The Influence of Teacher Coaches on Canadian Secondary School Student Athletes

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Abstract

The success of Student-Athletes (SA) both in-class and on the field depends largely on two particular individuals: the SA themselves and his or her Teacher Coach (TC). TCs within a given school have a duty to the classroom as the teacher, as well as a duty to the particular sports team(s) they coach. SAs are, just as the name would suggest, attending school primarily to be students and secondarily as athletes. The TC is in a unique position to create a bond with their SAs where they can nurture athletic prowess while also promote the importance of the students' academic performance. This study will explore the ways in which TCs in Canadian secondary schools motivate and influence their SAs to succeed both as students, as well as athletes. A large body research has been conducted specifically examining Canadian secondary school SAs who receive athletic scholarships to universities outside of Canada. There exists a noticeable gap, however, in the research aimed towards understanding the plight of the Canadian SAs who will not receive full scholarships to attend post-secondary institutions. This research project will offer a qualitative description of how TCs are aiding their SAs towards achieving success both in the classroom, as well as on the field of play, in order to graduate from high school and attend a post-secondary institution, should they be so inclined.

Keywords: Teacher coaches, student athletes, influencing, nurturing, communication, high school, secondary school, post-secondary
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

Extracurricular activities offer a diverse range of opportunities and experiences for secondary school students. One of the most glamorized extracurricular opportunities offered from school to school is athletics. With sports ranging from football, to basketball, to badminton, to golf, to archery, high school Student Athletes (SAs) are given unique opportunities to compete in the name of school pride and individual athletic accomplishment. Carl James (2005) explains, “through sports, students, would demonstrate their superior athletic skills and abilities, and the extent to which they can dominate an important and prestigious aspect of school life” (p. 28).

Many secondary school varsity athletes are able to apply themselves to the rigorous requirements of commitment to the team without inhibiting their classroom attendance, participation, or overall grades. For example, David Boyce (2008) of The Saint Thomas Moore Knights eloquently states, “I’ve always prided myself as a student-athlete… student before athlete” (The Hamilton Spectator). David was an award winner and scholarship recipient who went on to continue to play basketball competitively at a post-secondary institution.

The success of the SA both in-class and on the field of play depends largely on two individuals in particular: the SA themselves and their teacher coach (TC). The majority of secondary school athletics coaches are classroom teachers who willingly take on this dual role. Therefore, the TCs within each school have a duty to the classroom as the teacher, as well as a duty to the sport as the coach and should be advocating the importance of both. The TC is in a unique position to create a bond with their SAs because their aim is to nurture athletic prowess while also promoting the importance of the students' academic performance. In a country such as Canada, where Canadian post-secondary institutions do not provide full scholarships for their
athletes, the importance of academics for SAs becomes paramount for their success after high school.

This research study will uncover the ways in which TCs in Canadian secondary schools motivate and nurture their SAs to succeed as students, as well as athletes. Given the competitive nature of sport and the competitive academic requirements of attending post-secondary institutions, my goal is to identify how these TCs are assisting their SAs to achieve the highest levels in both academics and athletics.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The gold standard for the celebration of student athletic success in North America is in the United States, where the most successful secondary school SAs are put on a pedestal for their achievements on the field of play. These athletically gifted SAs are praised and are given the opportunity to coast through high school classes knowing they will receive full scholarships to play in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Noel Dyck (2011) speaks to the fact that there is a “frequency with which proficient athletes are admitted to otherwise academically selective and prestigious institutions with significantly lower academic scores than those required of other applicants” (p. 56). For most of those students, collegiate level athletics will be the pinnacle of their athletic achievement, regardless of whether or not they decide to whole-heartedly pursue an undergraduate degree in the process.

Yet, a different landscape exists for SAs in Canadian secondary schools. Ultimately, the very best athletes across Canada will likely be scouted to play their sport of expertise at a post-secondary institution either in the United States or at other prestigious schools around the world. Due to the fact that Canadian post-secondary schools do not offer full scholarships to its athletes,
SAs who expect to continue their sporting careers at a Canadian post-secondary institution cannot expect to receive the same kind of funding. Some funding does exist for athletic achievements, but not nearly to the same capacity of scholarship money offered from American post-secondary institutions (CIS, 2013). If the goal of the Canadian secondary school SA is to ultimately graduate and attend a post-secondary institution, whether to play their sport of expertise or not, these SAs will likely need to investigate alternative methods of funding; perhaps from potential post-secondary institutions or from their own high schools by way of bursaries awarded on the merit of academic achievement.

I am left to wonder if the plight of the mid-level SAs - the ones who, at best, will be able to continue playing sports at the collegiate level in Canada, or the individuals who have simply reached the pinnacle of their sporting careers while in high school - are familiar with the importance of a strong academic foundation to lead them towards successful completion of high school and perhaps open a pathway into post-secondary education. It is possible that proper attention to the academic needs of these SAs is overlooked in favour of the short-term rewards of athletic achievements. This could result in SAs ultimately missing out on the opportunity to attend certain post-secondary institutions because they were permitted to focus their efforts on athletics, as opposed to academics. Therein lies the importance of the role the TC plays: to uphold their duties as a teacher, as well as a coach.

This paper will explore the impact of TCs on the athletic and academic success of male SAs in public schools. I have chosen to focus on public school students because public schools are free of cost to attend and they are, more often than not, made up of a range of students from a wider socioeconomic spectrum than would be found at private schools. Students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds tend to endure a degree of exclusion from post-
secondary institutions in Canada; the main reason for this is the cost of tuition and the need for financial aide (Frempong, G., Ma, X., & Mensah, J., 2012). Given that tuition to many private high schools in Canada can be higher than the cost of post-secondary education itself, it would be fair to suggest that, in general, students who attend private secondary schools are students who come from families of higher socioeconomic status (SES). Further, students attending private schools may also have the benefit of well-funded facilities and play for coaches who do not have the responsibility of the dual role of both coach and teacher.

For the aforementioned distinctions between the demographics of students who attend private school versus students who attend public school, I find it interesting to examine how athletes of a larger diversity of ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds treat their respective requirements to the classroom against their commitments to the playing field. Whether or not high school sports will be the pinnacle of these students’ sporting careers, my aim is to uncover how Canadian public secondary school TCs nurture SA talents and help to lead these SAs towards potential opportunities either academically or athletically, or in both respects.

1.2 Statement of the Research Process

The goal of this research study is to gain insight into how public school SAs are aided by their TCs towards graduating from high school. For the purposes of this study I would like to focus solely on male SAs because the overall competition amongst male athletes is greater than that of female athletes. Further, more possibilities exist for males in sport at the professional level than for females. The trickle down effect of this is that there are more males looking to fill fewer spots in athletics at the professional and intercollegiate levels. I wish to uncover, from the perspective of the TC, how SAs view high school graduation and if they are made aware of
potential scholarship opportunities both from academics and athletics on their way to potentially attending post-secondary institutions.

For this study, I will be restricting my analysis to Toronto, Ontario public schools. Ontario is the province that I attended high school in, as well as the province I am attaining my Master degree. I would like to examine high schools within my hometown of Toronto out of personal interest, as well as the fact that it is the largest city in Canada and one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world. Toronto public secondary schools will give me the opportunity to examine experiences of individuals from a wide range of demographics of both students as well as teachers.

My overall research question is: In what ways do Ontario secondary teacher-coaches nurture male student athlete success?

Additionally, I have three sub questions that I would like to unpack:

1. In what ways can the Socio Economic Status of a student athlete affect their abilities to achieve success in academics and athletics?

2. Is there consistently a sport that contains the highest level of academic achievement amongst its student athletes? Conversely, is there consistently a sport wherein the student athletes display the lowest levels of academic achievement?

3. What methods of communication exist between teachers and teacher coaches about student athletes in classrooms? Can this communication be improved upon?

Students who come from a lower socioeconomic background have grown up being given fewer opportunities to succeed outside of the classroom. Some students may find it necessary to work part-time while in high school to bring in income for either themselves or their family and they may put that job at the forefront of their priorities, ahead of classroom assignments.
Additionally, some students come from families in which no one has ever attended a post-secondary institution. In these cases, high school may simply be a formality until the student turns of age and will enter the work force. In the public school system, students come from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds but all of these students are able to try out for and, if successful, play on sports teams. I wish to establish the ways in which being a part of these sports teams can inspire SAs to take a more active role in the classroom, or whether the extracurricular commitment gives the SAs more reason to avoid putting in the time for necessary assignments, while still being an active participant in school-related activities.

Further, it is my belief that it would be greatly beneficial to find out if there is a specific sport in which its SAs are consistently scoring the lowest in their classes, or the sport that has the lowest rate of post-secondary attendance by its SAs. To have a gauge as to which sports are churning out the least academically successful SAs would be beneficial for that school’s administration, the faculty, and the TCs to implement a stronger focus on academic requirements and mandates.

1.3 Background of the Researcher and Purpose of Study

Part of my inspiration for choosing this topic stems from the movie *Coach Carter* (Thomas Carter, 2005). Looking towards the future on behalf of his high school basketball team, coach Ken Carter (Samuel L. Jackson) imparts the importance of education in addition to athletics on his team of inner-city students. Carter’s overall goal is for his players to make it to college and continue on with their education. Carter is so staunch on his mandate that his group of SAs maintain their grades and attendance in the classroom that he locks his players out of the gym until the team raises their collective grade point average.
Coach Carter is, at the end of the day, a glamourized Hollywood story based on true events that took place at a high school in the southern United States. That being said, I believe it provides an excellent example of a high school coach not allowing SAs to underachieve in the classroom. Dimitris Gargalianos and George Pavlidis (2014) explain that the real Coach Carter “benched his undefeated players because they did not meet pre-agreed educational standards” (p. 295). Carter’s reason for his decision was simple: “Students come first” (Gargalianos & Pavlidis, 2014, p. 295). This is precisely what I wish to uncover with my research: if students do in fact come first, then in what ways are their coaches facilitating both fruition for their athletes on the field as well as in the classroom?

When I was in high school I was an avid participant in extracurricular activities, sports in particular. Athletics have always played a significant role in my life since the age of four. Throughout my education I always looked forward to joining the various sports teams offered at my schools in addition to the recreational leagues I played in competitively. In my final year of high school I played on the soccer team, I was the captain of the hockey team, and I also played on the baseball team; we won the district championship that year.

For myself, while I was in high school, a public school, I came to the inevitable realization that I would more than likely never make a career out of playing a sport. This was not the crushing of my dreams per se, rather, the understanding that I had not put in nearly enough hours of commitment to any one sport to have a chance of being scouted to the level necessary to continue to rise towards the professional level. Such being the case, I ensured that, in addition to the athletics, I devoted myself towards my academic studies.

