

Building and Elevating the Coach-Athlete Relationship:
Reported Behaviors of Effective High School Athletic Coaches

Hannah Owings Olson

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

2014

Reading Committee:

Edward Taylor, Chair

Clayton Cook

Sara Lopez

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

College of Education

©Copyright 2014
Hannah Owings Olson

University of Washington

Abstract

Building and Elevating the Coach-Athlete Relationship:
Reported Behaviors of Effective High School Athletic Coaches

Hannah Owings Olson

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Ed Taylor
Undergraduate Academic Affairs / College of Education

The relationship between a coach and an athlete lies at the heart of the athletic experience. This relationship can profoundly impact how a student-athlete experiences their sport, as well as their overall development as a young adult. Despite this, research focused on effective coaching practices remains an under-studied area of inquiry, particularly at the high school level. The purpose of this research was to better understand coaching behaviors that lead to quality coach-athlete relationships and how positive relationships manifest themselves at the individual and team levels. This qualitative study examined 24 high school Varsity head coaches and assistant coaches in the Pacific Northwest. Surveys, semi-structured interviews, and on-site observations were utilized to solicit coach opinions and perceptions on how relationships with athletes are built and elevated. Components of the International Sports Coaching Framework and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems

Theory were adapted to create a conceptual framework in which this study was grounded. Findings suggest that a strong coaching philosophy and baseline of sport knowledge underlie the relationship building process between high school coaches and their athletes. Demonstration of care, effective communication, as well as consistent and transparent behavior emerged as primary themes for relationship building. Findings also identify the creation of leadership and ownership opportunities for athletes as a cornerstone of effective coaching. Individual and team outcomes resulting from quality coach-athlete dyads are discussed, focused primarily on the benefits of committed athletes and the positive team environment that results. Findings tied to the barriers of relationship building are summarized, in addition to ways in which this study can inform future research centered around quality coaching practices in the high school environment and broader athletic context.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	i
List of Tables.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction of the Issue.....	1
Gaps in High School Athletics Literature.....	1
Primary Coaching Domains.....	3
Physical and Pedagogical Knowledge.....	5
Professional and Business Responsibilities.....	6
Intrapersonal / Self-Knowledge.....	6
Interpersonal Relationship and Team Impact.....	7
Purpose of this Study.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	11
Effective Coaching Research.....	11
The Complexity of Coaching.....	11
The Impact of Philosophy on Coaching Behavior.....	18
Relationships Between Athletes and Coaches.....	21
Hiring & Training High School Coaches.....	24
Effective Teaching in the Classroom.....	26
Key Themes from Effective Teaching Literature.....	26
Building Strong Relationships in the Classroom.....	31
Developmental Factors of High School Learners.....	33
Physical Development.....	34
Neurological Development.....	35
Emotional and Psychological Characteristics.....	36
Social Development.....	36
Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks.....	38
International Sports Coaching Framework.....	38
Types of Coaching Knowledge.....	39
Functional Areas of Coaching Practice.....	42
Ecological Systems Theory.....	46
The EST Model, Adapted.....	47
ISCF & EST, Adapted: A Conceptual Framework.....	52
Chapter 4: Methods and Data Analysis.....	56
Setting and Participant Selection.....	56
Data Collection Strategy and Procedures.....	59
Site Entry & Insider Perspective.....	59
Data Sources.....	60
Data Analysis.....	63
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion.....	66
Coaching Knowledge and Experience.....	66
Coaching Style.....	68

Coaching Philosophy and Values.....	72
Sport-Based Development.....	73
Participation Opportunities and the High School Experience.....	76
Making the Sport Experience Fun.....	78
Behaviors for Building Relationships.....	80
Sport Knowledge.....	81
Demonstration of Care.....	82
Displaying Transparency and Consistency.....	86
Effective Communication.....	89
Creating Leadership and Ownership Opportunities.....	91
Exhibit Your Passion.....	93
Individual Outcomes.....	95
Hard Work and Coachability.....	96
Act as Leaders.....	98
Collaboration and Communication.....	99
Appropriate Risk Taking.....	101
Team Outcomes.....	102
Barriers to Relationship Building.....	103
Managing the Time Crunch in High School Athletics.....	104
High School Student Maturity.....	106
Generational Gaps.....	108
Motivational Gap.....	110
Playing Time and Lineups.....	111
Summarizing the Findings.....	112
Chapter 6: Limitations and Future Directions.....	114
Limitations.....	114
Future Directions.....	115
Conclusion.....	119
Sources.....	120
Appendices.....	133
A – Participant Recruitment Email: Head Coaches.....	133
B – Participant Recruitment Email: Assistant Coaches.....	134
C – Head Coach Intake Survey.....	135
D – Interview Protocol: Head Coach.....	136
E – Interview Protocol: Assistant Coach.....	138
F – Coach Observation Behavior Chart.....	140

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure Number</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. <i>Four domains of effective coaching; summary of existing frameworks.</i>	5
2. <i>Synthesized coaching domains from existing literature with ISCF functional area overlay.</i>	44
3. <i>Ecosystem of a high school athletic coach in the Pacific Northwest.</i>	48
4. <i>Conceptual framework for coach-athlete relationship quality & outcomes.</i>	53
5. <i>Summary of key findings.</i>	113

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table Number</u>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. Summary of high school logistical data, 2010-2013.</i>	56
<i>2. Data source-by-research-question matrix.</i>	61
<i>3. Summary of logistical data from head coach intake surveys.</i>	66
<i>4. Behavioral coaching style of head coach interviewees.</i>	67

DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad who raised a strong-willed, determined girl and told her she was smart enough and talented enough to do anything in the world she could dream. Thank you for teaching me to put in the work, laugh hard, and believe in myself. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my biggest fans, I am forever grateful for your love, support, and crazy antics. Mom, Dad, Ryan, Emma, Steve, Sharman, Ross, Greg, Pam, Jeff, and Kelly ... thank you for always being there to cheer me on. Our clan is the best. To Gretchen, Bill, Walter, and Odell: I had to get these brains from somewhere and for that, I thank you.

To my big-hearted and one-of-a-kind husband Ryan, you deserve your own shout out for being a voice of reason when I most needed it and supporting me when I went completely off the reservation. I appreciate your love every day. Lucky me!

I am also forever indebted to my advisor, Ed Taylor, for being kind, thoughtful, and pushing me in new directions through fun and authentic conversation. You are a fabulous person, sir! To my committee members Clay Cook, Pat Dobel, and Sara Lopez, I thank all of you for challenging me to think critically about my work and being so generous with your time. Perhaps most importantly, I thank you for making the Ph.D. process smooth and pushing me towards the finish line.

And last, but not least, I want to thank the Center for Leadership in Athletics faculty and staff for their generous support of my research. Important and impactful work comes out of the Gilman Building and I feel so fortunate to be a part of those efforts.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF THE ISSUE

Scholarly work focused on the practice of sport coaches remains an emerging area of inquiry within academia. Despite the upsurge in quality research in the last decade, many scholars believe that coaching remains an ill-defined and under-researched topic within education (e.g. Cushion et al., 2003; Jones, 2006; Lyle, 2002). One such area is that of high school athletics and the opportunities and challenges that exist for coaches within that context. Specifically, little is known about how coaches build quality relationships with their athletes. The focus of this dissertation is to better understand that relationship building process as well as the individual and team outcomes that result from strong relationships between coaches and athletes. This introductory chapter serves to provide foundational and background knowledge tied to this topic, as well as introduce the research questions that drove this study.

I. Gaps in High School Athletics Literature

In reviewing the literature tied to high school athletics research, several issues emerge. First, the craft of high school coaching has historically been highly oversimplified in sport research. High school athletic coaching jobs have become increasingly complex as the landscape of sports in the United States has evolved. Coaching is no longer simply a physical education profession. While teaching sport skills and providing tactical knowledge remain an integral part of the job, maintaining the complex and interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete is central to the profession (Lyle, 2002) and, argued by some, to be the most crucial thing that coaches must do. Healthy coach-athlete relationships are central to the positive youth development outcomes that are possible

through sport. Coaches are ultimately educators, acting as mentors, role models, and advocates for their athletes (Owings, 2013).

Additionally, coaching literature has done a poor job accounting for the improvisation necessary to manage the complex activity of coaching (Jones & Wallace, 2005) and has not captured the artistry present in great athletic coaches. Coaching jobs are wrought with professional responsibilities and business activities: logistics and administrative work, academic assistance and advising, as well as external relations and community outreach. Simply engaging in this multitude of tasks, each with its own distinct set of expectations, is a demanding endeavor. To balance these roles in the inherently fluid, dynamic, and continually changing environment of sport is a highly complex challenge. Effective coaches are masterful at balancing a multitude of roles and should be studied as orchestrators of many responsibilities. To date, many frameworks pose coaching as an all-too-simplistic endeavor. As Bowes & Jones (2006) suggest, coaching should be studied in a way that captures the complicated and ambiguous nature of the profession.

Secondly, while more targeted work is on the rise, existing research tends to generalize findings across contexts inherently dissimilar to high school athletic programs. It is crucial that athletics research focused on the high school context take into account factors specific to that environment in order to most optimally inform the practice of coaches. Because high school sports are a central component of school culture and local community, athletics tends to be a highly visible enterprise. As a result, sport coaches' work exists within a high stakes environment, fully accessible to the public and school community. Scantling & Lackey's (2005) description of coaching as a pressure cooker profession seems apt and appropriate, given the evolving semi-professional nature of high

school athletics in recent years. The high visibility and pressures associated with that exposure are often ignored in scholarly work. In addition, the salient forces that impact the choices and behavior of coaches (Cross & Lyle, 1999) are an understudied area within athletics. Existing literature does not take into account the impact that external stakeholders have on a coach's decision-making and behavior.

Another consideration when working at the high school level is that high school students are at a distinct phase in their development. High school students are socially, emotionally, and cognitively unique in very specific ways. To date, this premise has been almost ignored in athletics research. Frameworks for effective coaching should take into the account the specific developmental needs of the athletes with whom the coach works. In this case, we have high school learners with very specific needs. These needs are based on the physical and neurological changes occurring during late adolescence, as well as the psychological and social development taking place in this age group. For the high school coach, it is important to use what we know from the sciences to inform our coaching practices and address the specific needs of adolescents. Much of the literature addresses elite coaches who work with intercollegiate, professional, and podium-bound athletes or, on the other end of the spectrum, recreational youth athletes. There appears to be a general shortage of research focused on best practices for working with the adolescent athlete in the high school context. The specific needs of high school athletes as learners and individuals should underpin studies in this type of research.

II. Primary Coaching Domains

More traditional social science disciplines, like psychology and sociology, have a rich and robust scholarly history. Unfortunately, because research across high school athletics

is still in its infancy, there remain more un-pursued and unanswered questions than those that have been formally addressed. Despite this, there is an upward trend in athletics research focused on defining effective coaching in varying contexts (e.g. Jones, 2006; International Council for Coaching Excellence & Association of Summer Olympic International Federation, 2012). Unfortunately, recent scholarly work is often ignored in lieu of non-empirical work from individual coaches or athletes. Autobiographical books and articles with advice and reflections from well-known coaches are easily found when exploring the concept of coaching effectiveness. While these portrayed experiences may certainly be valid and helpful in varying ways, they lack the theoretical grounding required of a solid foundational body of work.

As we turn our attention to the literature with an empirical basis, there is a large variation across scholars as they seek to define to what makes a coach effective (e.g. Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Bowes & Jones, 2006; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Furthermore, there is also a large variation in terms of what level and environment each framework is intended for and could potentially be applied towards. For example, the Sport-Based Youth Development framework described by Up2Us (2009) is quite appropriate at the youth and community level, yet does not map on as well to the collegiate or elite athletic environment. Its applicability at the high school level could also be debated, depending on the type of athletic program being examined. Despite these variations and differences, four coaching domains emerge somewhat universally from frameworks of effective coaching¹: physical and pedagogical knowledge, professional and business responsibilities, intrapersonal/self-

¹ It is important to note that that these four areas reflect the author's attempt to summarize existing frameworks and, as a result, may not be wholly reflective of the full body of literature related to this topic.

knowledge, as well as interpersonal relationships and team impact (see Figure 1). All four coaching domains are described briefly in the sections that follow to set the stage for the study at hand, however the domains most relevant to this work (*Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Knowledge*), are described more fully in the literature review.

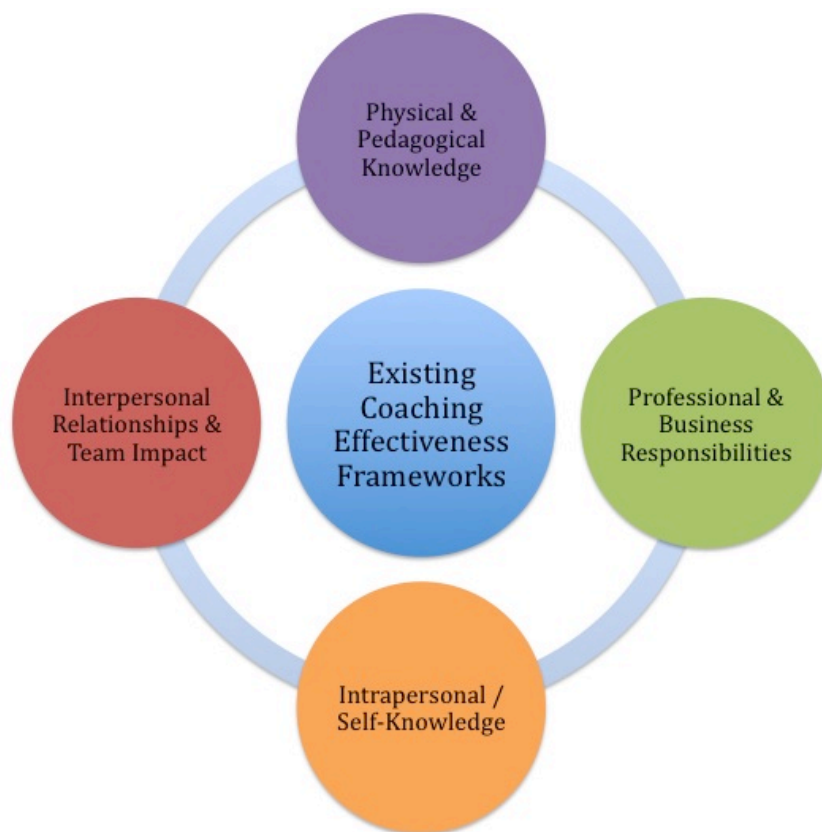


Figure 1. Four domains of effective coaching. Summary of existing frameworks.

Physical and Pedagogical Knowledge. While relationship building and managing logistics are an important part of the high school coaching role, having sport-specific or content knowledge is a necessary component of good coaching. In fact, sport knowledge is often seen as a pre-requisite for quality coaching (International Council for Coaching

Excellence & Association of Summer Olympic International Federation, 2012) in many empirical frameworks. Effective coaches must know their sport intimately and also be able to strategize the best ways to structure their knowledge in the form of training plans and game day execution. The coach must not only possess content knowledge, but also be able to effectively transmit that knowledge effectively to student-athletes. This transmission is dependent on a basic understanding of pedagogy and teaching techniques, appropriate for the developmental level of the athlete. Furthermore, there is an expectation that a coach will continually seek out new knowledge and stay abreast of current skills, strategies, and techniques relevant to their sport.

Professional and Business Responsibilities. While much of the focus on coaching is often relegated to what happens on the field of play, there exist supporting activities tied to program success. This domain includes many of the beyond-sport roles historically not part of the coaching profession: scheduling practice and competition, website management, fundraising, managing equipment and facilities, driving marketing initiatives, and others. In addition, professional responsibilities of a high school coach also include communicating with parents, staying in touch with school administration, and connecting with the local community, as communicating with constituents and program stakeholders remains imperative.

Intrapersonal / Self-Knowledge. The element of knowing one's self is present within much of the effective coaching literature. First and foremost, a coach must be able to define his or her own coaching values. These values often take the form of a coaching philosophy or mission statement. Not only must a coach be able to verbalize these values,

but also execute them in their daily work. Furthermore, good coaches should have a general awareness of their leadership style and how that impacts athletic program stakeholders. This style undoubtedly affects coaching behavior and interactions that the coach has with the team and individual players. Also tied to the *Intrapersonal* domain is the impact of prior experiences. Many coaches were athletes themselves at one time and/or have some level of experience in a coaching role. These past experiences contribute to many things: the coach's view on sport as a whole, team dynamics, or individual performance, just to name a few. The impact that prior experience in sport has on a coach's behavior must be considered. Lastly, regularly spending time to reflect on one's coaching practice and making adjustments to behavior based on those reflections is also a critical component to the *Intrapersonal* domain. Several frameworks highlight the importance of reflection and adaptation.

Interpersonal Relationships and Team Impact. Building and maintaining strong relationships with athletes lies at the center of the coaching profession (Lyle, 2002). If a trusting and healthy coach-athlete relationship can be developed, a platform for strong youth development outcomes and athlete learning is created (Scales, et al., 2006). For example, we know that quality relationships can lead to higher motivation, satisfaction, and performance in athletes (e.g. Olympiou, et al., 2008; Iso-Ahola, 1995). Conversely, learning and development can be hindered if a trusting relationship between coach and athlete is lacking. A strong, base level relationship opens the door for an enhanced, higher-level relationship over time. If coaches are able to understand their sport discipline as well as the complex business of how their athletes learn and develop (Parsloe & Wray, 2000), they will be able to serve in a mentoring and modeling capacity for their athletes. Thus, it is clear

that a strong relationship is important, yet behaviors to achieve that type of relationship have yet to be fully defined in athletics literature. More specifically, behaviors tied to quality coach-athletes in the high school context have not been explored fully. The *Interpersonal* domain and, more precisely, how a relationship is built between high school coaches and athletes, is the focus of this study.

III. Purpose of this Study

While these four domains provide a good starting point for exploring coaching effectiveness, it should be noted that an additional shortcoming exists when reviewing the literature. Most effective coaching frameworks tend to describe what coaches ‘should be’ at a very high, theoretical level. What these descriptions lack are tangible, evidence-based suggestions for actions and behaviors that result in positive coaching outcomes. For example, framework upon framework suggests that coaches should act in a mentor capacity for their athletes (e.g. Jones, 2006). However, the behaviors associated with being a good mentor are not specifically defined. If coaches are to be successful, it is imperative that they acquire knowledge as to what types of coaching behavior are most effective for motivating and connecting with their athletes (Grove, et. al, 1999; Laughlin & Laughlin, 1994). This is a growing body of work in coaching effectiveness literature, as assessment of behavior is traditionally not a part of coaching education frameworks.² According to Gilbert (2002), only 4% of articles in coaching science literature have focused on coaching behaviors and how they are measured. The focus of this study is to look specifically at

² Both Chelladurai (1980) and Smith & Smoll (1977) have published influential work in the field, taking behavior-based approaches in looking at sport leadership. These models were excluded from this review, as neither are specific to the high school context, nor look specifically at the coach-athlete relationship as a unit of analysis.

behaviors in order to contribute to the growing body of work in athletics research. Specifically, this study will unpack the *Interpersonal* domain of effective coaching and the behaviors tied to the development of strong athlete-coach relationships. However, and as Cushion (2007) warns, to create a model prematurely with a limited understanding of impacting factors can adversely affect the foundation and evolution of coaching knowledge. Thus, the challenge of this research is to create a conceptual framework that takes into full consideration the pedagogical, social, environmental, and psychological implications of the coach-athlete relationship. This includes consideration of individual coaching philosophy and values, the complex nature of coaching as a profession, the unique characteristics of the high school student-athlete, as well as environmental and external stakeholder impacts. Consideration of these elements into a single, integrated framework would greatly contribute to the athletics research related to coach-athlete relationships, as well as high school sports.

The purpose of this research is to better understand the specific behaviors that correlate with effective relationship building between athletes and coaches at the high school level. Pursuing research regarding best practices for coaching behavior is important in order to better support sport educators who are responsible for the development outcomes of adolescent athletes. This qualitative study addresses the following questions:

1. In what ways do coaching philosophies and environmental influences drive the behaviors of coaches in their daily work?
2. Which behaviors do coaches perceive to be the most effective in building relationships with their athletes?
3. Why and how do relationships between coaches and athletes evolve?

4. What barriers exist that impede the development of positive coach-athlete relationships?

5. In what ways are individual and team outcomes impacted by the types of relationships that exist between coach and athlete?

By investigating these questions, we are better situated to understand the complexity of the coach-athlete relationship, provide improved support for athletic coaches and, consequently, create better outcomes for athletes. The goal is that these findings will result in a more integrated framework that can better prepare coaches for the complex and multifaceted environment in which their craft resides. Because many coaches receive little to no formal training related to specific behaviors central to effective coaching (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001), this study provides valuable information for athletic directors, school administrators, and coaches who seek a tool that defines such behaviors.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many scholars believe that “coaching remains an ill-defined and under-theorised field” (Jones, 2006, p. 5) within educational research. On the whole, existing work tends to oversimplify the endeavor of coaching, generalize findings across sport contexts, and does not capitalize on empirical research from similar, more-refined academic fields. With that said, the trend towards effectively capturing the true essence of the coaching profession is on the rise in recent years. Specifically, quality work has emerged in the last decade that has greatly advanced our knowledge tied to the craft of coaching. In the sections that follow, literature related to effective coaching frameworks and the profession of coaching is detailed as it relates to high school coaches. Additionally, relevant work from the fields of psychology, biology, and sociology are discussed briefly.

I. Effective Coaching Research

As aforementioned, the endeavor of coaching is not fully understood from a scholarly standpoint. In part, this is due to the relative ‘newness’ of athletics research within academics. Additionally, the landscape of sports in the United States has changed dramatically in recent decades, essentially changing how coaching jobs are defined and thus, how they should be researched. Existing literature tied to the roles of coaches, the complexity inherent in a coaching job, as well as environmental impacts and contextual factors are discussed below in the hopes of providing a foundational baseline for this study as well as future research around best practices for high school coaches.

The Complexity of Coaching. The job of a modern day high school athletics coach is by no means simplistic. Coaching is a multi-faceted, relational endeavor that exists

within a fluid and dynamic, ever-changing environment. Despite this, traditional coaching literature tends to be top-down and reflects coaches as the sole dictators of athlete behavior and the athletic experience (Slack, 2000). This notion highly underestimates the complexity of a current day athletic coach's activities and social interactions. Instead, the practice of coaching should be examined from a wider lens to "conceive of coaches as inventive practitioners who work in ... a complex and ambiguous way" (Cushion, 2007, p. 396) within diverse social environments. Bowes & Jones (2006) agree with this claim and suggest that coaching "is an environment characterized by ambiguity and obscurity and, hence, needs to be researched as such" (p. 242).

Because coaching work is non-routine and therefore inherently problematic, it is important to build frameworks flexible enough to withstand constant change (Cassidy et al., 2004). Up until now, coaching frameworks have done a poor job accounting for the improvisation necessary to manage the complex activity of a sport coach (Jones & Wallace, 2005). It is important to view a coach as an orchestrator of multifaceted activities, which is more reflective of the high interactivity that is inherent to coaching. This may, in turn, lead to a more realistic view of what a coach can and cannot accomplish in their role.

The Many Roles that Coaches Play. Historically, researchers have examined coaching work primarily from a physical education lens, studying how sport skills are best taught to athletes and teams. This is referred to as the 'pedagogy of coaching' (e.g. Kidman & Hanrahan, 1997; Martens, 1997) and focuses on the true physical education components of athletics. The focus on this singular role made more sense in earlier decades, when coaches were primarily physical education teachers who coached as a secondary form of employment. Coaching was simply an extension of their everyday teaching work.

