupting them.

Data were collected until saturation was achieved. Data saturation is understood as the point where no new or relevant information emerges, and collecting further information is no longer necessary (Nascimento et al., 2018). Furthermore, Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study and when further coding is no longer needed. Therefore, the principal investigator evaluated the data collected at the conclusion of the initial 11 semi-structured interviews and found that similar responses were being discussed. This was also confirmed with the principal investigator's supervisor.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The qualitative data collected were assigned pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality of the sample participants. An inductive and deductive analysis of the qualitative data took place by applying a five-stage analytic process, originating with Edwards and Skinner (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994).

In stage one, familiarization, consisted of reviewing the audio recordings, transcriptions and field notes that were taken during the interview process (Edwards &

Skinner, 2009). Here, the audio files and transcriptions were reviewed for two reasons: first, the transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy; and second this was an opportunity for the researcher to become familiar with the data collected.

In the second stage, the thematic framework, the researcher examined the dataset to extract thematic content (Edwards & Skinner, 2009). This thematic content analysis was deductive in nature and based on Pondy's (1967) Conflict Process Model. The process that took place was done by examining interview transcripts line by line for themes examples that were based on Pondy's Conflict Process Model, which are identifiable concepts that are consistently discussed. The end result of this stage was an initial coding index will be developed. The coding index was then applied in the third stage to corresponding quotes and information collected from all data sources, known as indexing. Building on the second stage, indexing, the analysis moved from a deductive approach of the themes to an inductive analysis of codes that were assigned based on the thematic content analysis. An example of a code found in this stage is coaching behaviour and coaching methods. In total, there were 44 codes. Of which, 11 were identified as head codes, with the remaining as sub-codes.

Once the codes were determined, charting took place where the principal investigator organized the interview data into individual documents based on the indexing stage using computer software NVivo12. This software was chosen for its flexibility to manually analyze the dataset. Furthermore, NVivo 12 enhanced the research rigor and data analysis, allowed for the researcher to remain immersed within the data, and increasing the validity and trustworthiness of the overall study (Sotiriadou et al., 2014).

The final stage, interpretation, focused on the common themes and codes derived from the raw data or trends within the charting stage. The principal investigator reviewed the literature on elite sport drop out, and coach-athlete relationship within Pondy's Conflict Process Model to answer the research questions posed for this study. Furthermore, data collected were used to chart the range in nature between responses, identify associations between themes, and attempt explanations (A. Edwards & Skinner, 2009). To visually interpret the data collected a matrix was employed. A matrix involves "the crossing of two or more main dimensions or variables [or themes and categories] to see how they interact" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 239). The themes, codes, and direct quotes from the transcript were organized into the matrix model to interpret the conflict process that impacts the coach-athlete relationship (see Table 2).

Table #2. Overview of Participant's Conflict within the Coach-Athlete Relationship

Participant #	Sport	Sources of Conflict	Process Descriptors	Aftermath or Outcome of conflict
1	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete treatment • Favouritism • Humiliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive screaming • Promoting others • Singling out and belittling in front of others 	ESD/ Poor Mental Health
2	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury • Playing time • Humiliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sat out a season due to back injury • Lost starting position to new player during injury • Belittling and singling out 	ESD / Poor Mental Health
3	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury • Favoritism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School conflict with training during recovery period • Felt mistreated compared to other teammates 	ESD / Poor Mental Health

4	Volleyball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favoritism • Athlete treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not treating players equally • Excessive screaming. Humiliating certain athletes 	ESD
5	Field Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing time • Favoritism • Injury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player improved with better performance but lost playing time • Local players saw more playing time and were treated better by coach • Player was injured for a short period of time after finally being given playing time and once recovered never saw the field 	ESD / Poor Mental Health
6	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing time • Favoritism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player was not given playing time reflective of their performance • Other players were treated favorably with perceived parental influence over coach 	ESD
7	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant coach made players feel uncomfortable. Participant tried to fix the situation and ended up getting benched. 	ESD / Poor Mental Health
8	Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favoritism • Athlete treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach's daughter being treated better than other players • Coach speaking inappropriately to the players 	ESD / Poor Mental Health
9	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favoritism • Athlete treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach favoring players that they train privately in personal business • Degrading to participant 9 specifically. Taking 	ESD / Poor Mental Health

10	Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury • Athlete treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player being injured and pressured to play • Disregarding athlete's injuries by trying to convince the athlete that the injury is made up in their head 	ESD
11	Basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singling out with excessive punishments. Coach behavior not what player expected at an elite level 	ESD

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1994) created criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, which was based on five principles: authenticity, credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Authenticity of the data in the context of this study demonstrated that there was a “range of realities” that emerged from the interview process. Multiple interviews with different individuals who participated in different sports, which provided an authentic outlook of the coach-athlete relationship. Credibility required an in-depth description in the methods section of this report describing those sampled participants for this study. In addition, credibility was also established through a member checking process. The transcripts were sent back to the participants for some of the interviews to ensure accuracy. This is known as member checking (Neuman, 2000). Member checking is a research strategy utilized to validate and review their qualitative data to ensure the creditability of the findings and interpretations of data (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Stake (1995) explained that member checking can “play a major role directing as well as acting” meaning participants play a

pivotal role ensuring researchers are accountable to them and are credible sources for knowledge sharing and transfer.

To ensure dependability, the data collected was from a fixed point in the participant's life. The primary researcher met regularly with Dr. Edwards as well as Dr. Byers to ensure confirmability to go over transcripts, the analysis process, and coding. Transferability was addressed by establishing the process of coach-athlete conflict through the data analysis enabling the analysis to be used in other settings by using the conceptual framework.

Researcher Bias

Clarifying research bias in the beginning of a study helps the reader to understand the researchers position on the topic and any biases, which may impact the interpretation or delivery of the questions and/or responses of participants (Merriam, 1988). Being a former elite athlete, I am predisposed to having a bias in this particular study where I was a former elite women's soccer player, I had empathy and understanding for all participants. Going into the data collection and analysis portion of this study, I needed to be aware of any personal beliefs or opinions to analyze objectively. To ensure this bias had was minimized on the data analysis process, I had regular meetings with Dr. Edwards and Dr. Byers to discuss emerging findings and themes. I wrote down notes after each interview to summarize my thoughts. If I had questions arise from my thoughts towards an interview, they were discussed with my supervisor—this ensured validity in my findings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Based on the data analysis process, this section of the report will address the research question: How does conflict in a coach-athlete relationship lead to elite sport drop out in female sports?; I draw on Pondy's Conflict Process Model through different stages and apply it to the themes that emerged within the context of these findings, as depicted in Figure 1 below. Furthermore, Pondy (1967) suggested that conflict is a dynamic process. The findings demonstrated that when the coach and athlete experienced conflict between one another, the athletes sampled for this research dropped out of the sport. What is essential to recognize is that "[t]he development of each conflict episode is determined by a complex combination of the effects of preceding episodes and the environmental milieu" (Pondy, 1967, p.306).

The Conflict Process with the Coach-Athlete Relationship

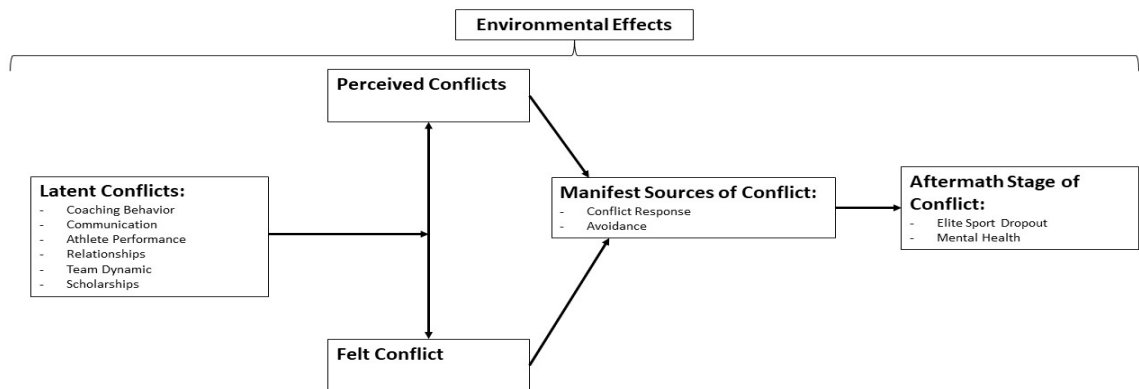


Figure 1. The Conflict Process with the Coach-Athlete Relationship

Environmental Effects

The conflict process begins with understanding the environmental conditions that lead to latent conflict. The environmental effects acted as an overarching theme that existed at each stage of the process within the context of this research. The environmental

effects stage refers to the external conditions influencing the conflict. In this study, the environment effect stage was viewed as having a more impactful role as it spanned across all stages. As discussed by Patterson et al. (2021), it is crucial for elite-level athletes to have an environment that provides optimal training conditions for them to be successful in competition. These optimal training conditions can include weight training facilities, training partners, team activities, team practices, and expert and knowledgeable coaches. This can be understood as a source of motivation for the athlete to continue participation in elite sport. One aspect of an environment where those training conditions become less than ideal is when an elite athlete perceives that they are consistently treated unequally and not be provided with the same opportunities as other athletes. For example, Participant 1 explained how they were singled out and exploited by their coach during training when

the coaches kinda let it [altercation between teammates] escalate to this point where all the girls were kinda yapping at each other.. and uhm.. saying things like "you're cheating" and stuff like that, and they just let it go, let it go, and there was a punishment if you lost this drill—you had to do two laps or something like that.. and I listened to them all you know... arguing and stuff and finally I tried to make a joke and said "oh.. you know.. you may as well just make our team run the punishment laps now" because of.. you know. All of this arguing that was going on! And coach said, great idea [name], you can go run those laps right now and leave your team short stacked and... he made me do them while the rest of them just got to keep playing.. and I cried! The whole time I had to do them! And like

he listened to all the other girls swear and curse and carry on at each other, but he picked me out of all that and made me go run.

Participant 1 had several interactions with their coach similar to this as the environment for the player became difficult to be motivated as an elite athlete, which became an expectation from their coach. This environment was negative for the player because of the way they were treated in training. Furthermore, all of the study participants expressed that regardless of their efforts, they felt that their situations would never change with their coach, which often resulted in a decreased motivation to compete, train, and a desire to leave the sport.

The elite sport environment heightens emotions due to the nature of the competition as it is highly stressful where there is a focus on winning. Thus, this intensifies the pressure on the coach-athlete relationship, which can lead to conflict between the two parties. As explained by Wachsmuth et al. (2017), “In high-level sports where the stakes are high, outcomes unpredictable, and emotions heightened, effective communication and appropriate behaviour may become challenging, and conflict can be provoked” (p.84). Participant 5 struggled for civility in their relationship with their coach. They felt constantly singled out by their coach as they explain,

On the field, we would practice on a huge turf field and just out loud if I was doing something wrong. There would be a call-out. Or, in a game, if I screwed up in the huddle at halftime, there would be a call-out. Things like that where it's just complaint. "(Name) you need to do 'blank' better or (Name) what are you doing?" Very, very direct.

Participant 5 constantly found themselves comparing their relationship with their coach to their teammates' relationship with the coach. Participant 5 explained that often the relationship between their teammates and the coach were perceived as friendly. This was identified as not being present in Participant 5's own relationship with their coach and they felt that they were constantly trying to adjust their behaviour to please their coach. In some regard, the environment for this athlete evoked a sense of fear for playing time or feelings of lesser status than their teammates.

The environment, which were discussed within the context of these findings, took place in the setting of either training or gameplay. This is really no surprise given that most interactions that would take place between a coach and athlete would be in that situation. What became apparent is that emotions played a role in creating an environment that was less than "welcoming" for the athletes that were sampled. Hodgson et al. (2017) in Magrum and McCullick (2019) explained that in order for a coach to be successful at the elite level, coaches "tend to be athlete centered, aware of their own, as well as others' emotions, able to understand emotions and their influences, and lastly, are able to manage their own emotions and those of their athlete" (p.3). A coach being able to manage an athlete's emotions becomes important for a coach as Magrum and McCullick (2019) explained that part of a coach's role is to assist athletes in making improvements to their behaviour that enables them to achieve a desired goal. Thus, a coach "who are able to perceive, understand, and regulate their own and others' emotions, may be more effective" (p.3).

Latent Stage of Conflict

The latent stage of conflict is where there is a potential for conflict and the starting stage of the process (Pondy, 1967). Furthermore, Pondy (1967) explained that “Conflict is said to occur when the focal person receives incompatible role demands or expectations from the persons in his role set” (p.300). Common by-products of the latent stage of conflict are stress, anxiety and depression. These emotions act as a catalyst in the conflict process between coaches and athletes and lead to athletes leaving elite sport. This negatively impacts elite athletes’ well-being, thus, making it essential to understand and identify latent sources of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship. Furthermore, sources of the latent stage of conflict identified in this research were divided into four themes: coaching behaviour, athlete performance, communication and relationships.

Athletes are affected by how their coach behaved toward them and their teammates in group and one-on-one settings (Norman & French, 2013). While Stewart (2016) explained that if coach-athlete

relationships are formed by coaches who are less empathetic, use negative feedback in an autocratic coaching style, and emphasize winning as more important than the development of athletes, the results can be counterproductive to both the athlete and the team’s success. (p.418)

For instance, athletes who experienced inappropriate behaviour from their coach, either directly or indirectly felt uncomfortable. This occurred on the playing field, during training and even at team socials. For example, Participant 4 discussed a situation of the exploitation of a teammate by their coach. The player viewed that coach as treating them poorly in this situation because the coach wanted the player to lose weight: “but like he

would weigh her in front of everybody.” Participant 4 continued explaining the impact it had on them by saying that,

[H]e put her on a scale, and everybody knew he was trying to get her to lose weight and like... UGH, you can't do that! You know, like... and that wasn't the only time he did that like he still did that in my fifth year to another player that he basically told her like you're not starting because you're too fat.

This situation was described as volatile, “You could knock his coffee over and he’d be... like a ball would hit his coffee and then he’d make you run lines because he’s pissed.”

The expectations of this behaviour from Participant 4’s coach continuously nurtured the development of conflict in the relationship with their coach as well as their teammates’ relationships with the coach.

Athletes are in a vulnerable position within the coach-athlete relationship as coaches hold a position of power. Participant 11 explains this by saying,

you were penalized in such a different way. And at times I get there is a benefit because you relate the fact that if I catch the ball with one hand I’m going to have to do suicides, then ideally, maybe I’ll catch the ball with two hands. But it was never- there was never a break from that behaviour.

Participant 11 did not agree with the way their coach punished the team as individuals.