Even before high school began I knew that I would be attending a post-secondary institution after graduating. I had no idea which institution I would end up at or what I would be
there to study but I had made attending a post-secondary institution my goal to achieve upon graduation. This was my own personal situation but I also knew a significant amount of other SAs who were far less outgoing, less committed to their studies, and more interested in showing up to school to play competitive sports than anything else related to the school. Personally, I did not require much aide from my TCs while balancing both athletics and academics, but I know that many other individuals did seek out the help of our TCs, which was usually a positive interaction.

Ultimately I went to continue my studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. When I was in my second year of study I lived in a house off campus with three friends, all of whom played on the Dalhousie basketball team. Two of these roommates are African Americans, who grew up in Ontario and came from a lower socioeconomic background than myself. Tom\textsuperscript{1}, from Pickering, Ontario, is two years older than me and was in his third year of study at the time we were living together. He had attended two years of Junior College in the United States before transferring to Dalhousie. The other, Jerry\textsuperscript{2}, attended high school in midtown Toronto and the Dalhousie basketball team’s coach was paying for his education. If not for that funding, he likely would have attended a university in Toronto and lived at home while playing basketball for that team; he, in fact, went on to do this years later. At the time, both Tom and Jerry who were successful scholars - Tom in Kinesiology and Jerry in Management - openly admitted to slacking off in the classroom in their final year of high school, knowing that they were being scouted to play basketball at the collegiate level. Looking back on it, I wonder to what degree TCs and classroom teachers lowered the requirements of assignments in order to help open the doors to their collegiate-level opportunities.

\textsuperscript{1} Pseudonym
\textsuperscript{2} Pseudonym
Looking back on my friends Tom and Jerry, I wonder how many other secondary school SAs are like these two young men. Further, how many previous high school SAs have had similar mindsets to Tom and Jerry and yet were unable to take their athletic talents to the next level beyond high school. Additionally, I am most curious as to how it was that these SAs were influenced either positively or negatively by their TCs who ultimately helped guide them on their paths beyond high school graduation. Effectively, I wish to uncover the methods that TCs have in the past and currently utilize to influence these young minds to achieve success in both academics and athletics.

The purpose of this case study is to illustrate the impact that TCs have on the pathway of Ontario male secondary school SAs towards successful completion of high school and the possibility of admission, or lack there of, into post-secondary institutions. I hope to unpack whether TCs are influencing SAs to become both athletes and better students, one of the two, or neither, as these young individuals attempt to complete high school and make plans for post graduation.

1.4 Limitations of the Research

In pursuing this case study there are three main factors that I will not be able to overcome and will thus limit my research process. The first is that I have been bound by time constraints. This Master of Teaching Research Project is due to be completed in April of 2016 and I will not have begun my interviewing process until July of 2015. Effectively, this will have left me with less than one year to conduct interviews with TCs in the field, as well as collect other forms of data.
The second major limitation of this research is that I will not have been able to interview students directly. Rather, I have spoken with TCs who gave me their perspective on student achievement both on the field of play and in the classroom. I received my information from the perspective of TCs both past and present who currently play or have played a significant role in the development of SAs. In doing so, however, I will not have gotten the opportunity to meet with SAs and find out from them first-hand whether they identify themselves as students first or as athletes, nor will I have had the opportunity to find out about the influences they have had throughout secondary school. I will also be limited by the TCs themselves based on which teams they currently coach or that they have coached in the past. By interviewing three TCs it is entirely possible that I will not have spoken to coaches of every high school sport offered for males.

The third important limitation of my research is that I will not have been able to interview teachers from schools outside of the Greater Toronto Area. I will have been living in Toronto full time and I will have sought out schools in the city and TCs within them who could provide me with strong insight into my topic. I acknowledge that I will not have been able to travel province-wide to conduct my interviews.

1.5 Definitions of Terms

Throughout this paper I will make reference to a variety of terms that may not be commonly utilized in one’s discourse. Below is a list of terms along with their definitions.

1. **TC** – Teacher Coach
2. **SA** – Student Athlete
3. **SES** – Socioeconomic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. (American Psychological Association, 2015)

4. **Secondary School** – High School

5. **Post-Secondary** – University/College
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will serve as a summary of the previous research done on topics related to this research project. It is beneficial to keep in mind the purpose of this research, as well as the research question and sub-questions that guide this research while reading this chapter. My overall research question is: In what ways do Ontario secondary teacher coaches nurture male student athlete success? Additionally, the sub-questions that I am seeking to unpack are: In what ways can the socioeconomic status of a student athlete affect their abilities to achieve success in academics and athletics? Is there consistently a sport that contains the highest level of academic achievement amongst its student athletes? Conversely, is there consistently a sport wherein the student athletes display the lowest levels of academic achievement? What methods of communication exist between teachers and teacher coaches about student athletes in classrooms? Can this communication be improved upon?

Given that the nature of my topic is directly focused on studying males, I will be using the theory of masculinity to guide my research. An important influence on this theory is Wayne Martino who has thoroughly researched the nature of boys in schools, focusing on the ways in which boys are perceived by their peers and teachers. I will examine how male students respond to males as classroom teachers and males as TCs. Ultimately, I wish to investigate the proverb ‘You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink’. With respect to SAs I aim to uncover the ways in which Ontario secondary school male student athletes are being led to water (graduation), if at all.

2.1 Masculinity
Wayne Martino has researched the different ways male students are prone to being treated by their teachers and by their peers as they grow and develop throughout their schooling careers, including the many ways boys are stereotyped. He has also researched assumptions about male student needs such as the necessity for an increase in male teacher influence. Martino will help us better understand the existing relationship between male SAs and male TCs.

In public schools with teachers of both sexes, it is generally not a requirement that male sports teams are coached specifically by male teachers, nor that female teams must be coached specifically by female teachers. In many instances, however, the TC of a male sports team is, in fact, a male teacher. Martino & Berrill (2003) propose that male teachers employ methods of teaching that vary from those used by female teachers because, quite simply, males are different than females. Using similar logic, the same could be said about the varying coaching styles of male and female coaches. This is a generalization, but it is a suitable basis to further investigate how male SAs relate to their male TCs.

2.1.1 Students and Teachers

Male students, male SAs in particular, are stereotyped for slacking off in the classroom more so than other demographics of students. The suggested reason as to why this occurs is really quite simple: male students believe that they can. Michael Kaufman explains, “men enjoy social power, many forms of privilege and often unconsciously, a sense of entitlement by virtue of being male.” (Martino and Berrill, 2003, p. 101, Quoting Kaufman, p. 75). Whether or not this stereotypical lens in which to view male students is fair, males are notoriously identified for having this sense of entitlement and privilege; such suggested behaviour can transition into classroom mentalities.
It is possible that we view male students in this manner because there has been a lack of understanding as to how to reach males in the classroom setting. In an Australian study Martino & Berrill (2003) reference a 2002 report from the Australian government which draws the conclusion that “boys need more explicit teaching than girls and tend to prefer more hands-on activities” and that “boys respond better to teachers who are attuned to boys’ sense of justice and fairness and who are consistent in the application of rules” (Martino and Berrill, 2003, p. 104, Quoting Australian Government Report, p. 77). Being attune to the learning needs of male SAs also requires an understanding that these students are more likely to succeed when given hands-on activities. Similarly, success in athletics stems directly from hands on attention by both athlete and coach alike. As well, organized sport as a whole, is directly governed by the principals of justice and fairness as every sport has its own rules and code of conduct to abide by. One could then suggest that male TCs have a higher likelihood of connecting with male SAs in the classroom environment based on their own personal connection to understanding sports, complemented by their own understanding of the various ways in which SAs relate to the games they excel in.

The aforementioned research confirms that teachers do not necessarily have to be male in order to connect with their male students or male SAs. Further, students indicated that it is not the sex of the teacher that is most important, rather, it is the type of person that teacher is (Martino et al, 2002). Thus, when examining what kind of teacher or TC would best influence male SAs either in class or on the field, it is not necessarily the case that this TC is a male. Rather, the best candidate for the position would be a good-natured individual who has the ability to understand their students, no matter if the student is male or female. Possessing the
ability to understand one’s students is one of the best qualities of a strong teacher. Martino et al (2002) came to the conclusion that:

The way forward for schools is to create professional learning communities for staff which are committed to the provision of enhancing teacher threshold knowledges and broader understandings about the impact and effects of gender concepts, family, school and community environment, peer culture, student-teacher relationships on both boys’ and girls’ attitudes, expectations and engagement with schooling. (p.132)

The teaching staff of a given school, males or females, essentially require a stronger knowledge base as to how to teach both male students and female students alike. Teachers should be given the resources to learn how to better connect with their students to avoid critical gender divides between male students and male teachers and female students and female teachers.

2.1.2 Canada

Martino (2009) introduces several assumptions that exist about males in education in the Ontario school system such as the idea that “increased numbers of male teachers are needed to address ‘the boy problem’ because they more attuned to boys’ learning needs” (p. 264). Based on this assumption it would seem that the Ontario schooling system is less content with finding teachers of strong virtue who can relate to their students, regardless of gender, and are more dedicated towards finding more male teachers based solely on the merit of having more male influence in the classrooms.

Another assumption addressed in the study is that “increasing the number of male teachers will provide boys with ‘role models’ who are better equipped to address their alienation and disaffection with schooling” (Martino, 2009, p. 265). Again, this is drawing from the notion that male students will learn better from male teachers because of the different methods of teaching employed by males teachers than female teachers. In a literature review documented by
the Ontario College of Teachers, support is given to the position that “male role models do matter” (Martino, 2009, p. 267, quoting OCT, 2004, p. 9). This logic is based on the reasoning that most school boards would not want to be entirely comprised of teachers of solely one sex, whether it be men or women, in order to have a diverse influence in the classroom.

There has been a direct call for more male teachers in Ontario. And if there have been more male teachers introduced into the Ontario schooling system there would logically be more male TCs available who would have more opportunities to connect with their male SAs both on the field and in the classroom.

2.2 The Importance of Sport

Throughout the development of the life of a child and a young adult there are many opportunities for learning and growth that exist outside of the traditional classroom environment. Sports, for example, have the ability to function as a tool for physical development while also having educational benefits by introducing the possibility for youth to learn from experiences and build a skill set that classrooms cannot offer.

Canada has a history of developing some of the world’s most talented athletes in a wide range of professional sports. In many instances, however, the goal of children and students competing in organized sports may not necessarily be focused on athletic success specifically; rather, the focus is geared more strongly towards parents simply facilitating their youth getting more active. Noel Dyck (2011) suggests, “in Canada, sports are broadly viewed as ‘natural’ and ‘wholesome’ pastimes for children that are expected to furnish healthy exercise and companionable leisure” (p. 53). Exercise is undoubtedly a positive by-product of sport, as is learning the dynamics of being part of a team; both can be vital in the healthy upbringing of
children if given the opportunities to do so. But Dyck is really referring to the breeding of a mentality wherein success in athletics is not necessarily the ultimate goal; rather, the focus is on participation in general.