However, the current trend has shifted away from that model tremendously, as many coaches do not have a credentialed physical education or teaching background. While the historical and physical education research certainly provides some valuable information, it by no means encompasses the full scope of a high school coach's duties in today's environment. Coaching cannot be conceived as such a unilateral endeavor, focused solely on possessing a high level of sport knowledge. Leach & Moon (1999) contend that at the heart of pedagogy is an understanding of what constitutes good teaching, personal beliefs on the purpose of education, and a belief in the importance of your subject matter. Relate this back to athletics and at the heart of good sport coaching is an understanding of what constitutes good instruction, a strong coaching philosophy and mission, and a firm belief in the power of sport to create positive outcomes. Thus, regardless of how it is described or packaged, coaching is a social, relational, and educational enterprise (Jones, 2006) and should be researched as such.

A more modern body of research focuses on the concept of 'Coach as Educator', examining the ways in which coaches are teachers, mentors, and role models in an athletics environment (e.g. Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2004; Penney, 2006). Coaching is a relational activity and coaches hold important positions with regard to caring for minors, a duty that carries significant responsibilities and ethical obligations. In this respect, a coach's "moral responsibilities should extend beyond policing foul play, to the fostering and cultivation of certain virtues that are directly implicated in the realization of the value of sport" (Cassidy, et. al, 2004, p. 150). Thus, while many roles are linked to the coaching profession, high school coaches report educating and mentoring as most central to their work (Owings, 2013). The question remains however, how are these educational outcomes

achieved? There is a general understanding and attitude that athlete-centered coaching is ideal, but unfortunately, there has been little in-depth examination of how that is achieved or implemented (Jones & Standage, 2006). Intuitively, we know that the coach-athlete relationship is at the core of achieving positive educational outcomes. Some scholars have identified baseline characteristics of an effective relationship (e.g. Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Meek, 2000). Examples include empathy, honesty, friendliness, responsiveness, support, cooperativeness, and respect. However, the coaching behaviors tied to these characteristics are not defined.

Finally, it is also relevant to note that coaches are asked to fulfill a multitude of additional roles, beyond sport practitioner and educator. Coaches are asked to take care of many beyond-sport tasks that range from fundraising and marketing to facility enhancements and budgeting. Having multiple roles has been identified as a primary stressor for athletic coaches (Frey, 2007). Furthermore, many coaches receive little to no formal training related to how they should frame and better negotiate the roles inherent in youth coaching (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Thus, navigating the expectations of different roles is challenging for novice and experienced coaches alike.

Role Conflict & Ambiguity. Being an educator, surrogate parent, businessperson, and community liaison simultaneously is challenging for any person, regardless of training and preparation. To complicate matters further, coaches must learn to navigate these roles, which are sometimes wrought with conflicting expectations. For example, a coach may be expected to raise a large sum of money for a facility enhancement, which takes much time and effort outside of practice and competition. This may cause the coach to be less accessible to his or her athletes, and less able to act in a mentoring capacity, also an

expectation of the coach. Role conflict, a component of role theory, is argued to occur when two or more discordant expectations for an individual's behavior are present within a specific environment (Kahn et al., 1964). Biddle (1986) goes on to assert that a person "subjected to conflicting pressures, will suffer stress, will have to resolve the problem by adopting some form of coping behavior, and that the person and system will both be disrupted" (p. 82). As is such, role conflict has been identified in the literature as a major stressor for coaches and a primary source of burnout and non-retention (Capel, et al., 1987). Role conflict and negotiation is also cited as a barrier to effective relationship building, as less crucial activities overstep the task of building and elevating the coach-athlete relationship. Furthermore, the existing body of literature addressing role conflict and negotiation inherent to high school coaching is primarily focused on teacher-coaches (e.g. Figone, 1994; Templin et al., 1981; Massengale, 1980). While this literature is helpful in better understanding the high school coaching profession as a whole, it is quite dualistic in nature, examining only the conflict between being a coach and teacher simultaneously. This assumes that coaching is a singular act or role, rather than an umbrella term for a multitude of different activities and expectations.

Also tightly aligned with role conflict is role ambiguity, which occurs when an individual experiences a lack of clarity about what is expected within a position. An example in this case would be a newly hired coach with little guidance surrounding the 'beyond-sport' components of his or her job. According to Rizzo et al. (1970) "ambiguity should increase the probability that a person will be dissatisfied with his role, will experience anxiety, will distort reality, and will thus perform less effectively" (p. 151). In

both role conflict and ambiguity frameworks, uncertainty and subsequent decision-making can result in dissatisfaction as well as a disrupted environment.

Environmental Complexity in Coaching. Within educational research, we are continually reminded that ‘context matters’. The coaching profession is no different in that it is infused with dynamic rings of invisible social contexts that surround the coach-athlete relationship (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). These contexts, unique to each participant, inform beliefs and actions (Merriam, 2009). Thus, while the importance of understanding coaches’ philosophies on an individual level is crucial, it is equally important to understand the various components of their particular environment which may affect player development and program decision-making. However, as Lyle (1999) notes, there is little research to date that evaluates a coach’s value system against environmental factors in relation to behavior and action.

Each individual high school coach works within a unique environment, consisting of different social and structural elements. Characteristics of the players, community, school, and league make each coaching job different and one-of-a-kind. Coaches cannot be isolated from the broader social, political, and cultural contexts and histories present in their environment (Culpan, 2000). Thus, because coaching work is subject to the social and athletic structures in which it operates (Cross & Lyle, 1999), emerging literature needs to do a better job considering the dynamic environment where the professional work of coaches is situated. Furthermore, it is necessary that coaches are aware of how they specifically are impacting the environment on an individual level through their actions and beliefs. O’Brien & Kollock (1991) describe the power that comes from understanding how we affect and impact the social structures in which we work. They argue that by

recognizing how we contribute to individual athletes as well as the broader environment around us, we are more apt to plan for positive athlete outcomes and have a better 'toolbox' for managing and reacting to the complex system of athletics.

The high school environment varies tremendously from institution to institution and region to region, thus impacting the experience of every individual participant. This environment or ecosystem is constructed of individuals (players, parents, athletic directors), groups (booster clubs, community sports leagues), and systems (schools, districts, conferences). These external stakeholders, through conscious actions or not, inform how coaches view their role within sport and may also impose specific expectations, suggestions, or pressures on the coach. Thus, coaches must continually balance outside value systems with their own coaching philosophies and values in order to make decisions and choices for their sports program. While recent literature has looked at sources of stress from an environmental lens (Cooper & Dewe, 2004), holistic stakeholder impact has not been examined. We do not yet fully understand how influences from external sources and environments may interact with personal value systems and philosophies, resulting in a challenging negotiation for the coach. It is important that emerging research focuses more on the interplay of individuals, groups, and systems that make each athletic environment unique, and often challenging. Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions based on findings from non-secondary education settings.

Adding to the complexity of the high school coaching setting is the range of skill and interest level inherent in the participants. This is defined as the participation spectrum (International Council for Coaching Excellence & Association of Summer Olympic International Federation, 2012). On one end of the spectrum is general participation,

which at the adolescent level, is characterized by social enjoyment, recreation, and fun. The focus of general participant athletes is to learn a sport as an avenue for connecting with peers, being social, and being connected to a broader team or organization. At the opposite end of the participation spectrum lies performance sport. In the United States, adolescent performance sport athletes are likely transitioning from a recreational model to one of sport-specific focus with a higher commitment level. The focus of these emerging athletes is to combine the technical and tactical skills needed to perform at a high level in their current sport setting. This hyper-focus on skill development is a result of current American sports culture, which pushes kids to specialize in sport and focus on competition at younger and younger ages. These athletes also likely have aspirations to participate at an elite level in their respective sport.

Having a mix of athletes that fall across the full participation spectrum on one team is another factor that makes the high school environment challenging. Coaches must strive to create a team culture that is inclusive of all participation interests, while also finding ways to allow each individual to develop physically and socially. This is by no means a simple or straightforward task that further complicates the work of a high school coach.

The Impact of Philosophy on Coaching Behavior. Given the challenge of role negotiation and impactful environmental factors, how does a coach navigate the complex system of athletics and make effective coaching decisions? Ultimately, roles that coaches select to enact are determined by how they individually perceive the endeavor of coaching (Owings, 2013) and by personal principles and values that comprise their respective coaching philosophies (Cassidy, et al., 2004). A coaching philosophy is “a set of values, governing principles and beliefs, which determine why you do what you do and how you

behave in the context of your coaching role” (Athlete Assessments, 2012). Findings by Nash et al. (2008) show that coaching philosophies become more complex as coaches gain experience working in athletics. More experienced coaches are able to demonstrate a conceptual awareness of key ideas related both to sport and coaching, as well as an appreciation of the social and cultural values tied to the practice of coaching. On the other hand, novice coaches tend to concentrate on organizational logistics and sport content rather than reflect on their own belief system (Cothran et al., 2005) and how that fits with their coaching practice. For young coaches, purposefully tying coaching philosophies to coaching practice is either non-existent or overlooked, despite the fact that philosophy provides the underpinnings for how a coach engages in his or her work. This is often simply a lack of awareness that elements of a coaching philosophy do not automatically occur and instead, need to be an intentional focus of what a coach does on a daily basis.

Elements of youth development outcomes typically lie at the root of the coaching philosophy at the high school level. “For the individual, then, thinking through actions to determine their root cause can become an enlightening process, as the value systems that guide a person’s coaching need to be understood if we are to equally comprehend his or her actions” (Cassidy, et al., 2004, p. 57). If coaches are able to link their behaviors back to their philosophy, this should ultimately result in specific, predetermined outcomes for student-athletes. These projected outcomes, varying in nature for each individual coach, are discussed in the section that follows.

Intended Youth Development Outcomes. Athletics can be an optimal setting for youth and adolescent development, socially, psychologically, and physically. However, this development does not happen accidentally, simply through sport participation or being on

a team. Student-athletes achieve the most positive outcomes when placed in an environment where the programming and team structure are grounded in established youth development frameworks (Center for Sport Based Youth Development, 2011) and coaches are intentional about how they mobilize their coaching philosophies. It is worth asking then, is it possible to capture the full spectrum of intended outcomes defined by coaches universally, or do individual beliefs and values vary too dramatically coach-by-coach?

At the high school level, arguably the goal is to allow young people to learn skills and gain funds of knowledge through sport participation that they can translate into other areas of their lives. Learning to throw a curve ball or shoot a free throw may not impact an athlete's life; facing adversity, learning leadership skills, and building relationships most likely will. However, accurately depicting the wide range of intended youth development outcomes discussed across coaching literature is a multi-faceted challenge. First, existing literature is not comprehensive enough to systematically capture the expanse of outcomes that have been published by various scholars. For example, Côté and Gilbert (2009) define coaching effectiveness as "the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge" in order for athletes to gain "competence, confidence, connection and character" (p. 316) while Feltz et al. (1999) argue that the primary focus should be on coaching efficacy and a coach's belief in their ability to affect change. Furthermore, coach practitioners tend to see themselves as responsible for a larger array of outcomes than the literature typically depicts. Thus, the gap between practitioner and scholar realities is great.

Additionally, there is disagreement between researchers as to whether or not youth development can be measured accurately. For example, Vella et al. (2011) notes that sport is a vehicle for development, but that behaviors designed to facilitate positive outcomes are immeasurable due to the fact that they cannot be isolated from the sporting context. Conversely, many recent studies have declared that the development of positive traits in youth athletes, such as life skills and character, is not only attainable for trained coaches, but can also be a measurable if researched in an intentional fashion (Brunelle, et al., 2007; Gould et al., 2007). The question of whether or not specific coaching behaviors can be linked to specific development and team outcomes within the athletic context is an intended product of this study.

Relationships Between Athletes and Coaches. Interpersonal relationships between coaches and athletes lie at the heart of the sporting experience. These partnerships are unique in that they are often voluntary and dependent on physical, athletic performance (Jackson et al., 2010). While interpersonal dynamics have been studied generally within the fields of psychology, sociology, and education since the 1970's, the topic of coach-athlete relationships has been criticized as a relatively untapped area of research within the athletics and education academic community. Coppel & Murphy (1995) noted that understanding these types of relationships is crucial to sport, yet almost nonexistent while, Vanden Auweele & Rzewnicki (2000) and Biddle (1997) described existing work as limited in scope and lacking depth. Despite these criticisms, serious progress has been made in the last decade by a small group of scholars, focused specifically on better understanding relationships between coaches and athletes in a more robust way (e.g. Jowett, 2007; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). This emerging work emanates almost wholly

from the field of psychology and, more specifically, sport psychology. In the dialogue that follows, the foundational underpinnings of this work are described, as well as additional shortcomings that exist in the current body of work.

The majority of existing literature focused on coach-athlete relationships comes from the field of psychology and focuses on the mental state and well being of athletes. Because initial relationship research highlights that coaches develop affective, cognitive, and behavioral bonds with their athletes, this work utilizes a behavioral or social psychological approach to underpin the research. Until recent years, “research has largely focused on relationships between coach leadership and team cohesion without considering the contribution of relationships formed between coaches and their athletes” (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004, p. 308). Two primary frameworks that fit this description are Chelladurai’s (1993) multidimensional model and Smoll & Smith’s (1989) mediational model of coach leadership. While both frameworks remain hallmarks in relationship research, their scope is limited in that they focus primarily on coaching leadership and resulting athlete psychological outcomes (i.e. satisfaction or self-esteem). Jowett & Chaundy (2004) argue that while coach leadership and coach-athlete relationships are interrelated, they are their own unique social contexts and must be studied as such.

Current research tells us that positive relationships between coaches and athletes can have a profound impact on how an athlete experiences their sport. Many studies have been conducted that highlight the link between the coach-athlete relationship and motivation (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), team cohesion (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004), achievement (Adie & Jowett, 2010), athletic performance (Mullen & Copper, 1994; Carron et al 2002), and self-concept (Jowett, 2008). Scholars describe the interpersonal

relationship between coach and athlete as a pattern of mutual care, dyad-oriented activities, and how each of the parties perceives of these patterns (Poczwardowski et al., 2002). Davis and Jowett (2010) noted that athletes rely on coaches to be a secure base to help explore their sporting environment and seek a level of closeness in order to do so. This assertion led to the development of the Coach Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q), an instrument developed by Jowett (2007) in order to further define and quantify coach-athlete relationship quality. The CART-Q measures four components of the coach-athlete relationship: closeness, commitment, complementarity, and co-orientation. These components make up the 3 + 1 C's model, which is said to predict intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes like relationship stability and motivation. Closeness refers to feelings of trust and respect while commitment reflects the desire for coaches and athletes to maintain a relationship. Complementarity examines both coach and athlete behavior and the degree to which those behaviors contribute to one another. Co-orientation refers to how feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are interconnected and the different perception that athletes and coaches bring to the environment. The CART-Q is considered a groundbreaking development in athletics relationship research, a first take at measuring multiple dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship.

While an impactful addition to sports research, the CART-Q does not wholly examine environmental impacts or, for the purpose of this study, the high school environment specifically. This criticism is common across coach-athlete relationship research, as studies often lack consideration how relationships are impacted by unique settings and environmental factors (Wylleman, 2000). The work has been criticized for being too exclusively focused on the coach-athlete dyad, thus ignoring the unique

ecosystem in which each relationship sits. Jowett & Wylleman (2006) call for “research that takes into account the relationship environment or context, rather than a relationless environment or context (in order to) convincingly generate knowledge and understanding about human behaviour, affect and cognition and their associations” (p. 122). The conceptual framework created for this study addresses this issue by combining a coach’s individual attributes and leadership style with the coach-athlete relationship and environmental impacts.

Despite progress in this area of research (e.g. the CART-Q instrument), scholars still believe that research investigating interpersonal bonds within athletics remains limited (Davis et al., 2013). As Poczwardowki et al. (2006) attest, “little systematic investigation has been conducted to understand the athlete-coach relationship as a phenomenon that is not smaller parts” (p. 119). To date, the research has been approached in an unsystematic, segmented way with many factors being examined individually. Future research should consider how these relationship factors impact one another and in what ways they are interrelated. Furthermore, systematic and reliable instruments still lack (Wylleman, 2000) and an agreed-upon theoretical construct does not exist among academics within athletics and education research. As Poczwardowki et al. (2006) note, “there is an intimate tension between the need to diversify approaches to research on athlete-coach relationships and the need to integrate emerging knowledge into an interpersonal theory of athlete-coach dyads that effectively address the idiosyncrasies of the athletic world” (p. 137).

Hiring & Training High School Coaches. Because of the importance of a coach’s role in the student experience, one would hope that qualified and trained individuals would be leading our schools’ sports teams. Unfortunately this is not always the case, as simply

finding and retaining quality coaches for athletics is a serious challenge that high school athletic departments face. Often, coaches receive little or no formal training in basic coaching techniques and pedagogy, not to mention training around the artistry required to manage the complex system of athletics. In the United States high school sports system, coaching is not typically considered a profession that requires specific training, nor do a clear set of national coaching standards exist.

There is no curriculum that youth sport coaches must adhere to, and they have little or no supervision. Most youth team sport coaches work in isolation and, therefore, have tremendous freedom in the content they select to teach, and the way they structure the training programs. (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001, p. 17-18)

In the geographical area in which this study was conducted, the requirements for obtaining a varsity head-coaching job are very minimal: a high school degree or equivalent, CPR and first aid certification, and the ability to pass a background check. No prior coaching experience is required, nor is specific educational or professional training. Furthermore, professional development opportunities are rarely provided or funded by the school or district, based on the limited resources of most high school athletic departments. As a result, coaches are required to seek self-funded 'clock hours' (i.e. coach training) on an individual basis. The criteria for these training hours is poorly defined by the regional governing body and athletic directors tend to be in disagreement about what constitutes appropriate clock hours (Owings, 2013). The result is coaches who attend a wide array of workshops and presentations with varying value and educational foundation. Developing a research-based training framework for these coaches could be an invaluable tool for athletic departments with the inability to provide formal professional development opportunities for their coaches.

II. Effective Teaching in the Classroom

The body of literature surrounding effective teaching practices is quite comprehensive and expansive. Scholars in this area have spent decades seeking to describe and refine research-based methods for effective teaching in varying environments (e.g. Domas & Tiedman, 1950; Gage, 1963). In contrast, the overall body of literature surrounding 'good coaching' is still quite new compared to its education counterpart, and many of the sources lack empirical validity. Coaching frameworks also tend to lack depth and rely on 'folk pedagogies' or assumptions of how people learn best (Bruner, 1999). While empirically-based coaching frameworks are on the rise in recent years, this area of athletics research still lags behind the body of literature surrounding effective teaching. Because the practice of athletic coaching mirrors that of traditional teaching, coaching research could benefit from findings related to effective classroom instruction. What follows is a succinct review that is not meant to be a holistic picture of all effective teaching literature, as the body of scholarly work is incredibly extensive and varied in nature. Instead, key themes and ideas that could inform athletics research related to effective coaching and relationship building are highlighted. Particular attention is paid to relationship-driven teaching and classroom management.

Key Themes from Effective Teaching Literature. Historically, there has been significant controversy in educational research surrounding the relationship between teacher behaviors and student learning outcomes (e.g. Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Getzels & Jackson, 1963; Medley & Shannon, 1994). Scholars have differing opinions whether or not it is even possible, through rigorous research methods, to definitively define the specific characteristics, skills, and behaviors of teachers that contribute to positive student

outcomes. Furthermore, there are discordant opinions surrounding the research methods that are appropriate for measuring teacher effectiveness. Perhaps as a result of these differing viewpoints and opinions, an extensive body of research regarding effective teaching has emerged over the last century. While these findings do vary, there are consistencies across these bodies of work. Four of these themes seem quite applicable to the craft of coaching and are described below.

1. There are central behaviors, qualities, and skills needed for a teacher to be effective.

In a literature review by Rosenshine & Furst (1973), five primary characteristics of effective teachers are identified from an overview of existing effective teaching research. These are clarity, variability, enthusiasm, businesslike behaviors, and student opportunity. Rosenshine & Furst concluded that, although researchers have differing opinions, these attributes or themes capture the overlap and agreeances among scholars. In a more recent review of teaching effectiveness literature, Bulger et al. (2002) summarized “The Four Aces of Effective Teaching”, which overlaps significantly with the literature review by Rosenshine & Furst aforementioned. They identified a teacher focus on outcomes, clarity, engagement, and enthusiasm as the most prevalent factors identified in their effectiveness research. Furthermore, the majority of empirical work consistently endorses structured and direct instruction as a foundation for student progress and achievement (e.g. Harris, 1998). This is described by Rosenshine (1983) as the ability to provide clear and concise, step-wise instruction that is understood by the learner. Brophy & Good (1986) further contribute to this idea, citing a need to focus on quantity and pacing of instruction while additional studies (Clark et al., 1979; Smith & Land, 1981; Wragg, 1989) reinforce the importance of providing feedback and effective questioning.

McBer's 'Model for Teacher Effectiveness' (2001) focuses on an extensive list of micro-behaviors (Teaching Skills) and patterns of behaviors (Professional Characteristics), including setting high expectations, managing resources, and engaging in assessment. They argue that an individual's ability to deploy these behaviors consistently can account for up to 30% of student progress. These areas overlap greatly with the coaching domains of *Physical and Pedagogical Knowledge* and *Professional and Business Responsibilities*. Further, they note that a greater range of deep-seated behavior results in being truly exceptional in the craft of teaching. The McBer model also includes the element of *Classroom Climate*. The authors define climate as creating environments that:

...maximise opportunities to learn, in which pupils are well managed and motivated to learn. From the pupils' perspectives, they are mostly looking to the teacher to create a sense of security and order in the classroom, an opportunity to participate actively in the class and for it to be an interesting and exciting place. (p. 10)

This concept of climate parallels considerations in coaching surrounding team environment and the creation of learning spaces. Also of interest here is that McBer's research found that teacher effectiveness was not affected by biometric data, such as years of teaching experience and educational background. In essence, they claim that a person with any level of experience can be effective provided they have a specific set of skills and competencies. Interestingly, this study did not take into consideration environmental factors or resources.

II. A wide range of teaching techniques and styles are essential to effective teaching.

Early research on teaching effectiveness attempted to match very specific teaching behaviors to student progress. As mentioned above, some generalized findings and broad attributes emerged from this work, as well as some foundational best practices for

teaching. However, early scholars found that it was challenging to provide concrete evidence that one specific teaching style would result in the 'best' student outcomes (Doyle, 1977; Harris, 1998). Instead, more recent models of teaching are premised on the idea that teachers need to master a wide range of teaching approaches in order to foster learning in different types of students (Hunt et al., 2009). Appealing to different learning styles is central to teachers and classrooms of students with varied abilities and skills. This undoubtedly parallels high school athletics, as the learning styles, athletic talent, and physical abilities of participants vary greatly. Clark & Peterson (1986) contribute to this idea by emphasizing the importance of adaptability and flexibility. They relate the ability to modify and change strategies spontaneously based on the current state of the classroom a strong indicator of effective teaching. This ability to assess the environment and make behavioral changes is also ever-present in athletics, given the dynamic environment in which coaches work.

III. Measuring effective teaching is highly dependent on understanding the goals and educational outcomes that the teacher is attempting to achieve in their respective environment. 'Context Matters!' is a common battle cry throughout educational research (Merriam, 2009). Taking into account contextual and environmental factors is central to the work that scholars do in this field and underpins much of what is considered quality research in education. Understanding the behaviors of effective teaching is no different, in that measuring what is effective depends on the educational outcomes that are being sought. Leu (2005) notes that an "important feature of quality is that it be locally defined, at the school and community level, not just at the district and national level" (p. iii). Doyle (1977) adds to this idea, claiming that formulas for measuring teacher effectiveness should

include contextual variables as well as the meaning that specific processes have for teachers and students in the classroom. Scholars agree that teacher effectiveness cannot be measured in a one-dimensional way. Rather, a more global understanding of educational outcomes being sought and the environmental factors present must be included in the equation. The focus on internally held beliefs and goals and how they interact with environmental factors are considered in this study via the theoretical framework described in later sections. A clear definition of intended outcomes – or lack thereof – for a specific team greatly affects how we measure effectiveness in a coach.

