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**Team Culture and Leadership:
A Case Study of the Northern Mystics Netball Team**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Sport and Exercise

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Meryl, my father Colin and my sister Kara for their many years of support and the on-going encouragement to fulfil my academic ambitions. It is also dedicated to my younger brother Josh who is the strongest, most courageous person I know.

Abstract

A winning culture has been defined as “one in which everyone on the team is committed to creating a performance-focused environment, which in turn, provides the opportunity for the team and every individual on that team to win” (Goldsmith, 2007, p. 42). This case study examines the team culture and leadership of the Northern Mystics netball franchise team throughout the ANZ Championship competition between 2008 and 2014. It focuses on what past and present factors of the team culture and leadership have influenced the team’s perceived lack of success (41wins, 45%: 50 losses), and also what factors are important in creating a successful winning team for future seasons to come. Primary data was obtained through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both past and present Northern Mystics coaches ($N = 4$) and senior players ($N = 3$). The rich description provided by these interviews, combined with the lack of scholarly studies completed in this specific area of study, increased the credibility of this qualitative research. A case study analysis was chosen as it allows for the integration and contrasting of different perspectives to provide a detailed understanding of a context (Yin, 2009). Findings indicate that there is a need to re- establish, reinforce and commit to team values each season, and adopt a transformational and collective leadership approach involving informal and formal leaders to align cultural values. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are other aspects that affect team performance, it is hoped that these findings could potentially provide a catalyst and be of significant use to the Northern Mystics netball franchise, along with other high-performing sports team environments which will support the development and sustaining of a winning team culture.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Nature of the Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate the key factors distinctive to team culture and how these factors can positively influence the winning ethos of the Northern Mystics ANZ Netball team. Their best performance spanning the seven year history of the ANZ Championship was making it to the grand final in 2012, losing the match and finishing in 2nd place. However, in 2013, a number of articles by journalist Dana Johannson raised concerns about the team culture and leadership in the Mystics; for example *'Limp Mystics in total disarray'* (February 26, 2013), *'Mystics riddled by issues'* (April 20, 2013) and *'Blame for Mystics' fall wholly their own'* (June 22, 2013). At the conclusion of the 2014 season they finished 7th out of 10 teams and had a 45% success rate, having won only 41 from the 91 matches played throughout the duration of the competition (2008-2014). Of the five New Zealand based ANZ netball franchise teams, the Northern Mystics are the third best performing team in the ANZ Championship since its inception in 2008. The link between sport team performance and team culture is recognised as an important one in terms of team success (Carron, Bray & Eys, 2002; Johnson, Martin & Watson, 2014; Williams & Hacker, 1982). This case study examines the team culture and leadership of the Northern Mystics throughout the duration of the ANZ Championship competition between 2008 and 2014. The commissioned research for this thesis was undertaken in 2014 with a subsequent report with recommendations presented to the Northern Mystics management team (McCarthy & Martin, 2014), which aimed to provide insight into how the team could be more successful in the future.

1.0.1 Team Culture

The theoretical framework this research is founded on is Schein's (2010) three level theoretical model of organizational culture using artefacts (rites, rituals & symbols), values and beliefs, and core assumptions (see Figure 1). Edgar Schein defines organizational culture as, "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (2010, p. 18). In his book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Schein (2010) states that artefacts situated at the surface of a culture, which are visible or tangible but may not be decipherable, are realisations of core values that are actually manifestations of deeper assumptions. Schein (2004) emphasises that "perhaps the most intriguing aspect of culture as a concept is that it points us to phenomena that are below the surface, that are powerful in their impact but invisible and to a considerable degree unconscious" (p. 8). He stresses that there are both visible and invisible stages of culture made up of 'superficial' aspects such as patterns of behaviour and visible symbols and ceremonies, and more hidden and underlying values, assumptions and beliefs.

This model is therefore appropriate for exploring team culture in a sporting context, as it can be used to gain a deeper insight into the more visible aspects of a team such as their rites and rituals, symbols and ceremonies, whilst also gaining an understanding of the 'deeper' aspects of the team's culture such as their beliefs and values. These are important factors that must be taken into account when reviewing the current culture of the Northern Mystics team.

Previous research conducted by Williams and Hacker (1982), on causal relationships among cohesion, satisfaction, and performance of the women’s intercollegiate field hockey teams in the Mid-Atlantic District in the United States, found that a team with an inclusive, positive, ‘winning’ culture contributes significantly towards enhancing team cohesion and personal satisfaction. However, currently the Northern Mystics do not have this ‘winning’ culture therefore, the viewpoints of the coaches, captains and senior players (both past and present), have been investigated to explore what has contributed towards the perceived lack of an effective, ‘winning’ team culture for the Northern Mystics, impacting on their level of success.

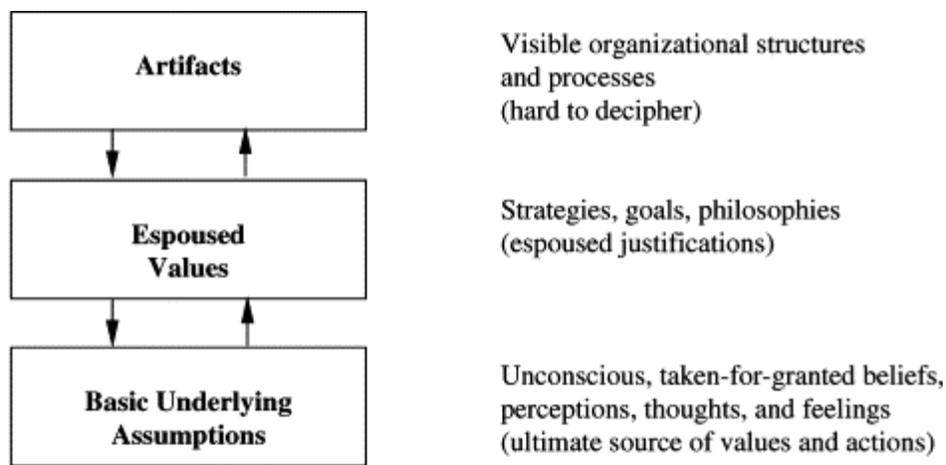


Figure 1 Schein’s three level model of team culture (2010)

1.0.2 Leadership

Another aspect that is vital towards the creation, formation, and maintaining of a successful winning culture within a sports team is that of leadership.

Leadership is providing direction and opportunity in all situations and ensuring success for average people to achieve greatness because of your influence and presence (Sweetenham & Parker, 2009, p. 36).

Schein states that “once cultures exist they determine the criteria for leadership... and thus determine who will or will not be leader” (Schein, 2010, p. 22). He also explains that leadership is fundamental towards developing a successful organisational culture and that “culture is created, embedded, evolved, and manipulated by leaders” (Schein, 2010, p. 3). Whilst cultures create leadership, leadership also creates culture. Zaccaro, Rittman and Marks (2001) suggest that the success of the team leaders to define their team’s goals and direction and then organising their team in a way to successfully achieve these, contributes significantly towards enhancing team culture and team effectiveness. They even argue that effective leadership processes are perhaps the most critical factor contributing towards the success of teams.

The perceptions of past and present coaches, captains, and senior players aim to provide an in-depth understanding into the leadership structures within the Northern Mystics and the impact this has on their team culture.

1.1 History of the ANZ Championship

Netball has the highest participation rates than any other women's sport in New Zealand. There are 143,000 players registered with Netball New Zealand with organised competition ranging from inter-school and local club netball, to premier domestic competitions such as the ANZ Championship (ANZ Championship, 2014). The ANZ Championship is the premier netball league in Australia and New Zealand and replaced the National Bank Cup in New Zealand and the Commonwealth Bank Trophy in Australia, both of which played their final season in 2007. It is challenged by ten teams, five from Australia and five from New Zealand. The Australian teams represent the five largest Australian states; the Adelaide Thunderbirds, Melbourne Vixens, New South Wales Swifts, Queensland Firebirds, and the West Coast Fever. While in New Zealand there are five netball teams representing the five "zones" across the country, the Northern Mystics, Waikato/Bay of Plenty Magic, Central Pulse, Canterbury Tactix, and the Southern Steel.

The ANZ Championship competition is held annually between April and July, encompassing 69 matches played over 17 weeks. Each season (from 2008-2014) began with a 14 week round-robin stage, followed by a 3 week finals series. In the initial round-robin each team plays the other 4 teams from their own country twice and plays the teams from the other country just once. Teams accumulate points throughout the round-robin stage, 2 points for a win, 0 points for a loss or draw. Teams are then ranked according to the number of points accumulated and the four highest ranked teams at the end of the round-robin phase then progress through to the finals series.

The first ranked team hosts the second-ranked team in the major semi-final, with the third-ranked team hosting the fourth in the minor semi-final, the loser of which is eliminated. The loser of the major semi-final hosts the winner of the minor semi-final for a place in the preliminary final. The grand finale is contested between the winner of the major semi-final and the winner of the preliminary final, with the former team as hosts (ANZ Championship, 2014).

1.1.1 2015 Season

For the 2015 season a new competition format was introduced. It continued to be played over the course of 17 weeks with the initial round-robin format staying the same, but was followed by 'Conference Finals' and then the ANZ Championship Final Series. The traditional league ladder was replaced by standalone Australian and New Zealand Conference Ladders, where teams were ranked during the season within individual conferences based on the accumulation of points. At the end of the initial round-robin, the top three teams from both conferences progressed through to the Championship Final Series playoffs, where the second and third ranked teams played an elimination final with the winner going on to play the top qualifier to decide the winner of each conference. The top four teams then advanced to the semi-finals, followed by the top two teams playing in the grand finale, hosted by the team who has scored the most points during the season (ANZ Championship, 2014). A further change to the competition format included a Challenge Trophy in a similar manner to rugby's Ranfurly Shield, where the initial holder was determined by ballot for 2015 and that team defended the trophy in each home game (ANZ Championship, 2014).

1.2 The Northern Mystics

The Northern Mystics, one of the five New Zealand franchises, was formed in 2008 representing the northern regions of Northland and Auckland. It was a forced amalgamation of rivals, the Northern Force and the Auckland Diamonds from the former National Bank Cup. Throughout the history of the ANZ championship (2008-2014) the Northern Mystics are New Zealand's third best performing team with a 45 percent win record behind the Waikato/BOP Magic (72% success rate), Southern Steel (46%), and in front of Central Pulse (27%), and Canterbury Tactix (14%). In comparison to the Australian teams, the Northern Mystics would be placed second to last amongst their team rankings with the most successful Australian team being the Melbourne Vixens (69%), the Adelaide Thunderbirds and Queensland Firebirds (66%), New South Wales Swifts (60%), and lastly the West Coast Fever (28%), (ANZ Championship, 2014).

The Northern Mystics finished each of the 2008-2014 seasons in the following consecutive placings; 7th, 8th, 6th, 4th, 2nd, 10th, 7th. In 2012 after five years in the competition, the team gained their best result finishing in 2nd place on the points table (See the Northern Mystics Fixtures & Results, Appendix A). Since then, the progress of the team has steadily decreased. The end of the 2014 season saw the team finish 7th from 10 on the competition ladder and raises the question as to why a New Zealand franchise team who has had a minimum of one to a maximum of seven current Silver Ferns (2013) in the team at any one time, is well under-performing within the ANZ competition against not only their Australian counterparts, but also the remaining four New Zealand franchise teams as well?

1.3 Motivation for the Research

I have countless childhood memories of watching televised games of the Silver Ferns playing against the Australian Diamonds, victory often impossible to predict until the final seconds. In the 1990s I was an avid supporter of the Wellington Shakers, our regional team competing in the National Bank Cup competition, the pre-eminent national netball competition in New Zealand. This was replaced by the ANZ Championship competition in 2008 and the re-named Central Pulse now encompasses the entire lower North Island region.

My netball playing career began as a young primary school student in Upper Hutt and then Masterton. I progressed throughout the Wairarapa Representative teams and was named in the Wellington Regional Talent Identification Squad in my final year of high school. The move to Palmerston North for University allowed me to play for the Manawatu U19 Representative team and I have been a member of the Feilding A1 Club netball team playing in the Manawatu Premier 1 competition for the last 10 years. As a player, I was the recipient of the 'traditional' autocratic style of coaching (Pratt & Eitzen, 1989), being told what to do, how to perform it, and when to do it in a game. We relied on the coach to provide the instructions and the game plan and when we deviated from this game plan we would be thrown into a state of panic and chaos. Teams in which I have been a member with this more autocratic style of coaching often experienced a high degree of negativity and have largely been unsuccessful.

As my playing career reached its peak, I turned my attention to coaching. I began as a high school netball coach and I am currently the head coach for Palmerston North Girls High School Senior A1 competing in both the top Manawatu Secondary School and Premier One grade. I am the lead coach in the Manawatu for the 'Pathway to Pulse' high performance programme, the head coach for the 2015 Manawatu U17 representative team and the assistant coach of the Central Zone U23 netball team.

I have background career as a Physical Education and Health teacher, was the Netball Development Officer at Netball Manawatu responsible for managing all aspects of junior netball and am currently a Senior Tutor in Physical Education at Massey University. In both my teaching and coaching career, I am a passionate believer of the importance of providing an empowering approach towards coaching my players and teaching my students. As a netball coach, I view leadership as empowering my players to be able to make decisions on their own. I believe all players should be encouraged to learn independently and to *want* to seek improvement and development in their own performances. On the netball court, I believe that players need to be able to think for themselves, make split-second decisions and to act upon these decisions with confidence and self-assurance, and taking responsibility for their own actions. My own experience in netball and teaching has contributed towards the development of my own coaching philosophy and style. My aim is to provide my players with an enriched, positive learning experience, for them to take ownership for their learning, to develop the ability to make informed decisions and to be an integral part of the vision, values and culture of the team.

I aim to teach my players to take responsibility for their performance and the decisions they make and to learn and grow from these experiences. My love and passion for netball and for coaching has been the foundation for undertaking this research. My interest in organisational and team culture and how this can have a positive or negative impact on a team's performance throughout the duration of a season, has also motivated me to complete this research.

1.4 Rationale: Why the topic needs investigating

With an overall success rate of just 45%, the Northern Mystics have consistently struggled to perform to a high standard as a team and meet the expectations and goals set by the franchise Board members, management team, coach and players. The organisational culture literature refers to the role of leaders, as 'creating' and 'maintaining' specific types of culture (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). Schein (2010) claims that leadership plays a significant role in the establishment of a positive team culture, combined with firm and specific set of values, beliefs, and rituals, a team with these elements will perform considerably better than a team where these elements don't exist. Fiedler (1996) also argues that the effectiveness of a leader is a major cause of the success or failure of a group, organisation, or even a country. However, Smircich (1983) recognises that culture can be seen as something which can be manipulated. Hence the nature, direction and impact of the manipulation on the team are reliant upon the skills and abilities of the leaders. Grint (2010) suggests that leadership has become more distributed, where leadership can be seen as a process, product or outcome (Grint, 2005).

