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Building a Successful University Program: Key and Common Elements of Expert Coaches

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The purpose of the present study was to determine how expert university coaches of team sports built their successful programs. In particular, key and common elements that enabled these coaches to achieve success were identified. Five expert Canadian female university coaches were interviewed individually. The results of the analysis revealed four elements for developing successful programs. First, coaches possessed a variety of personal attributes that enabled them to display appropriate leadership behaviors depending on the situation they faced. Second, coaches had a personal desire to foster their players' individual growth. Third, coaches possessed thorough organizational skills from which they planned the season and prepared their team for games. Finally, these elements were linked together by the coaches' vision, which involved the athletes buying into the coaches' goals, philosophy, and personality in order to achieve success. These results are discussed in relation to literature on coaching psychology and leadership.

Very few leaders are able to build a successful program, organization, or company and maintain a level of excellence for an extended period of time. Understanding what makes someone successful has fascinated researchers in various domains. Perhaps, the best way to understand what makes a coach successful is to examine the entire task or process of coaching. Two major bodies of research have shed light on different elements of coaching success and served as the conceptual basis for this research project. In particular, work from Chelladurai (1978, 1980, 1984, 1990) has described coaches' leadership behaviors, while Côté and colleagues (Côté & Salmela, 1996; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995) have created a Coaching Model (CM) to help understand the mental model of how coaches think and act. The combination of these bodies of research in coaching psychology has greatly influenced work in this discipline.

COACHING LEADERSHIP

Chelladurai's Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 1978, 1990) was the first behavioral model of leadership created specifically for sport situations. This interactive

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model allowed researchers to evaluate leadership effectiveness through the satisfaction and performance of athletes. According to the author, athlete performance and satisfaction was the product of three types of leadership behaviors: required leadership behaviors, preferred leadership behaviors, and actual leadership behaviors. These behaviors, in turn, were influenced by three factors: characteristics of the environment, characteristics of the athlete, and personal characteristics of the coach. Chelladurai's model benefitted coaching research because it attributed coaches' success to more than great leadership skills; rather, to their capacity to display actual leadership behaviors that responded to a combination of demands from the environment, the players, and the coaches themselves. Furthermore, successful coaches were able to adjust to these demands by incorporating the required and preferred behaviors into their actual behaviors.

While Chelladurai's work used paper and pencil tests, other researchers in coaching psychology have used behavioral observation instruments to understand successful youth sport (e.g., Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1979) and elite college-level coaches (e.g., Bloom, Crumpton, & Anderson, 1999; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). For example, Tharp and Gallimore observed the practices of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, using the Coaching Behavior Recording Form, a 10-category system revised from a teaching research observation tool. Each time Coach Wooden exhibited a behavior (e.g., giving instruction), it was recorded. Among their conclusions, it was found that Wooden's system of coaching basketball focused on teaching and drilling skills. This seemingly successful approach led to a new way of seeing quality teaching behaviors as a means of coaching success. According to Tharp and Gallimore, Wooden was successful because of the quality of his teaching, interventions, and instructions. While Tharp and Gallimore's study broadened researchers' understanding of coaching expertise from a teaching standpoint, it did not explain how and why certain coaches were more successful than others. For example, it did not examine the quality of their teaching instructions during practices or other coaching elements, such as their personality, philosophy, or goals.

An understanding of coaches' leadership behaviors was further enhanced by an investigation of expert Canadian coaches by Bloom and Salmela (2000). Their goal was not merely to investigate leadership skills of coaches based on the needs of the athlete and the situation, but rather to focus on similar coaching preferences, goals, and beliefs. Interviews were conducted with 16 expert coaches in basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, and volleyball. Coaches were asked to talk freely about their work, including coaching styles and leadership behaviors. Among the results, it was found that expert coaches have an ongoing quest for personal growth and knowledge acquisition, display a strong work ethic, communicate effectively, empathize with players, and are good teachers.