Along with the sense of being part of a team, sport can improve the lives of students with respect to self-discipline, identification, and can even create stronger academic aspirations (James, 2005). Participation in sport allows for individuals to expand the types of connections they have with others, opening themselves up to better understand who they are and how they fit in the world around them (James, 2005). It is the intangible benefits of self-discovery, growth and development that makes organized sport so unique. Education garnered through experiences in sport can complement school-based education. James further links participation in sport to better academic performance (James, 2005).

High school sports are unique because they offer organized, competitive sport opportunities to students of all SES backgrounds with the selection process based predominantly on ability, not cost. That is to say, at the very least, a student is given an opportunity to attend a try out for a school team without having to pay for the opportunity to do so. A TC could also find ways to utilize the education of sport and translate similar tactics and techniques into the education in the classroom for their SAs. Steven Elliot (2008) suggests, “participation in high school athletics provides student-athletes and their coaches with some of the most satisfying, rewarding, and memorable experiences of their lives” (p. 10). TCs can use the bond formed with SAs on the field to help influence and perhaps incentivise these SAs to succeed academically.

Research does not prove, however, that participation in sport will definitely lead to better academic performance. James (2005) confirms that there is no conclusive evidence that links participation in athletics with academic achievement in high school. James then proceeds to
suggest that “there is an enduring belief in Canada, especially among marginalized male high
school students (and at times their coaches and parents) that participating in sports does produce
educational benefits” (2005, p. 1). With the right communication and influence, students can
come to a realization of this potential educational achievement from their TCs and it can be
translated into success for SAs both in the classroom as well as on the field of play.

2.3 Scholarship Opportunities In Canada

Often, to help coax a student into attending a particular post-secondary institution, that
institution may award the perspective student with financing towards tuition in the form of a
scholarship. Scholarships are offered based on a variety of merits, including academic
achievement. SAs expecting to attend a post-secondary institution to play competitively at the
intercollegiate level may even be awarded with athletic scholarships at the post-secondary
institution they attend. These athletic scholarships differ greatly, however, depending on the
location of the institution.

In Canada, according to a report from Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), forty-four
percent of all CIS student-athletes receive athletic scholarships, which, on average, cover 51% of
their tuition and compulsory fees (CIS, 2013). This is, by no means, an insignificant amount of
funding. The CIS provided $14, 589, 012 in athletic scholarships in 2012-2013, more than
double the amount of funding distributed in 2006-2007. The CIS indicates that almost half of
their athletes receive an athletic scholarship covering a cost of tuition (CIS, 2013). As well, these
figures are only accounting for students getting offers to play in the Canadian Interuniversity
Sport league, which does not include Canadian Community Colleges. Therefore, the total
funding going to SAs attending Canadian post-secondary institutions to play competitive sport is even greater still. And this is only a reflection of scholarships distributed in Canada.

For North Americans, athletic scholarships awarded to high school athletes from post-secondary institutions differ dramatically between the United States and Canada. As Noel Dyck (2011) states “athletic scholarships remain a prominent feature of the rhetorical and organizational landscape of child and youth sports in Canada” (p. 58). Canadian athletic scholarships pale in comparison to scholarships awarded by our American neighbours. For top Canadian student athletes, many opportunities do exist south of the border in addition to the scholarships offered from Canadian institutions. Carl James (2003) explains “student athletes are likely to think that there is little or no difference between themselves and their American counterparts, and hence they have equal chances of winning scholarships as their counterparts to the South” (p. 128). It is true that top Canadian SAs routinely continue their athletic journeys in the United States after being scouted by a university because of the academic, athletic and monetary benefits offered by those schools.

The question then becomes a matter of how Canadian high school SAs make themselves known to their American schools and their coaching staffs. In many cases, this comes down to getting the proper exposure; the athlete needs to be seen in the right places by the right scouts. The onus of this role then falls upon the SA, the school, and the coaches (James, 2003, Dyck, 2011). James (2013) explains: “Teachers and coaches play a significant role in preparing students academically and athletically for the college and university athletic scholarships which they expect to win” (p. 135). There is, in fact, a strong reliance on the TC to fulfill their role in the process of a SA reaching the next plateau of their schooling and sporting career. James (2003), speaking of TCs, continues to say, “in this regard, student athletes expect them to
facilitate the process of school transfers, provide exposure opportunities, and demonstrate a willingness to accommodate their athletic interests” (p. 135). The TC must not only acknowledge the skills that students have in a particular sport but also contribute to managing the academic skills of said students. If students are to be considered for scholarships, regardless of which country the school they wish to attend is in, the support of their coach is critical (James, 2003). James (2003) summarizes by saying, “the idea should be for educators to assist students to negotiate and navigate effectively the academic culture of schools while taking seriously the social and cultural situation and needs of the students” (p. 141). The TC should act in accordance with facilitating the best experience for the SA as they continue on in both their athletic and academic journeys.

Perspective high school SA graduates do not always know the best path they should take following graduation, even if they have been fortunate enough to receive offers of admission from numerous suitors to play their sport of expertise at the post-secondary level. The variety of academic programs at the university play an important role in the decision making process (Miller & Kerr, 2002). This is another opportunity for TCs to influence their SAs to seek out the opportunities that lie outside of the sport itself, help the SA find the program best suited for their own needs.

There is much to be said about the prestige of gaining a full scholarship to a post-secondary institution in the United States. Dyck (2011) explains:

Given the absence of ‘full ride’ athletic scholarships in Canada, promising young Canadian athletes have long been targeted by recruiters from U.S. colleges and universities… Not surprisingly, the prospect of winning such scholarships has become strongly associated with high achievement in child and youth sports in Canada both in schools and in more extensive community sports clubs and leagues. Indeed, a common means of recognizing individual achievements by young Canadian athletes is to proclaim them as possible or even highly likely candidates to receive an athletic scholarship from an American university. (p. 57)
For Canadian SAs, this is truly the Gold Standard: being so skilled athletically, complemented with a level of academic aptitude to be receive an offer to attend a post-secondary institution that will pay for you to help continue to hone your already gifted athletic ability. This is no easy feat, but it is an attainable goal in favourable circumstances.

### 2.4 Eligibility Guidelines

Ultimately, the reality is that not every secondary school SA can go on to continue to play sports at the post-secondary level. This may stem from either an ultimate lack of skill required to compete at the next significant level, or it might stem from short-comings in the classroom. Ultimately, every team at each secondary school would be best served to have a set of guidelines put in place for their SAs to live up to in order to remain on the team. This would presumably increase academic participation for SAs and create extrinsic motivation for them to perform up to the expectations of their given classrooms.

Eligibility refers to the terms that the student must live up to both in the classroom and on the field to be able to play their respective sport. Ideally, a school will invoke a handbook or contract that highlights such important elements as: School Athletic Philosophy, Athlete Eligibility Rules, Health and Safety, Attendance at Practice and Games, Playing Time, Athlete/Coach/Parent Relationships, Athlete/Parent Acknowledge Form (Elliot, 2008). This is designed truly for the benefit of the SA as much as it is for the TC. Beyond the classroom environment itself, SAs are representatives of their school while on the playing field. It is vital for them to display good sportsmanship and represent the school with dignity and pride. Playing on a sports team (or several) is a privilege and these students should have to demonstrate the importance of balancing all of their school-based commitments in order to play (Elliot, 2008).
The importance of communication between SA and TC is paramount. Elliot (2008) says, “it is essential for coaches to clearly state their expectations for attendance at practices and games” (p. 8). Elliot (2008) goes on to further explain, “communicating expectations can play a key role in a positive relationship between the coach, players, and parents. Nasty confrontations can be avoided by adopting a step-by-step procedure for discussing issues with the coaching staff.” (p. 8). If there arise instances of dissatisfaction from the perspective of the SAs, the players are encouraged to speak to the coach to either receive clarification and/or rectify a problem (Elliot, 2008). This open communication can allow for students to address when they are having difficulties either with being a member of the team, or with being a student in any particular classroom or simply a student representing the school.

The SA represents the school they play for and attend. The success of the athlete can be traced back to the coach and the organization they play for, reflecting well upon the expertise of the entire operation (Dyck, 2011). The same could be said about the institution itself based on a student’s academic success. It would make sense then to aim for the student to represent the institution and coach with dignity both on the field and in the classroom.

The advantage of a student playing sports is that it enables them opportunities to become a more well-rounded individual. Attentiveness and exertion are not mutually exclusive entities, neither in sport nor in the classroom. There is a higher likelihood that a student will graduate from high school if they play sports and give effort in the classroom than those who do not play sports and do not give effort in the classroom (Staff & Kraeger, 2008). Such tutelage requires TCs to keep a watchful eye over their SAs and for the SAs to keep open communication with their teachers, most importantly, their TCs.
2.5 The Role of the Teacher Coach

The TC plays an integral role in aiding their SAs towards achieving success both academically as well as in athletics. James (2003) explains the methodology behind middle school students when choosing high schools based on the probability of excelling in sport:

In arguing that there is a relationship between the school one attends and the possibility of attaining an athletic scholarship, these student athletes said that it was important to attend schools that were known to be supportive of the sport in which they had an interest. The participants suggested that such schools were likely to be in school boards or districts that were also supportive of their sport.” (p.130)

Secondary schools cannot garner such reputations without an exceptional coaching staff made up of teachers at the school. But combining the job of coaching along with the task of teaching, is no easy feat. Timothy Ryan (2008) examines the overarching duties of a high school TC and the various reasons that lead teachers to take on the dual role of coach and teacher. Ryan investigated the relationship between coaching and teaching and the effects coaching had on teaching and visa versa. Ryan (2008) states, “TCs have an opportunity to influence a large number of youth, both in the classroom and in the athletic arena” (p. 58).

In order to examine the ways in which the TC can impact the SA both academically and athletically, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the TC is personally affected by both their role as a teacher and as a coach. The TC must have a stranglehold on both positions in order to do both effectively and get the most out of their classroom students as well as their SAs. Ryan (2008) explains, there are many external pressures on the role of the coach:

The more coaching roles one experiences, the more overload is expected in the coaching role, and the greater frequency that an individual coach will deal with members outside the school (i.e. officials, parents, fans, coaches) and within the school (i.e. other coaches, athletic director, transportation director, players). (p. 59)

Effectively, the TC must make sure that they are not biting off more than they can chew by taking on the role of both teacher and coach or else both capacities of their work will suffer at the
expense of students. In turn, the classroom students and SAs under this TC will also stand to lose because said TC will have fallen short of both duties. It will be thus be more difficult to cultivate relationships and nurture SAs towards achieving success when the TC has spread themselves too thin amongst their responsibilities.