IV. Effective teaching is a craft that requires a certain level of artistry; this is linked to reflective inquiry and continual professional growth. At a very base level, teaching effectiveness is dependent on the intersection between a teacher's knowledge of their subject-matter and their pedagogical ability (Bulger et al., 2002). Most argue however, that pedagogical ability is something not easily achieved, as the art of teaching is a craft that must be developed thoughtfully and intentionally over time. Hopkins et al. (1994) concluded that the development of this craft requires a certain level of artistry, or a highly personalized and individualistic approach to the study of teaching. The craft of teaching was summarized nicely by Rubin (1985), as he described the look and feel of a classroom with an 'Artist Teacher':

There is a striking quality to (these) classrooms. Pupils are caught up in learning; excitement abounds; and playfulness and seriousness blend easily because the purposes are clear, the goals sensible and an unmistakable feeling of well-being prevails. Artist teachers achieve these qualities by knowing both their subject matter and their students; by guiding the learning with deft control – a control that itself is born out of perception, intuition and creative impulse. (p. v)

As one can imagine, this level of craft is not achieved easily or unintentionally. Masterful teachers continually reflect on their practice and seek professional growth through a variety of mediums. Coaches, and perhaps all professionals seeking a mastery of their craft, engage in this process. This self-reflective and lifelong learning focus is a component that will be focused on in the conceptual framework ahead and is the final theme identified that aligns tightly with athletics work.

Building Strong Relationships in the Classroom. Within the body of effective teaching literature, positive teacher-student relationships are recognized as an integral part of quality classroom environments (e.g. Carr, 2005; Smith & Strahan, 2004). In fact, Thompson (1999) calls positive relationships “the most powerful weapon available to secondary teachers who want to foster a favorable learning climate” (p. 6). Pianta (1999) takes this idea one step further and suggests that positive relationships are not only important, but are the basis for effective teaching. Likewise, Nash (2009) notes that a teacher’s “influence is powerful, but influence is only available if a relationship exists” (p. 14). This premise suggests that without strong student-teacher relations, even the best teaching techniques lose impact and are less effective. As Tomlinson & Jarvis (2006) note, “good teaching is inevitably the fine art of connecting content and kids – of doing what it takes to adapt how we teach so that what we teach takes hold in the lives and minds of students” (pp. 16-17).

In her study of secondary school students, Wallace (1996) found that teachers' various approaches to teaching were less important than the interactive relationships established with students, while Pomeroy (1999) discovered that students' relationships with teachers surfaced as one of the most salient features of the educational experience.

These studies suggest that quality teachers should be in the business of relationship building as a mechanism for optimal student outcomes.

Positive teacher-student relationships have been shown in the research to be a foundation for student motivation (Birch & Ladd, 1996; Davis, 2003; Noddings, 1992) and achievement (Nieto, 1996). The question then becomes, how are these outcomes achieved? Demonstrating caring has been identified as one of the most powerful ways to build positive relationships with students (e.g. Kerman et al., 1980). As a result, much of the research regarding the behaviors of teachers that most contribute to positive relationships with students is focused on care (e.g. Noddings, 1984; O'Connor, 2008). Students and teachers have defined caring in a robust and varied way across the research. These definitions vary but include concepts like showing respect, effectively communicating, checking in, encouraging, sharing time, building trust, and setting high expectations (e.g. Boynton & Boynton, 2005; Tarlow, 1996). Nash (2009) calls particular attention to the element of trust, noting that it “plays an important role in teacher-student interactions and in the student’s willingness to step outside his comfort zone in the interest of learning” (p. 16). While the exact definition of demonstrating care can be debated, the ability of a teacher to move beyond the traditional (and potentially distant) model of dictatorial teaching towards one of camaraderie and collaboration is fundamental. This most certainly is not an easy task, as educational settings are wrought with institutional, cultural, personal, and physical barriers; but because the classroom is a setting of many emotional moments, the ability for a teacher to connect with a student in a reciprocal and synergistic way is powerful.

In addition to showing care, research suggests that building a strong teacher-student relationship requires that teachers have a high level of self-knowledge and possess the ability to be self-reflective. In *Relationship-Driven Classroom Management*, Vitto (2009) notes that all teachers “have certain deeply held beliefs about (their) profession and how to educate children. These beliefs not only influence...behavior but also may hinder (the) consideration of new strategies and ideas” (p. 25). He goes on to state that “the greatest single attribute of relationship-driven teachers is the willingness and ability to take an honest and non-defensive look at the effectiveness of their own behavior, especially how their behavior influences the interactions that occur in the classroom” (p.22). This concept of being a thoughtful and reflective practitioner ties back to much of the coaching literature previously discussed, as well as the forthcoming conceptual framework.

III. Developmental Factors of High School Learners

Extensive research has been conducted addressing the developmental factors of different types of learners and age groups within educational settings. On the whole, this research has greatly informed the work of teachers, providing important information to consider when constructing lesson plans, facilitating learning activities, and managing the classroom. From this body of literature we have come to understand that students benefit from programming that is customized to their unique intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs. When teachers make intentional choices in their classroom based on the specific characteristics of the population with whom they work, learning and intellectual development is enhanced.

Unfortunately, this focus on the developmental factors of learners is fairly absent in athletics research. Because the larger goal of high school athletics is to provide an

educational opportunity for athletes, it seems apt to leverage ideas garnered from general education research related to high school learners. To be effective, coaches should better understand what is happening with their athletes socially, cognitively, and physically during this specific time in their lives. Existing coaching frameworks and literature sometimes focus on a single, specific characteristic of the athlete, but often ignore how different factors are interrelated and influence one another. This is unfortunate, as these elements should not be looked at in isolation but instead, should be considered as a piece of a larger whole. In the case of this study, the focus is the high school learner and the period of late adolescence. In the sections that follow, the varying developmental factors of this age group are briefly discussed.

Physical Development. Adolescence is a time of intense growth. Other than infancy, there is no period in a person's life where more physical growth taking place. Physically, this can result in lack of coordination and sudden changes in motor ability. Coinciding with this extreme physical growth are chemical and hormonal imbalances, resulting primarily from puberty. High school students struggle to have consistent energy and remain alert for extended periods of time. Periods of extreme fatigue alternate with times of restlessness. Coaches must understand that high levels of movement along with frequent changes in activity are necessary. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that players will lack energy on a potentially frequent basis, regardless of practice and competition structure.

Neurological Development. The incomplete myelination and rapid growth of gray matter that are characteristic of adolescent brains do not allow the same cortical

connections that occur in adulthood; thus, adolescent thinking is in a realm of its own (Keating et al., 2004). During this time, connections between the heavily used parts of the brain are being strengthened and unused parts of the brain are deteriorating. This process, called pruning, coincides with the rapid expansion of cognitive skills in students. However, the “growth of these abilities is inconsistent, variable and situation-specific” (Scales, 1996, p. 24). Students are moving from concrete to abstract thinking, but as aforementioned, this is happening at completely different times for different individuals. Therefore, coaches are working with athletes who, cognitively speaking, have vastly different abilities to process and maintain information. Wilson and Horch (2002) suggest that “incorporating the senses and emotions to focus the learning, and then facilitating students in finding multiple ways to solve problems can focus adolescent learning while building complex neuron connections within the brain” (p. 59). Additionally, late adolescent brains can remember only five to seven bits of information at a time, thus necessitating information be delivered in smaller, palatable segments.

The part of the brain that controls planning, working memory, organization, and mood modulation doesn't mature until approximately age 18, so behavior of high school students can be generally described as inconsistent. What lies at the core of adolescent cognitive development is the attainment of a more fully conscious, self-directed, and self-regulating mind (Keating, 2004). High school kids are forgetful, often because they are preoccupied or hyper-focused on specific topics of interest. This can be a positive element for coaches, provided their interest is the sport in which they are participating. Further, adolescent brains respond when information has personal meaning and causes an emotional response (Casey et al., 2008). This once again encourages the educator to appeal

to learners on an individual level, based on their interests and foci.

Emotional and Psychological Characteristics. Adolescence is an emotional time for young people as the brain develops and matures. Students of this age seek autonomy and independence, and are curious about the world around them. They tend to test the limits of acceptable behavior, but can also vacillate back towards a desire for regulation (Lounsbury, 2000). Late adolescents are sensitive to criticism and display high level of vulnerability. Along these lines, they sometimes feel that the issues and problems they face are unique to themselves. Often their self-esteem and self-concept is tied to their level of physical maturation. As can be expected, adapting and accommodating the complex feelings and emotions experienced by athletes during this time is certainly a challenge.

Social Development. As mentioned above, high school students spend much of their adolescence forming and questioning their identities. Simultaneously, they are also negotiating how that identity fits into their current environment (Lounsbury, 2000). The environment is changing greatly for these students during this period, as much more time is being spent with peers versus adults for the first time in their lives (Casey, et al., 2008). As is such, social concerns and peer relationships are a top priority for high school students. Adolescents actively seek social acceptance and conform to group norms in order to fit in with their peers. In fact, a strong sense of group identity and acceptance by one's peers can have an overriding effect on all other aspects of the young adolescent's development (Lummis, 2001). Additionally, this period is marked by the modeling of behavior of older students and role models in their lives. Students in this age group seek

reinforcement that adults and role models in their environment care about their interests and show general support.

The question remains how, if at all, current coaches understand developmental characteristics of high school learners when creating programming for their athletes. This study examined this concept, focusing on ways in which coaches consider developmental factors and intentionally incorporate their understanding into their daily work.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

In an attempt to better understand the coach-athlete relationship, several major themes have emerged from existing literature tied to the research questions posed earlier in this paper. First, any work examining the practice of an athletic coach should, at the least, include some understanding of that coach as a person. These considerations may include core values, coaching philosophy, general coaching style, or other intrapersonal characteristics specific to the coach. Secondly, we have learned from the literature that the relationship between an athlete and a coach is bilateral, with both parties contributing in some way to a connection that does or does not exist. This infers that the coach-athlete relationship is one of a bi-lateral nature and is process-oriented. Lastly, the work of a high school coach does not exist in isolation and is impacted by internal and external factors, unique to that coach's environment. We must consider elements that surround the coach-athlete dyad if we are to understand ways in which relationships are built. In response to these three ideas, elements of the International Sports Coaching Framework, DiSC© Behavioral Profile, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory are being used as theoretical underpinnings for this study. These frameworks are described individually as they relate to this study in particular. This chapter is then concluded by the introduction and description of the conceptual framework that emanated from the work described.

I. International Sports Coaching Framework

In 2012, the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) and Association for Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) published the International Sports Coaching Framework (ISCF) for the purpose of providing "an internationally recognised

reference point for the education, development, and recognition of coaches” (p. 7). The ISCF task force was developed in response to a lack of common criteria designed to inform the work of athletic coaches globally. The framework successfully synthesizes much of the effective coaching literature reviewed earlier and provides a solid foundation in which this study was grounded and, ultimately, a conceptual framework built.

Types of Coaching Knowledge. The International Sports Coaching Framework recognizes that great coaching involves specific knowledge bases, as well as skills in specific functional areas. Three interrelated types of knowledge and how they are characterized are described first, as these areas are understood to be the foundation on which the functional skills sit. The ISCF utilizes Côté, & Gilbert’s (2009) integrative definition of coaching knowledge and identifies three primary foundational areas:

1. *Professional Knowledge.*
2. *Interpersonal Knowledge.*
3. *Intrapersonal Knowledge.*

Côté, & Gilbert’s definition very closely resembles the review of existing coaching effectiveness frameworks cited earlier in this paper. The primary difference we see here is that the *Professional Knowledge* area, tied tightly to sport-specific skills and understanding, encompasses a broader spectrum of skills and competencies than other existing frameworks. In the sections that follow, *Interpersonal* and *Intrapersonal Knowledge* are touched upon briefly, as they tie back tightly to the themes of relationship development and self-knowledge identified as the foundation of this study.

Intrapersonal Knowledge. Côté & Gilbert argue that a coach cannot maximize his or her effectiveness without having intrapersonal knowledge, or a solid understanding of self. A primary component of this area is the development of a clear coaching philosophy that a coach is able to effectively mobilize in their every day work. Elements of the philosophy may include the coach's identity, core values, leadership style, or approach to coaching. The premise here is that an individual must fully understand oneself in order to better understand the way in which they approach their coaching work. This includes self-reflection, as well as the ability to synthesize information gained over the span of a career. The authors stress the importance of being able to take a critical eye to ones work and make adjustments over time. Coaching philosophies and approaches evolve as a coach gains experience and learns more about the field of coaching, their specific environment, and their role within it.

DiSC® Behavioral Profile. In order to more tightly define a coach's approach or general style, this research takes advantage of the DiSC® Behavioral Profile. While not an element of Côté & Gilbert's framework, DiSC® aligns tightly with the *Intrapersonal* domain and understanding of self. The foundation of this tool can be found in a book written by William Marston (1928) titled *The Emotions of Normal People*. In this text, Marston argues that regular human emotions can explain behavioral differences in individuals and that these behaviors can change over time. Marston goes on to identify four behavioral types that reflect how a person behaves with respect to their specific environment. Over the next several decades, Marston's work was used by various scholars who developed the first versions of what we currently define as the DiSC® instrument. Despite going through

several iterations, the profile has consistently sought to identify individual traits and attitudes that result in varying behaviors.

The current-day DiSC© Profile is a personal assessment tool designed to measure behavioral style. The assessment uses scales of directness and pace to chart patterns of external, observable behaviors. The result is a report defining an individual's general approach or style within a specific setting. Four different behavioral styles are identified as part of the Profile. These are *Dominance*, *Influence*, *Steadiness*, and *Conscientiousness*. Individuals with a high level of *Dominance (D)* are bottom-line driven and tend to welcome challenges, appear confident, and enjoy moving at a fast pace. High *'I' (Influence)* individuals value relationship building and collaborating with people. Influencers tend to show much enthusiasm, optimism, and openness. Individuals with a high *Steadiness (S)* score are dependable, humble, and cooperative. They place high value on taking a calm and systematic approach to their work. *Conscientious (C)* people enjoy being independent and detail-oriented. High *'C'* individuals may appear cautious and calculated, though that is typically a result of valuing quality and accuracy. In a study by Strouse et al. (2005), undergraduate students identified mentors or protégés most influential in their student experience and leadership development. Of these mentors, 39% were characterized as high *'D'* and 39% high *'I'*. This would indicate that we might expect coaches, in a similar mentoring role, to exhibit these same characteristics. It is also important to note that users of DiSC© may display a mix of styles and/or may experience different behaviors based on the environment and current situation. For example, being in a high stress situation may elicit reactions that are not representative of the natural style of the individual.

Historically, the DiSC© Profile has been used extensively in organizational leadership literature and training. The goals of administering the tool include increasing self-knowledge of the participants, facilitating teamwork and communication between co-workers, and allowing effective management of differently wired employees. While the tool is only just emerging in the sports arena (e.g. Athlete Assessments, 2012), it provides a quality lens from which to examine coaching style within this study.

Interpersonal Knowledge. In addition to understanding oneself, Côté, & Gilbert list *Interpersonal Knowledge* as a component of effective coaching. Elements of this knowledge area are tied to a coach's ability to relate to their athletes and manage team climate. The primary goals embedded in the *Interpersonal Knowledge* base are building relationships, establishing team culture, and possessing an understanding of environmental impacts. Côté & Gilbert pay special attention to a coach's ability to build positive relationships with their athletes. They highlight the importance of effective communication skills, with an emphasis on active listening and questioning. Related to this is exercising empathy and sympathy as a foundation for building trust and mutual respect. The authors tie these skills to ways in which coaches demonstrate, explain, and deliver sport content. This *Interpersonal Knowledge* area also focuses on the coach as the orchestrator of a positive team climate, responsible for creating an inclusive space for his or her athletes. This type of climate allows for optimized learning opportunities and effective instruction.

Functional Areas of Coaching Practice. In addition to Côté & Gilbert's Coaching Knowledge areas, the ISCF identifies six primary functions that, if mastered, allow a coach to best guide the development of his or her athletes. These primary functions include:

1. *Set the Vision and Strategy.*
2. *Shape the Environment.*
3. *Build Relationships.*
4. *Conduct Practices and Structure Competitions.*
5. *Read and React to the Field.*
6. *Learn and Reflect.*

Each of these areas is defined by a multitude of tasks relevant to the broader functional area in the list. For example, 'developing an action plan', 'identifying and recruiting personnel', and 'safeguarding the athlete' are all tasks that fall under the umbrella of *Shape the Environment*. The framework suggests that as coaches add activity from multiple skill areas, the work of the coach becomes more and more complex. They argue that head coaches should, at a minimum, display a base level of competence in each of these areas if they hope to be effective and furthermore, strive for a high level of understanding in each area if they hope to master the craft of coaching. One may also notice the overlap of these functions with the overview of coaching effectiveness frameworks described in Chapter 1 (*see Figure 2*). This figure shows the overlap of existing coaching effectiveness frameworks with the ISCF model that is being used as a foundation in which to ground this study. While all elements of the ISCF can be argued to have major importance in the practice of coaching, the functional areas of *Build Relationships* and *Learn and Reflect*, are most closely tied to the research questions posed in this study. As is such, these two areas are the focus of the narrative that follows.



Figure 2. Synthesized coaching domains from existing literature with ISCF functional area overlay.

Build Relationships. As discussed earlier, building quality relationships with athletes is central to the work of sport coaches. The ISCF recognizes this and frames coaches as leaders and influencers, responsible for connecting to athletes, other coaches, sport organization professionals, and support staff. The framework pushes coaches to do the work of an educator, by teaching others and striving for specific organizational and

individual outcomes. In particular, they identify the following four sub-tasks related to relationship building as priorities for a coach:

1. *Lead and influence.*
2. *Manage personnel positively.*
3. *Nurture individual relationships.*
4. *Be an educator.*

These concepts are central to this research, as defining behaviors for building healthy connections and better understanding the outcomes of positive and negative relationships was an intended product of this study from the outset.

Learn and Reflect. The coaching environment is continually evolving and changing in a very dynamic way. As a result, coaching professionals in this space must be focused on adapting to their environment and refining their craft in order to maximize effectiveness and success. The artistry of coaching so aptly described earlier is not attainable if a coach does not take a critical eye to his or her work. The ISCF focuses on this idea, identifying the following as critical components of reflection as it relates to effective coaching:

1. *Develop professionally.*
2. *Innovate.*
3. *Evaluate the program.*
4. *Self-reflect.*

While the ISCF does not suggest behaviors for this career-long learning process, it does imply that such reflection leads to behavior adjustments and changes in coaches and should be a component of evaluating the overall success of coaches.

To examine coaching behavior properly, it is imperative to move beyond the team unit to include the social context in which the team is functioning. While the coach-athlete relationship is at the core of coaching, effective coaches must also understand how they are affected by different spheres of influence within their environment. These spheres could include the general athletic culture within the institution, parents, fellow coaches, sporting federations, or media to name a few. This concept of environmental influence is discussed next, through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979).

II. Ecological Systems Theory

It is important to note that coaches' roles do not exist in isolation. Conversely, and as qualitative research assumes (Merriam, 2009), there is a unique context in which each participant sits that informs beliefs and actions. It would be shortsighted to proceed with this research focused solely on the interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete, given that sport coaching is subject to the social and athletic structures in which it operates (Cross & Lyle, 1999). While the importance of understanding coaches and their beliefs on an individual level is crucial, it is equally important to understand the various components of their particular environment which may affect behavior and decision-making. As is such, this study is set up to examine relationships within the dynamic and ever-changing environment where the professional work of coaches is situated. To assist in analyzing the complexity of a coach's context and how that affects behavior, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological

Systems Theory (EST) is used as a theoretical framework. This framework is helpful in answering a primary research question posed in this proposal: In what ways do coaching philosophies and environmental influences drive the behaviors of coaches in their daily work?

Ecological Systems Theory (1979a) is constructed around the premise that an individual's development and subsequent behavior is affected by several interconnected environmental systems that constantly interact. In this case, Bronfenbrenner (1979b) defines development "as the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment, and his or her relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties" (p. 55). For the purpose of this study, EST allows us to discuss, in a meaningful way, how coaches' philosophies and behaviors are impacted by outside individuals, groups, and systems. The elements of the coaches' ecosystems hypothesized to be potential impacts are discussed next within the frame of Bronfenbrenner's model.

The EST Model, Adapted. Bronfenbrenner's (1979a) EST framework is depicted as a nested model of different environments. In later work, Bronfenbrenner (1988) goes on to explain how the model demonstrates the interaction of "three separable domains: (a) the *context* in which development is taking place; (b) the *personal characteristics* - biological or psychological - of the persons present in that context; and (c) the *process* through which their development is brought about" (p.78). This is also referred to as the Process-Person-Context model in related literature. For the purpose of this study, the model has been adapted (*see Figure 3*) to depict the athletic coach's environment and individuals and groups hypothesized to be impactful within that ecosystem.

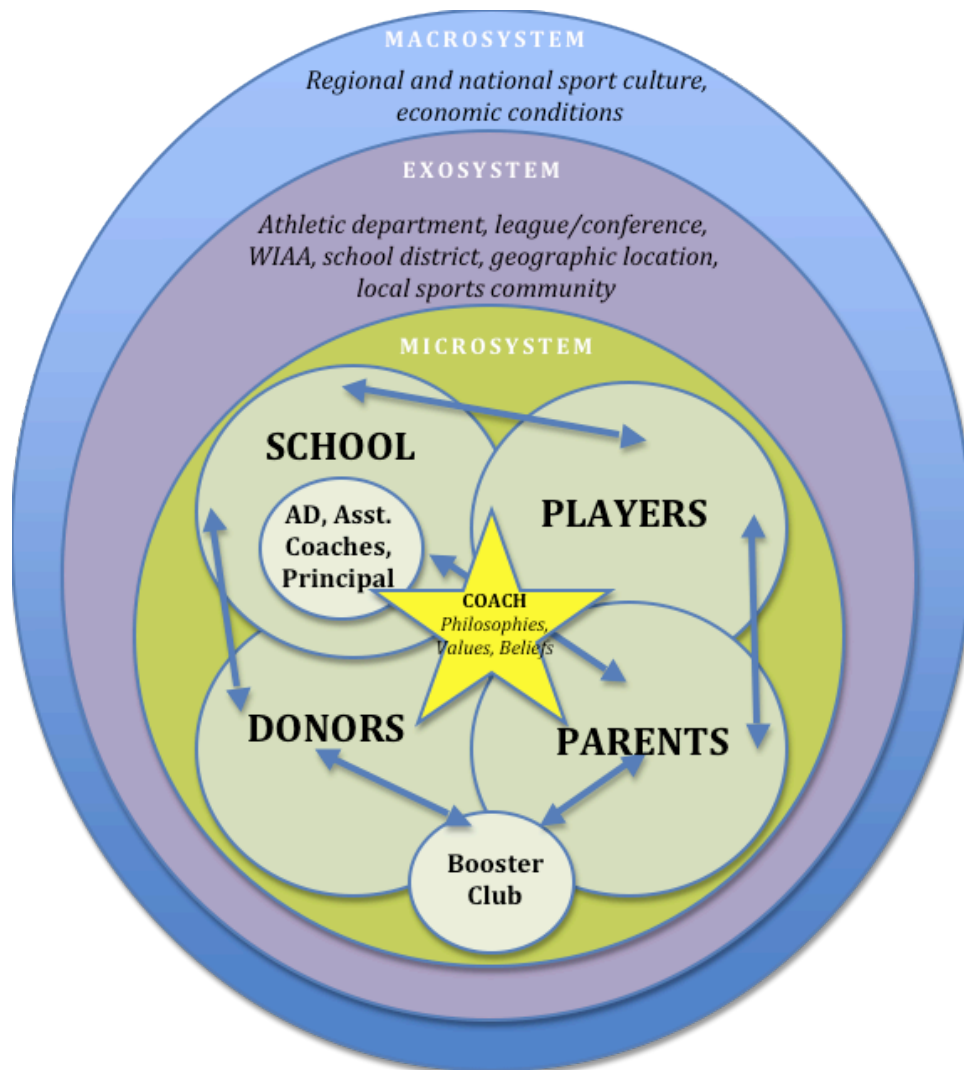


Figure 3. Ecosystem of a high school athletic coach in the Pacific Northwest.