Therefore, an investigation to understand the Mystics culture and leadership has been undertaken, involving the perspectives of past and present coaches, captains and senior players from the Northern Mystics Netball team.

1.4.1 Research Question

The central question for this research is:

- *What factors of the Northern Mystics netball team culture and leadership are important for creating a successful, winning team?*

1.4.2 Aims

- To provide insights into aspects of leadership in creating a positive team culture.
- For the research to provide a catalyst and be of significant use to the Northern Mystics netball franchise and potentially other high-performing sports team environments which will support the development and sustainability of a winning team culture.

1.4.3 Objectives

This case study will first examine past and present factors of the Northern Mystics team culture and leadership, which has been developed, nurtured and sustained since its inception in 2008 and has influenced the team's success and failures. It then focuses on what factors of the Northern Mystics team culture and leadership are important for its future success. A shared hypothesis is that if an organisation has an inclusive, positive culture because of a well-established and effective set of specific values, beliefs and behaviours that have been set by the leaders and team members, then the team will perform significantly better than an organisation that doesn't (Denison, 1984).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Team Culture

Taylor (2013) claims that team sports, such as netball, require time and energy to be devoted to building a culture that will lead to success. In a sporting context, Lussier and Kimball (2009) highlight how sport team culture adds a special element to the idea of organizational culture, because teams form a special bond that is often very strong. With this bond comes particular ways of behaving, a special determination to win and ways of dealing with both winning and losing). According to Taylor (2013), team culture is the expression of a team's values, attitudes and beliefs about sports and competition and decides whether the team's focus is on fun, mastery, winning, or whether it promotes individual achievement or team success Lussier and Kimball (2009) concur that all of these qualities of a sport team culture have real implications for how the team functions, how its members get along and, crucially, how the athletes on the team perform and the results they achieve.

In terms of an organisational culture setting, in his book *Organisational Culture and Leadership* (2010), Edgar Schein defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 12). He also describes organisational culture as being something an organization is, rather than something an organization has, whilst distinguishing it into three separate levels.

The first level contains artefacts which are visible but sometimes not comprehensible; the second level involves the values of the organisation, and the third level is the entrenched basic expectations and traditions that are taken for granted by the members of the organization (Schein, 2010). The culture of some sports teams may be a result of their location, the ethnicity of the players, the climate, or the city in which they live and train. Every sports team is different and the culture within each team is unique and special. The difference between an ordinary sports team and a *winning* sports team however is considered by some, such as Goldsmith (2007), to be the demand of the development of a winning team culture.

Schein's organisational culture model exposes culture from the viewpoint of the observer and emphasises that objects situated at the surface of a culture, which are visible or physical but are sometimes ambiguous, are realisations of fundamental values that in turn are signs of deeper assumptions. Hamdan, Belkhouce and Smith (2008) refer to culture as being compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a section that is visible above the waterline and a larger section that is invisible below, the concept of culture has some aspects that are visible and others that can only be assumed, and are invisible. The surface elements of team culture could include recognition, the way members dress, how each person clearly interacts with each other and organisational outsiders, team slogans, mission statements, rituals and values, and collective behaviour (Schein, 2010).

Given the considerable lack of overall success experienced by the Northern Mystics during the period of the ANZ championship, there would appear to be a significant need to investigate

how the team culture can change so that winning becomes more of a habit than it is currently. In connection with using Schein's model of organisational culture, this may reveal what artefacts, rituals and behaviours are conducive to a positive and effective team culture that can be continued and enhanced in the future and what aspects of the culture may need to change.

A positive team culture inspires a higher degree of inclusion from the individuals involved. They develop a sense of ownership over their performance within the organisation and a sense of pride in what they have contributed. A culture with a positive, inclusive environment also promotes the long-term development of responsible, mature work habits on the part of each individual member and over time, members begin to personally identify with the goals of the organisation. Organisations with an inclusive, positive culture generally perform significantly better compared to those without such a culture (Dennison, 1984). Goldsmith (2007) claims that developing a winning team culture means that the primary goal of the team, the players and the management and coaching staff, is the creation of an environment for all involved that is founded on excellence. It requires everyone working together to guarantee that winning is realistic and maintainable. Creating a successful, winning team culture requires a collective desire to work hard and to build a positive environment where everyone involved has copious opportunities to show they can perform consistently at their best (Goldsmith, 2007).

Heeran and Requa (2001) suggest that when a group of athletes are truly united together as a team, players will then perform unselfishly during games. In netball, players work together collectively as a team to help make another player "shine", for example, by helping to create an

important intercept. This can also lead to players accentuating the emotionally supportive and sympathetic role that they play for one other. It is critical to forgive players in the team who may be down because they made a mistake in the game and to focus on encouraging them instead. Mallet and Cote (2006) claim that the culture of any team is also a significant part of the pre-game preparation as usually an individual player tends to not get ready for a match by themselves, but rather together with their teammates. For many elite sports players, in their imagination, they often seem to make the connection between winning and uniting with teammates.

Schein (2010) outlines six essential steps to allow for a strong establishment of team culture.

1. Team leaders, with formal and informal influence, must embrace values of the culture.
2. The values must be continually reinforced through formal and informal means. Johnson, Martin, Palmer, Watson and Ramsey's (2013a) study of the success rate of the All Blacks revealed the alignment of informal and formal leadership to be even more powerful in reinforcing and emphasising strong team culture.
3. The leader's reaction to crisis, using this as a vital opportunity to reinforce the team values and demonstrate them as unwavering.
4. Emphasis the team leaders place on situations to reinforce the values.
5. Firm selection of members that will embrace the team's desired values.
6. And finally, the team values are reinforced through rewarding appropriate expression of the desired culture.

Summarising Schein's findings, it can be inferred that the development of a winning team culture is established upon collective values, expectations and rules that the members within the team learn, uphold and then are passed on to new team members. This requires a process of learning by the teammates where by obtaining new or adapting previously existing knowledge, skills, behaviours and values, through combining the various types of information. This process of learning is vital in the establishment and preservation of a winning organisational culture. However, if a team is 'learning' how to lose, it is important to stop this cycle and change this culture and therefore change the team.

Organisational change usually occurs in the context of failure of some sort, such as if a sports team are on a losing streak. A typical theme is, first, there are losses; then there is a plan of change; and subsequently there is implementation, which leads to a change in results (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Once the degree of dysfunction within the culture is identified, the leaders must then make it clear to the rest of the team. According to Schein (2004), only when the members believe that the team culture is causing its problems will they become open to cultural change. Schein (2004) calls this the 'unfreezing' process and suggests it is best accomplished by presenting enough 'damaging' evidence to create anxiety or guilt within team members. Once the dysfunctional culture is out in the open, Schroeder (2010) suggests that the leaders can then begin the restructuring process by establishing a new vision for the team, to use as a symbolic statement for the future approach that is vital for the establishment of a positive team culture

Schroeder (2010) conducted a study using the organisational culture perspective, to investigate the degree to which team improvement included a change in team culture. The study also aimed to identify the changes in leadership behaviours used by coaches to change their team culture. Ten National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division 1 head coaches were interviewed, each of them having steered a previously unsuccessful team to the championship levels within a 5 year period. The results of the study showed that the turnaround and increase in levels of success was a result of a change within their team culture. The coaches started this cultural change by creating core sets of values specific to their team and to then instil these values, the coaches taught them with specific tactics. They recruited athletes who would embrace these values and also rewarded those who demonstrated the team values on a regular basis. These findings resonate with the work of Warner (2011), who has stated that for any sports team, both the winning culture and the learning processes required in order to achieve it need to be adhered to and accepted by all team members and management for it to be successful.

Developing team cohesion

Carron et al. (2002) hypothesise that cohesion is linked with enhanced team success in sports. Success is about everyone in the team following the same direction in regard to the team goals, while unsuccessful teams do not have the same collective focus or direction. The more difficulty and challenges that a team faces, such as the challenge of losing, possible conflict amongst members, losing players through injury, the more equipped and able the team becomes to strive to win and experience success. Teams become more determined and more cohesive as

long as they never let go of the direction they are heading in, in order to achieve their goals. Mullen and Cooper (1994) carried out a meta-analysis of 49 studies from several sub-areas in psychology (industrial, sport, military, social) and reported that the relationship between cohesion and team success is positive and that sports teams exhibit the strongest relationship between team cohesion and success.

Failures that teams encounter during the season and along their pathway to success and winning, should be used as a positive. Sweetenham and Parker (2009) suggest that if teams can confront those failures and with hope of learning from them also, they will be more likely to achieve their goals. A related concept of mental toughness involving the ability to withstand pain, to persist in the face of challenges, to accept responsibility of failures, dealing with injuries, poor refereeing performance mistakes, getting substituted and being dropped from teams, are considered to be challenging experiences and play a significant role in sport. For example, Parry, Nesti, Robinson and Watson (2007) claim that by concentrating on these events and the athletes' experiences with these, makes it possible to understand information about failure, loss, pain and hardship and can help the mental development of the person undergoing these experiences and that there are links between mental excellence and successful performances. Sweetenham and Parker (2009) also suggest that cohesion is also developed through consistency, which is also a key factor that has been identified in a winning team. Successful teams are built over time and coaches will struggle to repeat winning performances if there is a lack of consistency in coaching and also in terms of consistency with team building activities and planning of long-term strategies for the team. However, they have found that due

to the nature of many teams, it is common for teams to change their player formation from season to season particularly at professional level.

2.0.1 Rites, Rituals & Symbols

Rites and rituals help to maintain the traditions and morals of the team and play a significant role in the development of a team culture. Rites and rituals are often symbolic and are expressions of a team's traditions, values and core assumptions. They can become entrenched in one's soul through constant repetition (Johnson et al., 2013b). Inkson and Kolb (1995) define a rite as "an activity which participants must endure or complete in order to progress within a culture" and a ritual as "a set of symbolic actions performed mainly for symbolic value and are to be done on specific occasions, or at the direction of individuals or groups".

In a rugby environment rituals can be expressed through pre-match activities such as the *haka*; a symbol to express who they are and the deep culture of the team. Within the All Blacks, another example of a ritual is the 'back of the bus' leadership activity where the senior team members outline the values, expectations and behaviour expected from the new, junior members. The black jersey with silver fern is an example of a symbol that has historic and important cultural meaning for the All Blacks (Johnson et al, 2013b).

Heeran and Requa's (2001) research on the consequences of having a high emphasis placed on winning, found that whenever the girls' field hockey team emerged victorious, they celebrated their success together. This joint celebration was one of the rituals that demonstrated the unity

of the team and was a ritual that also confirmed the value of constantly striving for excellence and winning, while looking forward to the following season that lay ahead.

Indeed, rituals are just as important for losing teams as they are for teams that are winning. They are important for any losing team to try and bring about a change in their culture. An example of a change in rituals to bring about a change in team culture occurred within the New Zealand national women's rugby team, the Black Ferns. The team had a history of a series of rituals, including the first official gathering of the team after being named and deciding upon team values, expectations, behaviours and team goals, being named in the playing 22, being named in the starting XV, being presented with the black jersey, performing the haka and singing waiata. Value cards were also given to each player to hold on to throughout a tournament, however if this card was lost, there was a ritual of players having to be punished (Palmer, 2014).

In 2001, the Black Ferns were so worried about maintaining their winning record and were continuing to uphold their negative rituals, that they suffered their first loss in 10 years to England. Completely devastated, they decided that a change of the current team culture and their current rituals was necessary to ensure losing did not happen again. They focussed on being positive and changed to include the use of more positive rituals. They gave out BTB badges (standing for 'back to back' or 'better than before' referring to their back-to-back World Cup wins), to emphasise any team member being 'better than before' in whatever they did (training, playing, and behaviour). They began to give out a yellow 'leader's jersey' that was

given to a player who most represented the values of BTB, they set positive team goals, rewarded positive behaviour, encouraged input from different individuals in team meetings before trainings and games and each player was given a passport that was stamped for every game they played at the world cup, ticking off another step closer towards making the final, and additionally, the team bought two poles with them from New Zealand to Canada to represent a gate, of which they walked through this gate at every training and 'switched' on mentally to rugby mode. These changes in rituals that the Black Ferns implemented brought about a change in their team culture and eliminated the 'fear' of losing. The team was successful in their campaign and went on to win the 2002 Rugby World Cup (Palmer, 2014).

2.0.2 Values & Beliefs

Team values that contribute towards a winning culture can manifest in the form of specific words that team members develop and use and that provide a guide on how they should act, live, and behave. Values help them to understand the teams' vision, while also helping them to achieve the highest degree of success. Values are also principles that are used to fulfil personal needs such as self-esteem and self-actualisation (Johnson, et al, 2013b). Goldsmith (2007), states that these values should become the themes for the team for duration of the season and the guiding principles for everything members of the team do.

Building on such work, Cotterill (2013) has created a five stage process model for creating values, which supports the framework proposed by Schein (2010), based on the belief that shared team values are the foundation of a successful team and are critical to building trust

among players and coaches. The first step involves establishing clear objectives that must be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound. The second step requires the thinking of values the team could potentially abide by. Third, the values are then discussed in order to reach an agreement on the favoured options, which leads to the fourth step, in which they are then prioritized from the most important to least. The final step requires the team to then agree to accept the values and let them be the basis of their actions. These five stages can occur either informally or formally, but Goldsmith (2007) asserts that the latter is essential in ensuring the effectiveness of the values, which then need to be re-established annually.

Developing rituals such as a team cheer or song that is based on the team values is also recommended to help encourage team members to start thinking and performing like a winning team (Goldsmith, 2007). The dynamics of a team can largely depend on whether teammates can band together to pursue their objectives. It is common for many teams to lose games not due to lack of technical or physical capabilities, but as a result of team organisation issues such as personality conflict, problems regarding discipline, lack of unity and team cohesion and also poor motivation (Goldsmith, 2007).

Chatman (1989) suggests that culture may be an important factor in determining how well an individual fits an organizational context. The logic behind the *person-culture* fit is fundamentally drawn from a psychology perspective in which aspects of both the individual and the organisation combine to influence an individual's response to a particular situation. In this aspect, characteristics of individuals, such as their personal values and expectations, correlate

with situations such as incentive systems and rules, to affect the individuals' attitudes and behaviour. In a sporting context, individuals may be attracted to sports teams, coaches, and franchises they perceive as having values similar to their own. In addition, sports teams may attempt to select recruits they know who are likely to share their team values. New players are then further integrated and those who don't fit tend to leave. Thus, basic individual values or preferences for certain modes of conduct are expressed in organizational choices and then reinforced within organizational contexts (Schneider, 1987).