THE COACHING MODEL

Recently, research in coaching psychology has benefitted from the creation of the Coaching Model (CM; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995). Côté and colleagues investigated expert gymnastic coaches in order to conceptualize their work and tasks. The CM provided a framework from which to understand how coaches work and why they function as they do. The CM demonstrated that a coach initially creates a mental image of an athlete's potential which takes into account the athletes' personal characteristics, the coach's personal characteristics, and the contextual factors. It is from this mental model or assessment that specific coaching behaviors regarding training, competition, and organization (known as the core coaching components) will be developed, as the coach strives to achieve team and individual athlete success. The

authors found the overall goal of expert gymnastic coaches was to develop the athlete, both inside and outside of sport.

A single-case study with a university ice hockey coach supported all components of the CM to the elite team sport context (Gilbert & Trudel, 2000). Data were collected using a multiple-method approach that combined interviews and observations at three intervals during the season. The results showed congruency between the six components of the CM. The main difference that emerged from Gilbert and Trudel's research related to the overall goal of the coach; which in team sports also involves a focus on qualifying for the playoffs. It can be speculated that this difference begins in the organization component of the coaches' knowledge.

Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al. (1995) stipulated that organization involves "applying one's knowledge towards establishing optimal conditions for training and competition by structuring and coordinating the tasks involved in reaching the goal" (p. 9). Desjardins (1996) alluded to the multitude of organizational tasks of team sport coaches. These included team selection, goal setting, creating a vision, establishing a seasonal plan, developing team cohesion, working with support staff, and attending to administrative matters. Whether in individual or team sports, organizational tasks are present before, during, and after the season and represent the foundation of the season. Moreover, a coach's ability to organize the season and to deal with organizational issues reveals much about his or her coaching and management skills. If a coach is organized, there will be a solid foundation from which to build a championship team. This should lead to more effective training sessions that in turn might improve the team's success at competitions (Bloom, 2002).

One of the fundamental elements of organization relates to creating a vision. Desjardins' (1996) use of the word "vision" was similar to the mental representation of the athlete's potential (cf. Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995). Desjardins found that expert coaches began coaching their teams with a vision of where they could go and how they could get there. This vision involved both the long-term goal of program growth and development, as well as the shorter-term goal of what the coach believed each athlete or the entire team could achieve in any given season. Desjardins stated that once the vision was established, the expert coaches transformed this vision into a mission statement; a tangible written statement that gave the team direction for the upcoming year. The mission statement then influenced the seasonal plan, daily practices, training regimens, team selection, and goal setting. Desjardins also mentioned that expert coaches drew up a complete plan for the upcoming season taking into consideration the mental, physical, tactical, and technical aspects of training. In other words, a mission statement was not merely a target to aim for; it was the team's absolute reason for being.

It can be concluded that coaching is a complex and demanding profession that includes far more than solely training athletes to compete. Chelladurai's Multidimensional Model of Leadership suggests that team success is related to various interpersonal, cognitive, and operational aspects of the environment and the preferences of the athletes. Côté and colleagues' Coaching Model proposes that success includes more than a specific set of personality traits, organizational behaviors, or interpersonal skills on the part of the coach. Overall, coaching success appears to be related to different forms of leadership. Research in coaching psychology has used these two models to design studies that have provided information relating to successful coaching, such as how coaches organized their season, how they trained their athletes for competition, and how their athletes achieved satisfaction. Despite this, research has yet to explicitly examine and conceptualize the factors involved in the process of developing successful programs. Because it is common for coaches, particularly at the university level, to be hired with a mandate of building a successful program, the present study was created with

the intention of helping bridge this gap in the literature. Using the Multidimensional Model and the Coaching Model as a basis, the purpose of the present study was to determine the factors that successful collegiate coaches identified as contributing to the turnaround of their programs.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative methodology was employed. Specifically, a semi-structured and open-ended interview approach was utilized as it allowed the researcher to guide the discussion, yet it provided the participant (i.e., the coach) an opportunity to answer freely, with few restrictions. It was felt that this information would benefit coaches of all levels by providing them with practical information on how to establish a successful program.