Person. As could be expected, the coach sits at the center of the ecosystem and brings with him or her a specific set of philosophies, beliefs, and values. Bronfenbrenner describes these components as falling within the *Person* domain, defined by the personal characteristics of the individual. Examining the influence of core values, coaching philosophies, and internally held beliefs is central to understanding the psychological foundation of the coach. These pieces must first be understood before coach-athlete interactions and environmental impact can be examined. This domain correlates tightly

with the *Interpersonal* knowledge base described by Cote & Gilbert in the International Sports Coaching Framework.

Process. Understanding the elements of the *Process* domain, defined earlier as how a coach conceives and makes sense of their environment, is an intended product of this study. This domain will be utilized to frame coach responses and findings, as they relate to relationship-building behaviors.

Context. The bulk of EST framework accounted for in *Figure 3* is the *Context* in which the coach's work takes place. Context is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979a) as four interrelated and interacting environmental systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. He notes that each level of the system, some more immediate and some more remote, can and will impact the individual in some way. Likewise, the various systems themselves can interact with one another, resulting in additional influences and impacts (2001). Additionally, it is reasonable to expect a bi-directional impact when examining coaches within their respective environments. That is, not only will a coach be impacted by his or her athletes, external stakeholders and systems, but that coach will also be an outward influencer of his or her environment. As Lerner (2002) discusses, EST is predicated on the idea that individuals influence components of their ecosystem, as much as the components of the ecosystem affect the individuals. This notion is helpful in exploring the dynamic nature of the coach's environment and, in particular, the coach-athlete dyad.

Microsystem. The microsystem of the coach involves the people and structures that make up his or her immediate setting. As *Figure 3* illustrates, this involves the players,

coaching staff, parents and guardians, school environment, and school officials including the principal and athletic director. Also included here, but hypothesized to play a lesser role within the high school setting are donors and sponsors. Additional groups and structures could certainly be included, but the microsystem shown here is based on high impact groups that are surmised to most affect the *Process* domain. Let's envision a typical practice day: a coach stops by the athletic office prior to practice time, works with his or her athletes for two hours in the gym, then chats with a parent on the phone about playing time following practice. This scenario includes the school environment, athletic director, players, coaching staff, and parents. Conceptually, the structures (ie. groups and individuals) within the microsystem are expected to have the greatest impact on coach behavior, due to their proximity to every day work in athletics.

Mesosystem. Please note the multi-directional arrows in the model that indicate interaction between the different structures of the microsystem. These interactions are defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979a) as the mesosystem. The mesosystem is comprised of activity occurring between structures present in coach's immediate environment. These relations and interactions are expected to have some level of an impact on the coach, though perhaps less influential than members of the microsystem. For example, a player may have parents going through a divorce. While this issue is not a formal interaction between the coach and player or coach and parent, the fact that the athlete may be struggling with the divorce could certainly affect the coach in a direct or indirect manner. As is such, the mesosystem could be loosely defined as an indirect, impactful interaction.

Exosystem. Bronfenbrenner describes the exosystem as linkages between two or more settings or structures, one of which is outside of the individual's immediate setting (1979a). In the case of coaches within this study, the exosystem consists primarily of systems in which their sport operates: athletic department, school district, conference, regional governing body, local sports community, and the geographic location where the school is situated. For example, the school district may place new regulations on high school booster clubs, which limits how fundraising monies can be spent within a sports program. This interaction between school district, part of the exosystem, and the booster club, part of the microsystem, could potentially impact a head coach in a handful of different ways.

Macrosystem. Finally, the Macrosystem, shown as the environmental level most distant to the coach, consists of societal constructs that might come into play. This definition is perhaps more applicable in examining other contexts outside of high school athletics, but for the purpose of this study, primarily includes national views of youth sport and competition.

As has been demonstrated, the Ecological Systems Theory will be a useful tool in understanding how coach behaviors and coach-athlete relationships are impacted by the by the environment in which they reside. This framework, coupled with an understanding of existing coaching effectiveness frameworks, will open up a discussion around coaching behavior, the coach-athlete relationship, and environmental impacts central to the posed research questions. Jones et al. (2002) support this idea by suggesting that we learn more

about the interplay of individual agency and structure in order to better understand the work of coaches.

III. ISCF & EST, Adapted: A Conceptual Framework

Considering the importance of the coach in determining the quality and success of an athlete's sport experience, surprisingly little research exists that identifies optimal coaching behaviors and factors that influence the effectiveness of particular behaviors. (Kenow & Williams, 1999, p. 1)

As aforementioned, the International Sports Coaching Framework synthesizes existing coaching effectiveness literature quite well, resulting in a holistic model designed to inform the work of coaching professionals. Despite this, what remain absent are behaviors and tangible techniques tied to each of these coaching domains and bases of knowledge. While this may not seem as crucial for more straightforward domains, areas like interpersonal relations require more explanation and detail, particularly as it relates to behavior. Describing ways to gain trust or communicate effectively with a team would undoubtedly be beneficial for not only novice coaches, but more experienced coaches looking to improve their coaching practice. This focus on understanding behavioral impact on athlete-coach relations is an area yet to be researched fully in athletics and education academia.

The purpose of this study is to understand the foundations of a quality coach-athlete relationship and in what ways a positive relationship impacts athlete and team outcomes. To achieve this, components of the International Sports Coaching Framework, Côté, & Gilbert's areas of coaching knowledge, the DiSC© Behavioral Profile, and Bronfenbrenner's EST model were adapted to serve as a conceptual framework for this research. The graphic

that follows embeds components of each, and depicts the process of coach behavior that we seek to better understand (see Figure 4).

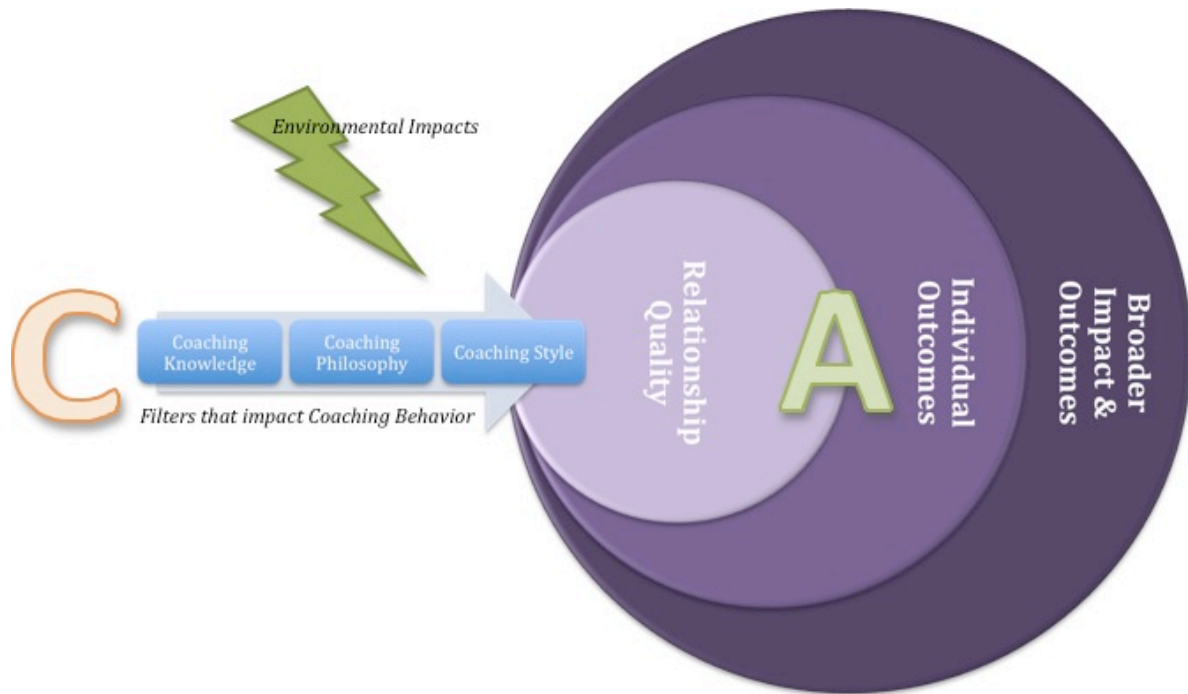


Figure 4. Conceptual framework for coach-athlete relationship quality & outcomes.

The initial relationship between coach and athlete may not be one of mutual choice. High school athletes attend tryouts, are assigned to a specific team and associated coaching staff, and likely have little or no say in who will be a figurehead in their athletic experience. Likewise, coaches at the high school level are often not familiar with incoming athletes or students that are new to their team. As a result, initial relationships can feel quite distant, or acquaintance-like in nature. The conceptual framework above designates the coach ('C') as the initiator of the relationship, laden with his or her own set of coaching core values. The coach behaves in specific ways, as their actions are impacted by the individual's

baseline coaching knowledge, philosophy, and approach. These elements are designated as behavioral filters, or factors that influence coaching behavior. The coach's behavior is interpreted by the athlete ('A') and, at that point, some type of relationship is established. Bi-products to this relationship, be they positive or negative, manifest at both the player level as well as the broader team and community level. It is important to note that the status of this relationship and its subsequent outcomes can quickly change, due solely to the nature of athletics. At the high school level, coaches and athletes spend large quantities of time with one another during the season. Often, an athlete has more contact with their coaching staff than teachers, friends, or parents. As a result, the speed in which the coach-athlete dyad is developed can be highly accelerated. Furthermore, coaches and athletes may experience powerful emotional moments together during practice sessions and competition and may perhaps share a deep-seated passion for their sport. This also impacts the rate at which athletes and coaches can connect or become at odds. Regardless of the mechanism, relationships between coaches and athletes shift and evolve, resulting in both positive and negative outcomes.

Also depicted in the conceptual framework are environmental impacts that affect coaches and athletes, as well as the relationship between the two parties. Consider these impacts all of the elements that emanate from the Bronfenbrenner ecosystem (see *Figure 3*) described earlier. The people and systems that make up the coach's unique environment (e.g. school community, parents, team resources) may directly influence how a coach approaches and chooses to execute his or her work. The conceptual framework attempts to capture these potential impacts in order to better understand how they are manifested in coach behavior.

This conceptual framework helps to ground this study, giving particular focus to how philosophies and strategies drive behaviors that impact coach-athlete relationships. Collectively, the components of the framework help us to better understand the bi-products of a quality relationship, on both an individual and team level.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

I. Setting and Participant Selection

This study examined athletic coaches employed at four high schools within a single school district in a suburban city in the Pacific Northwest. The athletic programs at the four high schools compete in one conference, but in different divisions based on the size and attendance numbers of each school. While these high schools reside in the same city, their student populations vary greatly. Each school is briefly summarized in the table below.

	Average Attendance	% of non-White students	% students qualifying for free/reduced lunch	% students whose first language is not English	State Ranking of Academic Rigor
School #1	1,397	43%	12%	22%	#5; #3; #4
School #2	1,457	57%	27%	37%	#1; #5; #2
School #3	1,658	58%	15%	30%	#4; #4; #3
School #4	1,028	54%	46%	39%	#3; n/a; #6

Table 1. Summary of high school logistical data, 2010-2013.

As shown, schools #2, #3, and #4 are quite diverse, with a multitude of ethnicities, backgrounds, and languages represented. School #1 is the most homogenous, with the highest percentage of Caucasian students, as well as students who speak English as their first language. Three well-known national ranking systems³ were examined to determine

³ The names of the specific reports used are being withheld to maintain the anonymity of the institutions within this study.

academic rigor. Graduation rates, SAT test scores, availability of college preparation and immersion courses, and performance on advanced placement testing were all components used in determining rigor in the rankings reports. You will note the strong academic focus of the schools in this study, as each is ranked in the very top of public high schools within the state.

Furthermore, the athletic tradition across these schools is also very different. Schools #1 and #3 are quite competitive athletically, routinely competing for the state's athletic cup, which is awarded each year to the school with the most successful, comprehensive athletic program. Conversely, the other two high schools (#2 and #4) do not often qualify for post-season tournaments and do not have a strong athletic history in the past two decades. The schools with a weaker athletic tradition also have higher percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, which suggests a correlation between socioeconomic status and access to athletics resources.

Selecting this district allowed for a variety of contextual settings within a specific geographic area, while ensuring some continuity across institutions with regards to school size, district policy, and mission of the league in which the teams compete. Holding these factors constant allowed for the construction of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009) where coaches and their individual contexts and relationships were the primary unit of analysis.

Coaches of soccer, basketball, softball, and baseball were recruited as participants for this study based on several factors. First, these sport teams are similar in terms of squad size at the Varsity level. Approximately 12-18 players participate on these teams, depending on participation levels at the school and coach preferences. Because coach-athlete relationships were the focus of this study, selecting sports with a lower coach to

player ratio seemed appropriate. All of these sports are also characterized as team sports: activities where individual outcomes are not embedded in the competition like, for example, in a sport like swimming or track. Additionally, these sports take place during different seasons throughout the year, which was important in terms of creating some variance in terms of when during the academic cycle these sports take place. Girls' soccer is an autumn sport, girls' and boys' basketball takes place in the winter, while boys' soccer, baseball, and softball are spring sports. This selection of teams provided a sufficient timeframe for data collection and analysis, over multiple seasons.

Perhaps most importantly, these sports were selected based on the diversity of the athletes that select to participate in these activities. The sport pipeline and access points for soccer, basketball, baseball, and softball are inherently dissimilar and, as is such, very different types of students participate in these sports at the high school level. It was confirmed prior to the study that the athletes from these four sports are representative of the student population as a whole at each school. Lastly (and as described earlier), coaching specific high school athletic teams, such as basketball, is defined as a pressure-cooker profession due to the high visibility and community investment of the sport. Basketball was selected for this reason while baseball and softball, sports characterized by less environmental pressure at the high school level, were selected to be a contrast. Soccer tends to fall in the middle of this spectrum in terms of environmental pressure. The juxtaposition between these sports provided an interesting range of data and coach opinions.

II. Data Collection Strategy & Procedures

A Human Subjects Application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Washington and this research was deemed an exempt study. Following this notification, the 22 head coaches⁴ from baseball, basketball, soccer, and softball at the four, single-district high schools were contacted via email and invited to participate (*see Appendix A*). Of these head coaches, 13 chose to participate. Following a coach's agreement to participate, his or her assistant coach was invited to participate as well through an email invitation (*see Appendix B*). Eleven assistant coaches agreed to be interviewed as part of the study, to supplement the head coach's commentary.

Site Entry & Insider Perspective. Based on previous research, it was anticipated that my status as a fellow coach would be beneficial in recruiting participants. This hypothesis proved true and I was able to gain access to coaches through individualized communication and personal connections. Furthermore, prior to beginning my study, I had the strong support of two athletic directors within the district who were familiar with my research interests and had expressed willingness to provide inroads at their institutions if necessary. I contacted three coaches through one of these athletic director contacts. As a result, ensuring voluntary participation was of utmost importance and special attention was drawn to the voluntary participation sections of the introductory email and consent form.

My status as a current high school coach also provided an insider perspective while planning this study and gathering and analyzing data. Being a coach with an extensive coaching history gives me a broad yet unique viewpoint, as I am entrenched in this type of

⁴ Two participants coach multiple teams, thus limiting the total head coach participant pool.

work throughout the year. Furthermore, I have a strong understanding of the high school context and adolescent athletes. I mention my role as an ‘insider’ here not because of researcher bias, but because I believe it positively contributes to the findings in this study. My dual role as a coach and an academic coexist in a way that allowed me to see nuance in the data. Likewise, this study helped me to look at my coaching practice in a new way, a concept I will return to in the *Findings* chapter.

Data Sources. Data was collected through a head coach intake survey (*see Appendix C*), semi-structured interviews with head and assistant coaches (*see Appendices D & E*), and on-site observations (*see Appendix F*). *Table 2* shows the data sources that were used for examining the posed research questions. Complete descriptions of these data sources are described in the sections that follow.

Research Questions	Head Coach Intake Survey	Head Coach Interview	Assistant Coach Interview	On-Site Observation
In what ways do coaching philosophies and environmental influences drive the behaviors of coaches in their daily work?	X	X	X	X
Which behaviors do coaches perceive to be the most effective in building relationships with their athletes?		X	X	
Why and how do relationships between coaches and athletes evolve?	X	X	X	X

What barriers exist that impede the development of positive coach-athlete relationships?		X	X	X
In what ways are individual and team outcomes impacted by the types of relationships that exist between coach and athlete?	X	X	X	X

Table 2. Data source-by-research-question matrix.

Intake Survey. Head coach participants completed a brief intake survey (*see Appendix C*) to help provide context for the interview. The primary purpose of the survey was to gain an initial, cursory understanding of the individual’s coaching philosophy, leadership style, and approach to coaching. Logistical data (years at the school, sport coached, prior coaching experiences) was also requested. I asked that the survey be returned electronically prior to the interview so that it could be reviewed and used as a foundation for conversation that would follow. Ten coaches interviewed returned the intake survey prior to the interview, while three brought the survey with them to the in-person interview. Assistant coaches were not asked to complete this survey.

Semi-Structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews with varsity head coaches and subsequent interviews with assistant coaches were the primary data source for this study. Head coaches were interviewed regarding their own behavior, while assistant coaches were asked to reflect on the practice of the head coach. A consistent protocol (*see Appendix D*) was used as a beginning framework across all head coach interviews and was centered around the following themes: coaching philosophy and approach, leadership style, and coach-athlete relations. A second protocol (*see Appendix E*) was used to interview

assistant coaches around similar topics. The primary purpose of the assistant coach interviews was to triangulate the philosophy, style, and strategies reported by the head coach. While both protocols were designed and constructed around themes tied to the research questions, the flexibility in dialogue that semi-structured interviews allow was used as an advantage in this study. As Patton (2003) describes, this strategy allowed a better understanding of “how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences” (p. 348). A strength-based methodology was utilized for the interview process. Coaches were asked about ways in which they positively impact athletes and build quality relationships. Additionally, they were asked about challenges they face and the strategies they use to minimize said challenges. While less-optimal coaching behavior was a naturally occurring part of each conversation, it was not a focus of data collection. As is such, deficits in skills sets or negative coaching attributes were not part of the research design nor intended to be reported in this study.

The semi-structured interviews took place at a location of the participant’s choice, which was typically the school at which they were employed. Only two of the head coaches were interviewed at a non-school location. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then supplemented with personal notes from the interview. Each head coach and assistant coach was assigned a specific coded number to help maintain the confidentiality of the documents while analysis took place.

On-Site Observations. Following the head coach and assistant coach interviews, an on-site observation took place during a team practice or competition. The purpose of the observation was to gain a firsthand account of coaching style within the team context. The

observation protocol (*see Appendix F*) was designed from the DISC© Behavioral Profile literature and listed 24 behaviors to look for during the practice or competition. These behaviors were expected to show a baseline indicator of coaching style, as defined by the DISC© literature. When a listed behavior occurred during the 90-120 minute observation period, it was tallied and noted on the observation sheet. Following the observation, the total occurrences in each behavioral category were counted and a primary coaching style was linked with each head coach. This behavioral style was checked against both head coach and assistant coach interview transcripts in an attempt to show congruency between the head coach's reported style against actual style. This confirmatory approach allowed for triangulation of data tied to the coaching style behavioral filter depicted in the conceptual framework.

III. Data Analysis

An exploratory and strength-based approach was used for data analysis. After transcribing the interviews, the transcripts were generally overviewed and personal researcher notes were added to the transcriptions. From this reading, a list of themes and categories were drawn from the pieces of data that were responsive to the research questions (Merriam, 2009) and related back to the applied conceptual and theoretical frameworks. As aforementioned, the research questions in this study focus on positive behavior and attributes, so a focus on strengths (versus deficits) underpinned data collection procedures. Four primary topics or constructs emerged from the initial analysis, pulled from the research questions being investigated in this study: individual philosophy (IP), coaching behaviors (CB), team culture (TC), and the individual coach-athlete relationship (CAR). These topics were the focus of the second round of analysis and larger

pieces of data were assigned a single theme code (IP, CB, TC, CAR) or multiple theme codes, if applicable. Transcripts were read a third time, open-coded, and criteria from Miles & Huberman (1994) were utilized to assist in generating meaning from the themes and sub-categories identified in the transcript reviews. The six sub-categories that emerged from the initial themes were:

1. *Coaching Knowledge and Experience.*
2. *Coaching Style.*
3. *Coaching Philosophy and Values.*
4. *Behaviors for Building Relationships.*
5. *Individual and Team Outcomes.*
6. *Barriers to Relationship Building.*

These sub-categories became the primary units of analysis and were more fully explored via interview transcripts, on-site observation logs, and the intake surveys from head coaches.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were a focus of this analysis, using strategies outlined by Merriam (2009) and Lincoln & Guba (1985) to increase trustworthiness. First, I utilized multiples sources to triangulate the data. The perceptions of the head coaches were the focus of this study, but by including an observation and intake survey, additional information was available beyond the interview transcript. Furthermore, assistant coaches were included in this study to provide an additional perspective with regards to the head coach's philosophy, style, and behaviors. Including multiple data sources and perspectives in the research design allowed for thick

descriptions of content, as well as triangulation of data across settings for each participant. Additionally, maximum variation within a bounded system was achieved through sampling, as all coaches within four specific sports were invited to participate. The overall effectiveness and relationship-building behaviors of these coaches were expected to vary, resulting in data from both common and outlier coaches.

Findings were confirmed and disconfirmed by checking for representativeness, researcher effects, and examining rival explanations and extreme cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of testing assertions, revising claims, and re-testing was central to the design of this study. I took a critical eye to this work by self-reflecting on my experience through a researcher journal, paying particular attention towards providing an audit trail of research methods and design decision-making.

The ultimate goal was to understand the full range of responses within the coaching data and to make the most accurate conclusions possible based on these understandings. My tenure as an athletic coach and educator allowed for an in-depth examination of the detail and nuance embedded within the data. These findings are discussed in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to better understand the strategies that coaches use to effectively build positive relationships with athletes and define both individual and team outcomes that result from these elevated relationships. Underpinning these constructs are intrinsic filters impacting coach behavior, such as coaching philosophy and style. Findings related to these themes are discussed, based on data collected from coach surveys and interviews as well as observations. As aforementioned, a strength-based methodology was utilized in this study; thus, the findings depict the positive attributes and behaviors of the coaches who participated.

I. Coaching Knowledge and Experience

In examining the conceptual framework for this study, understanding more about the experience level and sport knowledge of the interviewed coach is an important, foundational piece of this study. Much of this information was obtained through the pre-interview intake survey completed by the head coaches, as well as during informal conversation before and after the interview sessions. A summary of the logistical data gathered from the intake surveys is displayed below in *Table 3*:

Coach Gender	Team Gender	Avg. Coaching Experience	Avg. Tenure at Current School
<i>Female: 4 Male: 9</i>	<i>Girls: 7 Boys: 8</i>	<i>16.3 years</i>	<i>6.1 years</i>

Table 3. Summary of logistical data from head coach intake surveys.

As is shown, the 13 head coaches interviewed have an average of 16.3 years in the coaching profession. Prior coaching experience ranged across high school, club, youth, collegiate, and professional settings. If we compare these tenures to a more general educational setting, like a classroom, this is an impressive amount of experience to have in one's discipline. Based on the length of coaching tenure of the interviewees, it is reasonable to conclude that these coaches have had many learning opportunities and athletic experiences that contribute to their coaching style and behavior. This high level of coaching experience would also suggest an increased level of sport specific knowledge and competence. This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that all but two of the head coaches interviewed played the sport they coach at the collegiate and/or professional levels. Thus, there is a general understanding that these coaches initially entered the coaching field with a solid foundation of sport-specific knowledge and understand the intricacies of the sport they coach.