Although research has shown that similar backgrounds, attitudes and experiences can increase 'liking' between individuals, it may be that organizations or sports teams that reward specific outcomes and behaviours will be more or less attractive to different types of people. Chatman (1989) claims that values provide the starting point, along with the process of selection and integration of the team members to insure a positive person-organization fit. Thus, agreement between an individual's values and the values held by an organisation of a sports team may be at the root of 'person-culture' fit (Schneider, 1987).

Wang and Straub (2012) found that the core values of a team provide guidelines for behaviour for every athlete to 'obey' and these values then form the basis of a strong foundation on which to build a strong successful team. Wang and Straub (2012) investigated the leadership style and coaching approaches of a successful world-class coach and the implications for how other coaches who could employ the findings to benefit their own coaching. The participant involved in the research was Coach Anson Dorrance, a college soccer and former Olympic U.S.A

Women's National Coach. In order to develop and promote a positive team environment Dorrance, alongside his players, created an all-embracing set of team core values that he viewed as a crucial aspect in the development of a cohesive team.

Dorrance commented,

"We talk about athletes leading a principle-centred life where the decisions you are making are decisions where you are following a set of core values that we designed for the team....the highest award that a player can win on my team isn't the most valuable player award. It's the Core Value Award. It's an award of character, not soccer abilities"
(quoted in Wang & Straub, 2012, p. 438).

Here, it may be expected that, the Northern Mystics as a semi-professional, high performance sports team will also require the same dynamics of leadership that other organisations have displayed in order to establish a successful winning team culture. As Goldsmith (2007) has stated, a reason a team with a well-established, inclusive and multi-layered culture will perform significantly better, compared to a team who does not possess a well-established set of values, beliefs, and behaviours. Players will also develop a sense of ownership and pride over their performance and personally identify with team goals and objectives.

2.0.3 Core Assumptions

Schein (2010) describes core or underlying assumptions, as unconscious taken-for-granted beliefs, habits of perception, thought and feeling – the ultimate source of values and action. He argued that:

“...if you do not decipher the pattern of basic assumptions that may be operating (in an organization) you will not know how to interpret the artefacts correctly or how much credence to give the espoused values. In other words the essence of a culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, and after you understand those, you can easily understand the other more surface levels and deal appropriately with them” (p. 32).

Focus on winning

A strong comparison can be made between organisational culture, the success of businesses, and high performance sports teams. This comparison is due to these contexts involving other people within a particular structure and sharing a common main purpose of experiencing success or winning (Johnson et al., 2013a). It has been found that a winning tradition within a team can contribute significantly towards improvement in players’ performances, helps to recruit elite players and also produces attitudes and behaviours that are advantageous for the team (Heeran & Requa, 2001). It helps to create a strong feeling of task and social cohesion that seems to be influential in achieving further team successes.

Teamwork is also said to be one of the most tangible products of this togetherness. Instead of individual players competing against each other for athletic glory, players unite to accomplish the shared goals of the team. Their commitment, sacrifice and team cohesion are intensified by the ultimate goal of winning a championship (Heeran & Requa, 2001).

Heeran and Requa's (2001) research of a girls' high school field hockey team and the consequences of having a high emphasis placed on winning, suggests that winning normally has positive results for players, their major support groups and their community. They conclude that competition and winning seem to increase sports participation, enhance team cohesion and personal satisfaction, whereas losing has a negative consequence on the cohesion of a team. A further study conducted by Trocado and Gomes (2013) was designed to examine whether experiencing success in sport influenced athletes' perceptions of the achievement of personal and team goals. The results found that winning teams and athletes on these winning teams gauged more positively with their personal and team goal achievement compared to non-winning teams and athletes.

Johnson et al. (2013a) claim that there are particular factors that have become perceived as being essential for winning and for the creation of a successful team, and suggest that those factors are being preserved by team members. An example of this is the All Blacks, who have maintained and sustained their winning culture through the use of a language and an approach that expressed the values and beliefs of the players, therefore making the objectives of the team clear and the strategies to achieve those objectives obviously understood (Johnson et al,

2013a). Winning can further enhance player performance, increases positive attitudes of team members, creates feelings of devotedness, increases unity, commitment and sacrifice from players and is pivotal for achieving further success in the following future seasons. For any high performance sports team such as the Northern Mystics, the concept of winning is a leading priority which can have long-term positive effects on the culture of the team.

Learning from losing

There are however, many high performance teams that struggle with experiencing success and winning. Experiencing failure can be credited to a range of factors exhibiting a domino effect, and in turn begins a process of a spiral of negative events. The ability of a team and an individual to overcome these negative experiences and to create their own positive team culture, will separate the good teams from the great teams (Johnson et al., 2014; Sweetenham & Parker, 2009).

According to Sweetenham and Parker (2009) the performance culture of a team is created by maximising their potential and steering the team towards excellence and where their time at task is directed towards the team goals identified and agreed upon by all members. Teams must prepare to win with strategic and focused planning being essential to provide direction as to their goals that are identifiable and achievable and are clearly understood by all those involved in the process and result. However it must be understood that there will be times when the team must prepare and perform together in times of difficulty, such as when a team is losing. The strength of the team will be tested under these situations and it is in these

circumstances that players must unite and continue to strive to achieve the goals of the team (Sweetenham & Parker, 2009).

For a team on a losing streak, however, it may seem that when things are down they will always be down and by focusing on other players inadequacies this in turn can undermine confidence and reinforce the losing that is occurring. Nevertheless, Kanter (2005) states that these losing teams can still 'change' the culture of the team to turn things around and start winning through 'confidence'. Confidence grows through winning streaks and through experiencing repeated success and confidence decreases during losing streaks with the experience of failures and setbacks. Kanter (2005) states that confidence is a missing link in sport and when the winner is often behind, they sometimes fumble, lose the ball, miss a shot and they keep going. They learn from their mistakes and from the experiences and that is what having confidence makes possible. The most important quality that leaders in a losing team can show is confidence in their players and teammates. Kanter (2005) also states that when that confidence is expressed to these people, it begins to help make it possible for them to perform and to start winning. Confidence builds when players feel they can count on the people around them, and when the team leaders believe in their players, confidence grows and winning becomes more attainable.

2.1 Leadership

Leadership is a pivotal aspect of achieving performance. Robbins (2002) suggests that to get the most out of people, they need to be led and not just managed. Leading people requires inspiring them to come together for a common goal. Leaders need to motivate, support and work with people to keep them united and enthusiastic to move forward. In comparison, managing is about establishing systems, rules, procedures. It's about the business and not about the people. Kippenberger (2002) claims that status and position are considered no longer enough to get positive results that are required in a highly competitive era, people need to want to give their best and not just be told to do so. This approach is known as transactional leadership, where in a sporting context it is based on the idea that the relationship between leaders (the coach and management) and followers (the players) develops from the exchange of rewards such as performance-related pay, recognition and praise in return for good performances. It still accepts hierarchy and a chain of command and is system-driven towards accomplishing tasks and team goals.

For people to consistently excel and perform, they need to feel motivated, committed, and inspired, and encouraged. This approach to leadership is known as transformational leadership, which probably aligns the best with leading sports teams. It is about empowering people to learn, to seek change and improvement, and relies upon motivation towards achieving a shared goal not an individual one (Kippenberger, 2002). Pratt and Eitzen (1989, p. 320), claim "leadership means vision, cheerleading, enthusiasm, love, trust, verve, passion, obsession,

consistency, creating heroes at all levels, coaching and numerous other things". These attributes recognise that there are many aspects involved in leadership and at the same time it has the added element of having to deal efficiently and successfully with any form of change, supporting team mates and management and motivating and inspiring them to be the best they can possibly be.

Schein (2010, p. 3), states the connection between organisational culture and leadership is "usually the result of the embedding of what a leader has imposed on a group that has worked out... culture is ultimately created, embedded, evolved, and manipulated by leaders". Sweetenham and Parker (2009) agree with Schein in regards to the importance of leadership within a team's culture, stating that one of the most significant aspects of creating a winning team culture is to have strong leaders that lead from the front, act as role models for other team members, set high standards and positive examples and live and breathe the winning culture they are trying to create. The leaders within the team need to always be willing to show and teach other team members, as this contributes towards the development of further knowledge and expertise across all players (Sweetenham & Parker, 2009). This style of leadership is also known as a shared leadership approach, where a high degree of cohesiveness is likely to be a result of the team members' beliefs that, together, they can efficiently accomplish the tasks they need to for their team to be successful (Zaccaro et al., 2001).

In a sporting context, shared leadership is present when two or more individuals share responsibility for directing the team toward its goals. Responsibilities are distributed and

people within the team lead each other. Shared leadership requires team members to be willing to extend their feedback to the team in a way that aims to influence and motivate the direction of the group and must be willing to accept and rely on feedback from other team members. Shared leadership is evident within a team when members have a similar understanding of the team's objective and collective goals and they contribute to each other's emotional and psychological well-being by offering encouragement and assistance. Together, these group dynamics can produce and develop a sense of trust and willingness to collaborate in support of team leadership (Author, 2015).

The effect that leadership has on an organisation's performance and the characteristics of effective leaders is considered to be critical for the continued existence of an organisation in a competitive environment (Trocado & Gomes, 2013). They believe this concept can also apply to sports teams as both athletes' and teams compete for the same goal and winning or losing is a regular cause of anxiety for both athletes' and their coaches (Trocado & Gomes, 2013). Although minimal, there has been some literature on sports leadership that claim the leadership that is demonstrated by coaches can be linked to athletes' performances and their psychological responses. Trocado and Gomes (2013) concluded that effective coaches generally produce positive results for their athletes and teams, via the way they successfully demonstrate leadership and positively influencing their psychological responses or athletic performance.

The study conducted by Trocado and Gomes (2013) designed to investigate whether achieving success in sport influenced athletes' perceptions of their coaches' leadership, found the

differences in the Multidimensional Scale of Leadership in Sports (MSLS) scores before and after the season showed that winning teams thought more positively of their coaches on five leadership characteristics and were most happy with their coaches' style in comparison to non-winning teams. Three of the five leadership characteristics were transformational involving vision, inspiration, and technical instruction. The other two characteristics indicated positive aspects of transactional leadership involving positive feedback and decision making. The results from the study revealed that winning positively influenced athletes' evaluation of their coaches, mostly in terms of features associated with transformational leadership. These features involved the accomplishment of tasks, providing athletes' with a challenging vision, technical coaching, encouraging athletes' to work towards achieving their team and individual goals, supporting the efforts of others and involving athletes' in the decision making process (Trocado & Gomes, 2013).

Effective, efficient team leaders, who demonstrate quality leadership skills, can create a winning environment by providing the opportunity for all team members to collectively focus on the areas they are best at and this is crucial for the harmonious long-term success of the team and continuing of achievement (Sweetenham & Parker, 2009). Some leaders however, should not be a part of the leadership team if failure is not to be the final result. Some teams confuse years of playing experience with leadership and allow these players to set standards that could be either damaging or negative. Senior athletes who are under-performing and are in this category should not be put in leadership positions as they will not contribute positively towards team performances (Sweetenham & Parker, 2009). However this argument of

Sweetenham and Parker's is challenged by Dupuis, Bloom and Loughhead (2006) who state that players in formal leadership positions such as the team captain, assume a considerable amount of responsibility within the team structure compared to fellow teammates. Players in this role are expected to undertake numerous aspects of leadership that are even more important than just their performance. Dupuis et al. (2006) suggested that team captains have three main responsibilities, the first is to act as a liaison between the coaching staff and the players, the second, to act as a leader during all team activities and lastly to represent the team at receptions, meetings and press conferences. In addition to these three responsibilities, some of the other duties team captains are expected to perform include establishing regular team and/or individual meetings with players and coaches, leading by example, such as arriving early for practice, high intensity when training, leading warm-up sessions, encouraging teammates, helping younger players and also helping coaches to develop team rules and programmes. Finally, team captains need to conduct themselves in a professional manner before, during and after every game, demonstrating respect to their teammates, opponents and officials.

Leadership in sports teams

Leadership is expressed and perceived in sports teams through a variety of means. Janssen (2015) claims leadership can be expressed through different roles demonstrated by team members such as performance leaders, locker room leaders, social leaders and the reserve leaders. However Janssen (2015) also states that these leadership functions can overlap and be fulfilled by the same person. Performance leaders are the primary on-court leaders that take charge, focus people in trainings and games, have strong vocal leadership, are highly results-

oriented, demonstrate high work ethic and intensity, are the most committed and competitive athletes and are serious about success (Janssen, 2015). The locker room leaders are the creators, champions and caretakers of a team's culture and they mould, monitor and maintain the team culture into one that is positive and productive. These leaders determine what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, both on and off the court, take great pride in the team culture and do everything they can to enhance, protect and preserve it; they buy into the team's vision and values and tend to contribute more towards the program's success with their leadership instead of their individual physical talent. Following a tough training, game, or loss, the locker room is often filled with upset individuals, disgruntled players and negative comments and the locker room captain needs to step-up and be vocal to keep the team positive and productive (Janssen, 2015).

Janssen (2015) has found that the social leaders of the team lead the charge on building and maintaining the team's chemistry, focusing on the relationships of the team and how well people bond together. They often plan social events to get everyone to know each other better outside of the sport and are able to form relationships with people in all subgroups. Lastly, the 'reserve' leaders are those who lead the second and third string athletes on the team. These players don't play much or receive much attention and the subs can be a very volatile segment of any team. The 'reserve' leaders assist in managing the frustrations that can arise with limited playing time for substitutes, and this is usually a respected leader of the reserves who still realises their important yet limited role and can quell any dissension that might rise up during the course of the season (Janssen, 2015).

Sugarman (1999) claims that leadership can also be expressed in sports teams via certain characteristics that are by consensus, typical of quality leadership. This is expressed through either task-oriented or person-oriented leaders. Task-oriented are those that are most interested in training, high performance and winning, whereas person-oriented leaders are more interested in the interpersonal relationships on the team. Great leaders in sport teams are considered to be both task and people-oriented leaders but lean more towards being a task-oriented leader. By contrast, leadership groups are also a popular way of expressing leadership in sports teams. Goldsmith (2009) claims there are several reasons for the use of leadership groups, the first is that society has changed and more athletes want input into the direction of their lives and careers. Players no longer seem to tolerate being ordered what to do by the coach or others, and the authoritarian models demonstrated by the coach may no longer work. Players demand more consultation and communication and the implementation of leadership groups allows players to solve problems and make decisions on the field of play or that can determine the outcome of the game. Expressing leadership in sports teams via leadership groups creates better problem-solving and decision-making athletes that 'own' their performance and are responsible for the outcome (Goldsmith, 2009).

