



PH.D. AND M.SC. PROGRAMS

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Dear Michael,

**Re: Summary of Survey Findings on the Effects of Apologies in Ice Hockey**

Recently, coaches in your organization participated in a study that examined the effects of apologies in ice hockey. The time coaches spent completing a survey is greatly appreciated, and we'd like to share some of the results with you.

Study Background

We were interested in learning more about what individuals can do after making a mistake to maintain the trust and respect of the people they let down. We were struck how leaders in the public eye seem to express remorse so infrequently for mistakes they make. In terms of hockey, the book *Tough Calls: NHL Referees and Linesmen Tell their Story* (1997) by Dick Irvin, describes how apologies made by NHL referees and linesmen to coaches are also infrequent, but, when they do happen, they seemed effective in restoring trust and credibility. To explore this more thoroughly, we invited head coaches of competitive teams from the Ottawa District Minor Hockey Association (ODMHA) and the Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL) to participate in a study. Coaches were given questionnaires that asked them to think about one of four scenarios: (1) a situation in which a referee with whom you are familiar DID NOT apologize for making a mistake in a game that was IMPORTANT; (2) a situation in which a referee with whom you are familiar DID NOT apologize for making a mistake in a game that was NOT IMPORTANT; (3) a situation in which a referee with whom you are familiar DID apologize for making a mistake in a game that was NOT IMPORTANT; and (4) a situation in which a referee with whom you are familiar DID apologize for making a mistake in a game that was IMPORTANT.

Study Results

One-hundred and fifty-six coaches completed surveys. Our analysis of the data produced several interesting findings. *First*, coaches believed that they were treated more fairly by a referee that had, on one or more occasion, apologized for making a mistake compared to a referee that had not apologized. *Second*, coaches felt there was more trust between themselves and a referee that had apologized, than those referees who had not apologized after making a mistake. *Finally*, referees that had apologized were perceived by coaches as more "transformational" in their leadership style in relation to referees that had not apologized. (By "transformational" leadership, we mean more inspiring, more stimulating, and more motivating). Interestingly, our analysis showed that the importance of the game did not change this result. In other words, referees which made a mistake and apologized scored significantly higher on trust, fairness, and transformational leadership in games that were important and not important. These results will be shared with the Canadian Hockey Association (CHA), GTHL, and ODMHA, and we intend to use these findings in a scientific paper on the role of apologies and leadership.

We thank you for your time and interest in this study. If you have any questions, then please feel free to contact Sean Tucker at 613-384-0133 or [1st8@qlink.queensu.ca](mailto:1st8@qlink.queensu.ca).

Sincerely,

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Graduate Student

Dr. Julian Barling  
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Dr. Nick Turner  
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