They found that it was constant punishments in training and their motivation and enjoyment were impacted by this.

Similarly, Participant 5’s coach would also employ questionable coaching methods singling out Participant 5 for unknown reasons. An example of this was when Participant 5 said,

[O]ne day she found out it was my birthday, and she made the team do extra conditioning because of it. Like it was that kind of very all or nothing, very ego-oriented coaching approach that made it so intense because if you failed, you were automatically on her bad side in any capacity.

Actions such as this further toxified Participant 5's coach-athlete relationship creating conflict with no explanation from their coach.

The common aspect to the situations of Participants 5, 11, and 4 where that there is a specific power dynamic between athletes and coaches. Power is understood as “an interpersonal relationship in which one individual (or group) has the ability to cause another individual (or group) to take an action that would not be taken otherwise” (Black et al., 2019, p.417). What becomes important to understand is that the more that a person or unit is dependent on an individual, the more power the individual has (i.e., dependency). In the case of this research, because of the control a coach has over playing time, training, and being on the team the coach has a power over the athletes and their behaviours, which is conducive with the work of Potrac and Jones (2009) on power dynamics and team performance.

Acts like humiliation and belittling initiated conflict within the coach-athlete relationship, where described by the participants of this study. Athletes in these situations are viewed in subordinate roles, where the relationship is an implied social contract with their given positions that is a reflection of authority and chain of command (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). This is an example of a specific power dynamic that can be understood as coercive power. Black et al. (2019) explained that this type of power is based primarily on fear, where an individual is in a position of power and has control over a subordinate

because of the punishment or reward that can be administered. In this scenario, it could be suggested that humiliation and belittling is a coaching behaviour seen as “okay” from the coach because they experienced something similar when they were playing sports or could be seen as acceptable because of the emotional presence of playing elite level sport. Laios et al. (2003) suggested that,

Coaches have coercive power when they have the right to criticize individual and team performance, punish improper behaviour, fire assistants and personnel, etc. Sometimes people (athletes) do what others (coaches) tell them, not because they believe in their wisdom, but because the results of not obeying would be unpleasant. (p. 151)

The presence of coercive power is a different discussion than what has been identified in team sports where legitimate and expert power have been identified as common types of power in coaching (Potrac et al., 2002; Potrac et al., 2007; Rylander, 2016).

In addition, the treatment of athletes in the manner discussed above can be influential in the enjoyment their sport less, which can lead to becoming more stressed and anxious when going to training or games (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). This is also reflected in Pondy’s (1967) work, where it was stipulated that “conflict may threaten the emotional well-being of individual persons” (p.308). This was exemplified within Participant 7’s relationship with their assistant coach. Participant 7 explained that the assistant coach behaved more like the head coach. In this situation, the assistant coach made all the decisions involving starting lineups and training sessions, while the coach had a very limited role in communicating with the athletes and team strategy,

And from my perspective, it seemed that the male assistant coach kind of called the shots even though we had a female head coach. So, it was just that dynamic wasn't very good. You knew you had to impress the assistant coach more than the head coach. (Participant 7)

Also, Participant 7 indicated that the assistant coach would invite themselves out with the girls for drinks after their games. As explained by Participant 7,

And he would come with like another from the male team's assistant coach. And they would come and like sit with us at our table and kind of drink and socialize with us. Which is that part is fine. It was just the inappropriateness of like trying to be friends with people and like walking girl's home.

For Participant 7, this behaviour was perceived as crossing a line in how an assistant coach should treating and interacting with the athletes and more importantly, the question was raised, "what is the role of the head coach?" Rylander (2016) findings suggested that in the case of the presence of coercive power, athletes needed to conform to the views and expectations of the coach or otherwise they would not be part of the team or receive less playing time. This may explain the reason of why an athlete may perceive the inappropriate behaviour of the coach and staff, but really do nothing about it.

Participant 7 admittedly tried to be okay with the way their assistant coach was treating them. However, some of their teammates confided with Participant 7 their feelings of discomfort about the situation. Participant 7 further explained the situation as being,

It's awkward, but you're like, whatever. But then like the longer they stayed and then like the more they would, everyone gets drinking, and it kind of gets a little

bit more relaxed, and they would start... Yeah, like, just kind of you could tell who they liked, I guess, and then that just made everyone really uncomfortable, including like the people that they would like feel a bit more friendly towards.

Participant 7 tried to fix the situation by sending an email to which the assistant coach responded inappropriately,

I sent an email to my head coach, the female, and then him, and saying like this is what's going on like it's uncomfortable. And, I guess, I was kind of speaking for the collective and like the other girls on my team. And like he responded back basically saying like we're not talking about this. Like it's not inappropriate.

Basically, he can do what he wants.

As a result, this was identified as the deterioration of the coach-athlete relationship for Participant 7, "That's when like I started to get benched. So, I knew that was the consequence of sending an email." It was clear to Participant 7 that their coaching staff had no intentions on taking their concerns into consideration.

Coaching behaviour was also discussed in situations where athletes were affected by how their coach treated a teammate. Participant 4 described how they were impacted knowing that the more committed and reliable players were not getting the playing time they deserved by saying,

The way he was handling things just like really upset me like to see these girls who would work their ass off and like obviously so much harder and so much more invested and then like.. I don't know I guess, I hadn't really thought, or talked to the other girl who was being favored about how she felt and how her situation was for her.

Participant 4 was passionate about their sport and was disheartened when they witnessed the mistreatment to their teammates by their coach.

Some of the athletes (e.g., Participant 1, 4, 5, and 9) described their playing and training environment as being toxic, that was created through by the coach's behaviour and treatment of the players. The coach's actions discussed by the participants in this study had used poor strategies (e.g., running until a player throws up as punishment) with their players that had a negative effect on their coach-athlete relationship. For instance, Participant 2 explained the extent that their coach would take to humiliate them in training when they said, "But he literally brought like the whole team in to just be like you can't do it can you!" These situations can be dangerous when only one party in the coach-athlete relationship is aware of and recognizes the conflict such as Participant 2 in this scenario.

Participant 2 further described the frustrations from this situation with their coach as they tried discussing the conflict present in their relationship; being, the coach not giving Participant 2 a chance to play after fully recovering from an injury. They explain,

No, he would especially... especially in my fifth year. He would just like he came up with all these like... BODY reasons as to why I wasn't playing.. like he was like: you don't look like a soccer player, you're too tall.

It is worth noting that previous to their injury, Participant 2 had been a USPORT all-star for three years in a row. It is important to note, that Participant 2's body image did not change over the time that they were injured as suggested in the above quote by Participant 2.

A particular aspect of a coach's behaviour is their communication style, as previous literature has recognized that a coach's communication style can be reflective of the athlete's experience and, ultimately the success or non-success of the team (Kassing & Anderson, 2014; Turman, 2008; Turman & Schrodt, 2004). Communication is critical in the coach-athlete relationship as it can aid or worsen conflict management, impacting sport satisfaction (Davis et al., 2019). Poor communication in the coach-athlete relationship leads to athletes developing anxiety and other mental health problems (e.g., depression). For example, some coaches discussed in this study were perceived as exhibiting irrational behaviour. Participant 1 provided an example of a situation where the team was forced to practice in the cold and the coach's response was that "he screamed at me to get my hands out of my sleeves. Like... I'm 20 years old, haha I know what I'm doing. And so, then he said... I had a bad attitude..." Participant 1 further indicated that the coach frequently screamed at the players, particularly Participant 1, when they did not like their actions. In one situation, Participant 1 was screamed at because of the way they tossed their pinnie on the ground after being subbed off during a scrimmage,

He took it as me having a bad attitude... and he came over and just tore a strip off of me and it was embarrassing and my parents were there, and they heard... Uhm.. it was just really mortifying and... Uhm that happened a lot... stuff like that.

Participant 1 provided another example of irrational behaviour by their coach when they discussed trying to remedy their relationship with their coach during training camp in their 4th year. Participant 1 said,

So in my fourth year, uh... we had vans, so like each coach drove a van and I... rode shotgun one time, because I was trying really hard to... Uhm... make it a good year because I had my second and third year were really crappy, and my fourth year I was like I'm gonna start the year off good, and I tried to sit with the head coach and chat as we went on this trip and I uhm was like oh I remember this place, we came here my first year! And saying things like that. And he brought it up later in a meeting... he kept me and another player behind, and he told me how negative I was being complaining that we'd been to all these places before.

Participant 1 felt defeated in communicating with their coach after they humiliated them in team settings several times.

Communication is a “double-edged sword”; good communication can assist in diffusing and resolving conflict. Conversely, poor communication can worsen conflict in the coach-athlete relationship (Choi et al., 2020). For example, Participant 3 explained that they were frustrated with the coach’s communication when they said,

Cussing at us... like fucking get your shit together.. like this is not what I'm looking for from my team.. he also referred to us as 'not his players,' so that was very degrading... because he came in when we had been scouted by another coach?

Similarly, Participant 5 indicated that they constantly made attempts to communicate in a positive manner with their coach, aside from being yelled at during training sessions.

There were some instances where the coach would yell at the players for a mistake, but not actually inform them as to what they had done wrong, “In practice, we would be

doing drills and she would yell my name, but she wouldn't correct any behaviour or give any guidance as to what needed to happen. So, I was getting pretty frustrated” (Participant 5). Conversely, Participant 9's communication from their coach was constant and, at times, degrading. She explains, “She'd scream at me. Yell at me. Tell me I wasn't good enough, that I shouldn't be a captain.” The regular communication and type of interaction with their coach was frustrating for Participant 9.

Participant 8 was also feeling frustrated with their coach's communication, as any issue that came up, their coach would dismiss it simply because they were women.

Participant 8 explained,

Well, it was more of just like sometimes he would just make comments about like some period stuff or like just being girls. Oh, it's just like a girl thing or like drama. Like I find those are very negative words rather than talking to us and trying to figure out what the actual problem was.

Tomlinson and Yorganci (1997) indicated that male coaches in intercollegiate sport have been “prone to excessive and exaggerated forms of macho self-assertation that belittles and humiliates their athletes, male or female” (p.136), which seems to be the case for Participant 8. Participants in this study with dismissive coaches neglecting to communicate was the starting point for conflict within their coach-athlete relationship. The findings revealed that poor communication between the athlete and coach was found to be disappointing, manipulating, and degrading at times for the athletes of this study.

Athlete performance was a category for the latent stage of conflict as it encompassed two factors: playing time and favouritism. Kassing and Anderson (2014) support the above point by stating that,

[T]here are times when athletes, like employees, find themselves at odds with their respective coaches. This can occur over decisions about playing time, position assignments, training techniques, and the like. (p. 173)

What then becomes challenging for these athletes is that in order to improve the relationship they have to express their discontent about the coach where the coach could use their power to initiate further actions that impacts their relationship (Kassing & Anderson, 2014). For instance, Participant 1 had a strained relationship with their coach. Participant 1 experienced constant screaming from their coach, verbally attacking them as a player and person. It was draining on Participant 1's spirit and love of the game. They explained that though their coach had a problem with them, it did not affect their playing time, "I still started every single game. So, like he still was showing me that he wanted me on the field, but he was so hard on me so that it also kinda didn't make sense." Participant 1 never complained about their playing time. They just wanted to be treated better as a person by their coach. However, Participant 1 was an anomaly in this study compared to the majority of the participants as they indicated to express concerns about their playing time to the coach.

Participant 2, for example, had been a three-time first-team USPORT all-star, they did not see playing time when they returned to the same level of play through rehab following an injury. They explain how they finally had a chance to perform one weekend mid-season when the current player in their position was unable to play,

She [a teammate] was injured, and he needed someone to fill in for her for the weekend. So, he put me in for right back. And I straight up like frickin killed it like we had GPS's on and like I ran around 14km one game like I just up and back

the whole time I had like the best scoring opportunities... like I hit the crossbar like... 3 times... that weekend?

Based on Participant 2 described performance above, it was indicated that all of her teammates and coaching staff, minus the head coach, congratulated them on their performance. They thought they would see more field time because of this. However, as soon as their injured teammate was healed, Participant 2 never got another chance to compete.

For each of the study participants recall of playing time, they described the situation where they would have to either "earn" or work up to a regular spot on the team. Conflict arose for Participant 5 when they had worked up to regular playing time, but then lost it without any explanation. They explained,

Two tournaments in a row, I hardly ever saw the field. So, I was back to playing my first-year minutes as opposed to the minutes that I had been receiving in the first couple of weeks of the season. And I had pleaded to be placed on the field numerous times, and then I eventually I got really fed up.

In addition, Participant 5 went on to confess that they were not clear on why the playing time was being restricted,

I couldn't understand why these rookies were getting played over me. No offense to them, but my record had shown improvement and I was going and I was doing what I was supposed to be doing, but I couldn't understand why I wasn't getting played.

Participant 5's performance and playing time for them was confusing as they felt that they were performing well in training, but was not given the chance to perform in game

play. Because this is a perception by Participant 5, the coach could be perceiving their training activities differently. In any event, the lack of communication between the coach and athlete became the starting point for conflict.

Participants eluded that several outside resources (e.g., parental influence) could impact their playing time rather than being evaluated based on their performance (Participants 6 and 9). It was suggested by the study participants that coaches were looking for personal or political gain by starting and playing certain players more than others. These coaches may even be a part of certain players' support systems, using their role to ensure that certain players receive preferential treatment. This is understood as favouritism.

Favouritism was defined in this research as prioritizing other individuals for reasons outside of how well athletes perform but limited in the broader literature on coaching (e.g., J. Edwards, 2016). This was commonly referred to when certain athletes were given more playing time or preferential treatment and more significant opportunities within the team. For instance, Participant 1 was performing well and starting each game. Their coach would leave Participant 1 on the field until they had enough of a lead to take them off. However, they would always leave certain players on to promote them.

Participant 1 explains,

They definitely had favourites, uhm and so, for example, I started every game of my university career and um any time we may have been having success as a team, I would be subbed off... and a favourite... player on the team would have been left on to score... there was one instance where one of our players who... was you... the coach favoured... uhm probably should have rested her kind of

thing.. uhm I think we won the game nine nothing! He left her on to score nine goals... uhm... but uhm... you know took me off I only played something like forty minutes, and he would put me in if we were playing bad... he would put me in, take me out, put me in, take me out and uhm... it was tough to not get injuries that way with your muscles warming up and cooling off and... that type of thing.

Similarly, Participant 2 found it challenging to gain any playing time from their coach while comparing themselves to their coaches' favourite players. They explained,

Unless you're like perfect, in every single aspect of what you're doing like you're on the bench. And like, to a certain extent I understand that... but at the same time.. that kind of pressure is like... it's also shitty because, like, not every single player has the same thing. So like, some people can make a million mistakes, and he doesn't care. And then... there'd be other people who like me and my friend... who literally played in the back like our whole university career.