The Captains Role

Some sports do not identify a formal on-field leader or captain, but do have informal leaders in the team; although in the sports that do have informal captaincy roles, the scope of the position can vary significantly. Whilst the role of a captain can change from sport to sport there is an agreement that an effective captain is instrumental to the team and its performance

outcomes (Cotterill, 2013). A study conducted by Loughhead and Hardy (2005) using the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) assessed the behaviour of coaches' and athlete leader behaviours. The results indicated that athlete leaders were regarded to display greater social support, positive feedback and democratic behaviours than coaches and that coaches and athlete leaders displayed different types of leadership behaviours. This research highlighted some unique aspects of athlete leader behaviours, however it did not differentiate between formal or informal leadership roles. This is to some extent unfortunate due to the formal athlete leader such as the team captain, assuming a substantial amount of responsibility within the team organisation in comparison to fellow teammates (Lee, Coburn, & Partridge, 1983).

Given that the leadership behaviours of athletes are considered to be an important component of team success it is surprising that research on athlete leaders is limited. However, a study conducted by Dupuis et al. (2006) addressed this by identifying and examining the leadership behaviours of university male ice hockey team captains. While each team captain displayed his own personality, some common personal qualities appeared amongst them such as remaining positive, controlling emotions and demonstrating respect to teammates and coaches. They stressed the importance of effective communication skills, an aspect which has also been suggested to be a key element in the development and effectiveness of leaders. The importance of being focussed on players' attitudes and performance and choosing the right moment to give feedback to players was also highlighted by the participants. In addition team captains also mentioned using a more sharing leadership style with experienced teammates (Dupuis et al., 2006). Most team captains within this study suggested the most powerful way to

show leadership was by setting the proper example for teammates with both their on-ice and off-ice behaviours, that is by role-modelling. This was accomplished by always working hard during practices, games and the off-season. Thus, it can be surmised that the leadership behaviours of team captains have consequences beyond immediate interaction and immediate response, by influencing team norms and consequently the atmosphere of the team in the longer term (Dupuis et al., 2006).

The Coach's role

Heeran and Requa (2001) claim from their research that it is the coach or the coaching staff that is likely to be the most important factor in developing a winning tradition for a team. The success of any team can depend greatly on the quality of the leadership and coaching skills demonstrated by the coach (Wang & Straub, 2012). Jowett and Cockerill (2003) stated that coaches play a significant role in athletes' fulfilment and performance accomplishments. Coaches influence athletes' sporting experiences such as their enjoyment, satisfaction, self-esteem, perceived competence and performance. They are also instrumental in promoting the history and the telling of the story of the team, and then using these stories to encourage new achievements and goals for the season ahead. A study conducted by Weiss and Friedrichs (1986) examined the relationship of leader behaviours, coach attributes and institutional variables to team performance and athlete satisfaction amongst Collegiate basketball players. In terms of individual satisfaction by players, the scores revealed that the coach's attributes and leader behaviours were prognostic of athlete satisfaction. Coaches, who were involved in regular rewarding of behaviour, and who demonstrated a democratic style of coaching and

decision-making, 'created' more satisfied athletes. Furthermore, Weiss and Friedrich's (1986) study showed that coaches with superior previous win/loss records also contributed towards creating higher levels of satisfaction amongst the athletes.

In sport, winning can also often depend largely on the development of a coach's rapport with their players, so this relationship can also play a crucial role for the success of strong, elite, winning teams (Wang & Straub, 2012). A successful coach should also show care and concern for their athletes both on and off the field, and also to gain their trust. Once athletes recognise their coach is trustworthy and is concerned about their own personal wellbeing, they then tend to develop more confidence towards them (Wang & Straub, 2012). However, it cannot be presumed that coaches are entirely responsible for a teams' success throughout the season (Trocado & Gomes, 2013). Most methods of measuring sport performance, such as the ratio of wins to losses or winning the championship at the end of the season, can also be influenced due to external variables that coaches have no control over, such as the opponents winning potential, mistakes made by officials and individual decision making of team members.

2.1.1 *Collective Leadership*

Collective leadership is a process wherein a clear leader or set of leaders, apply their skills and knowledge within an environment, successfully sharing elements of the leadership role as the situation requires (Friedrich, Vessy, Schuelke, Ruark & Mumford, 2009). Collective leadership helps to support a culture where relationships are treasured and valued, and members experience a sense of self-worth (Johnson et al., 2012). An example of a collective approach to

leadership has been apparent within the All Blacks rugby team. The team was initially led by the senior members in an informal matter, however over the past decade this has been formalised by the coaching team and has been effective in regards to upholding a winning team culture. The collective leadership model that is present within the All Blacks encourages a commitment to being totally honest with oneself and others, the evaluation of the team and in personal reflection (Johnson et al., 2012).

Johnson et al.'s (2013a) study of the All Blacks leadership structures found that a misalignment between the informal and formal leaders existed in 2004 one year after the All Blacks disappointing 2003 Rugby World Cup campaign. The new All Blacks coaching staff and captain acknowledged the informal leaders and worked directly with them to develop a collective leadership approach that influenced cultural changes for the benefit of the team and eventually led to one of their most successful winning periods.

Zaccaro *et al* (2001) found that if members feel confident in their team's abilities, they are more motivated to work hard for the team, persevere in the face of shared problems and are willing to accept more difficult challenges. Teams with this collective approach to leadership also set more difficult goals and are more committed to achieving these goals. Thus, under extreme difficulty and pressure, teams with this collective approach should perform better than groups who do not implement that same approach to leadership

2.1.2 Transformational Leadership

Leadership style is crucial to the influence of culture. Nazari and Soharbi (2014) found that sports teams preferred a coach who displays transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is commonly recognised for its ability to influence organisational culture through assisting with a shared vision, constant improvement, empowerment and leading by example. Kippenberger (2002) states that transformational leadership is the process of influencing key changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organisation members and creating commitment towards the mission, objectives and strategies of the organisation. Transformational leadership is also about impacting the hearts and minds and empowering people instead of using rewards to control them. This leadership style is seen as being effective in encouraging people to learn, to pursue change and to seek improvement. Indeed, the effectiveness of this is linked to the generation of impact of motivation that comes from a collective goal and rewards athletes as a result of a sense of involvement and achievement. It is largely based on trust from the leader and the understanding, skill, dedication and commitment on behalf of the supporters (Kippenberger, 2002).

A study completed by Rosener (1989) at the University of California's Graduate School of Management, investigated the way in which women lead. Members of the International Women's Forum were sent a questionnaire and were asked to nominate a man in a similar organisation with similar responsibilities. The men were sent the same questionnaire. The research showed that the men tended to describe a 'transactional' style, the women a more 'transformational' style as the dominant style of coaching. The men attributed their power

based on their position in the organisation and formal authority, while the women credited their power to personal characteristics such as interpersonal skills, hard work and a network of personal contacts. The research found that women were finding their own style of leadership, after having previously followed male leadership styles. Women encouraged participation, shared power and information, wanted to improve people's self-worth and as a result, got them excited and eager about their work (Kippenberger, 2002). Rosener's (1989) study is pertinent to this current study as netball is predominantly a female sport and the ANZ Championship netball competition is made up of female-only teams.

2.1.3 Empowerment

When coaches use an empowering style of coaching, it has been found that athletes are more likely to gain and take ownership of knowledge, development and decision making that will help them to make the most of their performance. An empowerment approach to coaching would thus stress an athlete-centred style in place of a traditional autocratic style of coaching, providing athletes with the opportunity to be involved in the vision and values of their team. This style has also been found to create a sense of belonging for the athletes and a shared approach to learning, while building a dedicated relationship between coach and athlete where mutual goals and teamwork is enriched, therefore creating positive, successful results (Kidman, 2001). An empowerment style is considered to be one of the most advanced and effective methods of leadership that allow athletes to succeed in and enjoy their sporting experiences. This approach also helps to motivate athletes and gives them a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment in being part of a collective vision, so the 'team' can grow in the same direction

(Kidman, 2001). As an aside, Kelleher (1966, cited in Kippenberger, 2002, p. 78), stated “that coaches who exercise the empowerment form of leadership can become healthier, wiser, freer, and more human”.

Advantages to using the empowerment approach are that athletes can be more motivated to learn and can build a greater understanding and retention of both tactics and skills that are imperative to the success of the team. Another advantage is that the coach empowers their athletes to aid in their own learning but does not control it, as it is essential for athletes to be independent and autonomous in their performance, their decision making and in their option taking while participating in their sports, thus encouraging them to become self-sufficient and self-governing athletes (Kidman, 2001). Wang and Straub (2012) found that the motivation and positive attitudes of athletes are highly linked to how much input they have in making the decisions that will affect them. A study conducted by Dennison (1984) investigated whether firms that organise their work well and involve their employees in the decision making process perform better than firms that do not. The results indicated that this indeed was the case, with participation in decision making appearing to be an investment and one that tends to pay off. Taking more time to include managers, executives and employees in a decision may not always be the quickest way to make a decision, but the results suggested that it may lead to a better decision having been made. Dennison’s results also showed that the implementation of the decision is usually improved when those who will be affected are involved in a decision making process.

An empowering approach to coaching has been highlighted in netball by two former Silver Ferns coaches, Ruth Aitken and Leigh Gibbs (Kidman, Thorpe & Hadfield, 2005). They began coaching the Silver Ferns netball team together in 2002 as Head Coach and Assistant coach, setting up systems in which the athletes had a major say in the team. They organised training sessions to encourage athletes to make decisions through solving problems for themselves, responding to questioning from the coach and playing games that have been created to develop understanding of tactics and skills. They encouraged and promoted a quality team environment where the team worked together to achieve team and individual goals. The teams' independence and ability to put the value of selflessness into practice helped them to take ownership of, and responsibility for, their team as a whole (Kidman et al., 2005). All Black coach Wayne Smith also advocates this empowering approach.

“The areas that we have needed to work on as coaches are developing our ability to grow self-awareness, understanding and problem-solving... we have had to become questioners instead of instructing all the time – technically or tactically” (quoted in Johnson et al., 2014, p. 196).

The insights demonstrated by such coaches suggest for interviewing the Northern Mystics team leaders (coaches, captains and senior players) to gather information regarding their leadership role is expected to provide a greater understanding of what influences the culture of a team and what makes a winning team culture when a team is not currently winning.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Design

This research design was based on a qualitative approach using semi-structured in-depth interviews as the main method for data collection. The use of interpretive qualitative methods allowed the researcher to understand personally “human behaviour in greater depth than is possible from the study of objective and quantifiable variables alone” (Neimeyer & Resnikoff, 1982, p. 76). Interpretive research in sport focuses on capturing concepts that are not measurable, such as personal feelings, thoughts and experiences. A qualitative research approach to collecting the data is founded upon the examination of words, feelings and emotions from the interviewees (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

3.0.1 Subjectivist Epistemology & Phenomenology: An interpretivist & inductive approach

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. It is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. Epistemology is the justification of beliefs, that is, how do we know what we think we know (Crotty, 1998). This current research is based on a subjectivist epistemology, a philosophy based on feelings or opinions rather than facts, which enables the researcher to convey the interviewees own ideas and opinions, as truthfully and honestly as possible. Phenomenology refers to a person's opinion around the significance of an event. The focus is on what people experience in regards to a particular situation and attempts to understand how they interpret those experiences through their own perceptions, perspectives and understandings. By looking at various perspectives of the same situation, a researcher can start to make some

generalisations of what something is like as an experience from an 'insider's' viewpoint (Boyd, 2003). The main method of gathering data is through semi-structured interviews, as this allowed for the expansion and clarification of responses in order to gain a better understanding of the views and thoughts of the interviewees regarding their teams' organisational culture and leadership (Appendix C). The current organisational culture and leadership approach within the Mystics team and how can this be more effective in a professional sport context, is the focus of this research.

The perspective of interpretivism requires examining the feelings, thoughts and experiences of which a social situation has for people (Abbott, 2010). Data collected from the viewpoints of the participants is interpreted by the researcher who aims to discover ideas such as meanings, values and expectations. Using an interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to discover and expose explanations from the viewpoints of the participants within the Northern Mystics instead of assuming them from using scientific measurements (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Inductive research is an approach that can be used when a researcher wants to explain why something is occurring, or if the area being researched is fairly new or is under-researched (Gratton & Jones, 2010). No hypotheses can be found at the early stages of an inductive approach to research and the researcher is unsure about the research findings until the study is completed (Alexandris, 2006). This inductive approach is relevant to the research on the Northern Mystics, as no hypothesis could be made about the culture of the team prior to the research taking place.

3.1 Case Study

This case study of the Northern Mystics allows for the combination of similar and conflicting opinions to provide a detailed understanding of the context. Case study research involves an up-close, in-depth examination of the subject being studied in their specific environments (Yin, 2009). Case studies are also the favoured approach when asking 'how' or 'why' questions when the researcher has minimal control over the events and where behaviours cannot be influenced (Yin, 2009). This approach is used by researchers of sport related activities to gain a comprehensive understanding of issues and how they relate to a particular group, organisation, or individual.

The use of qualitative data in a case study aims to understand viewpoints from the different participants involved in the research interviews (Stake, 2008). Qualitative research is based on smaller sample sizes and uses data that has been compiled from responses taken from personal interviews. The qualitative data is taken from the viewpoint of participants using a semi-structured interview to understand their personal opinions and beliefs, rather than those held by the researcher (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The case study research approach is relevant to this current research as in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Northern Mystics team culture, an in-depth examination of the personal viewpoints and opinions of the players and coaches is required.

3.1.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate method to employ in order to understand the opinions and beliefs of the participants (Trochim, 2006). Primary data was obtained through the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews (by Skype/telephone/in person, taking approximately one hour) with experts in the area of semi-professional netball. Past and present Coaches ($N = 4$) and senior team leaders ($N = 3$) were interviewed. Four of the five coaches and three out of the six players that were approached agreed to take part in the research. This balance of participants allowed for the comparison of perspectives from both the coaches and players.

The interview method was selected because it is used in qualitative research to investigate different phenomena within their own actual environments (Yin, 2009). It is noted that a larger sample of players could have been undertaken using a quantitative survey, however the analysis of the data in this case study was designed to communicate understanding from the different in-depth interviews with the team leaders (Schein, 2010). The semi-structured interviews allowed for the expansion and clarification of responses from the interviewees in order to understand their opinions and beliefs regarding the team culture and leadership within the Northern Mystics. Although the order of the interview questions was pre-determined, some additional questions were asked during the interview based on the participants' responses on certain subjects.