METHOD

Participants

Five expert Canadian female coaches participated in the current study. The study was limited to coaches of basketball and volleyball because both sports require the management of a small number of players, the planning of a seven-month season, the preparation for competitions almost every weekend, as well as other similar organizational tasks such as recruiting, fund raising, and daily practices. The Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) is an organization that governs the approximately 12,000 student athletes who compete in nine men's and ten women's sports. The athletes receive little or no media attention and attendance is usually sparse (crowds of over 1,000 are rare). As well, athletes receive very limited financial support and no academic credit for participating on their school team. Few female CIS basketball and volleyball coaches are employed full time by their institution; many coaches supplement their income through additional responsibilities within the university. No full time assistant coaching or other support staff positions are available. Even though the resources are scarce, the intensity and frequency of training and competition is comparable to Division I programs in the United States. Each team practices an average of four times per week and plays an average of two games per week from October to March.

The selection of these expert coaches was based on five criteria, which have been used in previous studies on expertise (e.g., Bloom, Durand-Bush, & Salmela, 1997; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). First, they had to have accumulated at least ten years of coaching experience at the university level or higher. Second, they had to be present Canadian university head coaches. Third, they had to have developed at least one player who had taken part in a major international competition such as the Olympic, Pan American, or Francophone Games. Fourth, they had to have built a successful program throughout their careers, as evidenced by winning one national or five conference titles. Finally, they had to be identified by an expert panel as one of the most knowledgeable and respected coaches in their sport. The panel was comprised of three professionals who were very familiar with the Canadian coaching milieu and included an executive member from both the CIS and the Coaching Association of Canada, as well as the principal researcher who has coached basketball at an elite level in Canada. Using the five previous criteria as well as the goal of identifying individuals who had taken over programs that had fallen on hard times and in a brief period turned them into winning and successful programs, the panel reached consensus on which coaches were best suited for this study. All of the coaches who were contacted for the study agreed to participate. Table 1 provides more information about each of the coaches without compromising their confidentiality. As well, a coding system for each coach was used (labeled C1–C5) to further ensure their confidentiality.

Table 1
Coaches' Demographic Information

Criteria	Expert Coach				
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
Total years of coaching experience	21	11	19	18	17
Years of experience at university level	17	11	10	13	17
Championship titles					
National	3	6	1	0	0
Conference (provincial)	5	5	0	10	8
Players developed at international level	4	2	1	6	10

Procedure

All five coaches were interviewed individually for a period of one to two hours. The interviews took place in various cities across Canada during the off-season. Participants were contacted by email or phone, were sent a brief outline of the study, and were asked to participate. During the interviewing period, coaches were given the opportunity to discuss the successful programs they built in their respective universities.

Interview Guide and Technique

An interview guide with three main parts was created specifically for this study. The first part included an introductory question that was designed to initiate the discussion and preface the topic of the study (e.g., "How did you get involved in coaching?"). The middle part included key questions based on Chelladurai's Multidimensional Model of Leadership (e.g., "How would you describe your style of leadership?") and Côté and colleagues' Coaching Model (e.g., "What was your plan when you first started to coach at this university?"; "How do you structure your season?"). As well, some questions were based on both models (e.g., "What were the key elements in building your program?"; "What were some of the key coaching elements that you attributed to your team's success the year you achieved your best result?"). Finally, the third part included concluding questions that gave participants the opportunity to add any information judged pertinent to the study (e.g., "If you were to start your coaching career over, is there anything you would do differently?"; "Would you like to add anything else to the interview?").

Several procedures and techniques were employed during the interview. To encourage maximum freedom of expression, one of the most widely used techniques in coaching expertise research was implemented: the use of a semi-structured interview format. This type of interview gives the participants the opportunity to stress points they believe to be most important, as opposed to them having to rely solely on the investigator's notion of relevancy (Dexter, 1970). Rather than asking questions that supposed pre-set answers, the open-ended and semi-structured interviews resembled an ordinary conversation, with the participant doing most of the talking.