Similarly, Participant 4 was frustrated by the favouritism demonstrated by their university coach. In their opinion, their coach was over the top negative to their team. Their coach was constantly screaming at players but was not universal about it. From Participant 4's perspective the coach had two favourite players on the roster that would not be communicated in the same way as other athletes on the team. As Participant 4 explains,

But he wouldn't put those two down. Those two were his angels. Kind of thing, haha they were like his.. trophy players! They were so good and so fit and good and so talented at everything, and um.. he really hyped them up a lot.

During the interview with Participant 4, it was admitted that the players that were perceived to be favorites were great athletes, which could have played a role in how they were treated in comparison to other athletes on the team. Another example of favoritism by Participant 4 was that their coach told some of their teammates that they could not attend family events in the off-season because they would miss training but allowed one of the favourites to go to a wedding during their championship tournament. Instead of being sat on the bench for not attending training, when the favourite player returned from the wedding for the championship game, and their coach started them with having little to no sleep.

Participant 9 also experienced the favouritism treatment and described their frustrations by saying,

It's really frustrating when you go to 2-hour practices every day, you're travelling all the time on the weekend, you're trying to study for school, you're trying to rush out lab to get to practice, and you feel bad for being a couple of minutes late.

When other people are also late but still get to play.

Favouritism is prioritizing other individuals for reasons regardless of how well athletes perform. Thus, favouritism can impact anyone involved on the team. Participant 3 stated, "He made it very obvious that there were favourites um... and he made it very obvious that I was NOT a favourite." While the outcomes of favouritism can be different with different coaches, the one common discussion point by the study participants was that it only takes one poor performance or a combination of adverse events where a coach's behaviour changes, which resulted in conflict arising between the athlete and coach.

Favouritism can have a significant impact on team cohesion or dynamic. Team cohesion is connected with group performance (Turman, 2003). All accounts of favouritism discussed in this study were said to have negatively impacted the team's overall performance in competition. Furthermore, Hague et al. (2021) suggested that it was the responsibility on the coach for making the elite sport environment motivational and enjoyable for athletes wanting to continue in their sport. As such, team cohesion was low and reflected in the team's performance in competition (e.g., Participant 9). The study participants also commented that favouritism even had a poor effect on training sessions. In some cases, participants recalled conversations with other coaching staff members disagreeing with the head coach's decisions but did not express their concerns to the head coach. The coaching staff in this case would arguably be put into an awkward position where a complaint is coming forward, but they do not want to go against coach's decision. This makes for a challenging situation for all parties involved.

Upon self-reflection, the study participants suggested that the conflict created within the coach-athlete relationship with favouritism was irreversible. Once it was perceived by the players that they were not liked as much as other players, a divisive environment was created where the coach's "favorites" were a group and the other players were another group. A divided team can impact a player's sense of well-being (Turman, 2003), impacting their overall wellness of the athletes and team dynamics. For instance, Participant 9 explained how their team dynamic changed once a new head coach was named to their premiership team. The new head coach was seemingly trying to promote their private training business by bringing players from other clubs over to this club's premier team,

So basically, multiple people on our team were brought over to our team because of this program, and all were, obviously, then the favourites even though their skill level was the same. A very cohesive group that like excluded us from them; basically tore up the team.

Participant 9 described their relationship with their coach as strained, as Participant 9 was working on getting past the conflict. Because of their position as team captain, Participant 9 attempted to remain positive. Unfortunately, the group was too divided in their differing relationships with the coach. Favouritism fosters a sense of inequality in a team (Gearity & Murray, 2011). The study participants who discussed experiencing favouritism as the conflict in their coach-athlete relationship felt resentment towards their coaches and the players favoured over them (e.g., Participant 2, 4, and 9).

Whether positive or negative, the parent-coach relationship can impact the athlete/coach relationship. Hellstedt (1987) suggested that coaches often struggle with working with the parents of athletes. The parent-coach relationship is the dynamic between the coach and athlete's parent. This relationship was analyzed because most athletes interviewed reflected on a time when their parents were still somewhat involved. Participants discussing their university experience would have been recruited from ages as young as 17. For example, Participant 4 described the relationship between their parents and the coach in a negative light by saying, "My Dad is mad at him! Like my dad used to say, oh, if I ever run into him, I'm just gonna call him an asshole!" Parents would have been involved in this initial recruiting process in intercollegiate athletics.

During the recruiting process, coaches look to sell their program to the athlete and the parents to ensure they receive a commitment to play at the academic institution.

Participant 1 discusses how their coach worked to sell them and their family even after signing into their first year, “He gave my family stuff like university paraphernalia.” This is an indication of how the coach is looking to recruit the athlete and ensure their commitment to the academic institution. However, in a different situation, the coach of Participant 3 tried suspending them over missing practice for school. They explained the response by their parents as being,

haha... well, my dad called and probably tried to set him straight like, what are you doing here... why are you doing this? You realize how crazy you look and how crazy you seem? Um... and then I think maybe once some things started clicking in his head, that he WAS crazy for doing this? (Participant 3)

The parents of Participant 3 trusted the coach to treat their daughter with respect and value academics and that their child is safe physically and emotionally. Participant 3 was not safe emotionally in this situation, and their parents stepped in.

The common sources of conflict tend to be communication and power dynamics over training approaches, as Hellstedt (1987) indicated. In addition, some parent-coach relationships can result in conflict that originates from parents being entitled to have a say over their child’s athletics (i.e., playing time) or even team selection because of the financial contributions they are making. Jowett et al. (2005) explained that parents overstepping their authority or perceived that they are entitled to be involved in these decisions can be received poorly by the coach, which can impact their child’s relationship with the coach. Parental influence within a team automatically creates political conflict and division. Participant 9 described this scenario when they said,

Basically, it was very, very, very intense. If you weren't from away, so if you were from the Maritimes, you basically, in my experience, didn't get playing time because other students from, say, other provinces out West where parents were heavily influenced also money and very involved with our coach.

Players experiencing frequent conflict in their coach-athlete relationship can develop resentment towards their fellow teammates that have otherwise positive relationships with their coach. This would suggest that poor relations between the coach and athlete within a team setting can result in intra-team rivalry and power struggles (e.g., Holt et al., 2012; Kristiansen et al., 2012; Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Participants expressed their frustrations when apparent favouritism happened with players that coaches preferred over others (e.g., Participant 5). This seemingly increased the existing conflict within the coach-athlete relationship with the participants and impacted how they interacted with the favourite players.

Unfortunately for athletes like Participant 5, not being a favourite created an isolating environment. They felt that the coach never appreciated them or would engage when they would try and speak with them. Participant 5 was from out of town and perceived that the coach had a stronger relationship with their teammates that were from within town, as they had been previously coached by this coach. Participant 5 felt that their teammates did not appreciate the relationship between them and their coach and thus, became distant from the coach. They explained,

There was a lot of conflict. I ended up pushing a lot of people away. My roommate at the time was actually my teammate, and we were going through some issues because I was having a hard time with the coach, and she didn't want

to hear about it. So I started to have falling out with her, and then, by default, my other teammates, who I was friends with and she was friends with.

Participant 5 developed a form of anorexia trying to appease their coach and ultimately resulted in them making the decision not remain on that team.

The above situation is similar to Participant 8's situation. One of their teammate's father was their coach. Participant 8 did not want to talk about how the coach treated them around their teammates for the sake of the coach's daughter's feelings and did not want to feel isolated because of it,

So like, I would try not to bring it up for when she was around because I didn't want her to think that I was talking bad about her dad, but I wanted to know if he was making these other comments to other girls as well.

Because of the situation, Participant 8 eventually decided to leave as they were a trainer for a men's team through their university program and saw how the women's coaches interacted with those athletes. Participant 8 knew that was what they wanted and expected through their university sport and were not receiving it. They were uncomfortable around the coach and, through that, their teammates.

For the athletes, a situation that impacts both their relationship with the coach and USPORT career was identified as scholarships, as this was identified to be a latent source of conflict. There is an inherent pressure on these athletes to meet a performance requirement to maintain their scholarship (Matosic et al., 2014). Thus, because coaches control playing time and evaluate performance, tension can build as there is a fear that the athlete could lose their scholarship and the coach would be the one to blame. This control is understood to be the source of coercive power. Matosic et al. (2014) discuss that

scholarships as an outside resource can negatively impact the coach-athlete relationship. For example, Participant 1 explained, “I felt, that if I you know... stood up for myself or told him off or whatever that he’d kick me off the team and I’d lose all of my scholarships. So, that would be the pressure that I felt... I guess.” The existing pressure of scholarships in intercollegiate sport can arguably hinder an athlete’s sense of safety of playing on the team and receiving financial support. As Participant 2 explained, “[The] only reason I stayed was because I needed my scholarship.” Participant 2 was experiencing conflict with their coach as soon as they recovered from an injury. They wanted to drop out sooner than they did, as they needed to keep their scholarship.

Perceived/Felt Stage of Conflict

As indicated by the Pondy (1967), the felt and perceived stage of conflict is dynamic where the conflict can progress to either one of or both felt and perceived stages of conflict. Conflicts identified in this study were differentiated by progressing through either felt or perceived stage of conflict. In this research, identifying these stages depended on scenarios discussed from the latent stage of conflict and the study participants’ perception of the initial conflict situation. In the felt stage of conflict, one or more of the parties involved are aware of the emerging conflict. Acknowledging the latent stage of conflict can have different impacts on the coach-athlete relationship depending on how each party experiences or perceives the conflict. For example, participants in this study discussed experiencing irrational behaviour by their coaches in dealing with felt conflict, such as coaches directly screaming inappropriately at the participants in either a one-on-one or group setting. Participant 1 explains this when they say,

um.. even the time like the time he screamed at me because I put my pinnie on the ground to put my sweater on... you know... people in the stands... came over to me afterwards... and said are you okay? You know... that was really awful of him. So it's not like it was in my head.

Having their feelings validated by spectators did not make Participant 1 feel any better about their ongoing conflict with their coach but certainly the conflict between the coaches was felt.

Similarly, Participant 10 felt conflict with their coach continually doubted their injuries. As such, Participant 10 never felt the support needed to recover from their injury and return to play safely. Participant 10 explains this by saying,

sometimes he was reactive more than he was like preventive. So, instead of saying, "Oh, you have this. Like you should rest, so it doesn't get into another injury." He would wait for you to be injured, and then he would like be mad at you for being injured.

Participant 10 explained that their coach would refer to her injuries as “phantom injuries.” As a result, Participant 10 expressed that they never felt safe returning to play, knowing they had not recovered enough to do so. Participant 10 was emotionally hurt by the coaches lack of trust for being injured,

No, it was kind of like a lack of respect. I don't know. You don't trust me. And like you've known me for like 7 years. I understand I had a lot of previous injuries but they were all validated. It's not like I made them up.

This situation were understood as felt conflict and the source of conflict was recognized by the study participants.

Perceived conflict is more common in situations where there is a lack of latent stage source conflicts present or a lack of awareness of latent stage conflict present. Pondy (1967) suggested that “Conflicts become strong threats, and therefore must be acknowledged when the conflicts relate to values central to the individual's personality” (p.301). Perceived conflict, like felt conflict, is situational. Poor management of perceived conflict is typically the result of poor communication. Most perceived conflicts in the coach-athlete relationship discussed in this study were those involving lack of playing time and favouritism. There was also a lack of communication in these situations, leaving the elite athletes to perceive the reason why they loss playing time or what they did wrong, but there was limited communication to confirm or deny those perceptions. For instance, Participant 8 discussed a one major conflict that arouse with their coach before an away university hockey game. The coach told Participant 8 to get dressed and warm up. After warm-up, their coach told them to get undressed with no explanation. Participant 8 tried to ask why but got no satisfactory response. After that situation, Participant 8 explained how they felt because of that outcome,

It was more of a like, I would say, an unspoken thing. Like that one thing happened and I just took it to heart, and I was so annoyed by it, that I just would try to stay out of his way and stay out of his daughter's way because I didn't want them to give him a reason not to play me.

From Participant 8’s point of view, their relationship began to deteriorate once the above situation occurred. Where there was no discussion following that conflict, it was never managed or resolved.

Similarly, Participant 9's coach seemed to be taking out their personal feelings towards Participant 9, through their coaching behaviour. Participant 9 explained, the turning point was having a coach that really didn't like me at all because of reasons like: Her partner tried to contact me and hang out with me, and she found out about it, and I had nothing to do with it and, I think, she took it out on me. Participant 9 was the captain of this team and tried to handle the situation and never spoke rudely back to their coach's relentless negative talk towards them. They mostly just brushed off the screaming aimed towards them and tried to move on. Participant 9 was left to perceive the reasons as to why they were being treated this way, "She knew I was a decent player, and I don't think she liked that. And especially, I was younger than her. I don't think she liked that very much." Participant 9 just took the continual screaming, tearing them down as a player and a captain by their coach. This perceived conflict continued to build up until Participant 9 decided to drop out of elite sport to escape the negativity.

Participant 7 also experienced perceived conflict in their relationship with their coach. It is important to note that their strained relationship was with the assistant coach of their university team. Their head coach was a former university female athlete, and their assistant coach was a former university male athlete. The assistant coach seemingly had more control of the team. They had all the say in the starting lineup and ran the practices. Participant 7's conflict with their assistant coach stemmed from their behaviour outside of training and gameplay. The assistant coach would try to socialize with the team outside of sanctioned events. Participant 7 explained how some players felt uncomfortable and pressured by the situation,

He did some things like he met with like players out at the bars like on the weekends, and so if you weren't really like into that or like left, could be felt as inappropriate. He would get mad at you. So there was, yeah, it was really kind of sketchy.

Participant 7 explained how it seemed fine when their coach would come meet the team for a drink or two. It was when the assistant coach behaved more friendly towards certain players once the drinks added up. They explained further how they would try to walk girls home,

But like walking one specific girl home after the bars and like things like that. So that you knew okay, that was a little bit more than just “oh we're going come have a beer, and then we'll leave and let you guys do your thing.” It was like more trying to do... It seemed like trying to build relationship. (Participant 7)

The situation with Participant 7 tried to address the problem with their head coach via email of which the assistant coach had been carbon copied. The head coach never acknowledged the email, but the assistant coach got the email and said it was not a problem, which was the end of the discussion. From that point forward, Participant 7 viewed the way they were treated by the assistant as being punished with seeing limited playing time in games and never being acknowledged by the assistant coach during any team event. Shortly after, Participant 7 decided to drop out of elite sport due to this perceived conflict never being acknowledged or managed within the relationship with their coach.