3.2 Data Analysis

The information was examined according to Huberman's (1994) principles of qualitative data analysis. These are data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. Where it was appropriate, the reporting of the exact responses from the interviewees is used to portray the holistic and personal understanding of the situation that has been studied (Merriam, 1998). Each interview took approximately 60-90 minutes. A copy of the interview questions is provided in Appendix D. Each interview was transcribed precisely in order to gain an accurate interpretation of the responses and the transcripts collected for examination. Each transcript was personally analysed and studied by the researcher, then broken down into the following themes; team culture, rites and rituals, values, winning, and leadership. The main responses were then highlighted and grouped under each of these main themes. Collating the responses under specific themes allowed the researcher to clearly identify any similarities and differences amongst the answers and provided a profound understanding of aspects of the team culture and leadership evident within the Northern Mystics.

3.2.1 Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability & Transferability

Qualitative data cannot be examined statistically; hence qualitative research cannot depend on statistical analysis to confirm if the research produces trustworthy and reliable results (Zamboni, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest four criteria for evaluating the reliability of data in qualitative research.

Credibility involves ensuring that the study measures or tests what it is meant to test. The credibility of this research is enhanced by triangulating the information, comprising of the appropriate documentation, the data collected from the interviews and myself as the lead researcher with my previous extensive experience of netball (Stake, 2008). Each of the participants approached were given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the research to ensure the data collected only involved those who were genuinely interested to take part and were prepared to offer their responses freely (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability is the degree to which the results of the research can be generalised or transferred to settings other than the context in which the study was performed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Since the findings of qualitative research are generally specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings of this research can be applicable to all situations and populations (Shenton, 2004). However, it is hoped that the results of this study may be of significant use to other high-performing sports team environments in the development of a winning team culture and to help create a more insightful understanding of team culture and leadership for future sport coaches and captains across all sporting levels. To assist with this transferability an adequate, in-depth description of the phenomenon being studied, including the organisation taking part in the study, where they are based, the number of participants involved, the data collection methods and the number and length of the interview sessions, is provided to allow possible future readers to make such a transfer to their own sporting environments (Shenton, 2004).

A study's dependability refers to whether the same results would be obtained if the study were repeated in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To address the concept of dependability, the research design, its implementation and the gathering of data within the study were reported in great detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the study if desired (Shenton, 2004). It must be stated however, that there is no guarantee that this study could be replicated and the exact findings repeated if these interviews were to be conducted a year later.

Confirmability refers to the point to which the results can be confirmed and supported by others. Provisions that were made to enhance the confirmability of this research include the triangulation of the data to reduce any effect of bias from myself as the lead researcher and an in-depth description of the study's methods to allow the trustworthiness of the results to be scrutinised by others (Shenton, 2004).

3.3 Limitations

Difficulty in player 'buy-in' was a limitation, with some players failing to respond to the initial email to partake in the interviews and others taking longer to provide a response regarding their participating in the research. There were also some issues surrounding the difficulty in arranging interviews. Where possible, interviews were grouped in Auckland to cover as many as possible in the one trip, but due to the previously mentioned issues with some player buy-in, commitments to the Silver Ferns, players away at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the compulsory player stand-down after a big international event such as the Games, other interviews had to take place either via Skype or a phone call at a much later date than when the initial interviews had taken place.

3.4 Ethics

The research was recorded as low risk by Massey University's Human Ethics Committee; anonymity and confidentiality was provided to all participants who were required to sign informed consent forms (see Appendix E). Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the responses from some of the interviewees contained in this report, this research remains confidential. This therefore prevents the details contained in this report being disseminated to other high-performing Netball teams.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The data is presented here under the various themes linked to Schein's (2010) framework, which aims, through representative descriptive quotes from the four coaches (C) and three senior players (P), to connect the specific themes and tell the story of the Northern Mystics team culture and leadership related to their overall performance.

4.0 Team Culture

4.0.1 Rites, Rituals & Symbols

There has been a limited use of defining rituals for the Mystics, as indicated by the following typical response.

"This could be an area that we maybe develop... It just ensures that everyone's included... The rituals, even though they were few and far between, are action based and were outside all the talk, that's why I probably like them". (P3)

The Silver Ferns have used themes to establish each season and also developed a women's haka.

"We learnt a women's haka... The haka was going to another country and taking the mana of our culture with us... we did it in the changing room before we went out before the final (in India, Commonwealth Games); we just chanted it". (P1)

The ANZ is a six month commitment and it is important that each year the team discusses “*why this campaign is worth doing.*” Some of the initial rituals for the Mystics have been at the season beginning camp.

“Well annually we start off with a camp and that’s where we bring everybody together for the first three days to look at our structures, our values, go through how we want to play this season - because there is a lot of competing priority for these athletes”. (C2)

However, it is important to establish informal and formal rituals that the team feel are special and are all willing to be involved with and commit to.

“I suggested... rituals and a few traditions around the team cause there wasn’t really that feeling within the group that it was about something special and your commitment and your involvement to things going forward”. (C1)

“I honestly believe that we could have done stuff, but it has to be set up right and it has to be completely player buy in to it”. (C4)

For the Mystics team the season inauguration breakfast has been an important team meal where new players are formally recognised, however these rituals seem to make a ‘fuss’ of the new players but do not necessarily acknowledge the loyalty and commitment of the more experienced players.

"[New players] get recognised when we come together as a team. We have a breakfast at the beginning of the year and they introduce the players. They number the players off in terms of who was signed at what time... a wall thing that has 1 down to probably 100 now". (P1)

The pre-game lunch meal for the Silver Ferns has also been an important ritual.

"The pre-game lunch, the bringing of past Silver Ferns into that lunch, was always really cool and them just speaking about the importance of the fern and wearing the fern". (C1)

The team hug when running on court was seen as a positive ritual, encouraging team culture.

"When we ran on court we always hugged. We always sort of cradled arms and I don't think that was a normal thing to do in netball at that stage, so that was probably a ritual that we did when we went on court". (P1)

The dress is an example of a tangible symbol that is *"something to recognise the effort gone in to making the squad and to welcome them into our group"*. The presentation of the dress is the most important ritual and symbol for the Silver Ferns and members of the Northern Mystics noted by all respondents. The dress could be presented by a (former) Silver Fern or Northern Mystics member.

"Whenever you were a new Silver Fern we always had someone deliver the uniform to the new player and made her feel really special". (P1)

"When you're a new debutant into a playing team you get presented a dress from someone that we believe you looked up to, that's quite nice". (P3)

“The actual handing over of the [Mystics] uniform, that was always done by a past player... it was special”.

(C3)

“One of the really special moments was the presentation of the Mystics dress when any new player came in for their very first game... the other players would speak about the newbie... that was very important”.

(C1)

There is significant respect for the black dress and the silver fern, but it is clear this is not replicated in the Mystics uniform.

“It was that black dress - it was that silver fern - when I put it on and thought how many people have worn it before me, the fact that I was representing, family, the country. There was so much history behind it... you just see the tradition of this black dress and it’s representing your country. I have not felt that with the Northern Mystics uniform - not that strong”. (C3)

“Even at training they wouldn’t wear the gear; deep down I knew that something wasn’t right... I was at times disappointed about the product that we put out on court so I didn’t want to be associated with the gear”. (P3)

There is potential for the dress to be re-designed with player input for 2015 incorporating elements that are important to the players in the team. For example, the colours black and silver and a fern demonstrating the link to the Silver Ferns. Also, the former Diamonds and Force legacy could be incorporated along with aspects of the regional Māori and Pasifika cultures and communities. It is important that the players have pride and ownership of the dress. Added to the design could be each player’s number, signifying they are part of the Northern Mystics player history. A plaque has been presented at the end of the season with the

Northern Mystics player number. However, this could be presented at the beginning of the season by a former member of the Northern Mystics. There has also been a Mystics cloak developed from Māori/Pasifika origins, which provides an important link to regional culture.

All the interviewees highlighted the importance of developing a strong team culture that is player driven. Team culture matters in developing an environment that reinforces player synergy and talent to achieve the best outcome, as indicated by the following typical responses.

“Culture... is hugely important”. (C2)

“[Culture]... it is the glue which holds a team together”. (C1)

“Culture is a huge part of any team. If you have all the players buying into this culture, everyone’s on the same page and going forward”. (P1)

However, it was acknowledged that there were elements of the team culture that were missing. *“We’ve got to find the right culture for this team to be competitive,”* although there were some important underlying values that were reinforced such as positivity, honesty and respect.

“There was a huge amount of positivity in some of the young players that did get out on court and actually performed well in some point in time”. (C1)

“Team culture, it’s about honesty, it’s about giving positive feedback but creating an environment that’s conducive to learning and everybody feels safe... It’s about respecting each other’s individuality but then getting on with it as well”. (C3)

"A real strength of the culture is they 'have your back'... that was a real bonus because in some cultures you've got to prove yourself. So I think they've definitely got one up on other teams in terms of that aspect". (P3)

At times it was clear that the team have 'bought into' the culture, reinforced by coaching and players' consistency.

"In our team in the first years because of the changes and just two teams coming together, it took a wee while to get that culture going. There was a broad base of culture already in the team and the new ones came in and they kind of just fitted in really well". (P1)

"They believed there was a good culture, I just didn't know if they understood what that looked like, they must have had it in 2012 - they all bought into it." (C4)

However, it is vital that there is an alignment of the team culture and that everyone is 'on the same page'. Management, coaches and players have to believe in the team values and role model them.

"[Culture] is important to me but I don't know how important it was to each one of them, I think they played lip service to it". (C4)

For 2015, identifying and reinforcing the unique aspects of the Mystics culture is important for the team's success.

"[Culture's] something that we need to work on. We need to identify what is our culture, because the team's changed and is totally different to what it was in 2008, 9, 10, 11, 12... What's important about our region...many of the girls don't know that, so that definitely needs to be identified". (P1)

"If you can establish a core that you keep, make sure that the rituals continue, that the expectations and the values are lived by on a daily basis... proud to wear the gear, respect training, respect what we're doing".(P3)

4.0.2 Values & Beliefs

Both coaches and players indicated that there are clearly individual beliefs, but there is an inconsistent use or expression of team values. Action speaks louder than words. Whilst values were talked about, these did not appear to be 'lived' values.

"The whole kind of 'team building team values' they just completely seemed over it and their feeling was that everyone knew what was what...anyway the feeling was that everyone actually did know what was what and that it was about getting on and getting the business done as such". (C1)

"The coaches had wanted everyone to have the same values... I don't know if every player stuck to those values when they transitioned from a Silver Fern to an ANZ champs player... At the beginning of each year we'd hear of the values... that is hugely important; we need to rehash those things because we do forget". (P1)

"You could say all these values but you've got to show it. At times we were found wanting". (P3)

The team aims to be well-prepared, but there is a need for a more professional united approach 24/7 for both junior and senior players, and the organisation itself.

“Walking the talk... senior players... it’s hard for them to be role models... The commitment level... [also] the young ones in terms of what they did outside the team environment “. (C1)

“[The values] need to be lived by everybody in each year in each facet of the organisation”. (P2)

There appears to be four significant values highlighted by the interviewees, but these need to be confirmed and reinforced at the start of each season as the team’s values.

Work ethic - prepared, highly skilled, committed, no surprises, no short-cuts, attend all trainings, punctual, intensity.

“It was based on hard work, this is what you’re good at... we created an environment where they could do that and feel comfortable enough to say ‘I don’t agree’”. (C3)

“This means - being on time, being prepared, giving 100% in your training, communication with each other and with the coach and manager”. (C4)

However, to become champions, everyone needs to commit to the team values throughout the season.

“What’s important is the hard working culture... you need to have players that are willing to do their job and not cut corners because you get exposed in the finals - that’s why we Mystics have never been successful and I base success on winning and we have never won [the competition] and we should have”. (C3)

“Teams that are really committed are the ones that usually come out champions, because it is that intense. It’s really hard to keep that intensity for so long, for fourteen weeks.... Once we get to that next level of thinking... I think we will be okay”. (C2)

Trust – pride, positivity, honesty and respect.

“Trust is really important within a playing group as well... Definitely a lot of pride, respect - huge respect for each other sometimes”. (P1)

“Developing respect within ourselves in terms of feeling a pride for the product that we put out on court and the way we play”. (C1)

Game plans are designed to suit the group of players. Players need to understand what their role is within the team. In terms of trust, communication in terms of roles and expectations needs to be honest and genuine.

“You have to be genuine and if you want people to work really hard in the team it has to be a two way thing. Honest communication... they communicate, but I don’t know whether it is honest”. (C2)

“It’s easy to say, okay what went wrong? But if they’re not prepared to look at themselves then they’re not taking responsibility for them having a part in everything”. (C4)

Family - community, connected, accepting individuality of player’s performance, diversity, and sense of belonging.

“Really important that the Mystics are well connected into the community, especially the number of Polynesian role models that we’ve got within the group... The family and the community needs are very important” (C3)

“Respecting each other’s individuality but then getting on with it”. (C3)

An important part of ‘family’ is being connected as a team, and to the community; it is ‘giving back’.

“They organized it all and got in touch with women’s refuges, so the team went and did a family day with the women and children from a couple of women’s refuges”. (C1)

“That’s what the Mystics need, to have to be honest ...they [need to] give back, help with the juniors; pass on their knowledge”. (C4)

Resilience – physically and mentally

“Resilience is about being able to withstand everything, scrutiny, expectation, consequence when we have a bad performance... resilience is a very key value”. (C2)

The four values highlighted above are consistent with the four organization’s values which are excellence, loyalty, unity and integrity (Netball Northern Zone) but *‘there is a need to align the vision of Mystics with the vision of the board’*. This comment reveals that there is a misalignment in previous years between the values of the individuals, the team, the management/coaching staff, and the board.

- *Excellence – work ethic? – The quality of being outstanding or extremely good.*
- *Loyalty – trust? – The state or quality of being loyal, faithful, to commitments, or obligations.*
- *Unity – family? – The state of being united or joined as a whole.*
- *Integrity – resilience? – The adherence to a code of values, soundness, and completeness.*

Eight team values were mentioned in the interviews; however, they were not able to be recalled. *“In terms of what people can remember and what people can demonstrate is eight too many?”* For 2015, there must be a need for consistent player-led and team-focused values that are continually reinforced.

“One of the biggest challenges within the group is that actually in the end ‘team’ is not the most important thing. ‘I’ is definitely the most important thing... our leaders were actually quite self-focused and it’s how the team fits into their view of the world... The Mystics do have to work out what are we about? What’s important to us and how do the players that we recruit actually fit into that off-court view of the world... because it cut through everything - do they fit into the culture?... Making sure that you are contributing to the team, but also what you are bringing to make the team stronger by bringing others on”. (C1)

4.0.3 Core Assumptions

Reasons for winning and losing

When asked about the importance of the outcome of the game in terms of winning and losing, all the interviewees strongly agreed and expressed the importance of winning in the ANZ Championship.