Also of interest is the large mix in terms of coaching tenure at the current institution. Eight of the head coaches interviewed have been in their current positions five years or less, while five of the head coaches have been actively employed at the school nine years or more. Thus, a portion of this particular sample of coaches are deeply entrenched in the high school programs in which they coach and could reasonably be described as loyal to their program and institution. Two sports had the least tenured coaches in this sample. This may indicate a higher coach turnover rate within these particular sports in the region studied.

Lastly, it is worth noting that several assistant coaches in this study have a long tenure with the head coach with whom they work. Each of the longer tenured head

coaches (>9 years) have at least one assistant on staff who has been part of the program the entirety of the head coach's career at that institution. That is, the head coach hired an assistant when taking a job at the institution and the staff has stayed together over the course of many seasons. For the eight less tenured coaches (<5 years), four have assistants that they have worked with in some capacity for greater than five years. Thus, many of the coaching staffs have relationships that extend beyond the tenure at the institutions studied in this research. It is reasonable to assume therefore, that the majority of assistant coaches in this study know their head coaches well and are able to accurately describe their coaching style and how they work.

II. Coaching Style

Coaching style was assessed through an observation of the head coach in a practice or competition setting, utilizing an observation protocol tied to the DiSC® Behavioral Profile. Eleven head coaches were observed during practice sessions, while two were observed during a competition. Behaviors were recorded and each coach was designated with a specific behavioral profile, defined in this study as coaching style⁵. It is important to note that these observations were designed only to assess style, not coaching philosophy. While the two are certainly intertwined on some level, the observation was intended to be an access point for the researcher to check congruency between reported style and behaviors reflecting the reported style. The findings of the observation and associated DiSC® profile are shown below (*see Table 4*).

⁵ These four primary styles include Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientious and are fully described in the previous chapter.

D	DI	I	IS	S	SC	C
2	3	3	3	0	1	1

Table 4. Behavioral coaching style of head coach interviewees.

As shown, the observed head coaches show a range across the primary DiSC© categories, suggesting a variance in terms of the style and manner in which they approach their coaching work. This suggests that multiple styles can be effective in the coaching arena and there is no singular way to approach the craft. However, it can also be noted that nine of the coaches displayed *Influence* as a piece of their primary style. Influence is characterized by high energy and pace, optimism, and enthusiasm. Individuals with an elevated ‘I’ designation are motivated by working in teams and collaborating with people. This finding is not surprising, given the interactive space in which high school coaches work. It is reasonable to expect that the ‘*high I*’ coach thrives in environments where the goal is to develop lead, and connect with young people.

There were no stark mismatches in terms of how the assistant coaches described the head coach’s style compared to head coach’s own self-report. Furthermore, congruency was found between what head coaches reported in terms of style and what the researcher observed while on-site during practice or competition. For example, if a coach described themselves as “energetic” or “methodical”, this was observed during the observation or competition. While care must be taken to draw conclusions based on a single observation, the triangulation of data surrounding style appears to show that head coaches have a strong awareness of their behavioral style within a coaching context. With that said, and as aforementioned, self-reports of coaching philosophy are a more complicated construct to

unpack in a singular observation and were not the intended product of the observation. However, better understanding philosophy is a central component to this research and is discussed later in this chapter.

Additionally, coaches reported that they developed their coaching style over time. This was achieved through both mentorship, as well as learning experiences within the field. Several coaches noted one or two primary mentors who shaped how they approached their coaching work.

There are one or two guys that I have known since my youth, that actually coached me, that I go back to when I am struggling with something or don't know what to do. They help me look at what I am doing and that has greatly impacted me as a coach, me as a leader.

My style, I guess, started as an exact replica of one of the coaches I played under. I learned pretty fast that her style didn't work for me 100%, but I definitely took pieces of it and still coach by some of her rules and stuff like that.

Others commented along these same lines and noted that they were able to learn from past successes and incorporate elements from positive moments in their coaching career into future work. These “learning moments” helped shape their overall style over time.

I learned fast what I needed to do and what worked with my teams. Every time I do something positive with the kids and something sticks with them, I try to tuck it away and remember it to do it again.

Less successful behavior was also cited as a critical piece of developing coaching style, in that coaches learned from their mistakes and altered their behavior to a style more comfortable for themselves as well as the team participants.

I look back on my early years, and I was basically in the child abuse business the way that I yelled and screamed at those kids. I think I got away with it because I was young and we were pretty talented, but man ... that was bad. I learned fast that sort of stuff doesn't work.

Here, we see a coach using incredibly strong language, based on what he viewed as extreme behavior. Lastly, slightly adapting one's coaching style to the current culture or demeanor of the team was also identified as a strategy. Several coaches noted that it was important to be flexible, while not giving up who you are as a coach.

I have always been super intense and dominant in terms of how I approach my practices and games. But as I have gotten older, kids seem more sensitive and that doesn't work for me anymore. I have had to take some time to really think about how my behavior can best get the kids to do the things I need them to do.

I have a philosophy and values, you know? And I never give that up ... never ever. But I do like to think that I am adaptable to the needs of my guys. High school kids are changing and going through a lot. We have to keep up with what is happening with this generation of kids.

From these descriptions, it can be concluded that coaches in this study view coaching style as an evolving and ever-changing construct. Coaches utilized self-reflection as a strategy for examining past coaching experiences and relationships, which inform future behavior and decision-making. While no participants reported a complete shift in style, several noted making adaptations and adjustments over the tenure of their coaching careers.

This finding illustrates how coaches, similar to teachers, must be reflective practitioners. Because of the complex nature of coaching, good coaches must always be evolving, learning, and paying attention to the changing aspects of the systems in which they operate. As mentioned in the *Methods* chapter, I have a dual role as an academic and athletic coach. Much of the data analysis and writing of this dissertation occurred while I

was in-season, coaching my high school team. My academic research gently pushed on my daily work as a practitioner, resulting in increased frequency of reflection within my coaching practice. My identities as a female coach, educator, and academic researcher intertwined in an interesting way, affecting both my research and work with my student-athletes. This process, I believe, resulted in higher quality empirical work as well as a more introspective and improved softball coach.

III. Coaching Philosophy and Values

As described earlier, coaching philosophy sits at the center of coaching work and drives the behavior of the coach. Furthermore, coaching philosophy is tightly intertwined with coaching style; the two have quite a bit of overlap and cannot be looked at in isolation. Thus, an important piece of this study was to uncover the root of coaching philosophies and better understand what outcomes coaches seek by exercising their philosophies.

The intake survey asked coaches to briefly describe their coaching philosophy and values. This description served as the starting point for the semi-structured interview, which sought to unpack their philosophy further. Core values, ideals, and anticipated outcomes were all discussed. Additionally, assistant coaches were asked to describe the head coach's philosophy for the purpose of providing an additional perspective. Lastly, the observation was used (albeit loosely) to view the coaching philosophy 'in action'. Four primary themes emerged consistently throughout the head coach interviews and surveys: sport as a vehicle for youth development, creating participation opportunities, enhancing the high school experience, and having fun.

Before these themes are discussed, it is important to re-visit the experience level of the coaches within this study. As previously mentioned, the individual coaches that

participated in this research are incredibly experienced with lengthy resumes at the high school level. As is such, the descriptions of coaching philosophies that follow are very clear and have been honed and adapted over time. Furthermore, there was little wavering when it came to discussing a coach's role within the high school context. Participants in this study experienced almost no role conflict, despite the complex nature of their position. It is the researcher's assertion that the clarity of the findings that follow are a direct result of the experience level of the coaches involved in this study. Should more novice and inexperienced coaches been involved, it is hypothesized that more ambiguity surrounding philosophy would be present, in addition to greater stress around role selection and balancing environmental pressures.

Sport-Based Development. Participants spoke very eloquently about the power of sport to be a positive force in the lives of high school students. In particular, they focused on using sport as a vehicle to teach applicable life skills to young people that they can utilize not only as a sport participant, but also for their lives beyond the field or court.

"We coaches are in the kid development business, not the sport development business. My job is to use this sport to develop the kid so that the big things in life can be dealt with using the same principles."

"We teach them something. Leadership qualities ... those are the skills and the thing that can lead us to be great men in societies, great husbands or wives, great educators, whatever it is they do. Whatever they do, we teach them to do it to your fullest potential and be passionate about it."

"If you are fortunate enough to coach kids that get to the college or professional level, outstanding. But what I want kids to say is I became a better person while I was part of the program."

Coaches spoke specifically about teaching athletes how to participate with a high level of confidence, focus, and intensity. They noted that these skills can potentially develop in practice, during competition, or simply through the process of being part of a team and learning what that commitment entails. Several coaches talked about their “team codes” that athletes sign, which speak to the specific behavior they require of the athletes on a routine basis. For example, “all players will focus 100% on practice as soon as they step on the field.” These guidelines provide behavior-based expectations for players that coincide with intended skill outcomes that coaches desire.

Cultivating competitiveness was also a central theme reported by both head coaches and assistant coaches, who intentionally incorporate challenge and opportunities to compete in their practices⁶. This includes inner-team competitions, performance challenges over multiple practices, and peer-versus-peer drills. Coaches noted that the ability to display competitiveness stems from players having confidence in their abilities, wanting to improve, and being comfortable in competitive environments. This comfort comes from repeated exposure to high-pressure situations so that a stressful environment feels familiar and does not elicit a negative response from athletes.

“That tells me a little bit about things that I have instilled that they are willing to work out when nobody is looking, when I’m not there, when I’m not around. They don’t need me telling them to work hard.”

“We want them to compete with what they did yesterday and what they did the day before and how they fought the day before. We want them to be better tomorrow than they were yesterday with big dreams driving it. We want to set outrageous goals and build outrageously good habits.”

⁶ A lack of competitiveness was also cited as a generational barrier for the current day high school students. This is discussed later in this chapter.

In addition, coaches stated the importance of kids being able to set and strive towards a specific goal and reported that facilitating goal setting was an important task for a coach. Several coaches require written goal setting as part of their program, while others create space for verbal goal setting before practices and competitions. Furthermore, the coaches interviewed hoped to teach kids the mental fortitude to face challenge and adversity head-on while setting goals throughout their athletic journey. Many times this includes building competition into practices and creating drills and opportunities that are slightly out of reach for the athletes. This relates back to the idea of creating opportunities for athletes to become comfortable with challenge and pressure.

"I started seeing that they need to fail because if they don't, they are never going to learn. So at that point in time, I started to talk with key members and older players, the member I thought could handle the challenge as a leadership group. I explained to them that we were going to push them farther than they could handle but it was for their own good ultimately. And it did work!"

"I want players who are confident enough to be willing to take chances and can take criticism if their risk doesn't pay off."

Coaches also articulated that the ability to face challenge extends beyond the field of play. While performance-based challenges are inherent to sport, it is the coping skills learned from those athletic challenges that is most valuable. Participants talked about the ways in which developing life skills in the context of athletics provide a valuable transference into every day life.

"We have to understand what we are teaching them. Sure, we are teaching them basketball, but it's ultimately kind of how life is. We are going through a tough stretch, but we can get through it ... we can jump ship right now, or we can stay on it. It's hard to stay on it, but we have to, because that's life."

“Listen, we all make mistakes in life. I’m not happy with the mistake you made in life, but you know what, here it is, you can change it, you can learn from it. So either you make this, turn this into a positive or you can continue going down that wrong path and you are not going to learn from it essentially.”

Utilizing sport as a vehicle for holistic skill development is an explicit focus for the coaches in this study. They reported a high level of intentionality when focusing on this specific construct of their coaching philosophies. Furthermore, coaches in this study seemed to very easily prioritize student development over outside pressures and tasks that could, in many circumstances, overtake optimal coaching practices. As discussed, this is likely a result of the experience level of the coaches within this study and their choice to coach in the high school setting.

Participation Opportunities and the High School Experience. An additional theme that underpinned the coaching philosophies of participants was the desire to create an environment where all kids have the opportunity to participate and grow. The head coaches recognized that the high school setting was different from club or select athletic teams, as it was a part of the school experience and a place where peers are a component of a broader, institutionally-based community.

“I do think about how I am impacting them, how they are going to feel about it, because to me, high school is about building memories.”

“I see athletes and athletic experience a piece of the high school educational experience so, keeping that in mind, I want to create a situation where there is lots of fun memories ... supporting the academic side and kind of finding success for each kid at whatever level they are coming in.”

“A lot of these girls have never played before and don’t know what it is like to be part of a team or have a common goal. They learn to work hard and get better, but they get to represent their school while doing it which is so cool.”

Because of the broader educational mission of high school athletics, many coaches spoke at length about keeping perspective and remembering that their specific sport was merely a fraction of the whole, in terms of the high school experience. Coaches cited being flexible with student schedules and, in particular, being cognizant of additional activities taking place at the school that are important to their student-athletes. An additional part of this broader educational (and perhaps social) mission is to create an environment where relationships with teammates and coaches are created, cultivated, and last beyond high school graduation.

“These kids, I hope they keep in touch. The ones that come back and visit you when you are still coaching and they are gone doing college stuff, and then they come back and make it a point to come say ‘hi’, those are the ones that make you the happiest.”

“I think I appreciate and see the value in having those experiences for kids to bond and build that team culture. These are their friends that they will have later in their life.”

Coaches reported that former players who proactively stay connected with the program are an indication of positive relationships that are formed during the athletic playing experience. Two coaches noted having formal avenues for this connection to take place through various alumni events.

Additionally, coaches mentioned the importance of cultivating the sports pipeline beyond the high school setting in order to grow participation numbers in their sport. Spending time with youth leagues and younger players was a strategy used by many of the

coaches to generate excitement and build interest in their program. Examples include providing youth clinics and camps, attending middle school and youth games, and fostering relationships with youth coaches in the area.

“It took me a little bit longer to establish the right people at the middle school level that were on board with what I was doing at the high school and that cared to make sure that there were kids at every level doing the same thing. That’s been a real struggle and you want to have a revolving door of players. Be invested in your players and try your best to get involved with the younger kids so that by the time they reach you, they have skills.”

Connecting with younger players earlier in their athletic careers creates an opportunity for coaches to begin to build initial relationships with players long before they arrive at the high school. This extends the relationship building process beyond a four year period. Furthermore, a stronger pipeline results in more participation opportunities for kids of all talent levels prior to high school, as well as higher turnout rates and an increased talent pools at the high school level.

Making the Sport Experience Fun. Creating a fun environment was also a primary tenet of the coaching philosophies discussed in this study and is certainly worth noting as a final theme. Again, coaches stressed the importance of keeping the high school setting in perspective when creating team programming and goals.

“Sometimes you can get ... really focused on the X’s and O’s of the game and you forget that most of these kids ... play the game because they want to have fun and they like the social aspect of it.”

“You are not always going to remember all the plays and all the games and what happened in this setting and this game, but you remember memories and the fun things you did with the team.”

Coaches described the need to be creative and “mix things up” with fun activities, both during and after practices. Scavenger hunts, team dinners, ropes courses, alumni games, group hikes, and obstacle courses were all mentioned as examples of these types of activities. Coaches stressed that the fun factor was of utmost importance, specifically during losing seasons, where little enjoyment was coming from the result of competition. Coaches also described having a higher level of personal satisfaction during the season if they could “feel” their players having fun on a daily basis.

Based on my observations of athletics in this geographical region, allowing space for “fun” and holistic development may in fact be more easily attainable in the high school setting. It is important to note that, when examining the athletic system within the United States, there are parallel participation structures in place at the high school level: high school athletic programs run alongside select programs. Club and select programs have become semi-professional in nature, particularly over the last decade. These systems run year-round, provide athletes with exposure at national tournaments, are the breeding ground for college recruitment, and typically come with an enormous price tag. In contrast, high school sports have become less relevant with regards to college recruiting access and have shifted towards a more participatory culture. Coaches within the club and select programs exist in a higher stakes environment, where player and parent expectations run high with regards to athletic development, national exposure, and recruitment. This creates a unique and challenging foundation on which coach-athlete relationships sit. The focus is likely centered around sport development and athletic competency. Conversely, it is concluded that high school coaches may have the capacity and latitude to build

relationship capital with their athletes more easily, as different developmental elements are the focus of the high school sporting experience.

IV. Behaviors for Building Relationships

The importance of positive relationships between coaches and athletes has been described in depth throughout this paper. Scholars and coaches alike have described how solid relationships are at the core of effective coaching. However, how we achieve these positive relationships is not entirely clear, based on the limited research in this area of inquiry. A primary focus of this study was to better understand how, specifically, coaches behave in ways that promote good relationships with their athletes. Following interviews and observations with head coaches in this study, six specific categories of behavior emerged⁷. These include:

1. *Possessing a baseline of sport knowledge.*
2. *Demonstrating care.*
3. *Displaying transparency and consistency.*
4. *Effectively communicating with program stakeholders.*
5. *Creating leadership and ownership opportunities for your athletes.*
6. *Exhibiting a high level of passion and desire for you coaching position.*

Participants spoke eloquently about specific ways in which they engage in these categories of behavior as part of their coaching work. They described these behaviors with clarity, providing further proof that the coaches in this study are equipped with strong

⁷ Interestingly, these themes tightly align with the qualities of effective teachers cited earlier in the literature review, suggesting a strong correlation between the work of coaches and teachers.

philosophies and beliefs about their role as a high school coach. These descriptions are detailed in the sections that follow, giving unique insight into participant views and coaching approach.

Sport Knowledge. In speaking with both head and assistant coaches, a consistent theme emerged tied to sport knowledge: a certain baseline of content knowledge is necessary to be an effective coach. Coaches talked about how general sport understanding is a pre-requisite and foundation for building a relationship because it is tied to respect; athletes have a general expectation that their coach understands the sport. Game strategy, training techniques, understanding rules, and the ability to play with the athletes were all mentioned as a part of baseline sport knowledge. Coaches stated that players must have confidence that the coach understands the game so that they trust their decisions and ‘buy-in’ to the program philosophy.

“They trust that you are coaching them in the best way you can. I have got the latest information and I know what I am talking about. I know what I am teaching and then I am able to teach them the game and that they are willing to listen.”

“They have to trust you know what you are doing. We are not going to set you out to fail, so you have to just trust us that whatever we call, whatever the situation is, that we have your best interest and we are trying to put you in a successful position.”

Many of the coaches interviewed seek out training materials and coaching clinic events in order to stay abreast of the current trends in their sport. As aforementioned, the majority of head coaches in this study played at the collegiate and/or professional levels. These coaches noted this was an advantage, in that players coming into their program were

aware of their playing history and thus, assumed they possessed a high level of sport knowledge.

“My guys know that I played college ball and professional ball. That automatically gets their attention and they don’t question whatever it is that I ask of them. It could be a drill or whatever ... they will do it. I don’t think other coaches that don’t have a storied playing background automatically get that. It’s definitely an advantage for me.”

“They know I have played at the highest level. They know that I have had some of the best coaches around. That’s big.”

Several coaches also mentioned playing and participating with the athletes during practice as a way to show competence in the sport. Coaches who noted this stated that they build their participation into practice and scrimmages to both set an example, but also to “keep relevant in the eyes of the players”. It should also be noted that coaches did mention the danger in becoming too focused on sport-specific knowledge or becoming dependent on the reputation of being a great player, as that does not necessarily equate to good coaching. Some coaches talked about low spots in their coaching career where they became overly focused on the X’s and O’s of the game, at the expense of other educational and social components important to the craft of coaching. Because finding and maintaining quality coaches for high school athletics can be a serious challenge (the schedule is demanding, the pay minimal, and the stress often high), a range of different types of people enter the field of coaching. I speculate that coaches with high sport-specific IQ are valued highly, despite their understanding of the craft of coaching or educating young people. This can be very dangerous at the high school level, given the role of a coach in a school setting. This concept is discussed more thoroughly later in the findings section.

Demonstration of Care. Coaches in this study repeatedly talked about the importance of demonstrating care towards their athletes. In particular, coaches mentioned that they try to connect with their players' lives outside of the sport context, attempting to get to know the teenager, not the athlete. This aligns with Noddings (1984) definition of care via 'engrossment', or trying to learn more about the individual that you do not already know.

"I do ... a weekly email so kids on Sunday night they get the email and they have to respond with what their week looks like for school, something they are doing with their family, and something they are doing with their friends that is outside of (sport). This gives the opportunity to get to know them a little bit."

"Yeah, I want them focused on practice and stuff, but we spend quite a bit of time before and after getting to know the kids and what they are about. Knowing that stuff is so important; maybe even the most important."

Coaches talked about staying abreast of players' academic performance, events occurring at school, as well as other extracurricular activities in which the student-athletes are involved. Coaches reported this process can ultimately become reciprocal, as athletes gain interest in coaches' lives and are invested in the coach as a person. When this happens, team unity is visible and the setting is one of comfort and trust. Interestingly, coaches of girls talked about the importance of knowing about athletes' social lives, and trying to connect with them through their interests and what was happening outside of academics and athletic contests. Coaches of male athletes either did not mention knowing about the social aspects of players' lives, or explicitly sought to avoid that fine line of "learning too much". As one coach stated, "they have their best friends for that kind of stuff". Coaches cited probing questions and continual communication as the best strategies for learning

more about the players outside of sport and showing interest in their lives. I observed much “small talk” between coaches and players, before and after practice, that appeared to be reflective of caring.

Also mentioned was the importance of understanding that high school is often a tumultuous time for adolescents, as they are navigating complex social situations while also trying to define themselves as an individual. This relates back to the adolescent developmental literature reviewed earlier. Coaches stated that athletes appreciate when coaches recognize the somewhat chaotic nature of a high school student-athlete’s life, acknowledge the athlete’s feelings, and provide emotional support.

“I think it is important to continue to put yourself in their shoes. I think you find a piece of yourself in every kid that you coach and I have had all kinds of different personalities on my team from totally crazy, wild behavior to super shy, not confident. And I just try to look at each one of them and see how I can connect with this kid ... and show them I care about them.”

“I believe that we pick athletes we can get on our page as coaches and I think that is backwards. I think we need to pick coaches who can get on the kids page so they can understand them and help them improve in their context.”

“I would hate to be a high school kid nowadays. They go through so much, you know? It was not like that when we were in school!”

Only two head coaches interviewed explicitly noted developmental factors of high school students. However, based on additional commentary from participants, it is the author’s understanding that this does not connote a complete lack of awareness of the adolescent athlete. Rather, it suggests that coaches do not have an explicit and fully educated understanding of adolescent development, but do understand general characteristics in an intuitive manner. This points to a potential area of professional development for high

school coaches, as we know that the developmental state of adolescents is very unique and appealing to those characteristics could be very strategic.

Additionally and partially related to the previous finding, is the idea that coaches must understand kids as unique individuals. Coaches stated that each athlete is different and the challenge is finding ways to connect with each individual and their individual idiosyncrasies.

“I think at one point at the beginning you are kind of like, okay everybody is a cookie cutter and I want to have them all look like this, act like this, and here is what they are all motivated by. And I think as time goes by and you see kids have so many different personality traits and motivators and so you have got to kind of learn how to bring the best out of all of them.”

“Some guys, they need me to light them up on one side and down the other, and would rather have that happen. That is their motivation. But some guys they don’t respond to that, they just crawl in a hole and disappear. You have to know who is who.”

The ability to determine an individual athlete’s motivational drivers was declared a challenging but foundational piece of starting and building a relationship. Coaches reiterated the importance of taking into account the confidence level of each individual and finding ways to support them and build their skills. This is a challenging task to negotiate as the physical skills, personality, and social maturity of every individual athlete varies. Many coaches tried to navigate this process through simple conversation and repeated exposure to their athletes over time. Others were strategic about using different coaching techniques and communication tone during practices to appeal to different types athletes.

Much of the leadership literature (e.g. Noddings, 1984; Sernak, 1998; Autry, 1991) spends a considerable time discussing the value of care with relation to power dynamics.