Moving forward, the conflict process is entirely dependent on how the potential for conflict impacts each individual party involved in the coach-athlete relationship. In

this study, the trajectory for perceived conflict, like felt conflict, depended entirely on conflict management. Thus, the first stages of the conflict process is really very individualistic as each conflict scenario has nuances that are either perceived or felt, but it comes down to the individual's cognitive recognition and ability to identify the beginning elements of the conflict.

Manifest Stage of Conflict

The manifest stage of conflict is considered the outbreak stage or the “breaking point.” This is when either the felt or perceived conflict comes to fruition. This would include how the conflict is dealt with at the time of occurrence. Pondy (1967) describes the manifest stage of conflict as conflictual behaviour. An important distinction is that “manifest conflict seems to be that behaviour which, in the mind of the actor, frustrates the goals of at least some of the other participants” (Pondy, 1967, p.304). This was typically the point in which the participants in this research decided to leave their elite sport. The manifest stage of conflict was when the coach and athlete had a discouraging discussion about the conflict present within their relationship. The two themes of the manifest stage of conflict identified in this research were conflict response in the form of injuries and avoidance.

Conflict response is considered a manifest stage of conflict, as it occurs when conflict response is referred to by how each party reacts to conflict coming to a “breaking point.” On the coach's end of conflict in this study, there were common acts of conflict response that caused detriment to the athlete's continued participation. It was determined from the data analysis that conflict responses were comprised of aggressive conversation,

lack of communication between the two parties, or punishment (e.g., not allowing the athlete to return to play from an injury or forcing them to play during an injury).

Some athletes in this study discussed how injury strained their coach-athlete relationship. Injury is an example of a conflict response by coach that forced the conflict to come to a head. As indicated above, Participant 10's coach would not accept their player's injuries because they wanted them to play. Participant 10 explained this when they said,

It's like talking to a wall. So, yeah, he would just be like, "I think that you should go see sports psych about this. This is clearly in your head." But I had to explain to him and our athletic therapist to back me up saying that like, "No. She does have pain in like generalized spots. Meaning that like if she has pain in a generalized spot it doesn't mean it's mental." So he just wasn't listening and he just wanted me to play and didn't care what it cost.

According to Participant 10, their coach just wanted these injuries not to be accurate and tried to ignore them. The continual pressure to perform by Participant 10's coach and not heal ultimately led to their exit from elite sport.

Athletes are frustrated with injuries, as are coaches; however, as a coach this is an instance where injuries is out of their control, and the focus is seemingly on getting the athlete back to playing regardless of the cost. When there is a lack of supportive behaviours on the part of the coach, this has been identified to be a source of conflict (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). There were instances when athletes, such as Participant 2, felt pressured into participating in training while they were injured. The team was doing the beep test (a running test that is used to assess endurance and speed) during training,

when the coach wanted Participant 2 to be involved in the testing even though they were struggling with an injury. Participant 2 did not want to argue with their coach and agreed to run the test,

He was like “are you gonna do it (the beep test)? Cuz if you don’t do it now, you’re just gonna have to do it later. So why don’t you just do it now?” and I was like ehrrrrr okay let’s do it! (grimace) let’s go..”

This came to the “breaking point” when Participant 2 reached the third level and could no longer feel their entire left leg,

Like I had to stop at level 3! (Low). Because I couldn’t feel my leg! Haha, and he came over, and I was like literally freaking out because I was like, what the fuck! I can't feel my fucking leg! And he comes over and I had my sock off because like.. the physio was like.. trying to like calm me down a little bit!

Participant 2’s back injury was not healed, and the running had caused their left leg to go numb. Participant 2 added that their coach did not believe them that their leg was numb and touched the bottom of their foot to see if the nerve caused any movement, “he didn’t believe me! Haha, he thought I was bullshitting it to get out of the rest of the test! So he like touches my foot, nothing happens!” Overtraining combined with unrealistic expectations for athletes has been known to cause burnout, self-esteem issues and dropout (Kuhlin et al., 2020). This left Participant 2 feeling disregarded by their coach in their recovery.

Injury caused a loss of trust within the coach-athlete relationship with impatient coaches. Coaches frustrated by athletes’ injuries were not supportive of the time needed to return to training. This made players feel unsafe in their sport and suffered re-injury

(McCall et al., 2017). Athletes with perceived quality support from their coaches are more likely to have higher overall well-being (Peng et al., 2020). Coaches that allow athletes to recover fully have a more substantial chance of performing as the athlete was before the injury. Some participants in this study, never returned to the calibre of player that they were pre-injury, as they never had the proper time to heal.

The result of the study participants not being able to play, often resulted in coaches “moving on” with other athletes who could play in their position. While from the study participants perspective of “moving on” and lack of communication was unacceptable, it is important to note that the role of the coach at the elite level is to ensure the team is winning. If an athlete can not play, then the coach needs to field a team with players that ensure success, and in some cases that means they need to focus their attention on athletes who are not injured.

Once athletes from this study recovered, they remained benched over the players who moved into their roles. For example, Participant 2 explained that their relationship with their coach started to become toxic when they had injured their back,

I got injured, and I was out for the whole year. And.. while I was out for the whole year... he just like forgot that I existed and I... got hell and because it's like... he lost respect for me during that time... and just like tossed me to the side as soon as... and like when I was healthy he was like.. (Name) who?

This is a fear experienced as athletes undergo injury rehabilitation (Tracey, 2003).

Regardless that the athletes were now healthy and able to play as before their injury, they were no longer a priority athlete for their coach. Participants in this situation were not satisfied with the discussion with their coach, when trying to address their frustrations,

which resulted in the study participants to lose hope and enjoyment and leave their elite sport.

Several participants (e.g., Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11) in this study discussed their coaches as consistently screaming aggressively and excessively at them. This was frustrating to athletes as they developed an understanding that they could never appease their coach. They began to expect verbal abuse from their coach when going to training. According to the literature, athletes developed low self-esteem and anxiety from their coaches behaving by aggressively responding (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). The study participants discussed how some coaches had shamed them for dropping out and tried to make them feel guilt. For example, Participant 11 had a hard time coping with their university coach from the start of training camp. They disagreed with how the coach ran their training sessions by belittling individuals when they did not perform up to standard instead of addressing and punishing the players as a team. Participant 11 never addressed this behaviour with their coach. Because of this, there was a constant build-up of issues impacting the relationship between Participant 11 and the coach. Finally, when those issues got to a point, where Participant 11 decided to quit the sport and the team, the coach responded with, “And, and you know, that was when he said do you want to know, I was gonna start you. You've got so much potential. I can't believe you are doing this.” Participant 11 admitted that they might have stayed had that interaction happened sooner.

Some athletes hit their breaking point with the conflict response in their coach-athlete relationship and were discouraged by the dismissive response to the latent conflict by their coach as they attempted to address the situation. Participant 5 decided to confront

their coach, fully intending on staying on the team. They wanted to change their status on the team. They explained how their interaction with the coach's changed their decision,

So I was very frustrated, and I stomped into her office after practice one day, and I was like, "Enough." And so my tone was very frustrated and respectful but frustrated. I said, "Coach, I just don't understand why I am not seeing the field?" So then there was that frequent gap that we had in communication where she basically just pushed my feelings to the side and said, "You are not getting on the field. You're done for the year." She's like, "I've got other people to play." And so I was like, "This is ridiculous." And she is like, "I don't care. It's my team. If you have a problem, get out." So I left her office. (Participant 5)

Their coach would not give them a chance to play and would not even discuss a route to become a better player for future seasons. Participant 5 found this to be deflating to a point where they decided not to continue on in the sport.

As a result of the conflict between the coach and athlete, some of the participants described a punishment (e.g., Participant 2, 6, 7 and 9). This mainly took the form of suspending athletes or not dressing them for important games, while they were uninjured and able to dress. Athletes such as senior athletes being told that they were not dressing in their last home game due to conflict dropped out of elite sport as a last resort to not allow their coach to humiliate them. Athletes in this study saw irrational punishments such as sitting out a game after needing to miss a training session. This had a more severe impact on the coach-athlete relationship when there were similar cases with other team members who did not receive the same punishment. Acts of punishment from coaches in

response to perceived conflict can result in discouragement felt by the athlete, lack of motivation, and a limited desire to continue on in the sport (Olympiou et al., 2008).

Avoidance was considered a manifest stage of conflict as when neither coach nor athlete acknowledges and addresses an issue within the relationship; the conflict continues to grow. This was the case with several participants in this study. For example, athletes like Participant 4 feared that if they were to engage verbally with their coach to voice their concerns or if they were to try and move on to another program, their playing careers would end then and there. This is a type of coercive power that can be utilized by the coach to ensure conformity and avoid conflict interactions. Participant 4 explained that “it was just like... I was scared I'd never get to play again if I quit. So I had to keep playing there. That was my only option. If I want to play”. Participant 4 felt stuck in the program they were in with their coach. All they wanted to do was to play the sport that they loved, but their coach was destroying their love for the sport.

Similarly, Participant 6 never actually had a confrontation with their coach. As Participant 6 explained they tried to communicate with the coach about their limited playing time. Participant 6 felt that they never got constructive feedback or would only see temporary change for a short period of time, “With that said, once I did say something, there's times when there was a change, and there's also times when there wasn't very much of a change.” Participant 6 did not continue into university sport as they had initially intended, which they attributed to this particular coach. What is unfortunate about this situation is that study participant was recruited to different schools for soccer but never applied, as they did not want to experience a similar situation again.

Wachsmuth et al. (2020) indicated that the skills to manage and resolve conflict are imperative for the coach-athlete relationship to survive. Athletes who did not approach their coach about existing conflict or have their coach approach them the conflict remained latent. The conflict moved from latent to manifested when the athlete decided to address the conflict with the coach, then the conflict impacted the coach-athlete relationship.

Quality coach-athlete relationships depend heavily on outcomes from the relationship, such as satisfaction (Rhind & Jowett, 2010). Several factors can influence the satisfaction of the coach-athlete relationship, such as communication and how each party treats the other. It is important to address when factors create dissatisfaction from the coach-athlete relationship, as when appropriately managed, they could be resolved. For example, Participant 4 got injured in a training session, and their hand was bleeding. They needed to get it taped so that their hand would stop bleeding and would not get any blood on the ball. Their coach got annoyed at the situation and yelled at their teammates while participant 4 got their hand taped. This was one of Participant 4's "breaking points" before quitting elite sport. They explain,

I got a bandaid, it was fine, got back into the drill. And then after practise, one of my friends was like yeah, he went on like a rampage while you were getting your finger taped about how you- like people who play [the sport]- shouldn't have long nails. I was like are you effing kidding me like I was so done with that kind of BS that after practice I went into his office and I like showed him my nails, and I was like, are these long to you? And I was like, do these look long, and I just wanted

to kind of make it clear that my nails weren't long, and the bottom of my nail got hurt. Like...What do you want from me?

Out of frustration, Participant 4 attempted to confront their coach and manage the conflict they seemed to be festering. They did not get a satisfactory response and was dismissed by their coach.

The study participants who did not attempt communicating with their coach regarding their dissatisfaction in their relationship never received closure and the state of mind to move on from that situation. This also did not allow for an opportunity for the coach to change their behaviour towards the athlete if they are willing. In addition, if some type of communication took place between the two parties, there would be an opportunity for the coach to present their side of the situation. Not communicating their frustrations with the coach also did not allow the athlete to understand the rationale for the coaches' behavior. Participant's perceptions could have blinded them to the decisions being made to benefit the team as a whole. Participants in this study who experienced this situation eventually lost their love of the sport because the conflict in their coach-athlete relationship was never acknowledged or resolved as neither party brought it to the other's attention.

The Aftermath Stage of Conflict

The aftermath stage of conflict is understood to be the result of the conflict. This stage captures any lasting impact and outcome from the conflict (Pondy 1967). The aftermath stage of conflict is highly dependent on how the conflict process was managed. This is the discovery stage of whether or not the potential for further conflict to develop exists from conflict and what happened because of it. Two prominent themes emerged in

the aftermath stage of this research: negative mental health disorders and elite sport dropout.

Mental health disorders were identified in the aftermath stage of conflict as it was a recurring theme for study participants. Athletes discussed how the anxieties developed through their conflict with their coach have followed them into their careers, impacting their professional confidence and performance. For instance, Participant 1 explains that even now in their profession, they have anxiety about someone coming in and screaming at them as their coach always did, humiliating them,

Um, but yea that stuff sticks with you and um.. it- I would say to this day has affected me in.. other aspects of my life like um in my profession now sometimes I go to work and I am really good.. at my job.. but there are some days where I feel like.. someone's just gonna call me out.. or um I'm really nervous to go to my job because I might mess up and someone may point it out.

This impacts Participant 1's life several years after their experience with their university coach.

Goutteborge et al. (2019) identified mental health disorder rates in former elite athletes were similar to that of current elite athletes. This data supports that both perceived and diagnosed mental health disorders developed in the study participants from their conflict with their coaches remain in their lives today. This is portrayed by Participant 9 who was not at a university when they dropped out of elite sport. They were in a premier league playing with their hometown club. Participant 9 had developed mental health problems during their time as an elite athlete. However, they intensified after they left because of the way that they left. They explain, "It was awful. Like, I'm on

anxiety medication now. Yeah. Just awful. Like, really weird to be around like the soccer community.” Participant 9 began playing in a lower-level team, but their participation quickly started to decrease.

Some athletes developed and were treated for depression (e.g., the study participants discussed being prescribed medication for their depression) from their conflict with their coach. Junge and Prinz (2019) discuss how information on mental health disorders among elite athletes is inconclusive. However, they found that there was high importance in having coach awareness of the mental health of their athletes. Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders among elite athletes (Kremzar Jovanovic et al., 2022). Depression resulting from constant conflict in their coach-athlete relationship impacted relationships within and outside their elite sport environment. Relationships were lost due to the conflict affecting their day-to-day life. It was common for the elite female athletes to be consumed in the conflict with their coach, as their elite sport was the most significant part of their routines.

Athletes' poor mental health had an impact on their physical health (e.g. Participant 5 and 9). In one instance, the study participant developed eating disorders as a result of conflict within their coach-athlete relationship. Quinn and Robinson (2020) discussed how eating disorders are more typical of an issue for college-level female athletes. However, the social aspect of team sports positively relates to eating disorder development as well. Eating disorders impact elite athletes' performance and can cause long-lasting health problems (Mancine et al., 2020). For example, Participant 5's mental health became a serious issue as they continually tried to appease their coach to the point that they neglected to eat. Participant 5 explained,

And so, I actually developed an ectopic heart really early but it was a form of anorexia. And on top of that, I was losing sleep because of the nights I would spend worrying and thinking about these things.

Participant 5 then needed to heal physically and mentally after dropping out of elite sport.