“Well in terms of being an athlete, winning is always what you’re training for and wanting to do.... you always want to win. It was important”. (P2)

“You don’t play franchise netball and not be worried about the outcome.” (C1)

“That’s why we play sport is to win” (C3)

It was evident the interviewees had numerous varying reasons as to what they thought was responsible for their lack of success including the absence of leadership, lack of direction, player unrest, too much player power and players not being mentally present at trainings and games.

“Every week we would kind of do it different at training and my argument towards that type of approach is if you change it up all the time how do you know? So I think we had a real issue of getting our processes right in terms of how we prep for games”. (P3)

“I believe that we did have the players and the skill but I don’t think every player turned up each week. And that’s including me sometimes, maybe I didn’t turn up each week but I just don’t think that we have played to our full potential”. (P1)

“There were a lot of voices and no real control...you didn’t have that really clear...person...just controlling all the wealth of experience that you’ve got in the team”. (P2)

“Player unrest last year... I think they weren’t happy with how things were done”. (C4)

“To be honest there was so much player power”. (C4)

The lack of success and winning of games was having an on-going detrimental effect on the team and its players.

“I suppose the chances of the wins on the board became fewer and fewer, and that was very hard for some players to cope with, on all of us, you know, it’s not easy... in the end the win loss ratio killed the team in itself”. (C1)

The Mystics did however experience some success throughout the ANZ Championship competition as they obviously progressed in the final placing’s from 7th in 2008 to their most successful placing in 2012 where they finished second. The interviewees all agreed that factors such as consistency in coaching and leadership, experience, and consistency all contributed towards this.

"In 2011 we did go through to the grand final and the reason for that was we had quite an established leadership within the team. We had a very experienced captain, so she understood how to get the girls together and how to work a team". (C2)

"I think for the 2012 where we finished 2nd it was the consistency in coaching... so there was some consistency going through and also I think players had respect for the coach in terms of the result we did get in 2012". (P1)

"I think we had a pretty good team in 2012, we had the team we had a core of experienced and one or two young players in the squad. And I think that had a heck of a lot to do with us getting us to that final." (C3)

There is a legacy of winning in the region developed from the history of the amalgamation of the Auckland Diamonds whose best placing in the National Bank Cup was 4th in 2007 and Northern Force, whose best placing was 2nd in both 2003 and 2007. However, their rivalry led to some difficulties at the start in 2008.

"Combining two franchises the Northern Force and the Diamonds who were rivals and then coming together as a team so that was huge... There was obviously some animosity, because players were sitting on the bench that were in the Diamonds, but there were Force players on the court" (P1)

"I don't think we dealt with the whole issue of North Harbour versus Auckland that kind of coming together of the two". (C4)

Some participants expressed that it is important to establish what is significant about playing for the Northern Mystics region and build on the success of other winning Auckland/Northern teams to highlight the region's success e.g. Breakers.

“You’re representing your region... the pride... understand why this region is important, to me... It’s got a lot of history in terms of netball, Auckland won the competition 10 years in a row. It’s a big compass in terms of top of north down to Pukekohe... it’s just pretty special to be picked as one of the twelve out of thousands and thousands”. (P1)

“We are the flagship team for netball in this zone... we have to represent and hold netball with integrity in everything we do, but we have to have results as well”. (C2)

Winning is a key outcome illustrated by six of the interviewees, although one interviewee noted that they *“focus more on the process”* than the outcome. The expectation of winning is higher in the Silver Ferns, although it should be the same in the Mystics team, as this is the stepping stone to the top level.

“It’s probably more the expectation as opposed to the desire to win. The expectation was higher playing for the Silver Ferns than it was for any other team”. (C3)

“The outcome of a game ... it’s crucial, we’re here to win and perform... to perform week in and week out”. (C2)

“[Winning] was huge, because the Mystics is the step before the Silver Ferns and you should have the best team in the Mystics in this franchise in the area”. (P1)

“Winning is always what you’re training for and wanting to do, you always want to win”. (P2)

Consistency is the key, which was present in 2012 in terms of having the same head and assistant coach for 2011 and 2012, and has the same potential for 2015.

“For the 2012 where we finished second – it was the consistency in coaching... The reason why we were successful in 2012 is because we had consistency for two or three years with players coming through. There wasn’t a huge difference within the group”. (P1)

“In 2012 we were playing a lot to our strengths. We knew what our strengths were. We had really good tactical plans in terms of what we were doing playing to our strengths, creating ball for inside the circle, what the outside needed to do”. (P2)

“Results are crucial and so is character and how we play. The character has to reflect the style of netball that comes out of this zone. We do that, but at the moment it’s not consistent enough to be championship winning netball”. (C2)

The margins between winning and losing can be small, but an important learning aspect from previous wins is... *let’s just focus on us*. There appear to be two dominant ideologies in the team culture currently, a sense of entitlement and blame.

“When you win confidence is up, our environment is a lot more buoyant... a lot more consistent... Teams that are winning are the teams that are extremely disciplined and have a good pass, catch, and shot”. (P3)

“This team does well when we’re successful with big moments in play and we do well when the team is fully on the same page... when the concept of how we want to play is clear and why are we doing things is very clear...Once we get over those two things of entitlement and getting rid of blame... then we will be on our way...Dealing to those situations will be key - to be able to match their values, work ethic and resilience to actual actions over and over again, repeated actions”. (C2)

However, the focus on ‘team’ cannot be compromised and needs to be reinforced through consistency of commitment from players at different levels. Players need to know what behaviours and attitudes are not acceptable.

“When something happens it needs to be ‘nipped in the bud’ immediately that time so that it’s not viral and goes through the team... You see some players in the Silver Ferns environment and then you see them in ANZ environment, totally different in terms of commitment. It’s just a different kind of person”. (P1)

“The groups that formed were a major issue. We were not playing for each other, there was a lot of talk of that, but it never really felt like we were”. (P2)

4.1 Leadership

The Northern Mystics formal and informal leadership throughout the team was highlighted by all the interviewees as an important factor in the team success. However, the following quotes also suggest that everyone's perception of leadership varies, some saw it as being the best player, others thought it was about belief in each other and some saw it as being distributed.

"Leadership is crucial, you have to have people that want to follow you so you've got to be able to lead the right way... leadership is about being the best player in your position on court". (C2)

"Everyone has a little bit of leadership in them and sometimes it differs. It's unlocking that and putting it all together – plus belief as well, that's huge as a player... having that belief in the whole team". (P1)

"Leadership is effective and dominant when you can't tell who the leader is... When everyone's leading in their different ways, that's a sign of a very strong aligned focused team. The Vixens had that nailed. Sometimes I wouldn't be able to tell who the captain of the Vixens was, because they were all contributing in their own right. Leadership is hugely important because it needs to come from everyone". (P3)

However, it is the role modelling of leadership through leading by example and reflecting the values of the team that is vital for this team's success.

"You have to be able to act and be the role model that drives and leads with determination". (C2)

"[Leadership] is incredibly important because you've got those ones coming through. To follow, they've got to believe in something". (C3)

"To be a good role model you need to lead by example everywhere and anywhere you go and whatever you do, it doesn't matter where you are, who you're with". (P1)

Leadership is not just to be expected from the senior players, but needs to include the junior players who have often already been in leadership positions themselves previously before joining the Mystics team.

“There are some junior players that I would listen to a lot more than some of the senior players. They’re more astute, they’ve got a better perspective on things and they’re looking at it externally, but they are outside that group, and they can give you some great vision on where things are at”. (C4)

“What we’re missing at the moment - we are not encouraging. Everyone’s a leader – they all have some kind of leadership in them and if we can pull that out of everyone it will form a bigger picture”. (P1)

“Encourage the young ones to contribute, everyone’s young and everyone’s shy but at times we could have made more of an effort in terms of everyone sharing”. (P3)

Leadership is about making the other players look good.

“As a senior player... I got to a point where it wasn’t about me...it became about how do I allow these kids to play the way that they want to play and get the best out of them. To figure out what’s the best way to give a piece of information to that person or to get that person on board”. (C3)

“Every decision is about what is best for the team not individuals”. (C2)

4.1.1 Captain, Coach & Senior Players

There has been consistency in the captaincy (until 2012) and consistency in coaching (2009-2012, 2014), but there is a need to align the formal and informal leadership. ‘Collaborative’ leadership and coaching styles are evident, but there is a need for ‘collective’ leadership and less individual player power.

"I don't believe they totally bought into the fact that they had to drive along with the staff to get the quality in there; they had to actually step up as well". (C4)

"Senior players should be able to talk and discuss with the other senior players... but they're not prepared to stand up to them and that's not so great... It was hard to be a leader in that team because you had little pods of people -with strong personalities.... All heading in the right direction, as opposed to random directions so they feel like a sense of belonging, which is important... Because their personalities may disrupt the unit you've got to funnel them into a one way direction". (P1)

"We had a lot of voices, and no real control... you didn't have that really clear person controlling all the wealth of experience that you've got in the team". (P2)

The captain

The captain needs to role model leadership and understand the other players that are around her.

"You need to understand each individual and know that everyone's different and what makes them tick and what doesn't. The ability to make the hard calls... you get better at it when you do it a lot more... You look at the likes of Casey for the Magic and she's definitely a good role model as a captain within a franchise unit. She's rallied the girls around, she delivers on court, so she leads by example and off the court as well... [The captain was] the voice between the players and the management... always had players' best interest". (P1).

"Need to understand when you have a captain what their strengths are... what we respect them for. Too much responsibility is put on [the captain]. It should be spread out so everyone is working to their strength". (P2)

The coach

Presenting a more traditional autocratic direct style of coaching is appropriate given the time restrictions of the Mystics being together. This direct style requires effective honest communication with players, which is respected by senior and younger players.

“One of my better coaches was someone who communicated directly to you and honestly. Wasn’t confrontational it was just honest... at least you knew where you stood”. (C3)

“Communicated really, really well... great with the young ones too. [The coach was] really good, she would listen and then say “why don’t we do it this way”... and if she didn’t agree then she would say “I don’t think that’s right.”... [The coach] made the decisions at the end... open door and would listen... really good in terms of what a good coach should be”. (P1)

The coach is instrumental in facilitating player driven, process driven performance of which both players and coaches can be proud.

“The coach needs to really be clear on what she wants from a player and as a team and listen to those experienced players about what’s happening, but ultimately make it very clear that after listening, it is what she thinks will work best for the players and as a team... put your foot down”. (P2)

“Players need to trust the coach, that what we are doing in training is preparing us for what’s out on court. Coaching has got to be the heart of the whole game our product - something she can be proud of and we can be proud of. Something that we have both collectively been working towards... Effective coaching is really important to nailing the processes that develops a good product”. (P3)

The increased physicality of the game also requires creative and innovative coaching approaches (e.g. the 'hoist' – where one player lifts another).

"A creative yet driven style of coaching". (C2)

"[The coach] looked outside the box, always had new ideas coming through, always had the basics in the back of her mind, made sure you did the basics well, but branched out to something new". (P1)

"Thinking out of the box is a positive, but... the basics needed to be covered first to make sure that everyone understood the basics of what you're trying to do or what the tactic was, what your strengths are and really reinforce and hit that home before you move on to thinking outside of the box too much".

(P2)

There is also a balance needed between the professional and personal aspects of the players' lives.

"To work with athletes on a personal level to get them through to perform - that's important as well. The most reward is from the athletes you invest that real closeness with - strong and professional". (C2)

"If you engage too much in what's happening off court you lose your focus about the real purpose - to perform on court". (C2)

"You've got all these personal things to deal with - the outside factors - so same principles in terms of on court and what they expect of you, but in terms of when you separate them. The ANZ coaches have to deal with a whole lot more". (P1)

The senior players

There is a need to involve and align the Mystics senior players, the Netball Northern U23 players and coaches to ensure the development of a clear and transparent player pathway for

the team and region. However there is also the need to pick the best players to form a winning team.

“At the ANZ you need to have the best. We’ve got a long way to go in terms of the ones coming up underneath for the Mystics. So to have the best, if they’re not here in front of you, you need to look somewhere else for the ANZ champs because you want to win. For ANZ champs you want to have the best team going forward”. (P1)

“You’ve got a wealth of knowledge with some of those girls - use everyone’s strengths”. (P2)

Challenges & Change

It should be noted that one of the underlying themes and significant changes in the game, noted by all interviewees, has been the increased physicality, which has needed adaptation by both the coaches and players.

“Physicality, understanding what physical dominance means in a game is very important and that is why it’s harder for young athletes to break through the gap, the divide between the other competition and ANZ is getting bigger and bigger to withstand that physicality of the competition. You have to be faster with a bigger anaerobic base, and jump higher than you did before, so it’s definitely about adapting to the game”. (C2)

“Physicality, the ability of players to be really strongly well-conditioned and to be able to sustain the pressure of 60 minutes of that level of netball is massive”. (C1)

“Physicality certainly stepped up, the speed has stepped up the need for cohesive team units... In the past you could have a great player, but now the teams that have the good units attacking and defence are the ones that are really starting to stand out”. (P3)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.0 Team Culture

The findings emphasised the importance that the players and coaches placed on developing a strong, positive team culture, particularly demonstrated by the following quote, *“Culture is a huge part of any team. If you have all the players buying into this culture, everyone’s on the same page and going forward”* (P1). The importance the interviewees placed on developing their team culture is supported by Goldsmith (2007) who claims a team with a positive team culture already developed with established team rituals, rites, symbols, ways of interacting and communicating with each other, is significantly more successful compared to a team without one. Further support is offered through the study completed by Williams and Hacker (1982) on a Women’s intercollegiate field hockey team in the United States, where they stressed the importance of creating and developing team culture in order to enhance team and personal happiness amongst the players. Dennison (1984) also agrees, as team culture is vital for the long-term development of the team and to promote a high degree of inclusion felt amongst all players and management.

These current findings support the view of journalist Johannson (2013a, b, c) who had raised concerns about the team culture of the Mystics. The participants acknowledged their team culture was lacking, however they did identify some important elements that were present amongst the team that could contribute towards the initial development of team culture, such as positivity, honesty and respect, and support. These were demonstrated through senior

players offering positive feedback to the inexperienced players', coaches "reading" players body language and offering extra support if needed and showing respect for the captain and coach. Such elements are crucial for the development of team culture, as supported by Goldsmith, (2007) who agrees that encouraging positivity amongst teammates inspires them to perform at their best, and in turn, assisting with the creation of a winning team culture. The findings from Heeran and Requa's (2001) research also agrees with the participants and claim athletes will perform significantly better when teammates demonstrate and offer support to one another.