These scholars frame care as a delicate element of a relationship that must be nurtured and actively sought. I saw and heard from several coaches a natural aptitude (perhaps those with an 'I' style tendency?) to co-exist with their athletes in an informal and comfortable way. These coaches displayed vulnerability, humor, compassion, and quickly lessened the gap between the power role of coach and the high school student. It appeared simplistic. Other coaches, often more reserved and slow-paced, spoke about the overt effort they had to make in order to reach the "non-athlete" version of their students. It was uncomfortable and unnatural for these coaches to demonstrate care. In this way, we see how natural style affects behavior that can be impactful in the realm of coaching.

Displaying Transparency and Consistency. An additional behavioral element that emerged from the coaching interviews was the ability to act in a transparent, consistent, and forthright manner. Coaches defined transparency as demonstrating honesty and openness, which in turn, leads to trust between coach and athlete.

"Being honest with them, I think it is important you are able to even if it is not good news, that you can communicate honestly but that you can also give them a solution to the situation. Hey, this might not be what you want to hear, but let's figure out a way out of this and there is always a way to get around this challenge."

"They have to know where they stand, and they know that they have got a fair shot and fair shake. You have to be honest with them. That gets you respect and trust."

"Myself and the coaches, we will put together a depth chart. This is where we see you guys right now. It doesn't mean the season is going to be like this the whole way. You have got to be honest with each other, even if it is something that you may not want to hear."

"I think openness is where it all begins. Trust that I may not always agree with what you say, but I believe you have got my best interests at hand."

Per the development literature discussed earlier, adolescents and young adults tend to flourish, given some level of structure. As a result, coaches emphasized the need to set and maintain clear expectations and to be upfront with team rules and program philosophy. Typically participants achieved this through written rules or team binders with program information. Coaches also cited verbalizing written expectations whenever possible to reiterate messaging. While specific team rules and program philosophies varied from coach-to-coach and team-to-team, being firm with expectations was consistently noted by study participants. Setting ground rules for individual and team behavior allows for an unambiguous environment where coaches, players, and parents have clear roles and know what is expected of them. By diminishing the 'gray area', decisions and judgment calls tied to player and coach behavior become more delineated. Tied to this, several coaches noted being clear with consequences, should players not adhere to team rules or meet general expectations.

"Have I asked kids to leave practice? Yes, all the time. I have no problem sending any kid home. You are wasting your time and you are wasting my time and your teammates time. Just go home and come back tomorrow."

"If you see behavior that you don't like or they are not meeting the expectations, you have to have a conversation with them that they are subject to the same team rules that every else has."

"Have I (sent kids home) that I absolutely had a great connection with? Yes. I have done it on purpose, sometimes to send a message. Are those kids sometimes my best asset? Yes, because I want no one to think that they are more important than the team."

With this said, making swift and decisive judgment calls was not easy for any of the head coaches in this study. While some decisions may not be highly impactful, some can change the trajectory of a young person's life. Stories about college recruiting, drug use, and psychological disorders were all discussed as instances where coaches had to make serious decisions with serious consequences. Not only are making these decisions difficult, but they must be made with confidence. Nearly half of the coaches interviewed eluded to the idea that coaches must show confidence in their decisions and decision-making, particularly as it relates to team policy and expectations. These types of decisions are often met with emotional reactions from players and parents, so confidence must be displayed for a coach to avoid being in a position of vulnerability.

"I think coaching is constantly like a roller coaster. It can be very hard, wins and losses are extremely hard, so I think the number one thing is just be confident in the decisions that you make and for your actions. I would say with coaching you are going to be questioned about the plays, your defense, your selection of teams, your philosophy, anything you do. So you know what? You need to be confident in what you do. Keep on tracking forward, because when you second guess yourself ... there is no consistency essentially."

"I have had to make tough calls, you know? Calls with no right answers. There is no handbook for this stuff, so you just have to do what you think is right in the moment and hope for the best. Hope you are doing the best thing you can for that kid."

Three of the head coaches interviewed believed authenticity was tied to the construct of transparency. These coaches felt that part of being transparent and consistent was the ability to hold the full team accountable to a specific standard and communicate that to the athletes. This reciprocity is evident when coaches and athletes speak to one another and behave in ways where there is no surprise.

“We have a standard that we hold everyone to, including me. And when I fall down on my responsibility, I say, ‘Hey, my fault. I’ll get this right because I was working on it too.’ Ultimately we are all ordinary folks and what we are working to do is an extraordinary thing in high school, which is to create a real excellent program that survives the last group of kids.”

When a coach behaves in a transparent manner, athletes better understand what their coach is thinking and what specifically they are expected to do as a member of that athletic program. This level of honesty and openness breeds trust; coaches trust that athletes will behave properly and athletes trust that their coaches will remain consistent with their expectations and policies. One head coach used the unique strategy of checking in with assistant coaches on a weekly basis to assess how consistent her behavior was during the previous week. Another coach revisited team expectations halfway through the year with the full team during a mini-retreat, and adjustments were made to team rules if necessary. In my role as a coach, I start the practice following a game with areas of improvement for the coaching staff so that we take responsibility for shortcomings in our work.

Tied to being consistent and transparent is the ability to effectively communicate said expectations and policies, as a communication breakdown can result in the proper messaging not being transmitted to the athlete. The topic of communication is discussed next.

Effective Communication. Not surprisingly, coaches identified effective communication as a cornerstone of relationship building with athletes. It is not enough to simply have a coaching philosophy or team expectations; one must be able to relay that information to athletes clearly, in an impactful way. Coaches noted that the ability to articulate philosophies and expectations becomes easier with more practice (i.e. later in the

coaching career). On-field and on-court communication between coaches and athletes was a primary point of discussion during most of the interviews. Coaches spoke at length about the ability to communicate a message quickly and concisely with an appropriate tone. Tone was cited as a primary issue in communication miscues where athletes misunderstood what they coach was trying to relay.

“You can’t have the Bobby Knight tirades anymore and expect kids to respond to that. At least not every kid will respond to that, so you just have to be able to communicate calmly. This is the expectation and if you can’t do it, somebody else will be willing to and maybe you need to do something else.”

“So as you know, I coach both boys and girls. I have found that I have to take a very different tone with each of them. It’s not necessarily what I say, it’s how I say it to them that makes the difference. It’s silly, but it’s real!”

Participants talked about keeping dialogue succinct and to the point, in order to capture the attention of their players. This suggests some awareness of the attention span of the high school adolescent and making an adaptation based on this understanding. Several coaches also mentioned having assistant coaches or other leadership figures communicate messages in order to give them more impact. These coaches worry that their attempt to communicate a single message multiple times is an issue for many athletes, particularly adolescent athletes with a sometimes-limited attention span.

“I am trying to give space. I want to let them hear somebody else preach to them. If I am constantly preaching the same thing over and over and over again, pretty soon it’s in one ear out the other. So they need a break (and) when they come back it is fresh.”

Also noted was that athletes are not the sole recipient of the coach’s communication. As noted in Bronfenbrenner’s model, parents, guardians, athletic directors, opposing teams,

school administration, and league officials are all important stakeholders in a high school athletic environment. Coaches stressed the importance of identifying these groups and learning how to best capture their attention and relay information in a forthright manner. It was noted these groups need to be communicated with in different ways with different messaging, which is certainly a skill requires continual refinement.

Coaches also articulated the need for identifying which mechanisms are best for communicating with different stakeholder groups during the season. For example, all but one coach in this study utilizes text messaging to regularly communicate with athletes outside of practice and competition. Conversely, email and face-to-face addresses are commonly used when communicating with parents and school administration. Coaches described knowing both the needs of the stakeholder group and the appropriateness of the communication mechanism as keys to being understood and information relayed. What is deemed appropriate has changed drastically over the last decade, particularly for those coaches that have been in the industry for an extended period time. Players and parents now require immediate access to coaches, which I speculate would be a challenge for older coaches who did not have round-the-clock access as an expectation earlier in their careers.

Creating Leadership and Ownership Opportunities. As discussed earlier, sport can be used as a laboratory for positive youth development outcomes. One such outcome is helping young people to develop leadership skills in the sports context that can then be translated to their non-athletics life on a broader scale. Coaches can help facilitate this leadership development by promoting opportunities for athletes to take ownership in their athletic experience.

"I take them to the trophy cases by the gym and talk to them about what their legacy will be. You control that legacy. When you come back for your high school reunion, what do you want to be able to say about your sporting career here? You can own that but you have to decide now."

"I want to teach my students how to perform with the goal of them being successful. I've taken that idea of success and then with the help of our leaders, had them put the words to create our philosophy of success. They help us understand how we should look at our season for that specific year."

Furthermore, many coaches spoke about putting athletes in leadership positions within the team context, noting that often, as adults, we do not give high school students enough credit for the capabilities they possess. Coaches described how athlete-leaders can be very skilled at promoting the values of the program and setting a tone for how things should be done. They also noted that athletes feel appreciated and valued when put in these positions, which strengthens the relationship between athlete and coach.

"I just want the seniors to lead, my captains to lead, (because they know) the expectations we have. The players vote on the captains so essentially, hopefully, the kids will listen to them. Sometimes I don't get what is going on or why we are struggling. So for me, I'm just looking for them because I need help. I need you guys to help me out and keep the team together."

"We don't believe much in the status of a senior. We do believe in the status of a leader. Leaders help demonstrate how we do things our way. It is about showing people what we mean by hustle, what we mean by communicate, what we mean by praise the good work of the guys standing next to you."

"We are coaches and often we try to play the game for them. Whose game is it? I say the game belongs to the kids and the ceiling is high as long as we teach them. So I say if you can, teach! And they will achieve!"

Coaches utilize several strategies to provide leadership opportunities. The primary strategy used was appointing captains through peer voting. This not only puts several

players into leadership positions, but gives all players ownership in the process of choosing peer leaders. Participants also reported having players lead portions of practice, do peer teaching, or lead off-season training. Two coaches hold weekly captains' meetings where players complete assignments and readings tied to leadership.

Lastly, coaches clearly articulated the importance of helping athletes feel empowered by pushing them to set lofty goals and become comfortable with the feeling of challenge. This push gives athletes the sense that the coach believes they are capable and have the ability to succeed.

"We are trying to challenge them, drive them to failure at higher and higher levels so that the game becomes easier and that is the bottom line."

"I think the ideal is the coach understanding the needs of the players and what their goals are and helping them achieve them and helping them create that memory."

This idea ties back to the earlier finding related to helping student-athletes gain life skills and competencies through sport. Meeting a high-level goal or being put in a leadership position is a valuable life experience for an athlete. Knowing this, coaches who build out these opportunities with intentionality are greatly enhancing the experience of their athletes. In turn, athletes feel trusted and empowered, resulting in an elevated relationship between coach and athlete.

Exhibit Your Passion. Every coach interviewed spoke in detail about their love of sport and the profession of coaching. Despite having long coaching tenures, the participants remain passionate about athletics and working with young people. However,

they noted that simply possessing passion is not enough; passion must be actively demonstrated to athletes and other stakeholders.

“If we can’t find a way to enjoy it, to show the kids and the parents that you love what you do, then it might be time to find something else. Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm.”

“Number one ... get a group of parents and players and show them that you are excited about this opportunity. It doesn’t matter if you have taken over the worst program in the country. Show them how you are going to grow through your knowledge, through your passion.”

The ability to exhibit passion shows athletes that the coach is invested and cares about the team and its individual athletes. Not only does exhibiting passion demonstrate investment and care, but the passion can be infectious! The coaches in this study talked about how, through their passion, they are able to set an example for the energy and enthusiasm they expect as part of the program.

“They will behave and act the way you act. I think the way I want to represent myself is the way I expect my kids to represent themselves so when they go out in the field, I want them to respect the game, have excitement and passion and energy and focus. Those are all things I bring to practice with me every day ... because I am setting that example for them and they are able to go out and emulate that.”

Displays of energy and enthusiasm were very common during the on-site observations in this study. While these displays varied depending on the personality of the coach and overall team environment, passion was ever-present and a central component of practice and competition.

Although ‘being passionate’ may seem fairly elementary in terms of a research finding, the value of passion is high when we see how greatly it can contribute to the coach-

athlete dyad. In fact, many coaches reported that the ability to be excited about practice, a big play, or player development and effectively demonstrate that excitement is paramount in connecting with athletes. Thus, these findings suggest that the need to physically and verbally showcase passion and enthusiasm is imperative for high school coaches. With this said, much of the leadership literature surrounding care that was mentioned earlier in this paper (e.g. Noddings, 1984) notes that passion is not needed to build relationships if a certain level of care is demonstrated. This notion relies on the premise that care underlies passion, as it is a more consistent and reliable behavior. Furthermore, the literature states that in classroom and work settings, students and employees respond more favorably to care than passion. I suggest, based on the findings of this research, that both care and passion be exhibited simultaneously to elicit the best relationships in the most expedient manner possible. This seems most apt, given the quick time frame that high school coaches must connect with their athletes. Furthermore, I argue that the environment of athletics is different from a traditional workplace or classroom, in that uncertainty, competition, and excitement are inherent to sporting activity. Thus, demonstrating passion aligns well with the athletic context.

V. Individual Outcomes

Behaviors perceived to foster positive relationship development between coach and athlete have been described and detailed in the previous section. An additional goal of this study was to better understand the outcomes that result from a coach being able to build and maintain a quality relationship with players on the team. These outcomes, on both a team and individual level, were a focus of discussion throughout the interviews. Coaches

reported that having a quality relationship with an athlete results in four primary individual outcomes:

1. *Athletes will work harder and want to be coached.*
2. *Athletes will serve as leaders and need less guidance.*
3. *Players are willing to communicate and collaborate with the coaching staff.*
4. *Athletes are willing to take risks and step up to challenges.*

Each of these outcomes is discussed more thoroughly below, with a specific focus on how the outcome plays out in an athletic and team setting.

Hard Work and Coachability. Coaches believe that the ability to connect with an athlete allows for many positive outcomes. One such outcome is the desire an athlete has to work hard “for” the coach. This feeling emanates from knowing the coach cares about the athlete, has their best interests in mind, and is providing an environment where athletic success is possible.

“Something I say all the time (is that players) want to know that you care about them and once they know you care about them, they will do anything for you and will work for you.”

This ties back to the desired coaching behavior of demonstrating care, as the ability to showcase the commitment to the athlete is a foundational element of this outcome. One coach described that his players would “run through a wall for him”, while another said her players “outwork everyone in the league because they know I have their best interests in mind”. Player desire to meet coach expectations and give a strong effort was observed in many of the on-site practice sessions. This work ethic may be tied to the fact that the

students who attend the schools in this study are generally high achieving. Students are focused on their future and have lofty goals that stretch beyond the high school walls. While these goals many not necessarily be focused on athletics, the students have experience setting goals and putting in effort to achieve them. I surmise that the students who play for the coaches in this study may be more apt to work hard, compared to less motivated and lower achieving populations.

Also tied to the construct of hard work is that the athletes who are emotionally connected with their coach and have confidence in their coach's sport knowledge are willing be taught. Athletics uses the term 'coachability' to refer to an athlete's willingness to listen to instruction and make adjustments to their performance. One participant noted that feeling a connection with the coach is crucial, but feeling connected to teammates and the team mission is also important with regards to how apt the player is to take instruction.

"If the bond with each other, with the teammates and with the coaches are strong, then they are more apt to listen to you, to take your coaching, to be more coachable."

Coaches in this study believe that the ability to connect with athletes on a social, emotional, and psychological level results in having an "easier" job in that their intended message and instruction are readily accepted. Several coaches mentioned players "buying in" and willingness to adapt play and performance based on feedback as indicators of coachability.

Coaches also noted that a quality relationship in isolation is not enough and that players must also be invested in the team mission or team goal. The attachment to a common goal in combination with the quality relationship is what truly results in athletes that work mightily and are easily coached.

“At the beginning of every season, I spend a lot of time with my kids figuring out what they want to achieve as a group. I know if they are interested in what they are doing, than my season is going to be much easier.”

“Kids this age are tough so you have to know what is important to them. We make it all about them and their goals, and then they are animals out there.”

This finding relates back to the coaching behavior of collaboration and working together with athletes to create a common vision and expectation. Coaches described how this collaboration help breeds a commitment to individual and team goals, resulting in more positive outcomes both developmentally and athletically.

Act as Leaders. Many of the coaches interviewed noted that the players with whom they felt connected showcased the confidence to be in leadership positions within the team. These players understood the goals of the program, expectations of the coaches, and were able to provide guidance to younger and less experienced players.

“Once players have been in our program for a long time, we know that they are confident to take charge. They are comfortable taking charge. They know exactly how we do things and how we expect things. That wouldn’t happen if we weren’t connected.”

“I think the thing we like to focus on is taking pride in your name, and whatever you put your name on is going to be meaningful. If you say yes to do something, you are going to be all in and if you can’t do it, you need to make sure you say you can’t fulfill whatever obligation it is. It’s about the name on the front of the jersey.”

Coaches described being able to see an aura of pride around the more experienced athletes as they act as the drivers of team mission and philosophy. The interviewed coaches talked about how these players actively serve as an extension of the coaching staff, which is

particularly important in high school sports where the personnel and staff members are sometimes minimal. Coaches described how athlete-leaders are incredibly valuable in establishing team culture, setting a competitive tone, and being in an overall position of support.

"I see my captains as a crucial component of our leadership team. They are the ones that are in the mix and know what is actually going on with our team. We want them to feel empowered to make some decisions, but also communicate with us about what is going on."

Thus, in these instances, quality personal relationships are opening the door for a stronger overall coaching presence and a consistent demonstration of program expectations. When a coach is able to connect with the athlete, they are able to utilize these athletes in a leadership position for the betterment of the team. The presence of player-leaders was quite evident during team observations. In particular, programs with strong, overt program philosophies tended to have multiple players appearing seemingly confident in leadership positions. Players would step in to speak during times of conflict, challenge teammates, and serve as overall motivators towards the goal at hand. I speculate that coaches in this study have a greater number students with experience in a leadership position, given the typical background of students in each school and the inherent focus on excellence at each institution. This may result in coaches being more willing to provide leadership opportunities and release some of their power to members of the team.

Collaboration and Communication. All of the coaches interviewed talked about the importance of maintaining an open dialogue with players with whom they had a positive relationship. Several different examples were given with regards to how an open

line of communication appears. First, coaches noted that players who were comfortable with the coaching staff were willing to open up regarding their feelings and emotions.

“So I think for me, those relationships are really what coaching is about. It’s who I am. To me it’s important that they will open up about anything. I am an outlet for them.”

“So my feeling is it starts with respect and respect builds relationships. We are looking for that relationships to be built because that builds communication and without communication in sports, not very much can be achieved.”

Other coaches described the open line of communication as one where coaches and athletes feel free to discuss things that are happening with the team and program. This was observed during two separate practices, where captains asked to address the coaching staff following practice, regarding issues they were seeing with the team. Likewise, one of the head coach participants met with all of the upperclassmen following a practice session to discuss the level of competitiveness and effort displayed that day. These can be characterized as bi-directional conversations, in that both coaches and players appeared comfortable initiating the discussion and speaking freely about the current issue at hand.

“It allows for more collaboration with your kids. If it is open for discussion, they will be comfortable to discuss things with you and explain what they are thinking. That is super important at the high school level.”

“Once those relationships are built, guys want to play for you and talk with you. It looks like two cars being able to drive side by side. We co-exist and work together.”

Lastly, one single coach talked about athletes asking questions as a barometer for quality relationships. She noted that her team and her athletes are typically in a great place

relationship-wise if they feel comfortable to ask questions and/or challenge what is currently taking place. In several of the on-site observations, the players were extremely active in asking questions and clarifying goals and mission.

Appropriate Risk Taking. A final individual outcome mentioned by the coaches in this study tied to positive relationship outcomes revolved around risk-taking. In addition to being comfortable in a leadership position, coaches noted that athletes with solid relationships with coaches were willing to challenge themselves and take risks. In particular, they noted taking physical risks related to skill development and performance. They also mentioned emotional and peer-based risks, in terms of how athletes push and seek to motivate their teammates.

"I can see it in their eyes when they are ready for the next step. There may be a little fear hidden in there, but on the whole, they are ready for the next challenge. I give them space to do that."

"My players are willing to just go for it, you know? They know that the coaches have their backs so they push and push to get better. And not just for themselves ... they push their teammates. They are not scared to make mistakes which I think is something super important, especially for this generation of kids."

One of the behaviors mentioned earlier that promotes positive relationships was the act of challenging players. This finding would suggest that players learn the process of being challenged and then, once in a leadership role, continue to challenge not only themselves, but their teammates as well. It could be assumed that players understand what types of risk-taking are acceptable in the team context and strive to push the boundaries. This

peer-to-peer challenge has positive outcomes on a broader level. These findings related to broader team outcomes are discussed next.

VI. Team Outcomes

Not only do positive relationships have an effect on individual players, but they have an effect on the team unit as well. Understanding team outcomes emanating from quality coach-athlete dyads was also a component of the conceptual framework presented for this study. Two broad themes emerged when examining how strong individual relationships play out in the team context: positive team culture and high return rates of athletes.

Every head coach interviewed talked about the importance of positive team culture, should a team hope to be successful. While positive culture was defined differently by various participants, the creation of that culture was consistently described as being bred from trust, mutual respect, and a clear program philosophy. These elements were all discussed earlier in this paper. Participants noted that positive team culture is recognizable when the coaching staff and team members feel unified and pulled together by a common goal. They have confidence in the team mission and understand what the group is trying to achieve.

“Those kids who are the leaders who have been in the program for a long time and had been exposed to the strong leaders before them, they have really created a family culture where people are supporting each other and are encouraging each other. They are excited. Little successes are celebrated.”

Furthermore, in this familial environment, players become excited about being part of the program and are encouraged to contribute to the overall culture. All but one head coach mentioned that building strong relationships results in players and teams returning to play

for the program. This is of paramount importance at public high schools, where talent pools are dictated solely by school attendance areas. Coaches must be able to keep any and all talent as a piece of the program.

“You got to make them feel part and make sure that you are doing everything you can so that they have the best experience possible. Because that is how programs get built, through word of mouth.”

Also articulated was the sense of loss coaches feel when a player decides not to return to the program. Coaches noted that they hope to create an environment where all players feel connected so that they will remain a part of the team.

“I feel like that is a loss for me when I am not able to keep them in and really get them to connect with the rest of the group and they don’t come back. That’s on me.”

The ability to connect with players and create a feeling of connection with the sports program is a result of positive coach-athlete relationships. Coaches deemed this important not only to maintain talent, but also to create positive high school experiences.

VII. Barriers to Relationship Building

A final goal of this study was to understand the barriers that present themselves to high school coaches as they seek to build relationships with their athletes. The majority of these challenges are inherent to the high school setting and high school students. Five primary challenges emerged from this work:

1. *Accelerated pace of the high school season.*
2. *Understanding the maturity level of high school athletes.*

3. *Generational gap between coaches and players.*
4. *Motivational gap between players.*
5. *Playing time.*

These barriers were discussed explicitly by participants and are recounted in the subsequent sections.

Managing the Time Crunch in High School Athletics. The average high school season of the coaches interviewed is approximately 10-12 weeks, depending on eligibility for post-season play. Given the accelerated pace, the timeline for developing rapport with players is incredibly challenging.

“So we are so fast and furious in high school that you don’t get to always build that rapport you want with them. Because a coach and captain should be right in step, but sometimes it is hard to build that rapport and get going because we don’t have the time.”

Coaches feel a pressure to focus on strategy and technique, specific plays, and getting players “game ready”. This was observed in several of the practices, when coaches debated which specific components were most crucial to cover during the limited practice time. While coaching philosophies include items such as leadership development and team building, these tasks are often discarded in favor of running drills and preparing for the next opponent. Coaches reported feeling incredibly challenged by learning to negotiate this.

“The thing that really affected me going from college to high school coaching was the preparation, the time to prepare the players to go out and do what they need to do. I can honestly say I’ve spent so much time and effort and focus

on how to do it, and I will never have it figured out. Nobody will figure out the whole thing."

There is great pressure to ensure athletes are improving and that an eye is kept towards winning games and matches. However, one coach noted that you have to keep your eye on the "intangibles" and know that preparing athletes isn't solely about making sure they can sink a free throw or hit a curve ball:

"You have to realize some of that stuff makes some of the other stuff better. If you spend some time doing some little fun, team bonding games, and you might be sacrificing some of your practice, but you are getting the kids to trust each other, to trust the coaching staff, to have fun, to laugh."