Another major factor that affects the abilities of the TC as both a classroom teacher and a coach has to do with the size of the high school. Larger schools enable their staff the luxury of quantity; there are a greater number of teachers available in every subject department, as well as more teachers available to take on extracurricular responsibilities (Ryan, 2008). The more teachers in a particular department give each of these teachers the ability to divide up administrative duties amongst a greater number of people, including creating and sharing of assignments. Additionally, a larger school with a larger pool of staff will mean more teachers will be available to be a part of a respective team's coaching staff. This will subsequently help to divide coaching duties and administrative duties (Ryan, 2008). The result of this is that coaches can spend more time working with students on the field and, in some cases, coaches can divide their efforts and focus on certain individual athletes, giving them the specific attention they deserve. Having these coaching duties dispersed amongst other staff members, allows the TCs the opportunity to focus on the individuals in their classrooms whom require the attention. Effectively, in these larger secondary schools, TCs can afford to commit their time to take on the added responsibilities of coaching because of the shear volume of staff at the school to balance the requisite classroom duties.

Another important factor in understanding how a TC may influence their SAs both on the field and in the classroom has to do with the experience of the TC. If the TC is new to the teaching profession then much more of their time outside of class will, presumably, be spent
lesson planning versus on-field preparation. Whereas, in contrast, a more experienced teacher who will not need to spend as much time with class preparations will be a more suitable fit to take on the role of coach in addition to their job as a teacher (Ryan, 2008). Ryan (2008) explains, “Overemphasis on the coaching role, or belittlement of the coaching role, will likely lead to more conflict between the two roles” (p. 64). A more experienced teacher will gain more experience coaching throughout the years and may well be a stronger coach for the SAs based on their experience in the role.

2.5.1 Teacher Coaches and Parents

There are generally two major influences impressing upon SAs with respect to their needs in physical training versus needs in their studies: parents and coaches. Depending on the coaches’ own attitudes towards the importance of education the TC will either facilitate or inhibit the student in that respect (David, 2005). Thus, the impact of the coach in the life of the SA can be significant. It may well be the TC who influences the SA towards ultimately dropping a sport or, conversely, convincing them that sport is more important than academics. Patricia Miller and Gretchen Kerr (2002) suggest “adult figures including parents, high school teachers, counsellors and coaches, as well as coaches at the university level, need to ensure high school athletes are making appropriate academic choices” (p. 359). Coaches must also be aware of issues with respect to race and class, which should be reflected in their coaching pedagogy, understanding the structures within the school system (James, 2005). In order to get the most out of their SAs, TCs must ultimately understand the backgrounds of their athletes as well as the learning habits of their classroom students in order to help guide their SAs to seeking the best possible opportunities available to them.
2.6 The Reality

From a young age athletes will push themselves to their physical limit to identify how far their skills and training will take them in their journey to the professional ranks. But the majority of SAs who graduate to and go on to a post-secondary institution where they play sports at the intercollegiate level do not end up making it to the professional level, regardless of expenditure of effort (Gargalianos & Pavlidis, 2014). The opportunities continue to shrink as a SA climbs up the ranks of competitive sport. A greater number of individuals find themselves finishing with athletics at a competitive level and seek other pathways in life; this is why attaining a strong education is so vital.

2.7 In Summation

Studies have suggested that more male influence is required in the current schooling system in order to have better results with respect to reaching males and engaging them in the classroom as well as on the field of play. In many ways, the expression ‘boys will be boys’ is given to stereotype the learning habits of males who are thought to act in the manner that perpetuates this, as they are acting in ways that demonstrate masculinity. By the same token, these young men do not necessarily wish to abide themselves to these stigmas or stereotypes. And it does not necessarily mean that male teachers are required in order to best teach and understand male students. Yet, there has been a call for more male teaching influence all the same in hopes of having more male influence for male students.

There exist many possibilities in Canada for male SAs to receive both academic and athletic scholarships upon entering post-secondary institutions. In certain situations, a Canadian high school SA may be awarded a full scholarship to play at an elite level at an American
university. In order for a player to get to that point, however, it takes a great onus on themselves, as well as from their TCs. The TC has a responsibility to arrange for opportunities for their SAs to achieve higher in athletics while also ensuring that they put in their due work in the classroom to succeed academically. Meanwhile, the SA needs to trust that their TC has the best intentions for them, as well as put in the necessary work on the field and in the classroom in order to reach the next stages in education and sport.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Research Questions

After having performed a thorough analysis of available literature related to the topic of secondary school student athletes in Canada, I have come to a stronger understanding of the types of research that have already been conducted with respect to examining the influence of teacher coaches on student athletes. A significant body of research has been conducted that investigates the journey of Canadian SAs who receive opportunities to continue to play at a university or college in the United States or elsewhere in the world.

There currently exists a relative gap in research, however, with respect to the plight of the mid-level Canadian high school SAs and the chronicling of their journey towards graduating high school and beyond. These are the SAs who may go on to play sports at a Canadian post-secondary institution, which is a prestigious honour in itself, but will not provide them with an opportunity to receive post-secondary education free of cost. The research demonstrated that, for the majority of these SAs, participating in high school athletics would be the pinnacle of their sporting career.

I was then left to try and focus my field research on the resulting pathways of the aforementioned mid-level SAs, how they come to graduate from high school and how their TCs aide them in the process in order to answer my overall research question: In what ways do Ontario secondary teacher coaches nurture male student athlete success? Additionally, I sought to uncover whether there is a sport that develops the most scholastically successful athletes, as well as the a sport that develops the least scholastically successful athletes, the ways in which SES affects a SA in the graduation process, and whether TCs are facilitating their SAs’ success in the classroom to the best of their ability.
3.1 Background Information of Participants

This paper is aimed towards understanding the role of male secondary school TCs in Canada and their relationships with their male SAs both in the classroom, as well as on the field of play. I compiled a list of specific criteria that my participants needed to meet in order for them to be viable candidates for this research. I was looking for a total of three participants for the study working in Toronto, Ontario. My participants had to be: male, had to either be currently teaching or have taught at the secondary school level at a public school in the city of Toronto (either the Toronto District School Board, Peel Region School Board, or the York Region School Board), had to have coached a minimum of one varsity male athletic team for a minimum of one academic year (September to June), and had to be open to discussing academic achievement of SAs, as well as their role as both educator and coach.

I found three participants, of varying ages, who met the above criteria. The first participant, Stephan\(^3\), was a Physical Education teacher at a public high school in midtown Toronto who retired in 2014. Stephan carried with him more than 30 years of experience both teaching and coaching male varsity athletics at the same school. The list of teams that Stephan had coached throughout his tenure included: Basketball, Football, Hockey, Rugby, Badminton, Swimming and Alpine Skiing. Stephan taught and coached thousands of students throughout his 30 plus years on the job and it was his experience over multiple decades that made him such a unique and valued participant for my research.

The second participant, Bryan, is in his fifth year of teaching, currently working at a public high school in midtown Toronto teaching both Physical Education and Mathematics. Bryan has

\(^3\) Pseudonyms used for all participants
taught at four different schools early on in his career and has coached Football and Rugby teams at each of the schools he has worked at. Bryan’s school draws from a diverse range of students who come from families of a wide range of SES backgrounds. Due to the high number of students and the subsequent talent level of their athletes, this particular high school’s sporting teams compete in the highest levels of competition in the district and in the city. Bryan’s school has a history of producing athletes of exceptional talent who go on to compete at the post-secondary level both in Canada as well as in the United States. My old roommate Jerry, for example, attended and graduated from this same high school prior to making his way to Dalhousie.

My third participant, Andrew, has taught at a public high school in the east-end of the city of Toronto for 10 years. Andrew has been the coach of both the Cross Country and Ultimate Frisbee teams for five years. Andrew was able to offer unique insight from his position as a teacher whose primary position is in an academic classroom, as opposed to teaching from within the Athletic Department. Andrew first took on the role of TC five years ago because, if he did not do so, no other teacher was going to take on the role and there would have been no Cross Country or Ultimate Frisbee teams that year at the school. This school, the same school that Andrew has worked for the entirety of his career, is comprised of students from generally lower SES backgrounds.

Interviewing Stephan, Bryan and Andrew has given me a diverse range of participants with which to draw information from, as each participant spoke of experiences with respect to their interactions with male SAs from schools that are in different subsections of the city, that are of varying sizes, and are comprised of varying demographics of students.
I strongly believe that the demographic of the TCs themselves with whom I spoke is to the benefit of my research. In Stephan, I had the opportunity to learn from a teacher recently retired but with more years of experience teaching and coaching at the high school level than years I have been alive. Andrew is well established in his teaching career and has the unique experience of working in a part of the city with students of a wide range of demographics and SES backgrounds. And it was very engaging to speak with Bryan because he is in the earlier stages of his career as a teacher and as a coach but he works at a school with a relatively renowned high level of athletic achievement of its students.

Although Stephan, Bryan, and Andrew bring different professional experiences to the study, all three had very informative responses to questions asked, and offered similar comments. The key findings reflect themes, and sub-themes that emerged from the data of the interviews conducted.

I found each of my participants by way of recommendations from either friends or former colleagues. I first sent them an introductory email explaining who I was, who connected me with them, and what my study entailed. In the email I asked if they would be interested in learning more and being a part of my study. We were able to meet at a mutually agreed upon time and location.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

For each of the interviews I used both my phone and computer as digital recording devices. I transcribed each of the interviews verbatim in a script-format for the purposes of analysis. I then had specific answers from participants who had been chosen in hopes of providing me with honest and insightful opinions as to the dynamic that exists between TCs and their SAs.
My process was as follows:

First, I decided that the best way to organize my transcriptions was to put them into script format. This way I had every question and answer separated on the page in front of me. I then decided that, in order to analyze and synthesize the data as provided from each of my interview participants, I would group the answers of the three participants together into an organized chart through a process of coding: I created a table with five columns – question, participant #1 response, participant #2 response, participant #3 and themes. By having all three of the responses next to each other, I was able to easily see the similarities and differences in their responses. Further, I was also able to draw out important statements and identify re-occurring themes. This process enabled me to better understand where (if at all) the three participants differed in opinion or experience, or where their opinions and experiences aligned.

3.3 Ethical Review Procedures

I followed the ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program. Each participant who volunteered for this study was given a letter of consent prior to participating in the interview; they were required to read and sign it (see Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Participant). A copy of the letter of consent was given to each participant, and another copy was retained as part of the records for this study. Participants were informed of who will have access to the data (myself, faculty advisor, and instructor) and that it would be stored in a safe, unreachable place on my computer with a password required to access the documents. They were given all necessary information about content, consent, and confidentiality.
Interviews were conducted at a time negotiated by both parties, and at a place of the participant’s choosing. The participants were treated with due respect throughout the interview and were assured that they did not have to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable responding to. Every effort was made to ensure that these participants were both comfortable with and willing to participate in the interview and to have the resulting data included in this study. All appropriate measures have been taken to ensure participants cannot be identified through their responses.