5.0.1 Rites, Rituals & Symbols

Schein (2010) describes artefacts and creations as the visible, tangible elements that one sees, hears and feels about the culture. The findings showed the participants identified a lack of use of consistent, defining rituals within the team, however there were some *initial* rituals that were recognised that occurred at the start of the season. This included the team camp at the beginning of the season and the inaugural breakfast where new players were welcomed and recognised. These rituals tended to acknowledge the "new" members but did not happen on a regular basis through the season. The presentation of the dress was considered the most important ritual noted by all of the respondents as a symbol to recognise the achievement of being selected for the team, however it was also noted that the participants felt there was not the same respect held for the Mystics dress in comparison to the Silver Ferns dress.

The participants agreed it was important for the team to establish informal and formal rituals that the members feel are special and are willing to be involved with and commit to. This

finding supports Johnson et al. (2013b) that rites and rituals are vital to establish and to be upheld by team members and play a significant part in the creation of a winning team culture. The importance of rites and rituals amongst a team is also supported by Heeran and Requa's (2001) research where the female field hockey team involved in the study celebrated their wins together as a team every time they experienced success. It became a ritual that confirmed the unity of the team and one that all members were involved in, were committed to, and helped to promote future success.

5.0.2 Values & Beliefs

The development of a winning team culture is established upon collective values, expectations and rules that the members within the team learn, are upheld and then are passed on to new team members. The participants in the study agreed there were clearly individual beliefs and an inconsistent use of the team values amongst players and management and in-turn was perceived as having a detrimental impact on the performance on the team. This supports Wang and Struab's (2012) claims that a team without a core set of values to provide guidelines for all players and management to behave and abide by, will struggle to form a strong foundation to become a successful winning team.

The interviewees also stressed the importance of aligning the team culture with a more professional approach towards upholding the team values. A united front for both junior and senior players was identified so that everyone "walks the talk" and the values of the team are properly believed in, demonstrated and reinforced. This is supported by Schein (2010) and the

six steps he encourages for the establishment of team culture with the first being all team members with either formal or informal leadership responsibilities embracing the values of the team. The second, to continually reinforce the team values through various formal and informal means, which does not appear to be done currently in the Mystics team. Thirdly, for leaders to demonstrate the team values as solid when faced with a difficult situation, for example, it is important for the Mystics to react positively to a loss. The fourth step is then the emphasis that team leaders place on situations to reinforce the team values, the fifth step requires selecting members for the team who will embrace and live by the established values and the final step being that the values are reinforced through the development of the desired team culture.

The Northern Mystics netball organisation does in fact have team values documented, however there are eight of them, too many to be remembered or equally identified by the participants. There were four significant values that the interviewees did identify; work ethic, trust, family, and resilience, but these values needed to be confirmed and reinforced at the start of each season. However these four values that the participants highlighted were consistent with the four values of the Netball Northern Zone organisation; excellence (work ethic), loyalty (trust), unity (family), and integrity (resilience). Although there are the eight values linked to the Northern Mystics organisation and the four values documented for the Netball Northern Zone, the team leaders and other members are not all aware of these resulting in a need to cooperatively re-establish or create values the team itself will buy into, agree to accept and then continue to embrace situations to support these values (Cotterill, 2013). Although typical operating procedures are outlined in 'the team book' (Northern Mystics, 2014), the

interviewees expressed that a greater emphasis is required for both the formal and informal inductions to help new and old players to learn and re-establish a collective understanding of the team values. There are also other times when rituals should be incorporated, for example celebrating success. This process is vital for the creation and preservation of a winning team culture. Both the winning culture and the learning processes required in order to achieve it need to be followed to and accepted by all team members and management for it to be successful (Warner, 2011).

5.0.3 Core Assumptions

The findings clearly exhibited a collective agreement by the participants that winning was considered crucial and was the main focus of competing in the ANZ Championship competition. This is indicated particularly by the following quote; *“Well in terms of being an athlete, winning is always what you’re training for and wanting to do.... you always want to win. It was important” (P2)*. However, as the success of any high performance sports team is measured by the number of wins they accumulate, unfortunately for the Northern Mystics, a winning percentage of just 45% would not be considered by most high performance teams as being successful. The interviewees expressed varying opinions as to the reasons contributing towards their lack of winning and success, such as absence of leadership, lack of team direction, player unrest, player power and lacking in mental preparation, *“I believe that we did have the players and the skill but I don’t think every player turned up each week...I just don’t think that we have played to our full potential”*.

The factors mentioned by the interviews correlate with what Sweetenham and Parker (2009) identified as some possible factors that can hinder a team's performance and success, in particular the lack of direction by members towards a team goal as there was no real team "vision" or "goal" mentioned by the interviewees. This minimises the chances of success and winning, and is a significant part of a losing and fragmented team environment (Sweetenham & Parker, 2009). All interviewees agreed that the absence of experiencing success and winning games was having a damaging consequence on the culture of the team. This supports Heeran and Requa's (2013) claim from their research on a female high school field hockey team that losing on a frequent basis has a serious negative impact on the cohesion of a team. Further support is added by the research conducted by Trocado and Gomes (2013) that found non-winning teams and athletes gauged significantly more negatively with their own personal and team goals compared to those that were involved in successful, winning teams. The findings from the interviews suggested that there is not the degree of teamwork, togetherness, and aspirations to work towards the common goal of winning, amongst the Northern Mystics teammates that is required in order to achieve success. However, as high performing cultures are crucial for the enduring success of sport performance teams, it is indeed possible for teams to change their current team culture for the better.

Cruickshank, Collins and Minten (2013) conducted a case study to examine the key mechanisms and processes of a successful culture change programme at English Rugby Union's Leeds Carnegie. The Leeds Carnegie rugby team were named champions of English Rugby Union's second tier professional league for the first time in season 2000-2001 and were consequently

promoted to the top division for season 2001-2002. However, despite finishing fifth in their maiden season, the team were successful in qualifying for the world's most prestigious club tournament, the Heineken Cup, and winning their first ever trophy in 2004-2005. In order to investigate this successful culture change programme, interviews were conducted with team management, one specialist coach, six players and the CEO and the results revealed that culture change was effectively facilitated by team management, through shaping the physical, structural, and psychosocial context in which staff, management and players made performance-impacting choices. The study also found that culture change did not represent strict, linear steps but instead an integrated, holistic, and dynamic process was required. The research emphasised that culture change is dependent on, shaped by, and specific to the context in which it is delivered, for example, the motivations, needs, and preferences of professional sports team performers, particularly those in higher profile sports, may vary considerably and are shaped by the distinct goals of each sporting organisation and professional sports teams and athletes (Cruickshank et al., 2013).

In 2012 the Northern Mystics team gained their highest placing in their history of competing in the ANZ Championship, finishing second place on the results ladder. The interviewees identified factors such as experience of players and consistency in coaching that played a significant part in achieving this success as a team. Sweetenham and Parker (2009) argue that the factor of consistency in coaching and experiencing success in matches is important for a winning team. They stress consistency in coaching is essential if a team is to repeat their winning performances rather than it being a one-off. Wang and Straub (2012), and Heeran and Requa's

(2001) research also supports the views of the participants that coaching plays a significant role in a high performance team experiencing success, as both insist coaching is likely to be the most important factor in winning. Jowett and Cockerill (2003) claim the coach must demonstrate high quality leadership and coaching skills in terms of effective communication with players and management, employing a range of appropriate coaching styles that players respond positively to, use of appropriate forms of feedback and using effective leadership approaches, in order to play a significant role in a team achieving their goals and for the development of a successful, winning team.

5.1 Leadership

Informal and formal leadership such as identifying clearly specific roles and responsibilities of members within the team was identified by the participants as being important for team success as shown by the following quote; *“Leadership is crucial, you have to have people that want to follow you so you’ve got to be able to lead the right way...”* (C2). This supports Schein (2010) who claims that leadership plays a significant role in the establishment of a positive team culture, combined with a firm and specific set of values, beliefs and rituals, a team will perform considerably better than a team that doesn’t hold these.

Whilst the interviewees noted that team leaders acted as role models, there was a need for all players to consistently and cooperatively act together, eliminating selfishness for the greater good of the team. Sweetenham and Parker (2010) support this and claim that one of the most important factors of creating a winning team culture is to have strong leaders that lead from the front and act as role models for the other team members. These leaders must set high standards and positive examples, whilst living and breathing the winning culture they are attempting to build. The following quote expressed by one of the interviewees demonstrates that there is a place for the junior members in the team to play an active role in the leadership of the Northern Mystics and not just for the senior members.

“There are some junior players that I would listen to a lot more than some of the senior players. They’re more astute, they’ve got a better perspective on things and they’re looking at it externally, but they are outside that group, and they can give you some great vision on where things are at”. (C4)

Shared or distributed leadership styles are not only expected to be demonstrated by just the senior players in the team, but by everyone, including the junior members. Many of these junior players may have been in leadership positions previously to being selected in the Mystics team and therefore could offer a valuable contribution towards the leadership in the team. Sweetenham and Parker (2009) are strong advocates of younger players being a part of the leadership group within sports teams. They claim the 'old thinking' must be removed of only senior players being in leadership roles and replaced with the very best people for the roles, no matter if they are junior members in terms of age and experience, but knowing that these people can be influential through offering different opinions and ideas and make a difference to the culture and leadership of the team. In regards to overall success, Sweetenham and Parker (2009) agree that it is best to retain senior players who are still performing well and to applaud and recognise this; although currently there are no rituals, rites, or symbols that suggest that this occurs within the Mystics team. There needs to be an increase in the appreciation of the younger players rising up the ladder than the older ones coming down the other side, while also being more realistic about the contribution that younger players can make towards a team, not only performance-wise but also in important leadership roles too.

5.1.1 Captain, Coach & Senior Players

Collective synergy is essential for a positive team result in sport. Schein (2010) highlighted that leaders, with formal (e.g. coach, captain) and informal influence (e.g. senior players), must embrace and support the values of the team culture. Aspects of collaborative leadership were noted by some coaches and players, but needed to address the shared concerns, authentic

vision and strategies of the team, as argued by Chrislip (2002) and Chrislip and Larson (1994). However, selfishness, self-interest and individualistic thinking and attitudes from individual players was an issue that was often evident and highlighted by the respondents as suggested by the following quote; *“We had a lot of voices, and no real control... you didn’t have that really clear person controlling all the wealth of experience that you’ve got in the team” (P2)*. Therefore, there is a need for the alignment of both informal and formal leadership approaches to grow and strengthen a collective approach that will positively influence and change the team culture (Johnson et al., 2013a, b).

The need for collective leadership to improve the team culture is strongly supported by Johnson et al. (2012) who believe this approach of sharing the leadership role assists in supporting a culture where relationships are considered precious and are appreciated and team members experience a sense of pride and self-confidence. The example of how the All Blacks have incorporated collective leadership and how this approach has promoted positive changes to their team culture, eventually led to one of their most successful winning periods, hence, adding further strength to the statement that this leadership approach is essential for positive team culture development. Leadership is a pivotal characteristic in achieving success and producing a winning performance. Effective leadership contributes towards athletes feeling motivated, committed, inspired and encouraged. Aspects of collaborative leadership are prevalent within the Northern Mystics team; however the team is lacking in both collective and transformational leadership that needs to be demonstrated by the coach, the captain and the team as a collective, and is still yet to experience a high degree of success.

In order to help assist the team to achieve a winning team culture, the team needs have strong leaders that lead from the front, act as role models, set high standards, live and breathe winning culture and are willing to work towards the collective shared goal of winning. The interviewee's emphasised that aspects of transformational leadership were evident, which had a positive effect on the culture of the team and strengthened a collective vision through leading by example (Gilbertson, Blyde, Gianotti, Gilbertson, & Dougan, 2006). This supports Nazari and Soharbi (2014) who state that transformational leadership plays a significant role in the development of a shared vision of a team demonstrated largely by members leading by example. This also supports the study conducted by Kippenberger (2002), where female interviewees at the International Women's Forum indicated a high preference of a more 'transformational' leadership style of which participation by all was encouraged and power was shared, in turn encouraging the workers to be more excited and enthusiastic about their work.

National teams such as the Silver Ferns and All Blacks (Kidman et al.; 2005) are strong supporters of an empowering approach, however due to strict time constraints of the ANZ championships, an autocratic direct style of coaching is also respected and appreciated by players specifically when getting feedback and team information. Although the 'traditional' autocratic coaching approach is appreciated by the players in the team due to the short time frame of the season, the empowering approach is still strongly advocated as one of the most innovative and effective methods of coaching. Kidman (2001) supports the empowering approach in coaching as it helps to motivate players and to empower them to take responsibility of their own development and performance.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

6.0 Team Culture

The findings indicated that it is important to develop a strong team culture, one that is player driven but also supported and reinforced by coaching/management and administrative members of the 'team'. It is imperative that there is alignment of the team culture where everyone is 'on the same page' including the board, management, coaching staff and the players, all believing in the same team values and role modelling them. Although there were aspects of team culture that were evident such as positivity, honesty and respect, it was clear that essential elements of team culture were missing, such as team rites, rituals and consistent use of team values, therefore a dominant culture that suited all the whole team needed to be found.

Rites, Rituals & Symbols

There is a lack and limited use of defining team rituals. There was mention of some initial rituals such as a camp at the beginning of the season, an inauguration breakfast where new team members were formally recognised, and the presentation of the Mystics dress at the start of the season there were noted as important rituals by all interviewees. However, although this was considered important by the players, it was clear that there was not the same respect for the Mystics dress as there was for the Silver Ferns dress.

Values & Beliefs

Players and coaches agreed that players exhibited individual values and beliefs but they were not transferred into the team setting as a consistent use and demonstration of team beliefs and values. It was suggested that there were too many (8) vague values and individual beliefs, that were often dominant over agreed team values. Four values that were highlighted by the interviewees as important to them, were work ethic, trust, family, and resilience. However it is suggested that these values need to be confirmed and reinforced at the beginning and then throughout the netball season in the form of artefacts, rituals, rites, behaviours, reactions, rewards, stories and symbols. These team values and beliefs do not need to be the exact same for all teams and it is important that they do not contradict the vision established by the Mystics Board. However such values can be adjusted to reflect the particular uniqueness of the Northern Mystics team in order to portray the demographics, history, and experiences of both past and present players.

Core assumptions

The findings showed that winning matches in the ANZ Championship is considered to be very important by both the players and coaches in the team. The basis for playing franchise netball is to win, and it is what the players train for. The interviewees agreed that they haven't experienced much success in terms of winning during the 2008-2014 period of the ANZ Championship and blame factors such as not getting the team processes right, lack of preparation for games; players not being mentally prepared; too many voices and no one real person in control; player unrest and unhappiness; and finally, too much player power. On the

surface, this view seems to contradict the philosophy of “empowering” players by giving them too much power, or by employing a collective leadership approach which in turn created too many voices with no one leading or in real control of the team. These factors have had a damaging effect on the team and its players, and as the wins became fewer, the culture of the team also began to diminish. The Northern Mystics did experience some success in 2012 with the best-ever final placing finishing in 2nd place. The findings showed that the players and coaches believed the reasons for this success included good communication amongst players and team management, a well-established leadership group, consistency in the coaching position and a high degree of respect for the coach held by the team members.