Mancine et al. (2020) discuss how coaches can contribute to disordered eating in athletes by creating an overly competitive environment for the athlete. All athletes were impacted by their experiences with their coach. Most were emotional when speaking about the challenging interactions with their coach. The frustration was still with these participants years later, as they seemingly feel regret for not continuing to compete and could have continued to play at an elite level.

The final theme for aftermath of the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship is elite sport dropout. This resulted in all participants included in this study's outcome in the conflict with their coach. Some athletes decided to half-heartedly continue their season with their coach and leave elite sport once that season was finished. Others left mid-season when they could not tolerate further conflict with their coach. Athletes discussed a range of emotions towards their specific sports after dropping out. Several participants had eligibility left to play for their schools. For example, Participant 5 explains how their conflict with their coach caused them to lose the love for their sport when they say,

When I left [the sport] I decided that I would not do it again. I really fell out of love with the sport and all of the bad experiences I had around the sport. And even coming, though I finished my undergraduate degree in my university work with [the sport], I came to a different university to do my masters and here I have

been asked three different times to play for their team either in the community or at the school that I am at. And I just keep saying no. Because I have no desire to get back on the field again and get in that situation again.

Some participants (e.g., Participants 1 and 2) tried returning to play at a recreational level, though they left due to their mental association with the sport.

Poor communication and inappropriate support have been known to cause early athlete dropout (Andronikos et al., 2019). This study suggests that this is also true for elite female athletes. The participants in this study did not leave their elite sport as they intended to. Participants discussed wanting to play their sport at the elite level for a long time. Some participants were so disappointed in the lack of care that their coach seemed to have for them as athletes and people that they lost the love of the game. Participant 9 made it the whole season going into playoffs, putting up with their coach's mind games. Participant 9 explained their frustration when they said,

So after all these aggravations like all season, never saying anything, it was literally a build-up from April to August. Like this one day of me not being able to say anything, and yeah, so I grabbed my stuff. My lovely, lovely team manager, he was amazing. He looked at me and knew what I was going to do. Basically, the only reason I stayed, actually, and some of my teammates, and I walked off the field. Walked right off camera, like walked right off the field. Got into my car and I left. And I never spoke to her again.

Participant 9 continues to talk about their disappointment because they could have stayed at the elite level. They explained,

It ended with me not going back to play at a level that was where I should be playing. I am older now, obviously, and I don't have the time and or probably the stamina, but I probably would have played for another year or two.

Similarly, Participant 10 was disappointed at the lack of regard for their safety shown by their coach. Their coach had worked with Participant 10 on and off the field. They chose them to be their student worker for the summer sports camps that the university program would put on. The fact that Participant 10 could not perform when their coach wanted them to because they needed time to heal brought turmoil into their relationship. Participant 10 tried to perform but could not go all out due to an injury or would not be as fit as they needed to be yet in coming back from an injury. They explained this when they said,

Anyways so then I had decided like to not play that season in the end because it was bothering me too much, but like anyways... It was just like our relationship went like to garbage, and then I ended up just like not wanting to play for that program anymore. So after that year that I took off, I just didn't go back.

(Participant 10)

Participant 10 continued to say,

Because it didn't matter what (the) sports psych would tell him. What athletic therapists would tell him. What an MRI result would tell him. It's not what he wanted to hear and he like, he... yeah, he just gave me absolutely nothing and just, you know, it was just so much that I didn't come back. I didn't go back.

Participant 10 had another year of eligibility and was healthy again while back in school but did not want to return to their coach's program.

Participant 7 intended on finishing their fifth year of USPORT eligibility but could not bring themselves to do it. They explain, “And so I left, I would say, almost like halfway through the season of that year, my 5th year, because of that, of the like inappropriateness of that assistant coach.” After the assistant coach shut down their attempt to stop the assistant coach from behaving inappropriately towards the players and making them feel uncomfortable, Participant 7 was permanently benched. The assistant coach was friendly to everyone on the team except them. The head coach never intervened in the situation. Participant 7 did not see the point in staying where it was no longer enjoyable and as a result quit the sport.

Similar to Participant 7, Participant 4 fully intended on finishing their fifth season with their coach. Even though it had been a rocky four years, their coach still did not take the love of the game away from them until halfway through her fifth year. They explained this when they said,

In my fifth year, he just completely gave up. He didn't care if we lost in three, he was just like whatever... like... then why am I here, you know? Like why am I still going through this BS like the ONE THING I still had respect for you for is gone. So, then I quit. (Participant 4)

Participant 4 had become completely deflated and cried during workouts and after training. They were no longer enjoying the sport. The impact that the coach no longer caring about the team had on them was their last straw. The result was that Participant 4 never completed her eligibility as a university athlete.

Wachsmuth et al. (2017) discussed how interpersonal conflict could damage relationships. The conflict in the coach-athlete relationship examined in this study caused

athletes to lose the love of their sport and the elite environment. ESD was the last choice athletes discussed to gain back their happiness. The conflict in their relationship between the coach and athlete within the context of this study had reached a point where in the minds of the study participants their “best option” was leave the sport.

Coach-Athlete Relationship

This research began by exploring the reasoning as to why elite athletes chose to drop out of their sport as a result of conflict with their coach. Two factors became clear when reviewing the findings of this study: 1) latent sources of conflict were vital in the creation of conflict; and, 2) the environment in which these sources developed had a powerful impact on the outcome of the conflict in the coach-athlete relationship.

The latent source of conflict generally stemmed from the coaches’ behaviour. Whether in a team or an individual setting, the coaches’ behaviour impacted how athletes perceived their coaches. This aligns with Avci et al. (2018), who discuss the interconnection between the coach and athlete by saying,

This definition emphasizes the dual nature of the coach-athlete relationship; the feelings, thoughts, and behaviour of the coach are both affected by and affect the athlete's feelings, thoughts, and behaviour. (pg. 346)

The types of latent conflict were either felt or perceived conflict by the athletes’ regarding their coach-athlete relationship. In the elite sport environment, coaches are primarily responsible for creating a motivational climate for their athletes that facilitates winning for the university program. A coach creates this environment purely through their behaviour (Avci et al., 2018). Some participants who started on a good note with

their coach eventually felt a turn in their relationship. They were unsure why but felt that their coach no longer appreciated them as a person or player. For example,

[A]ll of a sudden, in my second year, he just stopped being kind. Like in my first year, he'd check in with little things... like... How's your boyfriend? Haha, and little things like that. And then in my second year, it was just... a totally different ball game, and I don't know what changed... I don't know what I did wrong because I... I came into training camp really fit, uhm.. he all of a sudden just kept saying, you have a bad attitude. (Participant 1)

Furthermore, Participant 1 continues to explain that later in their career their relationship continued to be more negativity, "I kinda thought that they felt like a stranger and that they didn't really care about me... personally or soccer wise. I felt like a kind of cold feeling from them." Participant 1 did not understand the cause of the conflict, and they tried everything they could think of to rectify their relationship. It was confusing for them as Participant 1's coach still needed them as a player,

[L]ike if you hate me that bad.. tell me not to come back. And he even like at the end of my fourth year, like he wanted me to come back. Like, he offered me scholarships or bursaries, I should say- to come back a fifth year and start a new degree.

This was confusing for Participant 1, as their coach was not creating any motivation or enjoyment within their coach-athlete relationship to want to continue and play. However, the question then becomes: Is a role of a coach at the elite level to create motivation and enjoyment?

A motivational elite sport environment combined with high-quality coach-athlete relationships improve both performance and satisfaction for athletes according to Jowett and Arthur (2019). Emotions are heightened in elite sport environments as the passion for competing and performing at the top level consumes the individuals involved.

Furthermore, having an understanding of the emotions that exists between the coach and athlete is important for determining the strength of the relationship. Potrac et al. (2017) used Hargreaves (1998) discussion of teaching in the context of emotional understanding and emotional labour to apply it to coaching by suggesting that “emotional understanding refers to a coach seeking to comprehend intentions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of others using empathy and emotional imagination” (p.132). Potrac et al. (2017) continues to make the connection with Hargreaves (1998) work by stating,

Given the importance of obtaining, maintaining, and advancing a connection with athletes (and other situational stakeholders), examining how coaches recognise and respond to fear, pride, embarrassment, and disgust in others is a potentially fruitful avenue of inquiry for advancing our understanding of coaches’ pedagogical and micro-political tact. (p.132)

It is also important to note that a coach who is able to recognize the emotional capital that can exist in a relationship result in “deliberately manipulate other people’s emotions to sustain, usurp, upset, or withhold social placement from some and to convey it to others (or themselves)” (Thoits, 2004, p. 371).

Based on the above literature then, what becomes apparent is that coaches need to be able to recognize that an individual’s emotional state in order to be effective as a coach. This understood to take the approach as “player center” approach to coaching. In

understanding this approach to coaching, a coach recognizes that each individual athlete responds to coaching direction or interaction differently based on delivery and by doing so enables the coach to provide direction, feedback, and motivation that maximizes the potential for a successful output from the athlete. As seen by these findings an approach of yelling, lack of communication, and overall poor behaviour led to a fractured relationship between the coach and athlete.

The elite sport environment becomes an elite athlete's world. To present an analogy, an athlete's sport is like a job, their team is their family, and their coach is in a role of trust and respect. The elite sport environment consumes the elite athlete to the point that it impacts everything the athlete does outside of their elite sport. Conflict in the coach-athlete relationship can impact an elite athlete's schoolwork and relationships outside of their elite sport.

A central contribution that this study makes to the broader literature on coach-athlete relationships and Pondy (1967) conflict process model, is the addition of discussion around the power dynamics and type of power used by coaches that leads to conflict. Throughout all the findings, it was evident that because of the coach's position and control over playing time, training, and scholarships the coach was able to apply coercive power to influence the behaviour of the athletes. Thus, analogy that can describe the relationship is a subordinate/manager position. Where the manager in this context is the coach and the subordinate is the athlete, and the coach has the power to control rewards and punishments to influence the behaviour of the athletes to ensure the success of the team. Conflict, which based on these findings, is when the athlete identifies the

conflict in the latent stage that is either felt or perceived that moves to the manifest stage of conflict that results in a negative aftermath.

Based on the understanding of the conflict process and the coach-athlete relationship, coaches can be influential in an elite athletes' continuation in sport as they create the environment for the athlete. It is essential to keep in mind that the role conflict discussed by Pondy (1967) is prominent within the coach-athlete relationship. Based on the perceptions of the athletes who took part in this study, coaches who seemingly did not consider the athletes' opinions or values, led to ESD. According to the literature, coaches that took more of an overbearing dismissive approach had a negative impact on the athletes (Norman & French, 2013). For example, Participant 4 no longer processed the negativity from their coach as positive inspiration, rather it impacted their want to continue to play for that coach,

Um... it just didn't feel like it was coming from a good place anymore. Like it didn't feel like you were yelling at me to make me better. You're yelling at me because you don't like me. Because you're mad that I'm kind of done with your manipulation, and you're making us run a million lines, and kind of mentally abusing us a bit, and manipulating us and I'm done!

Participant 4 continued by saying,

Yea, that's when my relationship with him was just kinda like... he's just being unreasonable about some things and like the favouritism is happening.. and like I don't want him to swear in my face anymore like he literally would yell in girls face and call them effing R words.

This ultimately led to participant 4's leaving the sport at the elite level as their coach was ruining the game for them. According to Pritchard (2020) both coach and athlete are mutually interconnected. Pritchard (2020) explains further that through this interconnection, everything that one individual thinks, feels, and behaves impacts the other. Every action taken by the coach impacted the athletes either directly or indirectly.

It is essential to understand the process of conflict within the coach-athlete relationship as the repercussions of dropping out of elite sport due to conflict has lasting adverse effects on former elite athletes' mental health and well-being. Understanding the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship and its impact is important for coaches and sport organizations to understand for athlete retention.

In this study, there were minimal communication between coaches and athletes. This would have been difficult for either party to manage conflict within the relationship. In analysing the data, it is clear that there is an underlying power dynamic of the coach-athlete relationship. The elite sport environment impacted the emotions of study participants emotions regarding their conflict with their coaches. In fear of losing a scholarship, starting position or playing time, communication from the participants to their coaches was seldom. This allowed their perceptions of the conflict to manifest impacting the athlete's mental well being and continued participation in elite sport.

Stress and anxiety are common by-products of conflict (Wachsmuth et al., 2020) that emerge in the aftermath stage of conflict. Once the conflict in the coach-athlete relationship came to fruition in the manifest stage, it was how the coach managed the conflict and interacted with the athlete at the time that did not resolve the situations from

the athletes' point of view. The conflict aftermath stage of the conflict saw each participant leave their elite sport.

Rhind and Jowett (2010) discussed conflict management being a factor in maintaining the coach-athlete relationship. Conflict management in their findings centred around expectations, consequences of unmet expectations and cooperation. This covered variables such as cooperating while discussing conflict in the coach-athlete relationship and taking steps to prevent conflict. Conflict management allows for complete transparency and respect for one another in the coach-athlete relationship. In the present study, some participants directly discussed conflict management because it did not exist in their coach-athlete relationship. For example, Participant 3's coach tried to avoid ownership or accountability of their conflict. Participant 3's coach had allowed them to miss an off-season training session since they were injured to go to a school event for their class. Their coach changed their mind just before the event started. Participant 3's coach knew they had no transportation and were on crutches. Their coach told them they would be suspended from the team if they missed the training session—this created conflict between Participant 3 and their coach and participant 3's parents. Participant 3's father stepped in and called their coach. Their father explained to the coach that the coach had told the participant one thing and then when it was too late to change plans, told them the opposite. They explained that it made no sense to punish Participant 3 for this. Once Participant 3's coach realized that they were in the wrong they blamed Participant 3's anxiety and depression for this conflict. As Participant 3 explained, "He started trying to find a way out of it by blaming my anxiety.. and just the fact that I was sad at school... so... yea." Participant 2 had a similar situation where the coaches was not what

Participant 2 expected, “uhm.... It was definitely the way the conflict was managed... He just like he doesn’t acknowledge it. Or if you bring it up to him, he just, discredits you.”

The way conflict is managed impacts the athletes.

None of the participants discussed their coaches taking steps to ensure all expectations of the athletes were known, in attempts to lower risk of conflict. In an interview, the LinkedIn CEO named their conflict management strategy ‘Managing Compassionately’ by understanding that people see things differently than others, and may not have all the same information that the other party has on certain conflict situations (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). This applies to the coach-athlete relationship as well in terms of conflict. Both coach and athlete’s judgements would be impacted by their want to win (coach) and want to have a starting position or to have substantial playing time (athlete). Both individuals would ultimately have the same goal, but could differ on approaches to reaching those goals.

Other literature places importance on emotional intelligence as a tool for conflict management within the manager role (Schlaerth et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2021).