Another coach focused on the fact that it may not be possible to build physical skills, life skills, and leadership capabilities simultaneously in the condensed timeframe of the high school season. In fact, he mentioned it can be frustrating and "setting yourself up for failure" if you make an attempt to "do everything" in one season. Instead, his focus is thinking about the path of development over the four years an athlete will have in a high school program if he or she participates for their full career.

"And we have a four-year teaching process that is manageable, because that is forty weeks. If I can't teach somebody something in forty weeks then I don't know what I am doing. So we have standards for where we want freshmen to be, we have standards for where sophomores should be, standards where juniors should be in terms of skills, we have standards where seniors should be in terms of abilities to perform those skills."

And finally, one coach was adamant that some kids may actively learn life skills and leadership qualities while participating in sport, but are simply unable to demonstrate that learning during their tenure on the team for some reason or another. This coach spoke to

the longer time frame that some players need to understand a coach's actions and appreciate the relationship that he or she was trying to build.

"Maybe it wasn't in the those four years that is was supposed to happen, maybe it was later in life. That is what I'd hope for. Sometimes it is not peachy; sometimes it doesn't end on a white horse riding away and winning. But your wins come later in life."

This suggests that coaches need to maintain perspective when it comes to the goals and connections they are attempting to achieve during the accelerated timeframe of a high school sports season.

High School Student Maturity. During the interview process, coaches were asked to talk about the evolution of their coaching philosophies. A key finding that emerged was that coaches, over time, gained a better understanding of the psychological, social, and emotional characteristics of their athletes. This relates back to the idea that coaches have a general, intuitive awareness of the adolescent developmental characteristics and their understanding develops over time. Over half of the participants talked about how, initially, they expected their athletes to act like mature adults. However, they learned over time that high school students often lacked maturity, and it was the responsibility of the coach to adapt to less-sophisticated behavior.

"So I think remembering that they are not quite ready yet to do all those things that you are able to do at 25, 26, 30. Make sure you are teaching things at their level. They are not mini-adults. They are kids."

"We are the adults and we need to remember that. They are 17-year old kids and don't know as many tricks as we do."

Coaches discussed players not being “mini-adults” but didn’t have a great handle on the developmental needs of high school students initially in their careers. A majority of the coaches talked about traditional adolescent behavior as a “problem” and how that’s “just the way these kids are”. There appears to be a disconnect between their understanding of how athletes act and the scientific and developmental reasons for the athletes’ behavior. Some coaches seem to think that athletes make the choice to be moody or not pay attention, while these characteristics may greatly be attributed to simply being an adolescent. A better understanding of the developmental needs of adolescents may help close the gap between coach expectations and player behavior.

Athletes with a primary focus on sport is a rarity at a portion of the schools of the coaches who were interviewed. Coaches aware of the academic rigor present in the district, as well as the abundance of extracurricular activities available to students, are better able to cope with student anxiety and diminished maturity in balancing sport with other activities.

“You know, we keep doing what we can so we can get better but you know the flip side of that? You have got to remember they have school to take care of, they have got family that they need to spend time with at night.”

“I try to put myself in their shoes and remember what it was like to be in high school ... to juggle all those responsibilities and still not really be fully independent and still have to be able to make your own decision sometimes.”

“This district is nuts. There are IB tracks, immersion tracks, AP things, language classes, service learning, special certificate classes. That wasn’t there when I was in school. It’s no wonder these kids have anxiety about coming to practice with so much else to do.”

Coaches found greater success developing relationships with students when they allowed a certain level of flexibility and continually reminded themselves that these were 14 – 18 year-old students who lacked maturity. Conversely, coaches do feel an obligation to build leaders and put athletes in positions of ownership. There is a fine line to walk between expecting adult-like behavior and showing compassion during times of diminished maturity. Navigating this challenge was noted as an ongoing challenge for several coaches in this study.

Generational Gaps. Several coaches in this study reported that connecting with high school athletes has become increasingly difficult as they have aged. Many of these coaches began coaching at a young age but now, further advanced in their careers, are not viewed as “young” and “fun” coaches. These coaches sense that their players don’t feel they can relate to them.

“One time this player didn’t come talk to me about a problem and I was crushed. Why didn’t he come talk to me? And then I go downstairs and look in the mirror and I have gray hair. And I realized, I am not your guy anymore. I am your grandfather!”

“I can preach and preach and preach, but they are 14 to 18 years old and, even though I am not that old, they think I am pretty old and don’t get it.”

Coaches in this study cited generational differences as being a challenge to connecting with young people, particularly in a sport context. The phrases “athletes these days” and “back when I played” were quite prevalent during the interviews, suggesting these coaches view the current high school sport experience as being different from their playing days or early coaching career. Given the extensive coaching careers of many of the individuals in this

study, we can assume that most of these coaches have gone through not only one, but two different generational types of athletes. Current high school students are the tail end of the millennial generation. Millennials are often characterized as entrepreneurial, experiential, ambitious, and technologically savvy. They look for new ways to complete tasks and enjoy a challenge, yet sometimes have unrealistic goals. Millennials seek autonomy, immediate feedback, inspiration, and ways to connect with peers. For coaches working with millennial athletes, they recognize the positive characteristics of their athletes, but find several aspects of the generation incredibly challenging. Two coaches spoke specifically about players being “soft” and requiring too much coddling.

“I think we can go on all day about the reasons why they are what they are. It is still important to have that mental resolve, that ability to deal with adversity. They have to make a commitment to do that and that isn’t always easy. I can’t feed them everything.”

“It’s not their fault they grow up in an environment where everyone gets a prize and everyone is a winner. I personally take that as a challenge and try to teach them that there are winners and losers in this world.”

Furthermore, one coach mentioned the challenge of creating competitiveness and believes that being on a team means something different to this generation of students. She spoke in detail about how these students are used to working in teams and almost rely too much on having the support of teammates.

“I think there is this assumption that someone else will step up sometimes, or that someone else will be the competitor ... that someone else can shoulder all the pressure because we’re are doing this together. Sometimes you have to be the one to do it. Sometimes I wish there was more inner-competition between the kids to be better than the person next to them.”

This suggests that although current-day high school students work well together, they may be lacking a competitive drive or the willingness to step outside of the team unit. The lack of competitiveness across students was a topic that was incredibly prevalent during interviews with head coaches. Coaches described parents and the “culture of the local community” as the cultivators of this millennial view, in that they reinforced stereotypical student behaviors reflective of the generation. Coaches cited generational characteristics (“everyone gets a prize”) as a cause of the lack of competitiveness but interestingly, not one coach mentioned specific strategies used to mediate the problem. This suggests that coaches have potentially accepted this issue as an inherent piece of the coaching process and a barrier to working with this generation of students. This idea ties back to the claim that, as coaches, we could evolve the practice of coaching by better understanding the student population with whom we work. Great strides could be made if the developmental needs of adolescents were better understood and successful strategies used to bridge the social gap between coaches and athletes were readily shared. We must ask, what is the current culture of adolescents and how do I adapt my coaching to this group?

Motivational Gap. An additional challenge facing high school coaches are the varying motivation and skill levels on a high school Varsity team. As athletics have evolved, the club and select systems have become quite extensive and it is reasonable to expect that there will be a mix of club and non-club athletes on a high school team. Not surprisingly, these players have different motivations for participating on a high school team. As the Sport Participation Spectrum suggest, some are in it for social reasons and to have fun, while some are looking to be competitive and improve their skills. This barrier was quite

visible during on-site observations where the intensity levels of different players were in stark contrast to one another.

“When they come to high school, some of them are like, ‘this is my fun time’. Well that’s a group of them, but everybody else is like, ‘I don’t play at a high level, I want to try to make something here’. So you’ve got these different work ethics and it is hard trying to figure out how to balance that.”

Coaches reported that athletes with lower motivation levels often have strained relationships with coaches. These athletes tend to show contempt for being challenged and push back against coaching efforts to improve effort and production. Coaches suggested building creative practices with competition embedded as a strategy to negotiate these different motivation levels, as this can put all athletes on a similar plane moving towards a common goal.

Playing Time and Lineups. Lastly, and worth mentioning, is the impact of playing time on coach-athlete relationships. All but two coaches interviewed mentioned that a lack of playing time can very quickly destroy any developing or existing relationship with an athlete. As one coach stated, “I make the line-up ... I am already the bad guy”. While not necessarily rational, athletes mistake not getting minutes or innings with a lack of care and respect on the part of the coach.

“You can do everything right, but you don’t give someone playing time and that is important to them, you can’t do much to get close with them.”

The participants felt that this challenge was difficult to work around, though clearly communicating criteria for playing time was noted as strategy to address the issue. Again, the importance of effective communication returns as a theme of positive coaching.

VIII. Summarizing the Findings

Results from this study show specific behaviors and strategies that coaches perceive to be effective in developing relationships with athletes. Findings suggest that coaches must demonstrate care with their athletes and effectively communicate with all constituents in the program. Setting clear expectations and behaving in a consistent and transparent manner were also identified as necessary behaviors for building relationships, as well as challenging athletes and providing leadership opportunities. Additionally, coaches reported that being enthusiastic and passionate about the job was crucial to successful relationship building.

Additional findings detail both individual and team outcomes that result from positive relationships if they can be developed. Individual outcomes include players working hard and allowing themselves to be coached. Coaches also reported that athletes who feel connected to the coaching staff are more likely to collaborate and challenge themselves. On a broader scale, quality relationships result in both positive team culture and higher retention of athletes. These key findings are summarized in *Figure 5*.⁸ Overall, this study helps fill a gap in current literature focused on the coach-athlete dyad and coach behavior. Limitations of this study as well as future directions for this type of work are discussed next.

⁸ Please note that barriers to coach-athlete relationship building, discussed in the Findings chapter, are not depicted in this figure.

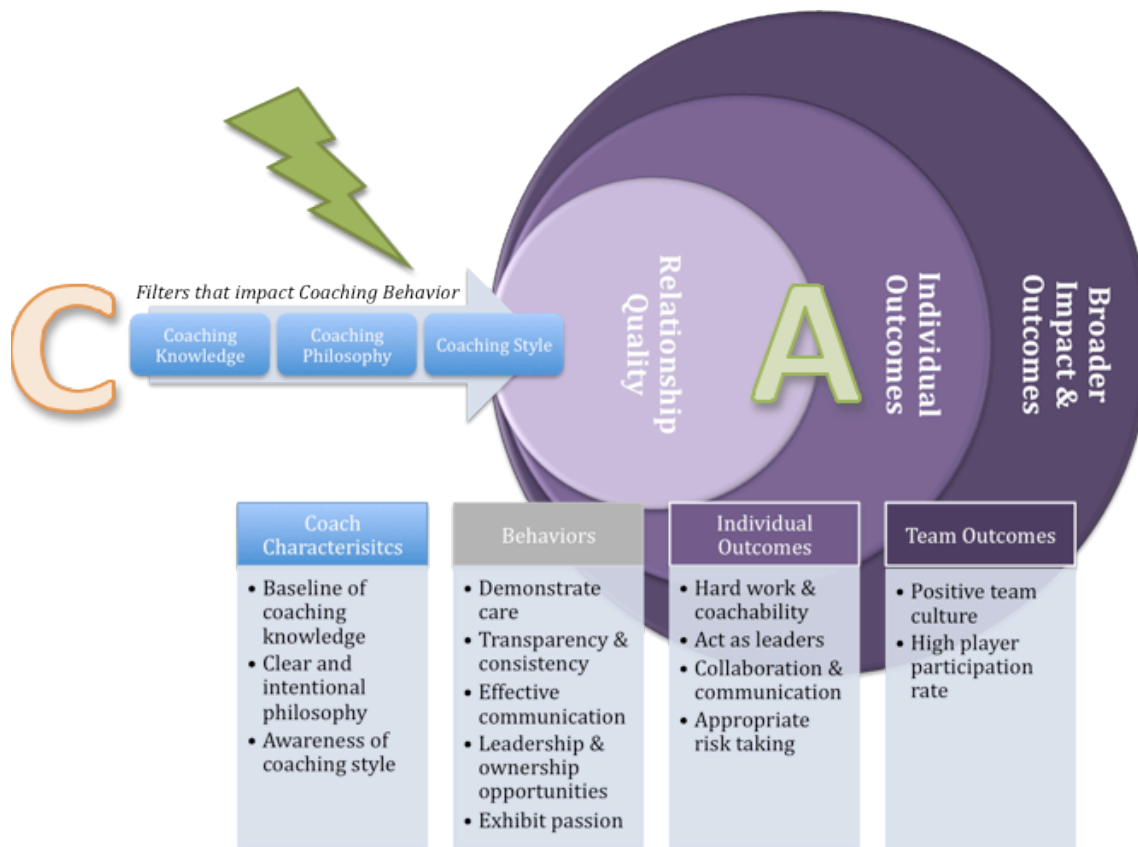


Figure 5. Summary of key findings.

CHAPTER 6: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As is the case with most inquiry, limitations exist that influence the research findings and their applicability to the broader context that is being studied. It is important to understand ways in which this research can be built upon, based on both the limitations of the study as well as additional questions that emanate from the work. In this spirit, both limitations of this research and future directions for research are discussed.

Limitations

Several elements of this study potentially limit the generalizability and scope of the research findings. It is important to note these limitations not only because of their impact on the existing work, but also because they underpin additional questions tied to coach-athlete relationship research. First and foremost, the sample (n=24) of head coaches and assistant coaches was fairly small and restricted to a handful of specific sports offered at the high school level. A more comprehensive study would include an increased sample size with coaches representing all school-sponsored sports. The consideration of athletic programs with larger squad numbers could also supplement the findings in a unique way, as strategies for relationship building with a larger coach-athlete ratio likely differ. Furthermore, the primary group of respondents did not coach what we have defined earlier as “pressure-cooker” sports. It is reasonable to assume that the pressures inherent in these higher profile sports may affect the ability for a coach to build a relationship with his or her athletes, and this premise was not fully reflected in this body of work.

This study was also limited in that the participants all coach within a specific school district and geographic region. In this case, a Pacific Northwest suburban city was selected

as the backdrop for this study. Schools from inner city or rural school districts were not utilized. One might expect that different challenges would emerge if the context of the coach being studied was altered dramatically. Additionally, this specific school district is quite academically focused, with an eye towards national high school rankings and college preparation courses and sequences. For two of the schools, this focus sometimes overtakes the importance of athletic participation and how sports are valued in the community. Future work might consider settings in which education is not highly valued and thus, sports and coaches become more central to the athlete's identity.

Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study was that athlete perspectives were not solicited. While the focus of this research was the coach-athlete relationship, only the perceptions of coaches were explored. Accounting for both individuals in the coach-athlete dyad could contribute significantly to this work by ensuring that the high school athlete perspective is considered and reflected in the research.

Future Directions

While seeking to answer the research questions posed in this study, a multitude of new questions tied to coach-athlete relationships emerged. Many of these ideas emanated from the limitations in this specific study, and the consideration of how findings may have been altered if different research decisions were made.

1. How would the findings vary if schools from inner city or rural environments were selected as research sites?
2. How do coaches with higher coach-athlete ratios (ie. track, swimming) seek to build relationships with individual athletes?

3. How are coach-athlete relationships impacted by the athletic tradition of a high school?
4. Does academic rigor impact athletic teams' attitudes or performance at the high school level?
5. Which coach behaviors do athletes perceive to be the most effective in building strong coach-athlete relationships?

Findings from these research questions would be interesting to compare to the findings of this study. Variance in results would illuminate how research design impacted the data collected and conclusions made in the original study.

While this study contributes to the overall body of work related to coach-athlete relationships, it provides a very small piece to the “athletics and education” research puzzle. Thus, it is important that this study be used as a springboard for additional research related to effective coaching practices. This study was conducted with an eye towards the future for this very reason. As is such, various ideas were gathered as interviews were conducted, data transcribed, and themes explored. Many of these ideas were products of nuances within the data or simply isolated comments from coaches that intrigued the researcher. While these pieces of data could not be pushed towards firm findings or conclusions within this study, they are impactful in that they point to future directions for research related to coach-athlete dyads. There are many areas that emerged that tie to this study, either directly or indirectly. These areas include:

Athlete perspective.

1. What importance do athletes place on developing relationships with their coaches?

2. How do athletes perceive that relationships evolve between coaches and athletes?

3. Are athletes able to recognize and understand a coach's philosophy?

Parent perspective.

1. Which coach behaviors do parents perceive to be the most effective in building strong coach-athlete relationships?

2. What type of relationship do parents expect to exist between their children and their children's coaches?

Peer-Athlete relationships.

1. How do peer-to-peer relationships affect how individual athletes perceive their athletic experience?

2. Can the effects of positive peer-athlete relationships outweigh the effects of a negative coach-athlete relationship?

Combating barriers.

1. What advanced strategies do coaches use to combat the barriers identified in this study (e.g. maturity level, length of the high school season, motivation)? Is it even possible to combat the barriers that are inherent to the high school context?

Additional coach perspectives and coaching staff dynamics.

1. How do coaching staffs work together to more effectively build relationships with athletes?

2. How do relationships between coaches (i.e. coaching staff dynamics) affect how athletes perceive individual coaches on a staff?

3. How do coaches negotiate a difference in philosophy across a coaching staff with regards to relationship building with athletes?

4. How do improved coach-athlete relationships positively impact the coaches? And does this influence their satisfaction with their role?

5. In what ways can we better train coaches as they learn how to effectively relationship-build with athletes?

Club and select teams.

1. Are effective coaching behaviors different when examining the club and select athletics environment?

2. Do coach-athlete relationships hold a different meaning in the select team context?

3. Do peer-to-peer relationships vary on club and select teams as compared to those in the high school context?

Gender.

1. Do the findings of this study change if only female coaches are interviewed? Only male coaches?

2. Do the findings of this study change if only coaches of female athletes are interviewed? Only coaches of male athletes?

3. How do peer-to-peer relationships within the sport context vary by gender?

As shown, there is no shortage of additional research that could be pursued based on data and initial findings that emerged from this study. As the body of literature tied to effective coaching continues to grow, these ideas will be important to understand more fully.

Conclusion

It is the researcher's hope that quality inquiry will continue to guide the way we think about the profession of coaching. Coaches are situated at the center of an athlete's sport experience and therefore, are in a place of high influence with young people. This influence can be an incredibly powerful tool in shaping and building student-athletes both within and outside the sport context. However, developing adolescents through sport is not a simplistic task. Coaching (at any level) is complex and challenging! In order to better equip coaches for the important work that they do, the general body of research around effective coaching must continue to grow. Not only this, but it is the responsibility of scholars in this field to find appropriate avenues to get their work into the hands of practitioners in an accessible, usable way. Conducting this research as an active coach was a powerful experience and I hope that more coaches can create space for thought and reflection throughout their careers.

I look forward to seeing how dramatically the body of coaching research expands in the years to come, given the recent boom in quality and impactful work. Until then, I will continue to find my own unique way as an academic and coaching professional to impact the field in which we work. From tee-ball to the NFL, collegiate athletic departments to community centers ... three cheers to all the coaches who positively impact the world of athletics!

SOURCES

- Adie, J. W., & Jowett, S. (2010). Meta-perceptions of the coach–athlete relationship, achievement goals, and intrinsic motivation among sport participants. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 40*(11), 2750-2773.
- Athlete Assessments (2012). *Your coaching philosophy: A 'how-to' guide to developing yours* (1st ed.). Mooloolba, Queensland: Bo Hanson.
- Autry, J. A. (1991). *Love and profit: The art of caring leadership*. New York: Morrow.
- Biddle, B.J. (1986). Recent development in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*, 67-92.
- Biddle, S. (1997). Current trends in sport and exercise psychology research. *The Psychologist, 10*(2).
- Birch, S. H., & Ladd, G. W. (1996). Interpersonal relationships in the school environment and children's early school adjustment: The role of teachers and peers.
- Bowes, I. & Jones, R.L. (2006). Working at the edge of chaos: Understanding coaching as complex, interpersonal system. *The Sport Psychologist, 20*, 235-245.
- Boynton M., Boynton C. (2005). *The Educator Guide to Preventing and Solving DiSC© ipline Problems*. Association for Supervisions and Curriculum Development.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). A future perspective. In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Making human beings human: Biological perspectives on human development*. (pp. 50-59). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1988). Interacting systems in human development. Research paradigms: Present and future. In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Making human beings human: Biological perspectives on human development*. (pp. 67-93). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2001). The bioecological theory of human development. In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Making human beings human: Biological perspectives on human development*. (pp. 3-15). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Brophy, J., & Good, T. L.(1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. *Handbook of research on teaching*, 328-375.
- Bulger, S. M., Mohr, D. J., & Walls, R. T. (2002). Stack the deck in favor of your students by using the four aces of effective teaching. *Effective Teaching*, 5(2).
- Brunelle, J., Danish, S. J., & Forneris, T. (2007). The impact of a sport-based life skill program on adolescent prosocial values. *Applied developmental science*, 11(1), 43-55.
- Bruner, J. (1999). Folk pedagogies. *Learners and pedagogy*, 4-20.
- Capel, S.A., Sisley, B.L., & Desertain, G.S. (1987). The relationship of role conflict and role ambiguity to burnout in high school basketball coaches. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 9, 106-117.
- Carr, Wilfred. "Philosophy of education." *Oxon: Routledge* (2005).
- Carron, A. V., Colman, M. M., Wheeler, J., & Stevens, D. (2002). Cohesion and performance in sport: A meta analysis. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 24(2).
- Casey, B. J., Jones, R. M., & Hare, T. A. (2008). The adolescent brain. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1124(1), 111-126.

- Cassidy, T., Jones, R., & Potrac, P. (2004). *Understanding sports coaching: The social, cultural and pedagogical foundations of sports practice*. London: Routledge.
- Center for Sport-Based Youth Development (2011). *Front runners: Proof that sport-based youth development programs work*. New York: Up2Us.
- Chelladurai, P. (1993). Leadership. In R.N. Singer, M. Murphey, & L.K. Tennant (Eds.), *Handbook on research on sport psychology* (pp. 647–671). New York: Macmillan.
- Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, SD (1980). Dimensions of leader behavior in sports: Development of a leadership scale. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 2, 34-45.
- Clark, C. M., Gage, N. L., Marx, R. W., Peterson, P. L., Stayrook, N. G., and Winne, P. H. (1979). A factorial experiment on teacher structuring, soliciting, and reacting. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71: 534-552.
- Clark, C. P., & Peterson, B. P.(1986). Teacher's Thought Processes. *Handbook of research on teaching*. New York: Macmillan.
- Cooper, C.L. & Dewe, P. (2004). *Stress: A brief history*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Coppel, D. B., & Murphy, S. M. (1995). Relationship issues in sport: a marital therapy model. *Sport psychology interventions.*, 193-204.
- Côté, J., & Gilbert, W. (2009). An integrative definition of coaching effectiveness and expertise. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 4(3), 307-323.
- Cothran, D. J., Kulinna, P. H., Banville, D., Choi, E., Amade-Escot, C., Macphail, A., Macdonald, D., Richard, J. F., Sarmiento, P. and Kirk, D., A Cross-Cultural Investigation of the Use of Teaching Styles, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 2005, 76, 193-201.
- Cross, N., & Lyle, J. (Eds.). (1999). *The coaching process: Principles and practice for sport*. Butterworth-Heinemann.