3.4 Limitations

One major limitation in this research was the sample size of three participants. Considering the aim of the research study and the amount of time allotted to complete the research, the sample size was appropriate. The minimum requirement of interview participants for this research study is two persons. I chose to go with three participants to help further diversify my field data.

Another very significant limitation to this research was time. Not only was time limiting with respect to the amount of participants to interview, time also affected the interview length themselves. For example, Stephan currently resides outside of the Greater Toronto Area and so I had a very specific time frame in July to be able to interview him in person, while he was visiting Toronto. Due to time being a factor, I had to limit the number of interview questions to 16. I could only utilize as much of the participants’ time as they would permit me to which, in each case, was around an hour.

Subsequently, the interview questions (as listed below in Appendix A) were carefully constructed based on the literature review and the gaps in the existing literature.
3.5 Validity

There is an obvious limitation with respect to generalizability because, again, I only had the time to interview three participants and could only draw my ultimate conclusions from specific opinions and experiences of these three individuals. Although, even if I had interviewed 100 teacher coaches from across the Greater Toronto Area, there would still be a level of generalizability because I would still not have spoken to every male TC in the Greater Toronto Area, let alone every TC in Ontario. Thus, I had to do the best I could to extract useful knowledge I had been given from my interactions with my participants to make an impact and contribute to this topic by filling in gaps in research that currently exist.

Further, I tried to incorporate perspectives from a variety of male teachers who range in age, years of experience and neighbourhood in which they work/worked with SAs. As mentioned above, I have not incorporated every type of demographic of teacher who coaches and teaches male SAs in public high schools throughout the Greater Toronto Area, nor would I ultimately have been able to do so because of time constraints. By the same token, my three participants offer a wide range of experience that differs greatly based on their own unique situations and have provided me with great insight with regard to my overall research questions.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

The findings collected for this study emerged from three interviews that were conducted with experienced teacher coaches. Each participant had at least four years of teaching experience and at least four years of experience coaching male athletic teams at the high school level at public schools in the city of Toronto.

In order to fully understand the findings of this chapter, it is important to re-state my overall research question: *In what ways do Ontario secondary teacher coaches nurture male student athlete success?* In addition, throughout this study I have sought to uncover the answers to the following sub-questions: In what ways can the socioeconomic status of a student athlete affect their abilities to achieve success in academics and athletics? Is there consistently a sport that contains the highest level of academic achievement amongst its student athletes? Conversely, is there consistently a sport wherein the student athletes display the lowest levels of academic achievement? Finally, what methods of communication exist between teachers and teacher coaches about student athletes in the classroom? And can this communication be improved upon?

I have chosen to present the data retrieved from my interviews in four main themes, along with several sub-themes, to allow my research to be both general and specific on the experiences of these TCs and the SAs they worked with. The themes are as follows:

4.1: The impact of Socio Economic Status on Student Athletes  
4.2: Academics vs Athletics  
4.3: Feminization and Masculinity  
4.4: Communication: Successes and Pitfalls

4.1 The Impact of Socio Economic Status on Student Athletes
For this research project, my first sub-question investigates the ways in which SES impacts SAs both in the classroom and on the field of play. As I have previously stated in Chapter 1, I have specifically chosen the demographic of TCs and SAs at public schools for my research because public schools are more likely to have students of more diverse SES backgrounds than private schools.

All three of my research participants confirmed that SES can affect SAs in a variety of ways. For a student to be able to commit to a sports team in high school they are committing themselves to the time spent practicing, team meetings, and playing the games themselves before, during or after school. The majority of SAs who participate in high school athletics also have additional responsibilities outside of their classroom assignments and outside of the requirements of their school sport commitments; examples of this include: playing for rep sports teams or tutoring. Each of my three participants verified that students and SAs who come from lower SES backgrounds also have additional after-school obligations such as taking care of other members of their family, and/or the commitment of working a part time, or even a full time job. As a result of these obligations both academics and athletics can suffer. These SAs cannot complete assignments nor can they attend practices or games, as their time is instead devoted to these other commitments.

From the literature review I compiled in Chapter 2, I had speculated, based on research, that high school athletic programs provide a nearly level playing field for SAs of all SES backgrounds. The basis of this assumption stemmed from the fact that, generally speaking, most students are able to try out for and make a school sports team based on their abilities, not the cost of the sport. This speculation, however, does not take into consideration the cost of the sport to the school. As was the case when I was in high school, Bryan and Stephan verified that at most
schools in Toronto, hockey equipment is not provided. Football equipment will likely be provided, but there is no telling how often the department is afforded the opportunity to update its gear. That being said, high school sport is still, more often than not, less expensive than the cost of playing on a rep team outside of school and does subsequently offer more of an equal opportunity for perspective SAs of different SES backgrounds to participate in high school level sport.

4.1.1 SES is Equal to Opportunity

With respect to students of lower SES backgrounds being able to play high school sport, Stephan acknowledged that some of these students are truly being left behind because funding continues to be cut from athletic programs. Stephan states (in reference to the entirety of his career): “The low SES kids are being left behind. There’s a bigger gap now then there was by the numbers. Shear numbers. The money that has been cut from athletics is sad. It’s scary.” The opportunity gap continues to widen and students of lower SES backgrounds, those who do not have other opportunities to participate in athletics outside of school, are left with fewer pathways to play organized sport.

Similar to Stephan’s interpretation of the state of SES gaps, Bryan bluntly summarizes from his experiences that: “SES is equal to opportunity”. Effectively, the more privilege you come from, the more opportunities you are going to receive. Bryan explains that this opportunity-gap is not only related to sport either, but also in the classroom:

In the classroom, if there are both parents there… if there’s a stable home environment, parents tend to be more involved. They understand what’s happening in the school. They’ll ask their kids what homework they have. They’ll know that they can communicate with the teachers. They’ll do that. There are opportunities to advocate for extra help, or for tutoring. Maybe more students who are identified formally with an IEP come from higher SES backgrounds… Whereas, I don’t know how far along the process
of getting formally identified in terms of an IEP a student would be able to get themselves.

A student who comes from a lower SES background likely is not going to have the same support academically from their family as a student from a higher SES background. A student might be having trouble in the classroom because they actually have a learning disability but that particular student does not have the wherewithal to understand that they have an exceptionality, nor do they have a parent or guardian who is available to help them identify it. And this lack of support at home will also impact the opportunities afforded for students to partake in extracurricular activities such as sports. These students in question from lower SES backgrounds will not have the same access to resources at home to provide them with the opportunities to participate in sports. Ultimately, the student continues to suffer.

Andrew adds that, on top of part time jobs, some of the students he has taught work full time jobs while also taking a complete load of high school credits. Andrew explains, “Obviously kids that are from lower income families have to work more outside of school. It can be hard to find time just to get their school work done. Some of the students I teach have full time jobs, thirty hour a week jobs outside of school.” Given the commitment of work, even classroom assignments do not always get completed. Where then would be the time to also participate in athletics with a schedule that demanding on a high school student?

Unfortunately, schools consisting of students from predominantly lower SES backgrounds are losing ground and are unable to successfully participate in sports offered by the school. These same students become further in jeopardy of successfully graduating because school work and extracurricular involvement become secondary to their working requirements or familial commitments.
4.2 Academics vs Athletics

Student Athletes are, as the title suggests, both students as well as athletes. According to each of my research participants, the overwhelming majority of the SAs they have coached and taught viewed themselves primarily as students and secondarily as athletes.

SAs are at school to learn and achieve in academics and are also given the opportunity to participate in athletics. Even the SAs who are gifted enough as athletes to proceed to play their sport of expertise at the post-secondary level must also excel in academics in order to graduate and be eligible to play beyond high school. Bryan explains: “Whether it’s a vehicle on to further athletic opportunity, you’re there to be a student. As the system is structured now, that’s how you progress in a lot of athletics is by continuing to be a student.” To further put it in perspective, Stephan, with over 30 years of experience, could only think of a total of two former SAs who truly viewed themselves as athletes first and students second. Academic achievement is, according to each of my participants, at the forefront of how SAs today are able to achieve overall success in the classroom as well as on the field.

4.2.1 Academically Successful Student Athletes

My second sub-question is aimed at trying to identify a particular male sports team that consists of the overall lowest academically achieving SAs, as well as a sport that consists of the highest academically achieving SAs (by grade point average). Between my three participants I did not receive a uniform answer to either of these questions. Stephan surmised from his own experiences that perhaps the Badminton team at his school was in fact the most academically successful. He further suggested that the most academically successful teams “would not be either the hockey teams or football teams.” Bryan, from his experiences vouched for the
academic success of Rugby teams he has coached but ventured to guess that sports such as Ultimate Frisbee or the Swimming might be in the running for most academically successful. Bryan further identified that at different schools throughout the city of Toronto, the sports with perhaps the least academically successful students could be the Hockey teams or Basketball teams. Andrew speculated, based on his own experiences at his high school, that teams on the lower academically successful spectrum would be teams such as Basketball or Soccer, which draw from a more mainstream pool of students, whereas the gifted students at his school are drawn to sports like Cross Country and Ultimate Frisbee.

I have come to realize that there is not one specific answer to my sub-question and that it is convoluted to try and pin down one sports team across an entire city (or province or country) that consistently averages the highest or the lowest academic grades. Rather, it would literally vary from school to school. The greatest issue with trying to identify a specific sport in which we could speculate the SAs who are the most academically successful or least successful stems from the demographics and backgrounds of the students that make up the school: the demographics of the SAs on the sports teams themselves; whether or not the school has a gifted program; whether or not the high school is a Collegiate, a Secondary or a Technical school; how many players play on the team; as well as the cost associated with the sport itself. Each of these variables will subsequently affect which teams are most academically successful.

4.2.2 Student Demographic and Cost

Andrew explains the relevance of the gifted program at his high school, “It accounts for about ten percent of the population. And those gifted kids tend to be drawn to certain sports: Cross Country running, Ultimate Frisbee… Badminton. Some of them for Swimming.” Andrew
identified that the Cross Country team at his school is comprised of many students in the schools’ gifted program. Given that information, we could speculate that the Cross Country team would be one of the highest academic achieving teams at Andrew’s school. It does not necessarily mean that the same will be said about Bryan’s school, nor Stephan’s school, nor any other school in Toronto. A sport such as Cross Country is also a relatively inexpensive sport to pursue and could be comprised of an entirely different demographic of students, who are far less academically successful at other schools that do not have gifted programs.

Stephan explained that, from his experience, students who played on the Badminton team at the high school he taught and coached at are generally of a specific demographic that is, overall, more academically focused than demographics of students who make up other teams. Badminton, similar to Cross Country, is also a relatively inexpensive sport to play and can subsequently be made up of a variety of demographics at other schools of students of varying SES backgrounds.