Understanding the emotions the athletes are experiencing from a coach's perspective, could enable the coach to proactively understand and approach conflict resolution. Not all coaches discussed in this study were disrespectful while communicating through their athlete’s conflict; however, from the athlete’s perspectives, they did not want to show a want to work through the conflicts. The more respectful coaches addressed in this study would hear their athletes out when they went to speak with them but were dismissive to the athletes instead of communicating through the conflict. Had conflict management practices been in place, perhaps the coach-athlete relationships discussed in this study

may have been able to agree and take proactive steps to ensure that there was no further progression of their conflict at hand. Conflict management strategies such as problem solving (De Dreu et al., 2001) to ensure both coach and athlete are aligned in their goals, could have prevented conflict escalation.

Based on this study, the best opportunity to stop conflict from causing long-term damage in the coach-athlete relationship is awareness of common sources of latent conflict. Communication, for example, is vital to sustaining a quality coach-athlete relationship (Jowett et al., 2012; Lavoie, 2007). According to the literature, coaches who communicated poorly towards their athletes, be it rude, dismissive or aggressive, created a poor coach-athlete relationship that even contributed to burnout within the athletes (McGee & DeFreese, 2019). These participants also discussed symptoms of burnout, such as no longer feeling motivated towards their sport, leading to ESD (Avci et al., 2018). These discussions took place in the manifest stage of the conflict process leading to dropout in the aftermath stage of conflict.

Jowett et al. (2012) discussed coach empathy as a dimension of communication that positively impacted relationships. Based on the perceptions of the participants (e.g., Participant 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10) empathy did not exist in their relationship with their coach while trying to discuss their frustrations. According to the literature, relationships where a coach understands what the athlete is going through can have a powerful advantage in resolving conflict. When coaches show that they want to work with athletes through communication, it also positively impacts the athlete's satisfaction with their coach-athlete relationship (Jowett et al., 2012). Thus, affecting their motivation to stay in elite sport. This was not the case in the coach-athlete relationships for these participants.

Coaches were described as dismissive of issues when athletes attempted to address through one-on-one meetings. According to Jowett et al. (2012), strong individual coach-athlete relationships can positively impact overall team performance (Jowett et al., 2012). Building a quality coach-athlete relationship with a mutual understanding for one another could sustain elite athlete motivation and continued participation.

Conflict in the coach-athlete relationship can escalate through poor communication. Conflict responses will differ based on the individuals' differing thoughts, emotions and behaviours. For example, coaches can withdraw from the conflict if they sense that their athlete is anxious (Wachsmuth et al., 2020). In other cases, the coach could show frustration and simply put all blame on their athlete and shout at them, leaving no room for respectful, cooperative communication to work through their conflict.

Wachsmuth et al. (2020) discussed that the conflict responses such as intensity, duration and frequency could impact escalated conflict. However, Wachsmuth et al. (2020) also discuss the possible benefits of well-managed conflict. Well-managed conflict in the coach-athlete relationship can create opportunities for personal development and growth (Wachsmuth et al., 2020). Through good communication in conflict management, a stronger coach-athlete relationship can be formed, creating mutual understanding. This can influence other stronger relationships to develop throughout the team environment (Wachsmuth et al., 2020). Both athlete and coach can develop stronger coping skills and self-awareness. These are skills that can only be helpful in an elite sport environment. This could add more professionalism to the elite sport environment.

Conversely, conflict responses did not occur this way in the current study. As Wachsmuth et al. (2020) mention, poor conflict management is connected to lower perceived well-being among elite athletes and can develop higher stress and mental health issues. The conflict responses by some coaches (e.g., Participant 2, 3, 7), discussed in the present study had created high-stress situations causing mental distress on athletes. Such as Participant 3's coach agreeing to Participant 3 missing training for school while discussing the matter in person, then later texting the athlete saying that they would be suspended if they miss training for school once Participant 3 was away from the coach. This caused an escalation of the conflict in this coach-athlete relationship needing more parties to get involved (e.g., Participant 3's parents) and unnecessarily causing mental health issues for this athlete, including depression.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Limitations, Contributions and Future Research Directions

Elite athletes competing in USPORT and elite conferences alike face consistent challenges and stresses, whether those are financial, academic, relationships, or personal circumstances. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the process of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes to understand the impact on elite sport dropout. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 former female elite-level athletes.

A five-stage model of conflict categories by Pondy (1967) informed the findings from this research, whereby 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore athlete dropout based on the coach-athlete relationship. The data analysis revealed that the conflict process in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes was fluid and a non-cyclical process. This was contrary to Pondy's model (1967), where following the aftermath stage could lead to further conflict beginning with the existing latent conflict. The data revealed in this study that there was a lack of manifestation within the conflict process for all participants. There was very little discussion by the coaches when the conflict occurred. The dismissive nature in which the coaches managed the conflict left the participants in a helpless state as based on their perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship, the coach would have the power.

As a result of these findings, there were three suggestions that this research project produced:

- 1) Communication- communication is a key element that needs to exist within a coach-athlete relationship.

- 2) Power dynamics- Based on the role and positionality of the coach, I argued that the coercive power was used to influence the intended outcomes expected by the coaches and team.
- 3) Cultural and environmental elements- external aspects that can create a positive or negative experience for the athlete, created by the coach. In addition to power dynamics, coaches lay the foundation for elite athletes to perform and maintain motivation within the elite sport environment. Literature is thorough in that coaches play a major role in keeping the athlete motivated in their sport. The elite sport environment is intense with coaches and athletes wanting to compete and perform. The culture that coaches create is shown in this study to have an impact on the athlete's continued participation and mental well-being.

All conflicts explored in this research had the conflict process ending in the aftermath stage of conflict as all participants had an outcome of leaving their elite sport due to the conflict with their coach. Pondy's (1967) suggested pathway from the aftermath stage is either a resolution with no further conflict or residual conflict acting as a latent source for further conflict, having the conflict process begin again. With the participants in this study, the conflict experienced in the coach-athlete relationship had a detrimental impact on the relationship and the elite female athlete's participation in their sport. Thus, the life cycle of conflict in the coach-athlete relationships in this study had a definitive beginning and end. However, where the conflict was not managed well, the potential for further future conflict between the coach and athlete would not go away. It is worth noting that some participants have seen their coaches outside of sport and had either awkward or unfriendly exchanges with their coach in passing.

The initial sources of conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes stemmed from the elite female athlete's perceptions of their relationship with their coach. Latent sources of conflict generally centred around the athlete's perceptions of how they were treated by their coach. Once the latent sources of conflict emerged and established themselves as progressing conflict in the coach-athlete relationship, they caused either felt or perceived damage to the athletes' confidence in their coach-athlete relationship. This took the same trajectory in all scenarios explored with participants.

Regardless of the timelines, the unmanaged conflict in the coach-athlete relationship ended with elite female athletes prematurely leaving their elite sport, causing many to develop mental health issues including anxiety and depression, that are still prevalent years following. Conflict in the coach-athlete relationship causes athletes to drop out of elite sport. The conflict process in the coach-athlete relationship causes long-term harm to elite athletes physically, mentally and emotionally. Having a strong awareness of common latent sources of conflict in an elite sport environment would be helpful to sport organizations regarding athlete retention and player management. Having an awareness of latent sources of conflict such as communication, coaching behaviour and favouritism for example, could better prepare coaches for conflict management with their athletes. Coach education on managing conflict in the coach-athlete relationship is essential to maintain continued participation and positive mental health in elite female athletes.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this research, including the recruitment of participants and the one-sided view of this topic. Due to the subject matter, some potential participants indicated that they were uncomfortable participating as it was an unpleasant memory that they did not want to revisit. This limited the amount of potential data that could have been collected. Even though theoretical saturation was reached, the initial goal for this study was to have more participants involved.

One limitation to this study is that the conflict being discussed is one-sided. However, removing the coach's input from the equation allows the elite female athletes a voice and opportunity to share their perspective allowing the primary researcher to gain a deeper understanding of conflict from their position. General theories arising from collected data cannot be confirmed without further research, as there was no input from the coaches' side of the conflict discussed in this study. The population for this research was a specific population of elite female athletes who have dropped out of sport prematurely. Findings cannot be assumed to have the same result in other populations without further research.

This research describes the conflict from the athlete's point of view only. I do not want to discredit the stories of these athletes. However, coaches may have seen things differently from their point of view and could potentially provide insight into the conflict. A research study on conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with elite female athletes who have prematurely dropped out of sport will naturally have a negative connotation on their respective coaches. Perhaps a stronger understanding could have been developed if these coaches had been given a voice in this study to explain their reasoning for conflict

experienced. This would not change the impact of the conflict, as the participants left their elite sport due to conflict in their relationship with their coach. For a stronger argument that coach education courses could be developed using this study, it would have been helpful to depict the coaches' retelling of the stories.

Contributions and Future Research Directions

The contribution this research report makes is two-fold: practical and theoretical. This research contributes to the practical field of coaching. The practical contribution is that conflict in the coach-athlete relationship can cause elite female athletes to drop out of sport. This research provides sources of latent conflict to be aware of in the coach-athlete relationship. Conflict discussed in this research allows great potential for interventions and focus at the elite level in the conflict process. It can enable coach education courses to be framed around awareness of conflict, developing strategies and coping skills to manage conflict within the coach-athlete relationship before conflict progresses into elite sport dropout. The theoretical contribution is that this research fills a gap in the literature that looks at the process rather than a snapshot of the conflict. This research adds to the existing literature on the conflict process in application to a sport setting with the coach-athlete relationship. This allowed elaboration for the stages of conflict to be analysed, as described by the study participants in explaining their conflict process with their coach. In addition, this research helps fill a gap that has had limited research in this area.

Future Research

For future research, discussing conflict in the coach-athlete relationship with both coaches and athletes will gain a full scope of the study. Using qualitative research with open-ended questions will allow participant elaboration and the researcher to gain more

insight. Qualitative research is open to interpretation and will allow a deeper understanding of the impact of conflict on the coach-athlete relationship. For future research, including a more positive take on conflict in the coach-athlete relationship could help develop coach education courses on overcoming conflict and strengthening the coach-athlete relationship.

Bibliography

- Abbott, B. D., & Barber, B. L. (2015). Physical or visual: How do girls experience their bodies during sports and non-sport activities? In: Society for Research in Child Development 2015 Biennial Meeting, 19-21 March, Pennsylvania Convention Center and the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown Hotel Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Retrieved from: <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/26992/> September 12, 2018
- Allender, S., Hutchinson, L., & Foster, C. (2008). Life-change events and participation in physical activity: A systematic review. *Health Promotion International*, 23(2), 160–172.
- Alexandris, K., & Carroll, B. (1997). Demographic Differences in the perception of constraints on recreational sport participation: Results from a study in Greece. *Leisure Studies*, 16(2), 107–125.
- Andronikos, G., Westbury, T., & Martindale, R. J. (2019). Unsuccessful transitions: Understanding dropout from the athletes' perspective. *Athens Journal of Sports*, 6(4), 195-214.
- Antonini Philippe, R., Sagar, S. S., Huguet, S., Paquet, Y., & Jowett, S. (2011). From teacher to friend: The evolving nature of the coach-athlete relationship. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 42(1), 1–23.
- Amorose, A. J., & Nolan-Sellers, W. (2016). Testing the moderating effect of the perceived importance of the coach on the relationship between perceived coaching feedback and athletes' perceptions of competence. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 11(6), 789-798.

- Atkins, M. R., Johnson, D. M., Force, E. C., & Petrie, T. A. (2015). Peers, parents, and coaches, oh my! The relation of the motivational climate to boys' intention to continue in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 16*, 170–180.
- Avci, K. S., Çepikkurt, F., & Kale, E. K. (2018). Examination the relationship between coach-athlete communication levels and perceived motivational climate for volleyball players. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 6*(2), 346-353.
- Baker, J., Côté, J., & Hawes, R. (2000). The relationship between coaching behaviours and sport anxiety in athletes. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 3*(2), 110–119.
- Balish, S. M., Rainham, D., & Blanchard, C. (2015). Community size and sport participation across 22 countries. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 25*(6), e576–e581.
- Barki, H., & Hartwick, J. (2001). Interpersonal conflict and its management in information system development. *MIS Quarterly, 25*(2), 195-195.
doi:10.2307/3250929
- Barki, H., & Hartwick, J. (2004). Conceptualizing the construct of interpersonal conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 15*(3), 216–244.
- Barnes, J. D., Cameron, C., Carson, V., Chaput, J. P., Faulkner, G. E., Janson, K., ... & Tremblay, M. S. (2016). Results from Canada's 2016 ParticipACTION report card on physical activity for children and youth. *Journal of physical activity and health, 13*(s2), S110-S116.
- Baron–Thiene, A., & Alfermann, D. (2015). Personal characteristics as predictors for

- dual career dropout versus continuation—A prospective study of adolescent athletes from German elite sport schools. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 21, 42–49.
- Bernard, H. R., Wutich, A., & Ryan, G. W. (2017). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches* (Second). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication.
- Black, J.S., Bright, D.S., Gardner, D.G. et al. (2019). *Organizational Behaviour*. <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/pages/13-introduction>
- Booth, V. M., Rowlands, A. V., & Dollman, J. (2015). Physical activity temporal trends among children and adolescents. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 18(4), 418–425.
- Brenner, J. S. (2016). Sports specialization and intensive training in young athletes. *Pediatrics*, 138(3), e20162148.
- Butcher, J., Lindner, K. J., & Johns, D. P. (2002). Withdrawal from competitive youth sport: A retrospective ten-year study. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 25(2), 145-163.
- Burton, L. J. (2015). Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research. *Sport Management Review*, 18(2), 155–165.
- Calvo, T. G., Cervelló, E., Jiménez, R., Iglesias, D., & Murcia, J. A. M. (2010). Using self-determination theory to explain sport persistence and dropout in adolescent athletes. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 13(2), 677–684.
- Carpentier, J., & Mageau, G. A. (2014). The role of coaches' passion and athletes' motivation in the prediction of change-oriented feedback quality and quantity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(4), 326–335.
- Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. D. (1980). Dimensions of leader behavior in sports:

- Development of a leadership scale. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 2, 34–45.
- Choi, H., Jeong, Y., & Kim, S. K. (2020). The Relationship between coaching behavior and athlete burnout: mediating effects of communication and the coach-athlete relationship. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(22), 1-17.
- Coaching Association of Canada, (2021) *NCCP Managing Conflict: Coach Workbook*. Coaching Association of Canada, Ottawa.
- Cockburn, C., & Clarke, G. (2002). “Everybody’s looking at you!”: Girls negotiating the “femininity deficit” they incur in physical education. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 25(6), pp. 651-665.
- Colorafi, K. J., & Evans, B. (2016). Qualitative descriptive methods in health science research. *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal*, 9(4), 16-25.
- Côté, J. E. A. N., Lidor, R., & Hackfort, D. (2009). ISSP position stand: To sample or to specialize? Seven postulates about youth sport activities that lead to continued participation and elite performance. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 7(1), 7–17.
- Côté, J., & Hancock, D. J. (2016). Evidence-based policies for youth sport programmes. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(1), 51–65.
- Crane, J., & Temple, V. (2015). A systematic review of dropout from organized sport among children and youth. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(1), 114–131.
- Creswell, J. W., Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publication.