- Culpan, I. (2000). Getting what you got: harnessing the potential. *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 33(2), 16-29.
- Cushion, C. (2007). Modeling the complexity of the coaching process. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 2(4), 395-401.
- Cushion, C. J., Armour, K. M., & Jones, R. L. (2003). Coach education and continuing professional development: Experience and learning to coach. *Quest*, 55(3), 215-230.
- Davis, H. A. (2003). Conceptualizing the role and influence of student-teacher relationships on children's social and cognitive development. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(4), 207-234.
- Davis, L., & Jowett, S. (2010). Investigating the Interpersonal Dynamics Between Coaches and Athletes Based on Fundamental Principles of Attachment. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 4(2).
- Davis, L., Jowett, S., & Lafrenière, M. A. K. (2013). An attachment theory perspective in the examination of relational processes associated with coach-athlete dyads. *Journal of sport & exercise psychology*, 35(2).
- Domas, S. J., & Tiedeman, D. V. (1950). Teacher competence: An annotated bibliography. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 19(2), 101-218.
- Doyle, W. (1977). Paradigms for research on teacher effectiveness. *Review of research in education*, 5, 163-198.
- Dunkin, M. J., & Biddle, B. J. (1974). *The study of teaching*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Feltz, D. L., Chase, M. A., Moritz, S. E., & Sullivan, P. J. (1999). A conceptual model of coaching efficacy: Preliminary investigation and instrument development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91(4), 765.

- Figone, A. J. (1994). Teacher-Coach Role Conflict: Its Impact on Students and Student-Athletes. *Physical Educator*, 51(1), 29-34.
- Frey, M. (2007). College coaches' experience with stress - - "problem solvers" have problems too. *The Sport Psychologist*, 21, 38-57.
- Gage, N. L. (1963). Handbook of research on teaching.
- Getzels, J. W., & Jackson, P. W. (1963). The teacher's personality and characteristics. *Handbook of research on teaching*, 506, 82.
- Gilbert, W.D. & Trudel, P. (2001). Learning to coach through experience: Reflection in model youth sport coaches. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 21, 16-34.
- Gilbert, W.D. (2002, June). An annotated bibliography and analysis of coaching science: 1970-2001. Washington, DC: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.
- Gould, D., Collins, K., Lauer, L., & Chung, Y. (2007). Coaching life skills through football: A study of award winning high school coaches. *Journal of applied sport psychology*, 19(1), 16-37.
- Grove, J.R., Norton, P.J., Van Raalte, J.L., & Brewer, B.W. (1999). Stages of changes as an outcome measure in the evaluation of mental skills training programs. *The Sport Psychologist*, 13, 107-116.
- Harris, A. (1998). Effective teaching: A review of the literature. *School Leadership & Management*, 18(2), 169-183.
- Hopkins, D. (1997). Improving the quality of teaching and learning. *Support for Learning*, 12(4), 162-165.

- Hunt, G. H., Wiseman, D. G., & Touzel, T. J. (2009). *Effective teaching: Preparation and implementation*. Charles C Thomas Publisher.
- International Council for Coaching Excellence & Association of Summer Olympic International Federation (2012). *International sport coaching framework*. Champaign, IL.: Human Kinetics.
- Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1995). Intrapersonal and interpersonal factors in athletic performance*. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, 5(4), 191-199.
- Jackson, B., Grove, J. R., & Beauchamp, M. R. (2010). Relational efficacy beliefs and relationship quality within coach-athlete dyads. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(8), 1035-1050.
- Jones, R.L., Armour, K.M., & Potrac, P. (2002). Understanding the coaching process: A framework for social analysis. *QUEST*, 54(1), 34-48.
- Jones, R.L., Armour, K.M, & Potrac, P. (2004). *Sports coaching cultures: From practice to theory*. Routledge.
- Jones, R.L., & Wallace, M. (2005). Another bad day at the training ground: Coping with ambiguity in the coaching context. *Sport, Education and Society*, 10(1), 119-134.
- Jones, R. L. (2006). The sports coach as educator: reconceptualising sports coaching. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 1(4), 405-412.
- Jones, R.L. & Standage, M. (2006). 'First among equals: Shared leadership in the coaching context', in R.L. Jones (ed.) *The Sports Coach as Educator: Re-conceptualising Sports Coaching*, London: Routledge.

- Jowett, S. (2007). Interdependence analysis and the 3 + 1Cs in the coach-athlete relationship. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social psychology in sport* (pp. 63–77). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Jowett, S. (2008). What makes coaches tick? The impact of coaches' intrinsic and extrinsic motives on their own satisfaction and that of their athletes. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, 18(5), 664-673.
- Jowett, S., & Chaundy, V. (2004). An Investigation Into the Impact of Coach Leadership and Coach-Athlete Relationship on Group Cohesion. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 8(4), 302.
- Jowett, S., & Cockerill, I. M. (2003). Olympic medalists' perspective of the athlete-coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 4(4), 313-331.
- Jowett, S. & Meek, G. A. (2000). The coach-athlete relationship in married couples: An exploratory content analysis. *Sport Psychologist*, 14(2), 157-175.
- Jowett, S., & Wylleman, P. (2006). Interpersonal relationships in sport and exercise settings: Crossing the chasm. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 7(2), 119-123.
- Kahn, R.L., Wolfe, D.M., Quinn, R.P., Snoek, J.D., Rosenthal, R.A. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. Oxford, England: John Wiley.
- Keating, D. P., Lerner, R. M., & Steinberg, L. (2004). Cognitive and brain development. *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, 2, 45-84.
- Kenow, L., & Williams, J. M. (1999). Coach-athlete compatibility and athlete's perception of coaching behaviors. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 22, 251-259.
- Kerman, S. (1979). Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 60(10), 716-18.

- Kidman, L., & Hanrahan, S. (1997). *The coaching process*. The Dunmore Printing Co.
- Laughlin, N., & Laughlin, S. (1994). The relationship between the similarity in perceptions of teacher/coach leader behavior and evaluations of their effectiveness. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*.
- Leach, J., & Moon, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Learners & pedagogy*. Sage.
- Leu, E. (2005). *Role of Teachers, Schools, and Communities in Quality Education: A Review of the Literature*. Academy for Educational Development, Global Education Center.
- Lerner, R.M. (2002). *Concepts and theories of human development* (3rd ed). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Lounsbury, J. H. (2000). Understanding and appreciating the wonder years. *National Middle School Association Web Site* (www.nmsa.org).
- Lummis, B. (2001). Guide to Collaborative Culture and Shared Leadership. Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools. *Center for Collaborative Education*.
- Lyle, J. (1999). 'Coaching philosophy and coaching behaviour', in N. Cross and J. Lyle (eds) *The Coaching Process: Principles and Practice for Sport*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Lyle, J. (2002). *Sports coaching concepts: A framework for coaches' behaviour*. London: Routledge.
- McBer, H. (2001). Research into teacher effectiveness. *Early Professional Development Of Teachers*, 68.
- McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (1993). Contexts that matter for teaching and learning. *Palo Alto, CA: Context Center on Secondary School Teaching*.

- Mageau, G. A., & Vallerand, R. J. (2003). The coach–athlete relationship: A motivational model. *Journal of sports science*, 21(11), 883-904.
- Marston, W. M. (2013). *Emotions of normal people* (Vol. 158). Routledge.
- Martens, R. (1997). *Successful coaching*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Massengale, J. D. (1981). Role conflict and the teacher/coach: Some occupational causes and considerations for the sport sociologist. *Sociology of Sport: Diverse Perspectives*, 149-157.
- Medley, D. M., and D. M. Shannon. "Teacher evaluation." *The International encyclopedia of education*, 10 (1994): 6015-6020.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mullen, B., & Copper, C. (1994). The relation between group cohesiveness and performance: An integration. *Psychological bulletin*, 115(2), 210.
- Nash, R. (Ed.). (2009). *The active teacher: Practical strategies for maximizing teacher effectiveness*. SAGE.
- Nash, C. S., Sproule, J., & Horton, P. (2008). Sport Coaches' Perceived Role Frames and Philosophies. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 3(4), 539-554.
- Nieto, S. (1996). *Affirming diversity* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Univ of California Press, Berkeley.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*. *Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought, Volume 8*. Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

- O'Brien, J. A., & Kollock, P. (1991). Social exchange theory as a conceptual framework for teaching the sociological perspective. *Teaching Sociology*, 140-153.
- O'Connor, K. E. (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and teacher education*, 24(1), 117-126.
- Olympiou, A., Jowett, S., & Duda, J. L. (2008). The psychological interface between the coach-created motivational climate and the coach-athlete relationship in team sports. *The Sport Psychologist*, 22(4), 423-438.
- Owings, H. (2013). *The Sport Coach as Orchestrator: Balancing Personal Philosophies and Stakeholder Influence*. (Unpublished pilot study). University of Washington, Seattle.
- Pianta, R. C. (1999). *Enhancing relationships between children and teachers*. American Psychological Association.
- Parsloe, E and Wray, M. (2000). *Coaching and Mentoring*. London: Kogan Page.
- Penney, D. (2006). 'Coaching as teaching: New acknowledgements in practice' in R.L. Jones (ed.) *The Sports Coach as Educator: Re-conceptualising Sports Coaching*, London: Routledge.
- Poczwardowski, A., Barott, J. E., & Henschen, K. P. (2002). The athlete and coach: Their relationship and its meaning. Results of an interpretive study. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*.
- Poczwardowski, A., Barott, J. E., & Jowett, S. (2006). Diversifying approaches to research on athlete-coach relationships. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 7(2), 125-142.
- Pomeroy, E. (1999). The teacher-student relationship in secondary school: insights from excluded students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(4), 465-482.

- Rizzo, J.R., House, R.J., & Lirtzman (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15(2).
- Rosenshine, B., & Furst, N. (1973). The use of direct observation to study teaching. *Second handbook of research on teaching*, 122-183.
- Rosenshine, B. (1983). Teaching functions in instructional programs. *The elementary school journal*, 83(4), 335-351.
- Sage, G. (1987). The social world of high school athletic coaches; Multiple role demands and their consequences. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 4(3), 213-228.
- Scales, P.C. (1996). *Boxed in and Bored: How Middle Schools Continue to Fail Young Adolescents and What Good Middle Schools Do Right*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
- Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., & Mannes, M. (2006). The contribution to adolescent well-being made by nonfamily adults: An examination of developmental assets as contexts and processes. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(4): 401-413.
- Scantling, E., & Lackey, D. (2005). Coaches under Pressure Four Decades of Studies. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 76(1), 25-28.
- Sernak, K. (1998). *School Leadership--Balancing Power with Caring*. Teachers College Press: Williston, VT.
- Slack, T. (2000). 'Managing voluntary sports organizations: A critique of popular trends', in R.L. Jones and K.M. Armour (eds) *Sociology of Sport: Theory and Practice*, London: Longman.
- Smith, L. R., & Land, M. L. (1981). Low-Inference Verbal Behaviors Related to Teacher Clarity. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 17(1), 37-42.

- Smith, R. E., Smoll, F. L., & Hunt, E. (1977). A system for the behavioral assessment of athletic coaches. *Research Quarterly. American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 48(2), 401-407.
- Smith, T. W., & Strahan, D. (2004). Toward a Prototype of Expertise in Teaching A Descriptive Case Study. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(4), 357-371.
- Smoll, F. L., & Smith, R. E. (1989). Leadership Behaviors in Sport: A Theoretical Model and Research Paradigm1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 19(18), 1522-1551.
- Strouse, S. K., Sieverdes, C. M., & Hecht, U. S. (2005). Leadership Mentor Selection, Developmental Stages, and Personal Leadership Development. In *21st Annual Conference" Educational, Extension and Research Strategies for a Changing World"*, San Antonio.
- Tarlow, B. (1996). Caring: A negotiated process that varies. *Caregiving: Readings in knowledge, practice, ethics, and politics*, 56-82.
- Templin, T. J., & Anthrop, J. L. (1981). A Dialogue of Teacher/Coach Role Conflict. *Physical Educator*, 38(4), 183-86.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Jarvis, J. (2006). Teaching beyond the book. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), 16.
- Vanden Auweele, Y., & Rzewnicki, R. (2000). Putting relationship issues in sport in perspective. *International journal of sport psychology*, 31(4), 573-577.
- Vella, S., Oades, L., & Crowe, T. (2011). The role of the coach in facilitating positive youth development: Moving from theory to practice. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 23(1), 33-48.

- Wallace, G. (1996). Relating to teachers, in: J. Rudduck, R. Chaplain, & G. Wallace (Eds). *School improvement; what can pupils tell us? London, David Fulton.*
- Wilson, L. M., & Horch, H. W. (2002). Implications of Brain Research for Teaching Young Adolescents. What Research Says. *Middle School Journal*, 34(1), 57-61.
- Wragg, E. C. (Ed.). (1989). *Classroom teaching skills: the research findings of the teacher education project.* Psychology Press.
- Wylleman, P. (2000). Interpersonal relationships in sport: Uncharted territory in sport psychology research. *International Journal of Sport Psychology.*

Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Email: Head Coaches

University of Washington College of Education
Center for Leadership in Athletics
Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195

Dear Coach [Last Name],

I am writing today to ask you to take part in a research study exploring the importance of coach-athlete relationships. The purpose of this research is to better understand the specific behaviors that correlate with effective relationship building between athletes and coaches at the high school level. This study will be conducted with coaches employed by the Bellevue School District.

This research is part of my doctoral studies at the University of Washington, though I am also an employee at the UW's Center for Leadership in Athletics. While the primary purpose of this research is for my dissertation, findings may be used to help create professional development opportunities for high school coaches at the Center. As part of this research, I am hoping to complete one, 60-minute interview with you. This interview can be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you. Prior to the interview, I will ask you to complete a 10-minute pre-interview survey, which will serve as a starting point for our conversation. Lastly, I would like to observe you coaching during a practice or competition. The visit can be scheduled on a date that you prefer.

This study is not designed to critique your team, coaching style, or school in any way. Instead, the research is being conducted to better understand methods for building positive relationships between coaches and athletes.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw at any time, and all information is confidential. Should I choose to publish or present findings from this research, I will not use names of people, schools, sports teams, or any other information that would identify participants, the school, athletic department, district, or conference. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact University of Washington Human Subjects Division (206.543.0098).

Thank you for taking the time to consider this opportunity. I will be in contact during the next week to discuss this further and confirm whether or not you would like to participate. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me via email (hannaho@uw.edu) or phone (206.685.4926) with any questions you may have.

Best,

Hannah Owings Olson

University of Washington, College of Education Graduate Student

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment Email: Assistant Coaches

University of Washington College of Education
Center for Leadership in Athletics
Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195

Dear Coach [Last Name],

I am writing today to ask you to take part in a research study exploring the importance of coach-athlete relationships. Your colleague, [insert head coach name] referred you as a potential participant. The purpose of this research is to better understand the specific behaviors that correlate with effective relationship building between athletes and coaches at the high school level. This study will be conducted with coaches employed by the Bellevue School District.

This research is part of my doctoral studies at the University of Washington, though I am also an employee at the UW's Center for Leadership in Athletics. While the primary purpose of this research is for my dissertation, findings may be used to help create professional development opportunities for high school coaches at the Center. As part of this research, I am hoping to complete one, 30-minute interview with you. During this interview, we will discuss the philosophy of your sport program and the behaviors of your coaching staff. This interview can be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you.

This study is not designed to critique your team, head coach, or school in any way. Instead, the research is being conducted to better understand methods for building positive relationships between coaches and athletes.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw at any time, and all information is confidential. Should I choose to publish or present findings from this research, I will not use names of people, schools, sports teams, or any other information that would identify participants, the school, athletic department, district, or conference. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact University of Washington Human Subjects Division (206.543.0098).

Thank you for taking the time to consider this opportunity. I will be in contact during the next week to DiSC© uss this further and confirm whether or not you would like to participate. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me via email (hannaho@uw.edu) or phone (206.685.4926) with any questions you may have.

Best,

Hannah Owings Olson

*University of Washington, College of Education
Graduate Student*

Appendix C
Head Coach Intake Survey

Name:

Email Address:

Current High School:

Years at this school:

Sport(s) Coached:

Prior High School Coaching Positions: *Please indicate the name of the high school, sport(s) coached, and years at the school.*

Non High-School Level Coaching Experience: *Please indicate the sport, level of play (recreational, club collegiate), and duration in that position.*

Current Employer (if applicable):

Roles involved in your high school coaching position. Please select all that apply.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher / Educator | <input type="checkbox"/> Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Webmaster |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor / Role model | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surrogate parent / caretaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeper / budgeter | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher of life skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facility Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraiser | <input type="checkbox"/> Community leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Trainer | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight trainer | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher of sport skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiter | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Of the boxes you selected, please identify the top three roles that are part of your coaching job:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In 2-5 sentences, please describe your general coaching philosophy.

Briefly describe the importance of building positive relationships with your athletes.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol: Head Coach

[Preamble:] As you know, I am a doctoral student at the University of Washington. Throughout my studies, I have focused my research on the intersection of education and athletics. Given my background, I have a particular interest in the high school context and how we make athletic experiences better for both coaches and athletes. Today, I'd like to have a conversation with you about your experiences at X high school and the relationships you work to build with your athletes. The interview should last about an hour and will be recorded for me to listen to later. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I'd like to start by talking about the survey you turned in prior to your interview. In particular, I am interested in learning more about the **'Coaching Philosophy'** that you provided. Can you describe how your philosophy has been developed and how, if at all, it has changed over time? *[Listen for: Key elements within the philosophy? Origins of this philosophy?]*

Please provide an **example** of how, during you last few weeks, you embedded X element or value from your coaching philosophy into a practice? A game? Team planning and meetings? *[Probe for: additional examples]*

It sounds like you work very hard to embed X or Y values into your coaching work. Are there any elements of your philosophy that **are more challenging to focus on** daily? *[Listen for: Links to roles, values, external environment or constituents?]*

Thank you for that helpful information. It really helps me understand more about you as a coach. I'd like to transition now to the **culture of your team** this season. How would you generally describe the your team environment at the moment? *[Listen for: general positive or negative climate]* Has the culture changed since last season? Or during the course of this season?

Based on your description, it sounds like X is a **strength for your team** this year. Tell me more about that. *[Probe: Why is strength important]* Are any of your coaches or players instrumental in this success? *[Listen for: roles of staff and players as it relates to the head coach]*

Congratulations on your success in that area. I am sure you are proud of X component of your team. Sliding to the other side of the scale, can you think of any **areas of growth** related to your team culture? *[Listen for: roles of staff and players as it relates to the head coach]* Do you have a plan for improvement in this area?

Thank you for giving me some insight into the culture of your team. It was very helpful. I would like to transition now to talking more about the **relationships you have with your players**. In your own words, how would you describe the relationships you have with your players. *[Listen for: general positive or negative relationships. Probe for: specific examples]*

Appendix D - continued
Interview Protocol: Head Coach

In your own words, how would you **define a positive coach-athlete relationship**? What elements are present? *[Probe for: specific examples of how we know the positive elements when we see them]*

You mentioned in your pre-survey that developing positive relationships with your athletes **enables you to do X**. Tell me more about that. *[Listen for: outcomes, both individual and team]*

If you can, please think about one or two players that you have been able to build a strong relationship with. In your own words, **how did that relationship develop**? *[Listen for: specific behaviors, indicators of quality relationship]* It's interesting that you mentioned X behavior. Can you give me an example of what you did to achieve that?

How, if at all, do you think these **players benefit** from having a strong relationship with you? *[Probe for: individual impacts]* Can you give me a specific example?

Are there any individuals on your team that **have been challenging to connect with** this season? *[Listen for: differences and similarities from prior question]* What strategies have you used to try to connect with X individual? Can you give me an example? *[Probe for: negative effects on the player or team]*

I have one last question for you today before finish. If you could give a new coach at Z High School advice on developing relationships with their athletes and team, what would that advice be? *[Probe: why that advice? Listen for: Links to prior information]*

This has been a very productive conversation for me. Is there anything **you would like to add** about your coaching work before we finish today? Do you have any questions for me before we end?

Thank you for your time. **[END PROTOCOL]**

Appendix E

Interview Protocol: Assistant Coach

[Preamble:] As you know, I am a doctoral student at the University of Washington. Throughout my studies, I have focused my research on the intersection of education and athletics. Given my background, I have a particular interest in the high school context and how we make athletic experiences better for both coaches and athletes. Today, I'd like to have a conversation with you about your experiences at X high school and the relationships you work to build with your athletes. The interview should last 45 minutes and will be recorded for me to listen to later. Do you have any questions before we begin?

This interview will focus on your team and head coach, but I'd like to start by learning a little more about you. In particular, I am interested in hearing about your **coaching philosophy**. How would you describe your coaching philosophy? *[Listen for: Key elements within the philosophy? Origins of this philosophy?]* Can you describe how your philosophy has been developed and how, if at all, it has changed over time?

Can you give me an **example** of how, during your last few weeks, you embedded X element or value from your coaching philosophy into a practice? A game? Team planning and meetings? *[Probe for: additional examples]*

How would you describe your head coach's philosophy? How is it similar and dissimilar from your philosophy? *[Listen for: dissonance, similarities. Probe for: examples]*

Thank you for that helpful information. It really helps me understand more about you as a coach. I'd like to transition now to the **culture of your team** this season. How would you generally describe the your team environment at the moment? *[Listen for: general positive or negative climate]* Has the culture changed since last season? Or during the course of this season?

Based on your description, it sounds like X is a **strength for your team** this year. Tell me more about that. *[Probe: Why is strength important]* Are your players or head coach instrumental in this success? *[Listen for: roles of staff and players as it relates to the head coach]*

Congratulations on your success in that area. I am sure you are proud of X component of your team. Sliding to the other side of the scale, can you think of any **areas of growth** related to your team culture? *[Listen for: roles of staff and players as it relates to the head coach]* Do you have a plan for improvement in this area?

Thank you for giving me some insight into the culture of your team. It was very helpful. I would like to transition now to talking more about the relationships between coaches and athletes. In your own words, how would you **define a positive coach-athlete relationship**? What elements are present? *[Probe for: specific examples of how we know the positive elements when we see them]*

Appendix E - continued
Interview Protocol: Assistant Coach

What do you think developing positive relationships with athletes **enables a coach to do**?
[Listen for: outcomes, both individual and team] Tell me more about that.

I'd like to talk more specifically about the **relationships your head coach has with the players on the team**. In your own words, how would you describe the relationships he/she has with your players? *[Listen for: general positive or negative relationships. Probe for: specific examples]*

If you can, please think about one or two players that your head coach has been able to build a strong relationship with. In your own words, **how did that relationship develop**?
[Listen for: specific behaviors, indicators of quality relationship] It's interesting that you mentioned X behavior. Can you give me an example of what he/she did to achieve that?

How, if at all, do you think these **players benefit** from having a strong relationship with the head coach? *[Probe for: individual impacts]* Can you give me a specific example?

Are there any individuals on your team that the **have been challenging to connect with** this season? *[Listen for: differences and similarities from prior question]* What strategies has your head coach used to try to connect with X individual? Can you give me an example?
[Probe for: negative effects on the player or team]

I have one last question for you today before finish. Let's assume that one or two seasons down the road, you become a head coach. What advice would you give your future self about developing relationships with your athletes and team? *[Probe: why that advice? Listen for: Links to prior information]*

This has been a very productive conversation for me. Is there anything **you would like to add** about your coaching work or team before we finish today? Do you have any questions for me before we end?

Thank you for your time. **[END PROTOCOL]**

Appendix F
Coach Observation Behavior Chart

<i>Behavioral Style</i>	<i>Observed Behavior</i>	<i>Occurrences / Notes</i>
Dominance (Problems/Tasks)	Takes a risk	
	Solves a problem	
	Displays competitiveness	
	Makes a quick decision	
	Makes a forceful demand of players or staff	
	Becomes argumentative	
Influence (People)	Appears socialable or charming	
	Displays or reflects optimism	
	Displays high emotion	
	Builds a friendly environment	
	Makes an impulsive decision	
	Shows trust in others	
Steadiness (Pace)	Calms the environment	
	Displays a high level of patience	
	Moments showing discomfort with change / fast pace	
	Displays consistent behavior	
	Serene / peaceful coaching approach	
	No outward expression of emotion during intensity	
Conscientious (Procedures)	Displays conservative behavior	
	Focuses on systems or rules	
	Demands precision and high quality	
	Analytical behavior / use of data	
	Executes pre-determined decisions	
	Show high focus, lack of distraction	