Conversely, Stephan identified that the Hockey team, from his own experiences, could fall into the category of lowest academically achieving SAs. Bryan too speculated that at some schools the Hockey team might fall under this category but he was unable to confirm that definitively. I find it interesting that academic achievement of a sports team does not necessarily correlate with SES, considering the fact that a sport such as hockey is likely to be the most costly sport to play at high schools and, therefore, eliminates many of the lower SES students from contention of participation. Yet, apparently, hockey players tend to be less academic in their nature according to my participants. All the same, we still cannot say definitively that there is any one sports team that consistently has the lowest or highest academic achievers by grade point average.
4.2.3 Funding

Throughout my research process I aimed to uncover whether or not SAs were well informed about potential academic scholarship opportunities offered from either their high schools or from post-secondary institutions. Between Bryan, Andrew, and Stephan, each participant verified that, at their own particular schools, SAs could and should be better informed of potential scholarship opportunities. Further, each of these participants indicated that it is not just SAs who could be better informed of such opportunities, rather, it is the entire student body who are not as well informed about scholarship possibilities as they could be. Bryan admits, “I would say across the board, I think that there’s poor communication information about academic scholarships or opportunities, in general.” Bryan further divulged that, each June, the guidance department at his school sends out emails to the staff as reminders that there were scholarships that went unapplied for. By that time, this information is really too little too late to have any fruitful impact on the students.

Students and SAs alike in high schools are missing opportunities each year for scholarships and bursaries to help them pay the increasing cost of post-secondary tuitions. This gaff appears to be evident across the board and is something that could and should be improved upon to aid both students and SAs in graduating and going to a post-secondary institution (if they so chose to do). If more students and SAs become aware earlier on about the possibility of funding to attend post-secondary schools, this may open up more pathways for participation in high school sports and, ultimately, towards higher rates in graduation. There are opportunities that do exist and students need to be made aware of them.
4.2.4 The Carrot vs. The Stick

As mentioned, each of my three participants verified that the overwhelming majority of SAs view themselves as students first and athletes second. That being said, in many cases, SAs can still have a significant amount of trouble keeping up in their academic classrooms. This can stem from a variety of aforementioned reasons including: part time jobs, commitments to family, participation in sports, or just a general lack of interest in their studies. At most schools it is up to the TC to set out a specific mandate for their SAs to comply with throughout the season and for SAs to receive subsequent penalties if they do not live up to the standards they must perform at in their classrooms. At Stephan’s school, “the expectation was that they (SA’s) never used the sport as an excuse for not doing work.” Academics and athletics were, at the end of the day, separate entities and if students could not keep up with their studies then they had to be reprehe nded by removal from the team.

Enforcing suitable punishments for SAs who do not live up to the required standards in the classrooms becomes difficult because each circumstance depends on the individual situation itself. Bryan thoughtfully states his view, “I think, within a team, a blanket policy is never going to be as successful as one that can adapt to specific situations”. Every situation is different. Most importantly, disciplinary measures must not be too overwhelming for the SAs because, in many cases, the sport itself may be the only thing that is keeping the SA interested in coming to school at all. Bryan, Andrew, and Stephan each suggested that taking away the privilege of playing a sport could, in fact, have detrimental effects as opposed to inspiring the student to perform better in the classroom. Rather, there is a great importance in utilizing student athletics as a “carrot” as opposed to a “stick”.

Andrew refers to the head of the Athletic Department at his school with respect to his feelings towards SAs who might be in jeopardy of doing even worse academically if disciplined by the removal of sport, “He really sees sports as a carrot to get these kids into school and to keep them in school and--- And to graduate. And they do well.” Effectively, sports can keep students focused in the classroom. Andrew further elaborates: “A lot of these kids wouldn’t be in school at all if it weren’t for football or for basketball. Or whichever sport it is.” Andrew concluded his thoughts on the subject by saying, “If we take that zero tolerance approach and kick them off the team at the first offence, they’re just going to drop out of school.” Stephan, the former head of his Athletic Department at his school also indicated, “You wanted to use athletics as a carrot and not a stick, cause they’re there. If you take away the carrot then, especially for boys, the school became: ‘well what’s the point of sticking around if I can’t play?’”

Punishment by removal of sports will likely have entirely the opposite impact than the conceptual idea of taking away sport as a way of lighting a fire under the student to achieve higher in the classroom. Bryan identified that athletics may well be the only thing that has been keeping the student coming to school at all. For a period of time the mentality was, “You’re failing or you’re being disruptive in class so we’re removing you until you’ve shown us that you’ve improved. Or that you’re taking steps to improve… It was not successful. It removed kids from teams who might ultimately need those as a supportive environment.” Removing these SAs from the sport in hopes of improving performance in the classroom can quite often, in fact, create adverse effects. Bryan concluded, “Maybe the worst thing for them is to say ‘Okay, well, no more sport.’” There is an importance in trying to keep SAs in school and garner success by using all necessary means and athletics is a great opportunity for that.
4.2.5 Sport and Season

Bryan also brought to my attention the fact that the season of the sport itself will also have an impact on the academic achievement of its athletes. For instance, at Bryan’s school, the Rugby program runs during the final months of the school year. Bryan compares the timing of Football, Basketball, and Rugby and opines that, “Rugby tends to have the most academically inclined students. Especially based on when that is in the year. That takes place in May and June, which is a very important time of the year for evaluation.” This is a time of year when final assignments are due and students are gearing up for exams and are in an academic mindset, even despite their commitment to sports.

The season a sport occurs in could further see either a rise or a spike in academic success based on whether or not a school used the semester system, or whether or not a school has midterm exams. Again, timing is another major variable that affects the definitive answer of which sports teams are consistently the highest or lowest achieving academically across a school board or a province.

4.3 Feminization and Masculinity

Stephan made a particularly profound observation as to the current state of male high school athletics based on what he refers to as the “feminization” of the boards in the province of Ontario. By feminization, Stephan is referring to the fact that, school faculties are made up of mostly women. When Stephan had started his career in the 1980s, the ratio of female staff to male staff at his school was roughly 55:45. By the time Stephan had retired in 2014, he estimated that the ratio of female teachers to male teachers had shifted closer to 75:25. According to Wayne Martino, from my literature review, we know that the biggest problem that schools are
having, particularly in Ontario, is a lack of male teachers, which is a problem because “male role models do matter” (Martino, 2009, p. 267, quoting OCT, 2004, p. 9).

A lack of male teachers in public high schools across the province has a large impact on male SAs. Stephan indicated that, in general, more male teachers are needed in order to be able to coach male sports. There is a two-fold reason for this: The first is that females more often than not will not be the coaches for male sports teams. The second reason is that both male and female teachers alike enjoy coaching girls more so than boys because of the temperament and energy of females. As I cited in my literature review, Michael Kaufman explains “men enjoy social power, many forms of privilege and often unconsciously, a sense of entitlement by virtue of being male.” (Martino and Berrill, 2003, p. 101, Quoting Kaufman, p. 75). Males are more rowdy, and more aggressive than females and coaches prefer to work with the softer temperaments of female SAs because of that. The result is that there are not always male coaches available to coach male sports teams. In some instances, sports teams that have a long-standing history at schools cannot even be fielded because of a lack of coaches available. Stephan recounted an experience at his school when, for one season, they could not field a Football team because they did not have adequate coaching support from male teachers. None of the female teachers at the school had ever played football and were therefore not suitable as coaches. At the end of the day, it meant that the male students and perspective SAs were the ones who suffered because the program was not offered.

Stephan, who spent time coaching various teams that his daughter played on as she grew up, as well as having coached female high school SAs (in addition to the male teams he coached) has a lot of positive things to say about his experiences: “Girls are different. And they appreciated you.” Stephan notes, not only about his own experiences but also of the experiences
of his colleagues and contemporaries that: “in fact, a lot of males prefer coaching girls because they have better listening skills.” And this brings us back to the stigma as noted above about the mannerisms of boys. Thus, the fact that there are far more female teachers than male teachers in schools today, as well as the fact that male teachers prefer to coach female SAs is resulting in a “feminization” of school boards, at the expense of male SAs.

4.3.1 Mandate vs Volunteer

One of the most important things to consider when examining the influence of TCs on SAs is that, for a teacher to take on the role of coach, they must be willing to volunteer their own time to do so. This means that high school TCs will come from all academic faculties, not simply from the Athletic Department. Collectively, between my three participants, they have experience coaching male SAs in Football, Rugby, Basketball, Cross Country, Ultimate Frisbee, Badminton, Swimming, and Alpine Ski teams. What is more so interesting is the fact that two of my three participants, Bryan and Andrew, are not teachers solely from the Athletic Department. Bryan teaches both Physical Education as well as Mathematics, while Andrew teaches Humanities and Social Sciences. Thereby, in Toronto and across the province and country alike, high school sports rely heavily on TCs who volunteer their time in order for the SAs to have a chance to play sports competitively at all.

Stephan conveyed great concern for the state of high school sport in this country due to the necessity of volunteers needed to fill the role of coaches. Stephan identifies that “there aren’t enough people who view coaching as a fun job.” As well, there are too many individuals who are only taking on the coaching role because it will “look better on their resume.” At what point are the SAs benefitting just by virtue of getting to be part of a team without an involved and willing
coach? Is the TC more than likely going to be giving their classroom duties the bulk of their attention because their job is primarily as a teacher, not as a coach?

Andrew is a prime example of why it is important to have willing volunteers to take on the role of TC whenever the opportunity arises. Essentially, at Andrew’s school, no one was going to coach the Ultimate Frisbee team, so Andrew took the initiative to take on the role of TC. Andrew explains, “If I didn’t step up, there wouldn’t have been an Ultimate team. And, I actually, initially, started Cross Country for the same reason.” Instead of the program dying altogether, Andrew continues to coach new SAs year after year. Andrew admits that perhaps he is not the greatest coach in the world but he shows a willingness to learn as he goes. Andrew summates, “I think I’ve learned a lot along the way and sometimes they just need a person to be there to coach.” And so therein lies an example of a willing individual whose overall goal is to help students get the opportunity to become SAs however he can. And so much of high school sport across Canada depends on these individuals to take on these roles as TCs in order to facilitate opportunities for the SAs.

4.4 Communication: Successes and Pitfalls

Communication is vital throughout a school. It is of great importance for teachers to communicate with one another and for teachers to communicate with students. TCs also have the responsibility to communicate with other teachers in all other faculties as well as communicate with their SAs in order to facilitate the best possible experience for everyone. Each of my three participants provided me with examples of how TCs communicated with classroom teachers about the performance of the SAs in the classrooms.