- Crotty, M. (1998). Introduction: The research process. *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*, 1-17.
- Cushion, C. J., Armour, K. M., & Jones, R. L. (2003). Coach education and continuing professional development: Experience and learning to coach. *Quest*, 55(3), 215–230.
- Cushion, C., Armour, K.M., & Jones, R. (2006). Locating the coaching process in practice: Models ‘for’ and ‘of’ coaching. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 11(1), 83–99. doi:10.1080/17408980500466995
- D’Arripe-Longueville, F., Fournier, J. F., & Dubois, A. (1998). The perceived effectiveness of interactions between expert French judo coaches and elite female athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 12, 317–332. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/tsp.12.3.317>
- Darcy, S., & Dowse, L. (2013). In search of a level playing field—The constraints and benefits of sport participation for people with intellectual disability. *Disability & Society*, 28(3), 393–407.
- Davis, L., Appleby, R., Davis, P., Wetherell, M., & Gustafsson, H. (2018). The role of coach-athlete relationship quality in team sport athletes’ psychophysiological exhaustion: implications for physical and cognitive performance. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 36(17), 1985-1992.
- Davis, L., & Jowett, S. (2014). Coach–athlete attachment and the quality of the coach–athlete relationship: Implications for athlete’s well-being. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 32(15), 1454–1464.
- Davis, L., Jowett, S., & Tafvelin, S. (2019). Communication strategies: The fuel for

- quality coach-athlete relationships and athlete satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1-12.
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., & Vertonghen, J. (2016). A multidimensional approach to evaluate the policy effectiveness of elite sport schools in Flanders. *Sport in Society*, 19(10), 1596–1621.
- De Dreu, C. K., Evers, A., Beersma, B., Kluwer, E. S., & Nauta, A. (2001). A theory-based measure of conflict management strategies in the workplace. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 22(6), 645-668.
- Delorme, N., Boiché, J., & Raspaud, M. (2009). The relative age effect in elite sport: The French case. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 80(2), 336–344.
- Delorme, N., Chalabaev, A., & Raspaud, M. (2011). Relative age is associated with sport dropout: Evidence from youth categories of French basketball. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 21(1), 120–128.
- Doherty, A., & Hoye, R. (2011). Role Ambiguity and Volunteer Board Member Performance in Nonprofit Sport Organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 22(1), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml>
- Edwards, J. (2016). Understanding Talent Retention through the Transition Processes and Strategies Developed within a Sport System: Exploring the Elite Youth Hockey Development System in Alberta, Canada. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 8(2), 1-32.
- Edwards, A., & Skinner, J. (2009). *Qualitative research in Sport Management*. Elsevier.

- Edwards, J., & Washington, M. (2013). Managing a sport organization: The impact of recruiting, selecting, and retaining elite level coaches in sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 5(3), 80-112.
- Eime, R. M., Sawyer, N., Harvey, J. T., Casey, M. M., Westerbeek, H., & Payne, W. R. (2015). Integrating public health and sport management: Sport participation trends 2001–2010. *Sport Management Review*, 18(2), 207–217.
- Enoksen, E. (2011). Drop-out rate and drop-out reasons among promising Norwegian track and field athletes: A 25-year study. *Scandinavian Sport Studies Forum*, 2, 19-43.
- Erickson, K., & Côté, J. (2016). A season-long examination of the intervention tone of coach–athlete interactions and athlete development in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 22, 264–272.
- Findlay, L. C., Garner, R. E., & Kohen, D. E. (2010). Patterns of children’s participation in unorganized physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 81(2), 133–42.
- Franck, A., Stambulova, N. B., & Ivarsson, A. (2018). Swedish athletes’ adjustment patterns in the junior-to-senior transition. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(4), 398-414. DOI:10.1080/1612197X.2016.1256339
- Fraser–Thomas, J., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2008). Examining adolescent sport dropout and prolonged engagement from a developmental perspective. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 20(3), 318–333.
- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408.

- Gearity, B. T., & Murray, M. A. (2011). Athletes' experiences of the psychological effects of poor coaching. *Psychology of sport and exercise, 12*(3), 213-221.
- Goodman, L. (1961). Snowball Sampling. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics, 32*(1), 148-170. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2237615>
- Gouttebauge, V., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M., Gorczynski, P., Hainline, B., Hitchcock, M. E., Kerkhoffs, G. M., ... & Reardon, C. L. (2019). Occurrence of mental health symptoms and disorders in current and former elite athletes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 53*(11), 700-706.
- Grant, M. A., & Schempp, P. G. (2013). Analysis and description of Olympic gold medalists' competition-day routines. *The Sport Psychologist, 27*(2), 156–170.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative Research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2*(163-194), 105.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1997). *The new language of qualitative method*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Guzmán, J. F., & Kingston, K. (2012). Prospective study of sport dropout: A motivational analysis as a function of age and gender. *European Journal of Sport Science, 12*(5), 431–442.
- Hague, C., McGuire, C. S., Chen, J., Bruner, M. W., Côté, J., Turnnidge, J., & Martin, L. J. (2021). Coaches' influence on team dynamics in sport: A scoping review. *Sports Coaching Review, 10*(2), 225-248.
- Hamm–Kerwin, S., & Doherty, A. (2010). Intragroup conflict in nonprofit sport boards. *Journal of Sport Management, 24*(3), 245–271.
- Hampson, R., & Jowett, S. (2014). Effects of coach leadership and coach–athlete

- relationship on collective efficacy. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 24(2), 454–460.
- Hancock, D. J. (2017). Female relative age effects and the second-quartile phenomenon in young female ice hockey players. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 32, 12–16.
- Hajo, K., & Norberg, N. (2020). How do elite coaches implement relationship maintenance strategies?: A qualitative investigation.
- Hardy, L. L., Kelly, B., Chapman, K., King, L., & Farrell, L. (2010). Parental perceptions of barriers to children's participation in organised sport in Australia. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 46(4), 197–203.
- Hellstedt, J. C. (1987). The coach/parent/athlete relationship. *The Sport Psychologist*, 1(2), 151-160.
- Heritage, C. (2013). Sport participation 2010. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Heritage.
- Holt, N. L., Knight, C. J., & Zukiwski, P. (March 01, 2012). Female athletes' perceptions of teammate conflict in sport: Implications for sport psychology consultants. *Sport Psychologist*, 26, 135-154.
- Iacoviello, V., Berent, J., Frederic, N. S., & Pereira, A. (2017). The impact of ingroup favoritism on self-esteem: A normative perspective. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 71, 31-41.
- Isoard–Gauthier, S., Guillet–Descas, E., & Duda, J. L. (2013). How to achieve in elite training centers without burning out? An achievement goal theory perspective. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14(1), 72–83.
- Jaakkola, T., Ntoumanis, N., & Liukkonen, J. (2016). Motivational climate, goal

orientation, perceived sport ability, and enjoyment within Finnish junior ice hockey players. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 26(1), 109–115.

Jayanthi, N., Pinkham, C., Dugas, L., Patrick, B., & LaBella, C. (2013). Sports specialization in young athletes: evidence-based recommendations. *Sports Health*, 5(3), 251-257.

Jiménez, M., Fernández-Navas, M., Alvero-Cruz, J. R., García-Romero, J., García-Coll, V., Rivilla, I., & Clemente-Suárez, V. J. (2019). Differences in psychoneuroendocrine stress responses of high-level swimmers depending on autocratic and democratic coaching style. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(24), 5089.

Jones, I., & Gratton, C. (2015). *Research Methods for Sport Studies* (Third Edition). London: Routledge.

Jowett, S., Adie, J. W., Bartholomew, K. J., Yang, S. X., Gustafsson, H., & Lopez-Jiménez, A. (2017). Motivational processes in the coach–athlete relationship: A multi-cultural self-determination approach. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 32, 143–152.

Jowett, S., & Arthur, C. (2019). Effective coaching: The links between coach leadership and coach-athlete relationship—From theory to research to practice. *Sport Psychology*, 1, 419–449.

Jowett, S., & Cockerill, I. M. (2003). Olympic medallists' perspective of the athlete–coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 4(4), 313-331.

Jowett, S. O. P. H. I. A., & Cockerill, I. M. (2002). Incompatibility in the coach-athlete

- relationship. *Solutions in Sport Psychology*, 16, 31.
- Jowett, S. (2017). Coaching effectiveness: The coach–athlete relationship at its heart. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 16, 154–158.
- Jowett, S., & Poczwadowski, A. (2007). Understanding the coach-athlete relationship. *Social Psychology in Sport*, 6, 3-14.
- Jowett, S., Yang, X., & Lorimer, R. (2012). The role of personality, empathy, and satisfaction with instruction within the context of the coach-athlete relationship. *International Journal of Coaching Science*, 6(2), 3-20.
- Jowett, S., & Timson-Katchis, M. (2005). Social networks in sport: Parental influence on the coach-athlete relationship. *Sport psychologist*, 19(3), 267-287.
- Junge, A., & Prinz, B. (2019). Depression and anxiety symptoms in 17 teams of female football players, including 10 German first league teams. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 53(8), 471-477.
- Kanters, M. A., Bocarro, J. N., Edwards, M. B., Casper, J. M., & Floyd, M. F. (2013). School sport participation under two school sport policies: comparisons by race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 45(1), 113–121.
- Kassing, J. W., & Anderson, R. L. (2014). Contradicting coach or grumbling to teammates: Exploring dissent expression in the coach-athlete relationship. *Communication & Sport*, 2(2), 172-185.
- Keathley, K., Himelein, M. J., & Srigley, G. (2013). Youth soccer participation and withdrawal: Gender similarities and differences. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 36(2), 171.

- Keegan, R. J., Harwood, C. G., Spray, C. M., & Lavallee, D. (2014). A qualitative investigation of the motivational climate in elite sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 15*(1), 97–107.
- Koukouris, K. (2005). Premature athletic disengagement of elite Greek gymnasts. *European Journal for Sport and Society, 2*(1), 35–56.
- Kremžar Jovanović, B., Smrdu, M., Holnthaner, R., & Kajtna, T. (2022). Elite Sport and Sustainable Psychological Well-Being. *Sustainability, 14*(5), 2705.
- Kristiansen, E., Tomten, S. E., Hanstad, D. V., & Roberts, G. C. (2012). Coaching communication issues with elite female athletes: Two Norwegian case studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 22*(6), e156–e167.
- Kroshus, E., Baugh, C. M., Daneshvar, D. H., Stamm, J. M., Laursen, R. M., & Austin, S. B. (2015). Pressure on sports medicine clinicians to prematurely return collegiate athletes to play after concussion. *Journal of Athletic Training, 50*(9), 944–951.
- Kuhlin, F., Barker-Ruchti, N., & Stewart, C. (2020). Long-term impact of the coach-athlete relationship on development, health, and wellbeing: stories from a figure skater. *Sports Coaching Review, 9*(2), 208-230.
- Kumar, R. (2014) *Research Methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (4th edn.). Sage Publications.
- Lafrenière, M. A. K., Jowett, S., Vallerand, R. J., Donahue, E. G., & Lorimer, R. (2008). Passion in sport: On the quality of the coach–athlete relationship. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 30*(5), 541–560.
- Gargalianos, D., Laios, A., & Theodorakis, N. (2003). Leadership and power: Two

- important factors for effective coaching. *International Sports Journal*, 24, 150-154.
- Lambert, V. A., & Lambert, C. E. (2012). Qualitative descriptive research: An acceptable design. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(4), 255-256.
- Lang, M., & Light, R. (2010). Interpreting and Implementing the Long Term Athlete Development Model: English Swimming Coaches' Views on the (Swimming) LTAD in Practice. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 5(3), 389–402. <https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.5.3.421>
- Langan, E., Blake, C., & Lonsdale, C. (2013). Systematic review of the effectiveness of interpersonal coach education interventions on athlete outcomes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14(1), 37–49.
- Larner, R. J., Wagstaff, C. R. D., Thelwell, R. C., & Corbett, J. (2017). A multistudy examination of organizational stressors, emotional labor, burnout, and turnover in sport organizations. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 27(12), 2103–2115.
- Laurin, R. (2016). Awareness level of gender stereotype and stereotype threat effect on Ingroup favoritism bias in mixed-gender basketball teams. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 48(2) 155-161.
- Lemez, S., Baker, J., Horton, S., Wattie, N., & Weir, P. (2014). Examining the relationship between relative age, competition level, and dropout rates in male youth ice-hockey players. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 24(6), 935–942.

- Lemyre, P. N., Hall, H. K., & Roberts, G. C. (2008). A social cognitive approach to burnout in elite athletes. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 18*(2), 221–234.
- Lonsdale, C., Hodge, K., & Rose, E. (2009). Athlete burnout in elite sport: A self-determination perspective. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27*(8), 785–795.
- Lim, S. Y., Warner, S., Dixon, M., Berg, B., Kim, C., & Newhouse–Bailey, M. (2011). Sport participation across national contexts: A multilevel investigation of individual and systemic influences on adult sport participation. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 11*(3), 197–224.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative Research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2*(163-194), 105.
- Lin, W. F., Lin, Y. C., Huang, C. L., & Chen, L. H. (2016). We can make it better: “We” moderates the relationship between a compromising style in interpersonal conflict and well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 17*(1), 41–57.
- Lunde, C., & Gattario, K. H. (2017). Performance or appearance? Young female sport participants’ body negotiations. *Body Image, 21*, 81–89.
- Mageau, G. A., & Vallerand, R. J. (2003). The coach–athlete relationship: A motivational model. *Journal of Sports Science, 21*(11), 883–904.
- Magrum, E. D., & McCullick, B. A. (2019). The role of emotion in sport coaching: A review of the literature. *The Sport Journal, 22*, 1-10.
- Maltarich, M. A., Kukenberger, M., Reilly, G., & Mathieu, J. (2016). Conflict in teams:

Modeling early and late conflict states and the interactive effects of conflict processes. *Group & Organization Management*, 43(1), 6-37.

Mancine, R., Kennedy, S., Stephan, P., & Ley, A. (2020). Disordered eating and eating disorders in adolescent athletes. *Spartan Medical Research Journal*, 4(2).