6.1 Leadership

Leadership was identified as being crucial for team success. It was highlighted that the role modelling of leadership needs to be more effective both on and off the court by team leaders, and needs to come from both the senior players and the junior players in the team. There is also a need for all players to consistently and cooperatively act together and eliminating individual thinking and self-interest for the greater good of the team.

Aspects of collaborative leadership have been prevalent within the Northern Mystics team. However, the team has been lacking in both collective and transformational leadership and is has yet to experience a high degree of success. This study suggests that in order to help assist the team to develop a winning team culture, the team needs to have strong leaders that lead from the front, act as role models, set high standards, live and breathe the dimensions of a winning culture and are willing to work towards the collective shared goal of winning. There has been a lack of collective informal and formal leadership within the team and there is a need to include more collective leadership and less individual player power. The captain needs to role model leadership more effectively, understanding each individual and what they bring to the team, leading by example both on and off the court. The coach has been identified as providing an appropriate coaching style towards the athletes that is respected by all players. Although there is a lack of use of empowerment, the “traditional” autocratic style suits the players due to the strict time frame and short season of the ANZ Championship.

6.2 Implications

Northern Mystics

The Northern Mystics have been struggling to establish a successful, positive team culture, with no established set of team values and beliefs that its members have agreed upon or have bought into. The team also has a lack of rites and rituals throughout the season to help uphold the few traditions and principles of the team. The Northern Mystics team management and members need to call for the development of a more united team culture where everyone is working together towards one primary goal, to win and to achieve excellence within the ANZ Championship competition.

Netball & Sports Teams

This study has been informed by Johnson et al.'s (2012; 2013a, b) research on the All Blacks team culture and leadership. These current findings have also illustrated how Schein's theory (2010) of organizational culture involving artefacts and creations, rites and rituals, espoused values and embedded core assumptions can be applied to a team sport setting. It is expected that the findings related to the development of team culture and various leadership approaches can be transferred and applied to different sport teams. It is hoped that further research will be undertaken with players and coaches from both high performing and non-successful teams.

6.3 Postscript

In 2015 the Northern Mystics overall team performance and winning success were considerably improved compared to 2014, by reaching the championship semi-final. The team finished first in the New Zealand conference, winning seven and losing four of their thirteen games. However, they then lost the conference final against the Waikato/Bay of Plenty Magic (54-57) and the subsequent away semi-final against the Queensland Firebirds (44-60), the eventual competition winners. Whilst the research for this current study was undertaken in 2014 and a subsequent report with recommendation presented to the Northern Mystics management team (McCarthy & Martin, 2014), no formal evaluation was undertaken of the team's performance in the 2015 ANZ Championship. However, the Northern Mystics coach Debbie Fuller, indicated that the team culture had developed significantly and

"...puts the harmonious atmosphere throughout the whole team and management down to positive intent... I think there's a real curiosity in the team this year, they've really come together... There's real intent and willingness in the group to do the right thing, to work to capacity in every training session and that makes a huge difference - it makes my job easy". (ANZ Championships, 2015).

The underlined aspects of this quote demonstrate the development of an effective team culture through collective leadership; themes which have been highlighted in successful learning organisations throughout this thesis. These findings raise the questions as to whether

Netball New Zealand is doing enough to promote leadership and coaching at all levels of the game, and do they offer sufficient workshops on building team culture and leadership. Further questions this research has provided are why have Australians been brought in to coach New Zealand Franchises, as in the case of the Waikato Bay of Plenty Magic, and what does this say about the development of coaches by Netball New Zealand? Is enough being done at the levels below the ANZ Championship to ensure that players have quality coaching, collective leadership is encouraged and that players are appropriately conditioned?

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APPENDIX A Northern Mystics Winning Percentages 2008-2014

Year	Played	Won	Lost	Draw	Winning %	Placing
2008	13	5	8	0	38.46%	7 TH
2009	13	3	10	0	23.07%	8 TH
2010	13	7	6	0	53.84%	6 TH
2011	13	9	4	0	69.23%	4 th
2012	13	10	3	0	76.92%	2 nd
2013	13	1	12	0	7.69%	10 TH
2014	13	6	7	0	46.15%	7 TH
2008-2014	91	41	50	0	45.05%%	
TOTAL						

APPENDIX B Northern Mystics Results 2008-2014

2008						
6 th April	Northern Mystics	44	vs	48	Canterbury Tactix	Lost
13 April	Waikato BOP Magic	56	vs	52	Northern Mystics	Lost
19 April	Northern Mystics	45	vs	49	West Coast Fever	Lost
26 April	Queensland Firebirds	46	vs	40	Northern Mystics	Lost
5 May	Southern Steel	48	vs	50	Northern Mystics	Won
12 May	Northern Mystics	45	vs	59	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
26 May	Central Pulse	48	vs	54	Northern Mystics	Won
2 June	Northern Mystics	50	vs	46	Canterbury Tactix	Won
9 June	Northern Mystics	65	vs	64	New South Wales Swifts	Lost
14 June	Northern Mystics	47	vs	48	Adelaide Thunderbirds	Lost
23 June	Northern Mystics	47	vs	41	Southern Steel	Won
28 June	Northern Mystics	42	vs	28	Central Pulse	Won
6 July	Melbourne Vixens	56	vs	47	Northern Mystics	Lost

2009						
6 April	Northern Mystics	38	Vs	51	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
12 April	Northern Mystics	54	Vs	50	Central Pulse	Won
20 April	West Coast Fever	57	Vs	46	Northern Mystics	Lost
27 April	New South Wales Swifts	59	Vs	55	Northern Mystics	Lost
4 May	Central Pulse	60	Vs	61	Northern Mystics	Won
11 May	Northern Mystics	52	Vs	61	Southern Steel	Lost
18 May	Waikato BOP Magic	50	Vs	35	Northern Mystics	Lost
1 June	Northern Mystics	47	Vs	46	Canterbury Tactix	Won
6 June	Adelaide Thunderbirds	58	Vs	34	Northern Mystics	Lost

15 June	Southern Steel	52	Vs	50	Northern Mystics	Lost
20 June	Northern Mystics	57	Vs	61	Melbourne Vixens	Lost
27 June	Northern Mystics	57	Vs	59	Queensland Firebirds	Lost
6 July	Canterbury Tactix	63	VS	56	Northern Mystics	Lost

2010						
20 March	Northern Mystics	55	Vs	52	Adelaide Thunderbirds	Won
27 March	Central Pulse	50	Vs	61	Northern Mystics	Won
3 April	Northern Mystics	46	Vs	55	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
12 April	Queensland Firebirds	71	Vs	54	Northern Mystics	Lost
19 April	Melbourne Vixens	62	Vs	51	Northern Mystics	Lost
24 April	Northern Mystics	59	Vs	50	Canterbury Tactix	Won
3 May	Waikato BOP Magic	49	VS	46	Northern Mystics	Lost
10 May	Southern Steel	49	Vs	52	Northern Mystics	Won
17 May	Northern Mystics	61	Vs	60	Central Pulse	Won
29 May	Northern Mystics	48	Vs	54	New South Wales Swifts	Lost
5 June	Northern Mystics	62	Vs	53	West Coast Fever	Won
14 June	Northern Mystics	43	Vs	50	Southern Steel	Lost
20 June	Canterbury Tactic	47	Vs	58	Northern Mystics	Won

2011						
14 February	Northern Mystics	51	Vs	34	Southern Steel	Won
19 February	Central Pulse	44	Vs	54	Northern Mystics	Won
24 February	Northern Mystics	39	Vs	45	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
6 March	Northern Mystics	56	Vs	54	Melbourne Vixens	Won
13 March	Waikato BOP Magic	46	Vs	47	Northern Mystics	Won
21 March	Adelaide Thunderbirds	57	Vs	55	Northern Mystics	Lost

26 March	Northern Mystics	52	Vs	61	Queensland Firebirds	Lost
2 April	Northern Mystics	61	Vs	48	Central Pulse	Won
7 April	Canterbury Tactix	45	Vs	58	Northern Mystics	Won
11 April	West Coast Fever	54	Vs	56	Northern Mystics	Won
18 April	New South Wales Swifts	53	Vs	46	Northern Mystics	Lost
24 April	Northern Mystics	62	Vs	43	Canterbury Tactix	Won
1 May	Southern Steel	35	Vs	47	Northern Mystics	Won

2012						
1 April	Northern Mystics	51	Vs	47	Central Pulse	Won
8 April	Waikato BOP Magic	41	VS	47	Northern Mystics	Won
16 April	Northern Mystics	52	Vs	45	West Coast Fever	Won
22 April	Northern Mystics	48	Vs	50	Adelaide Thunderbirds	Lost
29 April	Central Pulse	47	Vs	51	Northern Mystics	Won
6 May	Queensland Firebirds	56	Vs	43	Northern Mystics	Lost
13 May	Southern Steel	45	Vs	49	Northern Mystics	Won
20 MAY	Melbourne Vixens	45	Vs	49	Northern Mystics	Won
27 May	Northern Mystics	57	Vs	56	Canterbury Tactix	Won
11 June	Northern Mystics	60	Vs	49	Southern Steel	Won
17 June	Northern Mystics	46	Vs	48	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
24 June	Canterbury Tactix	55	Vs	64	Northern Mystics	Won
1 July	Northern Mystics	50	Vs	49	New South Wales Swifts	Won

2013						
25 March	Northern Mystics	46	Vs	60	Melbourne Vixens	Lost
31 March	West Coast Fever	80	Vs	53	Northern Mystics	Lost
7 April	Northern Mystics	51	Vs	72	Queensland	Lost

15 April	Canterbury Tactix	80	Vs	78	Northern Mystics	Lost
21 April	Northern Mystics	69	Vs	68	Central Pulse	Won
29 April	Southern Steel	67	Vs	52	Northern Mystics	Lost
5 May	Northern Mystics	57	Vs	61	Canterbury Tactix	Lost
12 May	Northern Mystics	63	Vs	73	Southern Steel	Lost
20 May	Central Pulse	63	Vs	48	Northern Mystics	Lost
26 May	New South Wales Swifts	63	Vs	44	Northern Mystics	Lost
10 June	Northern Mystics	50	Vs	60	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
16 June	Adelaide Thunderbirds	64	Vs	48	Northern Mystics	Lost
24 June	Waikato BOP Magic	68	Vs	40	Northern Mystics	Lost

2014						
2 March	Melbourne Vixens	58	Vs	34	Northern Mystics	Lost
10 March	Northern Mystics	36	Vs	50	Waikato BOP Magic	Lost
16 March	Northern Mystics	47	Vs	53	Central Pulse	Lost
24 March	Northern Mystics	71	Vs	68	Adelaide Thunderbirds	Won
30 March	Queensland Firebirds	58	Vs	50	Northern Mystics	Lost
6 April	Southern Steel	61	Vs	67	Northern Mystics	Won
13 April	Northern Mystics	65	Vs	62	Canterbury Tactix	Won
20 April	Waikato BOP Magic	56	Vs	50	Northern Mystics	Lost
28 May	Canterbury Tactix	60	vs	61	Northern Mystics	Won
4 May	Northern Mystics	61	Vs	73	Southern Steel	Lost
18 May	Central Pulse	49	Vs	45	Northern Mystics	Lost
26 May	Northern Mystics	63	Vs	51	West Coast Fever	Won
1 June	Northern Mystics	56	Vs	53	New South Wales Swifts	Won

APPENDIX C Interview Questions

Team

- What were your reasons for wanting to play for/coach the Northern Mystics?
- When you were first selected how did it feel and what did it mean to you?
- Can you describe some of the team rituals (if any) and what they meant to you?
- Can you describe some of the team values (if any) and what they meant to you?
- We talk about 'induction' as the process where insiders let a newcomer know what being part of the team should mean to them: How were you inducted into the team? Did that induction process change over time?
- How has being in the Northern Mystics netball team differed (if any) to other teams you have been in? ANZ? National?
- **Stories:** What stories can you recall that might highlight what we have covered here?

Dealing with Success and Failure

- Winning/losing in terms of being a member of the Northern Mystics, how important is the outcome of the game in terms of winning or losing?
- What was the win that stands out in your memory? How did the team respond?
- The team has steadily made their way up the competition ladder every season from 7th in 2008 to 2nd in 2012. What are the main factors you believe has contributed towards this?
- How has being in the Northern Mystics netball team differed (if any) to other teams you have been in? ANZ? National?
- **Stories:** What stories can you recall that might highlight what we have covered here?

Adaptation

- During your time as Northern Mystics (coach/captain/senior player) what were some of the biggest change(s) to the game that you experienced?
- In your era as coach /captain/senior player what form of communication took place?
- Were there issues (if any) that divided the team? On the court/off the court?

- How important is culture within the team?
- How would you describe the team culture of the Northern Mystics?
- What are some of the key factors distinctive to the team culture?
- How has being in the Northern Mystics netball team differed (if any) to other teams you have been in? ANZ? National?
- **Stories:** What stories can you recall that might highlight what we have covered here?

Leadership

- During your time with the Northern Mystics, what do you think the Board looked for in terms of its coaches and captains?
- Why do you think you were selected as captain/ coach?
- How important is leadership within the team?
- Do you believe that leadership contributes towards a winning netball team? How so?
- During your time as the Northern Mystics captain/coach/senior player how did you demonstrate leadership?
- Has the way you demonstrate leadership within the Northern Mystics differed from previous teams you have been a member of? If so, how? Why?
- What was one of your biggest challenges, and how did you respond to it? On the court/off the court?
- **Stories:** What stories can you recall that might highlight what we have covered here?

Coaching

- How would you describe your/the coaching style with the Northern Mystics
- Has your/the coaching style for the Northern Mystics changed from previous teams you have been with? If so, how? Why?
- How important is effective coaching in creating a winning netball team?
- **Stories:** What stories can you recall that might highlight what we have covered here?

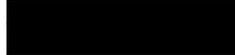
APPENDIX D Ethics Form



MASSEY UNIVERSITY ALBANY

12 March 2014

Lana McCarthy



Dear Lana

Re: Team culture and leadership in the ASB Netball Champs

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 25 February 2014.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."

"If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz"

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

cc A/Prof Andy Martin
School of Sport & Exercise
Manawatu campus

Prof S Stannard HoS
School of Sport & Exercise
Manawatu campus

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council