Currently, mass emails to the entire staff are one such way that communication exists between teachers and teacher coaches. This method of communication makes use of technology
available to all members of the faculty at the school. All three of my participants informed me that the TCs at their schools provide teachers with a list of students who will be participating on their sports teams. The onus is then on the teachers to provide information on whether or not these students are academically viable enough to be able to be competing on the teams. Bryan also requires his SAs to have each of their teachers sign a form each day to confirm they have been attending their classes. This way teacher, TC and SA can track the SA’s progress in academics and identify if the SA is meeting the requirements of their class. As mentioned in my literature review, Stephen Elliot (2008) explains, “communicating expectations can play a key role in a positive relationship between the coach, players, and parents. Nasty confrontations can be avoided by adopting a step-by-step procedure for discussing issues with the coaching staff.” (p. 8) And this holds true for all parties involved: the teacher, the TC, and the SA.

According to the research I gathered from my participants, the onus falls on the TCs to follow up throughout the season to ensure that their SAs are following proper classroom and academic protocol. This is where my participants feel as though communication can be improved upon. Often, information can get lost in translation between students and teachers and thereby the TCs have to follow up with the teachers to better understand how their SAs are performing academically.

Stephan identifies that the main reason communication between teachers and TCs was, in fact, very strong at his school was because many of the TCs were teachers from outside of the Physical Education department. Communication was subsequently enhanced between teachers and TCs because of the camaraderie between teachers and TCs between different departments.

Andrew, too, understands the importance of communication and believes that at his school in particular communication can be improved upon. He suggests, “The communication
with other teachers is important. Making the students understand that they have to maintain a certain academic standard to stay on the team or to play the games.”

Andrew, contrary to Stephan’s hypothesis, suggests one reason as to why communication could be improved upon at his own school is because he is not one of the principal coaches of sports teams. That is to say: he does not work in the Athletic Department. Although, Andrew did also mention that, at his school, SAs, TCs and teachers will all approach the Athletic Department teachers and TCs if they are having major issues with other teachers and that there is a strong support system within the Athletic Department for their SAs. Andrew summates:

There hasn’t been good communication. I think it’s partly due to the fact that I’m not one of the principal coaches at the school. I think teachers, if they have a serious issue with the student, might approach the Phys Ed department first. And most of those teachers also coach two or three teams. It might be partly that I’m out of the main loop of communication. But, I think there could be better communication for sure.

4.4.1 Influence of the Teacher Coach

The TC is in a very unique position to work closely with a SA on the field and, in some cases, to have that same SA in their academic classrooms as well. The TC and SA can form a unique bond wherein the TC is able to connect with the SA because of the extra hours they spend together during practices and games. It gives the TC a chance to better understand the nature of the individual SAs they are working with and they can subsequently use this bond as a way to influence these SAs to succeed academically and athletically.

Andrew indicates that the SAs in his class whom he personally coaches do have a different attitude towards the classroom and do tend to put in more effort, not wanting to disappoint him as their teacher. By the same token, each of my participants verified that being in the role of TC allows for a greater bond between student and teacher because of the extra hours spent travelling on buses, practices, and time spent collectively outside of a traditional classroom
setting. Andrew further explains: “If you do extracurriculars, and especially sports, it’s such a unifying thing that it makes your work in the classroom a lot easier because you’ve got a good relationship with these students. They tend to be on their best behaviour.”

Bryan explains his perspective with respect to his role as a TC versus his role as a classroom teacher regarding the ability to connect with his students. Bryan indicates that, from his experiences, it is different being on the field or the court with the SAs. Bryan explained that he has had students with whom they felt could come to him for more personal matters because, as their TC, he had provided for them a supportive and approachable presence. Bryan explains, “I think it is a different experience being on the field or on the court together… I think coaching is one way that we create that environment. That supportive environment.” SAs come to their coaches to seek out advice as to how they can best work to appease their other teachers when having problems in the classroom.

The influence of the TC in the SAs life cannot be understated. The TC is in a very unique position wherein they have the power to influence a SA not only on the field when they are being coached but also to help that student achieve success academically. Again, that is why the student is at school in the first place.

4.5 Conclusion

Stephen Elliot (2008) states, “participation in high school athletics provides student-athletes and their coaches with some of the most satisfying, rewarding, and memorable experiences of their lives” (p. 10). My participant Stephan furthers this statement by saying, “Boys have rewarding experiences through athletics. And that’s what they’ll remember.” With the right communication and influence, students can come to a realization of this potential
educational achievement from their coaches and it can be translated into success for SAs both on
the field and in the classroom.

*The impact of Socio Economic Status on Student Athletes*

Students and SAs from lower SES backgrounds find themselves having less time for
extracurricular activities or for completing their academic requirements because of such external
factors as working a part-time job or needing to take care of siblings in lieu of their
parents/guardians. These extra commitments affect their chances to play on sports teams and as
well as affect their chances of graduating as they interfere with their ability to get classwork
done. Unfortunately, SES is equal to opportunity and the gap continues to widen for those
students who come from a lower SES background. Students of lower SES backgrounds are
suffering both in the classroom as well as on the field of play because they are physically unable
to meet the requirements of athletic commitments and school assignments.

*Academics vs Athletics*

It is nearly impossible to identify a particular sport that has the highest or the lowest
academic achievement amongst its athletes. This is because there are too many variables from
school to school such as: the demographics of the SAs on the sports teams themselves; whether
or not the school has a gifted program; whether or not the high school is a Collegiate, a
Secondary or a Technical school; how many players play on the team; as well as the cost
associated with the sport itself. And certain demographics of the student population are attracted
to certain sports, meanwhile certain demographics of students can only afford to play certain
sports and not others.
Feminization and Masculinity

There is an occurring phenomenon amongst schools in Ontario wherein the amount of females on the faculty far outweigh the number of males. This is resulting in less males available to coach male athletics. This is compounded by the fact that male teachers enjoy coaching female SAs because of their temperaments. The overall result is that male athletics is suffering by a lack of qualified, male coaching and male SAs are suffering from a lack of male TC influence.

Communication: Successes and Pitfalls

Overall, communication can be improved upon between TCs, SAs and teachers at schools across the board. The TC is, however, in such a unique position to create a very strong bond with their SAs and subsequently help to lead them towards success both on the field and in the classroom. It is up to the TC to ensure that their SAs are living up to the required standards in their classrooms as well as on the field of play and they must ensure that they are able to help their SAs as best they can to achieve success academically as well as athletically.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

This chapter reflects upon the creation of this research study, discusses the findings and draws connections to literature. I will explore recommendations based on the information I have collected throughout my research and state suggestions for growth in future research.

My overall research question is: *In what ways do Ontario secondary teacher coaches nurture male student athlete success?* Additionally, the sub-questions that I had sought to unpack include: In what ways can the socioeconomic status of a student athlete affect their abilities to achieve success in academics and athletics? What methods of communication exist between teachers and teacher coaches about student athletes in classrooms? Can this communication be improved upon?

5.1 Overview of Key Findings

After coding and analyzing the information from my three participant’s interviews, I was able to draw four major themes: The impact of Socio Economic Status on Student Athletes, Academics vs Athletics, Feminization and Masculinity, and Communication: successes and pitfalls. These themes each also correlate to my extensive review of Literature in Chapter 2.

5.1.1 The impact of Socio Economic Status on Student Athletes

After speaking with my participants, it is abundantly clear that SES can potentially affect SAs both in their abilities to perform on the field as well as in the classroom for a variety of reasons. Students and SAs from lower SES backgrounds are much more likely to have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, or for completing their academic requirements due to external commitments. These commitments may include working a part-
time job or needing to take the onus of caring for other members of their family. These findings were verified by Humbert et al (2006) who state, “One additional time barrier noted by only the youth living in lower SES areas was time spent on family obligations.” (p. 472). Humbert et al (2006) further suggest, “A second reason for the lack of time that was discussed by high- and low-SES participants was having an after-school job. Several students suggested that work-related responsibilities consumed the students’ leisure time and reduced their opportunities to participate in physical activity.” (p. 473). Time constraints are constant barriers for students of both high and low SES backgrounds; they affect success in academics as well as the ability to participate in athletics.

These extra commitments are affecting the chances for students of lower SES backgrounds to play on sports teams, as well as affecting their chances of graduating. These time commitments interfere with their classwork and assignments. Unfortunately, the gap within Ontario continues to widen for those students who come from a lower SES background; they are experiencing fewer opportunities to succeed as students but especially as athletes given cuts to funding. The implications of this finding are stated below.

5.1.2 Academics vs Athletics

I came to understand that it would be nearly impossible to identify a particular sport that, uniformly, across the province, has the highest or the lowest academic achievement amongst its athletes based on their academic averages. This is due to the fact that there are many variables from school to school that create discrepancies in academic standing from sport to sport. The types of variables that exist include: the demographics of the SAs on the sports teams themselves (ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds); whether or not the school has a gifted program and, further, whether or not the high school is a Collegiate, a Secondary or a Technical school; how
many players play on the team; as well as the cost associated with the sport itself. In addition to the aforementioned list of variables, I have come to realize that it would be nearly impossible to identify a uniform demographic of students associated with a specific sport across the entirety of public high schools in one province. A particular demographic of the student population (ethnicity or SES background) may exist in some districts within one city and not in other districts of another.

5.1.3 Feminization and Masculinity

A trend exists in Ontario schools wherein the number of female teachers far outweighs the number of male teachers. The result of this majority-female influence is that there are fewer male teachers available to coach male athletics. Additionally, because of female mannerisms and overall behaviour, both male and female teachers alike tend to prefer coaching female athletics over male athletics. The overall result is that male athletics is suffering by a lack of qualified male coaching and male SAs are suffering from a lack of male TC influence.

At the beginning of my second chapter I had established that I was going to organize my study with the lens of the theory of masculinity, as I have narrowed the focus of my study specifically to male TCs and male SAs. A new term that emerged throughout my research was that of "feminization", which refers to the fact that the vast majority of teachers in Ontario schools are females and it is this overriding demographic of teachers that is affecting male SAs. As stated in Chapter 2, Martino (2009) introduces several assumptions that exist about males in education in the Ontario school system such as the idea that “increased numbers of male teachers are needed to address ‘the boy problem’ because they more attuned to boys’ learning needs” (p. 264). These suspicions were confirmed by each of my participants because there are significantly fewer male teachers available to coach these male SAs.
The above ultimately led to the assumption that “increasing the number of male teachers will provide boys with ‘role models’ who are better equipped to address their alienation and disaffection with schooling” (Martino, 2009, p. 265). After having conducted my interviews I can confirm that this is indeed true because male SAs in Ontario are suffering from a lack of male teachers, particularly a lack of male TCs to aide them through their high school journeys in both athletics and academics. The implications of having fewer male teachers is that there are fewer males available to take on the roles of being TCs for male athletics and, in turn, fewer male athletic teams are being offered. The result of this is fewer and less-experienced male TCs who are taking the onus just to ensure that a team can be put together at all. Male SAs need male TCs as role models or mentor types who aid SAs in achieving their best both in the classroom as well as on the field.

