Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of

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“A Comprehensive Understanding of the Coach-Athlete Relationship:
A Post-Secondary Canadian Team Sport Perspective”

Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education

Thursday, April 21, 2016
9:00am
David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. John Meldrum, Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, University of
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Dr. Bruce Pinel, Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, UVic (Member)
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Dr. Lynne Marks, Department of History, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This dissertation is comprised of three main sections. The first chapter is a historical review of literature research regarding coach-athlete relationships within sport and athletics. The review was conducted to consider as much empirical evidence as possible concerning coach-athlete relationships. Various electronic databases were searched, with a date range of 1977-2015. The main search engine used within this review was Summon 2.0, an intuitive search engine uncovering relevant information concerning topic of coach-athlete relationships from the University of Victoria libraries collections. Databases searched were ERIC (EBSCO), SPORTDiscus, Academic Search Complete, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, PubMed, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, PsycArticles, International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, and identified citations from scholarly papers were retrieved. Additionally, Google scholar was used as a search engine for increased variety of scholarly literature and academic resources. There were no limitations with the exception of non-English publications. This chapter aimed to examine and provide an overview of past and current literature supporting the coach-athlete relationship. Historical origins, contemporary models, other influences on the relationship, and coach-athlete interactive behaviors were examined.

The second chapter is a qualitative study, guided by a phenomenological method of research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded with 10 of the most successful team sport coaches within Canadian Inter-university Sport (CIS) from 2002-2012. Following coach interviews, interpretive research and bracketing and themes were used to identify key components from the interviews. A final thematic structure disclosing four major dimensions contributed to common factors the role relationships play in coach-athlete success, identified as: recruitment, communication, caring, culture, and trust. Findings revealed a model that demonstrates the reciprocal relationships between revealed dimensions and themes within a coach-athlete relationship (R-CARM; Reciprocating Coach-Athlete Relationship Model).

A third study was a qualitative longitudinal case study aimed to provide trustworthiness and potentially expand the aforementioned R-CARM. Two postsecondary teams and head coaches were chosen, one female and one male. The process of the study included an initial modification process of the R-CARM, initiating the RCARM through a multiple qualitative case study, data analysis of case studies and further amendment of the R-CARM. Team athletes were provided with an 11-item Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) and additional comments to evaluate the coach-athlete relationship. Results from the CART-Q were considered and cross-referenced with the R-CARM, coach interviews and interventions ensued based on the student-athlete feedback. The findings suggested subtle amendments to the model and the R-CARM potentially is a trustworthy tool for coaches developing, maintaining, and repairing the coach-athlete relationship.

Collectively, this dissertation has expanded the current knowledge of coach-athlete relationships, providing coaches with a prospective tool for advancement in the area of coach-athlete relationships within social-psychology sport literature. It is therefore plausible to conclude that R-CARM may be a valuable tool across diverse team sports at post-secondary levels. Future research needs to continue discovering the potential universality of the model in the content and the quality of coach-athlete relationships. The research in this study provides coaches with a potential frame of reference and curriculum to further the coach-athlete relationship.