Matosic, D., Cox, A. E., & Amorose, A. J. (2014). Scholarship status, controlling coaching behavior, and intrinsic motivation in collegiate swimmers: A test of cognitive evaluation theory. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 3(1), 1.

Matosic, D., Ntoumanis, N., & Quested, E. (2016). Antecedents of need supportive and controlling interpersonal styles from a self-determination theory perspective: A review and implications for sport psychology research. In M. Raab, M., P. Wylleman, R. Seiler, A. M. Elbe, & A. Hatzigeorgiadis, *Sport and Exercise Psychology Research* (pp. 145-180). Elsevier.

McCall, A., Lewin, C., O'Driscoll, G., Witvrouw, E., & Ardern, C. (2017). Return to play: the challenge of balancing research and practice. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 51(9), 702-703.

McDonald, C., Deitch, J., & Bush, C. (2019). Early sports specialization in elite wrestlers. *Sports Health*, 11(5), 397-401.

McGee, V., & DeFreese, J. D. (2019). The coach-athlete relationship and athlete psychological outcomes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 13(1), 152-174.

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2, 1-12.

DOI:10.1177/2333393615597674

- Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage Publication.
- Molinero, O., Salguero, A., Tuero, C., Alvarez, E., & Márquez, S. (2006). Dropout reasons in young Spanish athletes: Relationship to gender, type of sport and level of competition. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 29(3), 255.
- Møllerlækken, N. E., Lorås, H., & Pedersen, A. V. (2015). A systematic review and meta-analysis of dropout rates in youth soccer. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 121(3), 913–922.
- Murphy, N. A., & Carbone, P. S. (2008). Promoting the participation of children with disabilities in sports, recreation, and physical activities. *Pediatrics*, 121(5), 1057–1061.
- Nascimento, L. D. C. N., Souza, T. V. D., Oliveira, I. C. D. S., Moraes, J. R. M. M. D., Aguiar, R. C. B. D., & Silva, L. F. D. (2018). Theoretical saturation in qualitative research: an experience report in interview with schoolchildren. *Revista brasileira de enfermagem*, 71, 228-233.
- Neergaard, M., Olesen, F., Andersen, R., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description – the poor cousin of health research? *Bmc Medical Research Methodology*, 9, 52-52. Doi:10.1186/1471-2288-9-52
- Neuman, L. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th Ed.), Allyn & Bacon.
- Newman, H. J., Howells, K. L., & Fletcher, D. (2016). The dark side of top level sport:

- An autobiographic study of depressive experiences in elite sport performers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1-12.
- Nixdorf, I., Frank, R., & Beckmann, J. (2015). An explorative study on major stressors and its connection to depression and chronic stress among German elite athletes. *Advances in Physical Education*, 5(4), 255-263.
- Norman, L., & French, J. (2013). Understanding how High-Performance Women Athletes Experience the Coach-Athlete Relationship. *International Journal of Coaching Science*, 7(1), 3-24.
- Olympiou, A., Jowett, S., & Duda, J. L. (2008). The psychological interface between the coach-created motivational climate and the coach-athlete relationship in team sports. *The Sport Psychologist*, 22(4), 423-438.
- O'Reilly, N., Brunette, M., & Bradish, C. (2018). Lifelong female engagement in sport: A framework for advancing girls' and women's participation. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 10(3), 6.
- Paradis, K. F., Carron, A. V., & Martin, L. J. (2014). Athlete perceptions of intra-group conflict in sport teams. *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review*, 10(3), 4-18.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Peng, J., Zhang, J., Zhao, L., Fang, P., & Shao, Y. (2020). Coach-athlete attachment and the subjective well-being of athletes: A multiple-mediation model analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(13), 4675.
- Pereira, A., Faro, A., Stotlar, D., & Fonseca, A. M. (2014). The perceptions of the best

- Portuguese coaches about dropout and persistence in women's artistic gymnasts. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 6(2), 74-88.
- Pettersen, I., Hernæs, E., & Skårderud, F. (2016). Pursuit of performance excellence: A population study of Norwegian adolescent female cross-country skiers and biathletes with disordered eating. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 2(1), e000115.
- Pettersen, S. D., Adolfsen, F., & Martinussen, M. (2021). Psychological factors and performance in women's football: A systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 32, 161-175.
- Polman, R. (2012). Chapter 13-Elite Athletes' Experiences of Coping with Stress: Chapter taken from *Coping and Emotion in Sport*: ISBN: 978-0-203-85229-3. *Routledge Online Studies on the Olympic and Paralympic Games*, 1(53), 284-301.
- Pondy, L. R. (1967). Organizational conflict: Concepts and models. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 12(2), 296-320.
- Potrac, P., & Jones, R. (2009). Power, conflict, and cooperation: Toward a micropolitics of coaching. *Quest*, 61(2), 223-236. doi:10.1080/00336297.2009.10483612
- Potrac, P., Jones, R., & Armour, K. (2002). 'It's all about getting respect': The coaching behaviors of an expert English soccer coach. *Sport Education and Society*, 7(2), 183-202. doi:10.1080/1357332022000018869
- Potrac, P., Jones, R., & Cushion, C. (2007). Understanding power and the coach's role in professional English soccer: A preliminary investigation of coach behaviour. *Soccer & Society*, 8(1), 33-49. doi:10.1080/14660970600989509

- Potrac, P., Smith, A., & Nelson, L. (2017). Emotions in sport coaching: An introductory essay. *Sports Coaching Review*, 6(2), 129-141.
- Prause, D., & Mujtaba, B. G. (2015). Conflict management practices for diverse workplaces. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 6(3), 13.
- Pritchard, E. (2020). *National Coaching Certification Program Content updates Part 1*. Coaching Association of Canada, National Certification Program.
- Quinn, M. A., & Robinson, S. (2020). College athletes under pressure: Eating disorders among female track and field athletes. *The American Economist*, 65(2), 232-243.
- Rathanaswami, K., Bengoechea, E. G., & Bush, P. L. (2016). Physical activity in first generation South Asian women living in Canada: Barriers and facilitators to participation. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 24(2), 110–119.
- Rhind, D. J., & Jowett, S. (2010). Relationship maintenance strategies in the coach-athlete relationship: The development of the COMPASS model. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 22(1), 106-121.
- Rhind, D., Owusu-Sekyere, F., & Ando, D. (2021). Comparing the strategies used to maintain the coach-athlete relationship in Japan and the United Kingdom. *International Journal Physical Education, Fitness Sports*, 10(4), 4-12.
- Riddick, C. C., & Russell, R. V. (2008). *Research in Recreation, Parks, Sport, and Tourism* (Second Edi). Urbana, IL: Sagemore Publishing.
- Robinson, T. T., & Carron, A. V. (1982). Personal and situational factors associated with dropping out versus maintaining participation in competitive sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 4(4), 364–378.
- Rosso, E., & McGrath, R. (2016). Promoting physical activity among children and youth

- in disadvantaged South Australian CALD communities through alternative community sport opportunities. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 27(2), 105–110.
- Roxas, A. S., & Ridinger, L. L. (2016). Relationships of coaching behaviors to student–athlete well-being. *Academic Perspectives in Higher Education*, 2(1), 95-109.
- Ryba, T. V., Aunola, K., Kalaja, S., Selänne, H., Ronkainen, N. J., & Nurmi, J. E. (2016). A new perspective on adolescent athletes' transition into upper secondary school: A longitudinal mixed methods study protocol. *Cogent Psychology*, 3(1), 1142412.
- Rylander, P. (2016). Coaches' bases of power and coaching effectiveness in team sports. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 3(2), 128-144.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2015-0046>
- Schlaerth, A., Ensari, N., & Christian, J. (2013). A meta-analytical review of the relationship between emotional intelligence and leaders' constructive conflict management. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 16(1), 126-136.
- Schmidt, G. W., & Stein, G. L. (1991). Sport commitment: A model integrating enjoyment, dropout, and burnout. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 13(3), 254–265.
- Slack, T., & Parent, M. M. (2006). *Understanding sport organizations: The application of organization theory*. Human Kinetics.
- Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2011). Gender differences in adolescent sport participation, teasing, self-objectification and body image concerns. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(3), 455–463.

- Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2010). “Uncool to do sport”: A focus group study of adolescent girls’ reasons for withdrawing from physical activity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11*(6), 619–626.
- Smith, M., & Arthur, C. (2021). Understanding coach-athlete conflict: an ethnodrama to illustrate conflict in elite sport. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 1*-19. DOI: 10.1080/2159676X.2021.1946130
- Smith, B., & Caddick, N. (2012). Qualitative methods in sport: A concise overview for guiding social sport research. *Asia Pacific Journal of Sport and Social Science, 1*(1), 60-73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21640599.2012.701373>
- Smith, N., Tessier, D., Tzioumakis, Y., Fabra, P., Quested, E., Appleton, P., . . . & Duda, J. L. (2016). The relationship between observed and perceived assessments of the coach-created motivational environment and links to athlete motivation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 23*, 51–63.
- Söderström, T., Fahlén, J., Ferry, M., & Yu, J. (2015). Participation in non-elite sport in early adulthood: The impact of athletic ability in childhood and adolescence. In 20th annual Congress of the European college of Sport Science,(ECSS), Sustainable Sport, in Malmö, Sweden, June 2015.
- Sotiriadou, P., Brouwers, J. & Tuan-Anh, L (2014). Choosing a qualitative data analysis tool: A comparison of NVivo and Leximancer. *Annals of Leisure Research, 17*(2), 218-234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2014.902292>
- Spinney, J., & Millward, H. (2010). Time and money: A new look at poverty and the barriers to physical activity in Canada. *Social Indicators Research, 99*(2), 341–356.

- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stewart, C. (2016). Female athletes' rankings of coaching behavior: A longitudinal report. *Physical Educator*, 73(3), 417.
- Stirling, A. E., & Kerr, G. A. (2013). The perceived effects of elite athletes' experiences of emotional abuse in the coach–athlete relationship. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11(1), 87-100.
- Swann, C., Moran, A., & Piggott, D. (2015). Defining elite athletes: Issues in the study of expert performance in sport psychology. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 16, 3–14.
- The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity. (2016, March). *Women in Sport: Fueling a Lifetime of Participation. A Report on, The Status of Sport Participation in Canada*. https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fuelling-a-Lifetime-of-Participation-Report_Canadian-Women-Sport.pdf
- Telford, R. M., Telford, R. D., Olive, L. S., Cochrane, T., & Davey, R. (2016). Why are girls less physically Active than Boys? Findings from the LOOK Longitudinal Study. *PloS one*, 11(3), e0150041.
- Thoits, P. A. (2004). Emotion norms, emotion work, and social order. In A. Manstead, N. Frijda, & A. Fischer (Eds.) *Feelings and emotions: The Amsterdam symposium* (pp. 359–378). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, A., & Yorganci, I. (1997). Male coach/female athlete relations: Gender and power relations in competitive sport. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 21(2), 134-155.

- Turman, P. D. (2003). Coaches and cohesion: The impact of coaching techniques on team cohesion in the small group sport setting. *Journal of sport behaviour*, 26(1), 86-104.
- Turman, P. D. (2008). Coaches immediacy behaviors as predictors of athletes' perceptions of satisfaction and team cohesion. *Western Journal of Communication*, 72, 162–179.
- Turman, P. D., & Schrodt, P. (2004). New avenue for instructional communication research relationships among coaches' leadership behaviors and athletes' affective learning. *Communication Research Reports*, 21, 130–143.
- Tracey, J. (2003). The emotional response to the injury and rehabilitation process. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 15(4), 279-293.
- Volp, A., & Johann, U. K. (1987). The relationship between performance, intention to drop out, and intrapersonal conflict in swimmers. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 9(4), 358–375.
- Voss, M. W., Kramer, A. F., Basak, C., Prakash, R. S., & Roberts, B. (2010). Are expert athletes 'expert' in the cognitive laboratory? A meta-analytic review of cognition and sport expertise. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 24(6), 812–826.
- Wachsmuth, S., Jowett, S., & Harwood, C. G. (2018). Managing conflict in coach—athlete relationships. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 7(4), 371–391.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000129>
- Wachsmuth, S., Jowett, S., & Harwood, C. G. (2017). Conflict among athletes and their coaches: What is the theory and research so far? *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10(1), 84–107.

- Wachsmuth, S., & Jowett, S. (2020). Conflict and communication in coach-athlete relationships. *The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Sport and Exercise Psychology: Volume 2: Applied and Practical Measures*, 192-212.
- Wall, M., & Côté, J. (2007). Developmental activities that lead to dropout and investment in sport. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 12(1), 77–87.
- Webb, C. E., Coleman, P. T., Rossignac-Milon, M., Tomasulo, S. J., & Higgins, E. T. (2017). Moving on or digging deeper: Regulatory mode and interpersonal conflict resolution. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 112(4), 621-641.
- Weiss, M. R., & Fretwell, S. D. (2005). The parent–coach/child–athlete relationship in youth sport: Cordial, contentious, or conundrum? *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 76(3), 286–305.
- Wickham, R. E., Williamson, R. E., Beard, C. L., Kobayashi, C. L., & Hirst, T. W. (2016). Authenticity attenuates the negative effects of interpersonal conflict on daily well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 60, 56–62.
- Williams, M. (2015). The impact of formal coach education course: A coach’s view (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Cardiff Metropolitan University.
- Yang, S. X., & Jowett, S. (2016). 4 Understanding and enhancing coach-athlete relationships through the 3+ 1Cs model. *The Psychology of Sports Coaching: Research and Practice*, 54-67.
- Zhu, F., Wang, X., Wang, L., & Yu, M. (2021). Project manager's emotional intelligence and project performance: The mediating role of project commitment. *International Journal of Project Management*, 39(7), 788-798.

Appendix A

1. Can you tell me about your experience in sport starting from a young age to more recently and now?
2. I want to hear about your experience as an elite athlete and your **relationship** with your coach at that level....
 - a. Can you tell me about that?
3. Specifically on conflict, can you tell me about any conflict between you and your coach? – example, high levels or occasional (when), where (training, after training, travel, outside of training ??)
 - a. Would this incidence be considered a major conflict with you and your coach?
4. How long did this conflict situation last (months, years, etc..)?
 - a. How Did it end?
 - b. How did it develop?
 - c. What stage was the breaking point did you find?
 - d. How did you react?
5. Can we talk about the **impacts** this conflict had (on you, mental health, performance, other relationships with team or family?), participation in the sport (Want to participate, drop out of that sport, sport all together – what doing now?)
6. Were there other factors which played a role in your decision to drop out?

Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's full name: Meggie Spicer

Universities attended: University of New Brunswick, Bachelor of Recreation and Sport Studies, 2015

Publications: N/A

Conference Presentations: N/A