5.1.4 Pitfalls in Current Methods of Communication

Based on the research from my literature review and my interviews it is clear that, even as strong as communication may be within a given school, it can always be improved upon between TCs, SAs and teachers. The TC is in such a unique position to create a bond with their SAs and subsequently to help lead them toward success both on the field and in the classroom. At the end of the day, the onus of initiating stronger communication amongst all parties to ensure that the SAs are living up to the required standards in the classroom and on the field, falls upon the TC. Whether it is in person, the administration playing a more active role, or making use of technological communication, communication in a given school can likely be improved upon so that all members faculty and the entire SA body are able to better coordinate and accommodate one another.
Communication encompasses the importance behind the necessity for teachers, TCs and SAs to maintain running dialogues in order for the SA to be successful in academic classrooms as well as on the field of play. Elliot (2008) stated, “it is essential for coaches to clearly state their expectations for attendance at practices and games” (p. 8). Thereby, the first onus falls upon the TC to explain to their perspective SAs their expectations of them. Elliot (2008) goes on to further suggest, “communicating expectations can play a key role in a positive relationship between the coach, players, and parents. Nasty confrontations can be avoided by adopting a step-by-step procedure for discussing issues with the coaching staff.” (p. 8). My participants each mentioned that they had their own requirements of their SAs and they each had means of following up accordingly with the SA, with other teachers, as well as with other TCs to ensure that they had spoken to members affected by the academic performance of the SA.

The TC is in a very influential position both in the classroom and on the field of play for these SAs (Ryan, 2008). One of the biggest pitfalls of communication was a lack of informing students and SAs alike about potential scholarship opportunities. Because of their ability to inform SAs about potential scholarship opportunities, TCs are influential to those they coach (James, 2003). Better and more thorough communication will hopefully lead to better academic success, which can breed higher graduation rates and better opportunities for all students after high school.

5.2 Implications

The most important implication of this research that I can express to the teachers, TCs, and administration is the idea that high school athletics can best influence student academic behaviour by being used as a carrot and not as a stick, using involvement in athletics as
motivation and not using removal from athletics as means of punishment. Athletics, and all extracurriculars for that matter, can often be a vehicle that motivates students to attend school. A student may not be living up to the necessary expectations of their classroom requirements, but if the student’s teachers or the administration plan on punishing the student by taking away athletics as a consequence then this, in turn, will likely have the reverse effect than the teachers or administration might be hoping to achieve. In many cases, it is the opportunity to play sports that keeps some of these SAs coming to school altogether. Although playing sports at school is secondary to the academic classroom, taking away the privilege of playing might result in the student’s absence and willingness to fail from an academic standpoint. Thereby, the team loses by the removal of one of its members and the SA loses out by not being able to participate in athletics, by not coming to school, and by not completing their high school education. Given the fact that, in Ontario, the age that a student can decide to drop out is 16, sports can be one avenue that can lead students to staying in school longer and ultimately graduating. It is important that administrations and members of the teaching faculty do the best they can to keep students coming to school and motivated any way they can.

Strong communication between students, teachers and administration is necessary in bridging the gap created by SES. It is very likely that public school classrooms are compiled of students of varying SES backgrounds. It is important to understand which of your students struggle as a direct result of their SES. Missed or incomplete assignments might be a faction of a student having other commitments to family or to work. Or, it is possible that a student from a lower SES background who struggles in the classroom does not have a guardian available to help them identify the fact that they have a learning disability. It will be important for me to acknowledge and identify when SES is a problem for students so that I can facilitate their
academic success as best I can; perhaps by modifying assignments or due dates, or whatever they may need to help them achieve to the best of their abilities given their necessary commitments outside of school.

As a researcher I have come to appreciate and understand the scrutiny that such a research study has and the amount of work and dedication that goes into it. I understand that there are limitations in doing qualitative research and that it is the type of study that one will come out likely asking more questions than they have answered. And that is okay. It is important for one research topic to lead to a variety of others; it means that I have only scratched the surface on a particular topic.

5.3 Recommendations

This research process has led me to ultimately come to several conclusions and recommendations for teachers, as well as for administration within schools. There appears to be a gap in communication within schools from the administration and guidance department (and the teaching faculty as a whole) to high school students about potential scholarship opportunities. Unfortunately, my participants indicated that many of the scholarships and bursaries offered go unapplied for because the vast majority of the student population are simply unaware of all the opportunities offered. Such being the case, I would recommend that there be improvement on communicating potentially attainable awards and scholarship opportunities to all high school students. Administration and faculty members can begin by letting the students know, as they enter school in grade nine, what potential opportunities await them as they approach graduation and continue to enforce it year after year. The guidance department needs to be active in informing staff and students about these perspective opportunities and put a stronger focus on influencing the school’s teaching staff to remind students about these potential opportunities. A
lot of money is available each year and a lot of money goes by the wayside, which is terribly unfortunate given that the costs for attending post-secondary institutions continues to rise.

Additionally, I would recommend that schools across the country improve upon internal communication amongst the members of their faculty. Effectively, administration should encourage teachers to better collaborate with one another and work together, especially between departments. Whether or not this is increasing the number of faculty meetings or meetings across departments, or whether this involves an increase in letters, emails and phone calls across departments, it is vital that teachers speak with one another about the curriculum and certainly that they speak to one another about other students. There are too many instances where teachers and TCs, or other staff members in charge of committees and extracurricular organizations, find themselves in a disconnect, unable to properly communicate concerns about students to their fellow teachers. And it is the students who ultimately end up standing to suffer the most from this lack of communication between faculty members. We need to ensure that we utilize the technology at hand effectively. It is entirely feasible for staff to communicate with all many of the other staff members their given school about their own classrooms and about their students.

5.3.1 Further Study

Ultimately, I know that I have only scratched the surface with respect to the topic of the influence of high school TCs on their SAs. Although I was unable to uncover a particular sport that consistently contained the least academically successful SAs, I do still believe there would be benefit to further investigate the types of sports that consistently have the lowest academic achievers from a school-by-school perspective. This way schools could adjust the requirements of the SAs in order for them to play on their respective teams. The administration at a particular
school would then be able to clearly outline the academic expectations of the SAs for each given sport in accordance with the types of demographics of SAs known to participate on such teams (either raising minimum requirements or lowering them in order to best put these SAs in a position to succeed as both students and athletes). This would also help to accommodate the likes of varying SES backgrounds, given the varying demographics of students who are known to participate in the various sports teams.

5.4 Conclusion

The greatest implication that I found after having performed this study is the fact that athletics and extracurriculars are best utilized as incentive to SAs, not something to be taken away from the SA as a punishment. Even if a student is not performing up to the standards that they should be, it is still likely more beneficial to not only allow but encourage this student to continue to come to school and participate in the extracurricular activities they are involved in. If the school takes away these opportunities from the students in question, it has been known to have the reverse effect than desired wherein this motivate students to leave school entirely as opposed to motivate them to perform better.

I would recommend to all schools that they would be better served to try to continue to always improve upon communication; amongst students, teachers, and the administration. For a school to be most successful, the students and the staff alike will be working towards the ultimate benefit and success of the student body.

This study has been incredibly engaging and I have uncovered many valuable ideas and insights while exploring the topic of how male high school teacher coaches influence and nurture male student athletes. My hope is that the future will remain bright for Canadian student athletes
who will continue to have influential teacher coaches to help guide them towards fruitful opportunities both during their time in high school and beyond.
Work Cited


Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been teaching? Coaching?
2. Have you ever coached athletics at any other level?
3. Is there specific training or a requisite background in order for a teacher to take on the role of coach at the varsity level?
4. At your school, is there a permission form or a handbook that students must sign or have signed by a guardian in order to play on an athletic team? If so, what does the permission form entail?
5. Are there specific requirements that you personally implement for your players to maintain both academically as well as on the field/court? What would be some examples of these requirements?
6. Based on your experiences, can you provide some examples of non-school related extracurricular activities/responsibilities that student athletes may have?
7. Have you found that the Student Athletes at your school are well informed about academic scholarships to post-secondary institutions? Do you think Student Athletes would benefit from being informed of this information?
8. Have you found Student Athletes tend to identify themselves primarily as students or primarily as athletes? Do you feel that either attitude is more appropriate than the other?
9. Is it common for teachers and Teacher Coaches to communicate with one another about the performance of student athletes in the classroom? Do you feel this communication could be improved upon as it is?
10. Through your own experience as a high school Teacher Coach, which of the male sports teams do you believe possess the most academically successful students? The least?
11. In what ways could SES affect a student’s engagement in a sport or their engagement in the classroom?
12. Can you please explain the scouting process?
13. Have you experienced student athletes in your school receiving admission to American Universities to play their sport of expertise at the collegiate level? Canadian post-secondary institutions?
14. Have any players on the team(s) you have coached felt comfortable confiding in you about problems they might be having with teammates, with teachers, or family related problems? What do these experiences tell you about your position of influence in their lives?
15. How specifically can teacher coaches better aide their student athletes towards graduating and attending post-secondary institutions?
Appendix B: Consent Form

The Influence of Teacher-Coaches on Canadian Secondary School Student Athletes

Date: ___________________

Dear ___________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying the impact of the Secondary School Teacher Coach on Student Athletes both academically and athletically for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I believe that your knowledge and experience will provide relevant insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor and research supervisor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Arlo Kempf. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 - 60 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

Background of Study

Student Athlete (SA) success both in-class and on the field depends largely on two particular individuals: the SA themselves and their Teacher Coach (TC). The TC is in a position to create a unique bond with their SAs, presuming that their aim is to nurture athletic prowess while also promoting the importance of the students' academic performance. TCs within each school have a duty to the classroom as the teacher as well as a duty to the sport as the coach and should be advocating for the importance of both.

This study will explore the ways in which TCs in Canadian Secondary Schools motivate their SAs as students as well as athletes. Given the competitive nature of sport and the competitive requirements of attending post-secondary institutions, my goal is to identify how these TCs are helping their SAs to achieve the highest levels in both athletics and academics. The goal of this research study is to gain insight as to how SAs are aided by their TCs towards graduating from high school.
A large amount of research has been conducted specifically examining Canadian Secondary School Student Athletes who receive athletic scholarships to universities outside of Canada. There exists a noticeable gap, however, in the research aimed towards understanding the plight of the mid to high-level Canadian SA. This MTRP research will offer a qualitative description of how TCs are aiding their SAs in achieving success both on the field of play and in the classroom in order to graduate from high school and put themselves in a position to attend a post-secondary institution should they choose to do so.

**Confidentiality**

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

**Right to Withdraw**

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you may do so without negative consequences at any time up to the submission of the final paper in early April 2016. There is minimal risk associated with this research project. You will benefit from participating in this study to the extent that your perspective will further develop knowledge of this field of study.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Saltsman
416-627-7653
eric.saltsman@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor/Research Supervisor:

Dr. Arlo Kempf
Email: arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Mr. Eric Saltsman and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name (printed): ________________________________

Date: __________________________