Another interview procedure called probing was used to redefine terminology and correct misunderstandings (Patton, 1987). Probing also provided the opportunity to explore any topic brought up by the participants that was relevant to the study. This procedure helped direct the interview, when any further elaboration or details were desired. Therefore, if the participant mentioned a specific topic of interest as part of her response, the researcher probed to discover more details about that topic.

The researcher made sure the interviewee felt welcomed and at ease before any data collection began (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was done by building rapport with each coach before the interview session by explaining the confidentiality of the analysis and by emphasizing that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. Furthermore, each coach was informed that a full verbatim transcript of the interview would be sent to her for approval and editing.

Data Analysis

The objective of the analysis was to build an organized system of categories which explained the manner in which expert female coaches of team sports built their successful programs. The analysis was inductive, in that the categories emerged from the interviews. The coding of data followed the guidelines of Côté, Salmela, Baria, and Russell (1993) and Côté, Salmela, and Russell (1995).

In the coding process, each transcript was analyzed and divided into pieces of information known as meaning units. A meaning unit is a segment of text comprised of words, phrases, or entire paragraphs that express the same idea and is related to the same topic (Tesch, 1990). Following this, each meaning unit is named or tagged based on its content. Meaning units of the same topic receive the same tag. The researchers then group similar tags into larger divisions, which are referred to as properties. At this point, a new tag is given to each new property formed. It is the tags (not the meaning units) that are compared and grouped into properties. For example, if a first tag was titled "planning training" and a second "planning the season," these two form a new property with a new tag (e.g., planning). The final level of classification consists of grouping similar properties into categories. Again, it is the tags of the property that are listed and grouped. In doing so, the analysis creates a small number of higher-order categories. In a sense, this step is similar to the earlier stage of creating properties, except it is done at a higher and more abstract level of analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Suggestions proposed by reputable qualitative researchers were followed in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Sparkes, 1998). First, peer review was used in this study to verify the data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A sport psychology graduate student unaffiliated with the current study completed all aspects of the peer-review process. The peer reviewer examined 25% of the meaning units created from the data and matched each meaning unit with a tag previously established by the current researchers. A reliability rate of 90% was obtained between the peer reviewer and the researchers. Discrepancies were discussed between the peer reviewer and researchers until a consensus was reached regarding the classification of meaning units under the appropriate tags. The same process was repeated for the grouping of tags into properties, and then into categories. A reliability rate of 100% was obtained in both of these stages. Second, the credibility of the interviewer as the primary instrument of data acquisition was assured in many ways (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interviewer had significant experience as an elite level basketball coach, at both the university and provincial levels, totaling ten years of coaching experience, including seven at the elite level. The interviewer was familiar with the Canadian coaching culture, including jargon, coaching history and experience of each participant, as well as knowledge of teams, coaches, and athletes in this sport. This knowledge helped gain access to the coaches prior to the study and also helped to build rapport with them prior to the interviews. Third, the principal researcher who conducted the interviews was trained extensively in qualitative methodology as outlined by Patton (1987, 1990) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). Fourth, two different independent researchers helped triangulate the findings by assessing the data at each

stage of analysis (Sparkes, 1998). Finally, participant member checks were used, beginning with having each participant review the full verbatim transcript of the interview for clarity and accuracy and to make any necessary changes. A second check consisted of sending a summary of the results along with the visual diagram to all participants for further examination. Lincoln and Guba noted the importance of allowing the conclusions drawn by the research team to be evaluated by the experts who provided the information. All coaches completed the first aspect of the member check and three coaches completed the second member check. These coaches were in complete agreement with the summary and diagram, thus assuring the research team that the results were valid and reliable. The coaches were not asked their perceptions about the interpretation of the data (Sparkes, 1998).

RESULTS

The total number of meaning units from the interviews was 473. The analysis of the data revealed four higher-order categories, which were commonly displayed by expert coaches for building a successful program. They were titled Coaches' Attributes, Individual Growth, Organizational Skills, and Vision. A breakdown of the subcomponents (i.e., properties) within each of these categories as well as the relationship among these four categories can schematically be seen in Figure 1. An explanation of the four categories will follow.
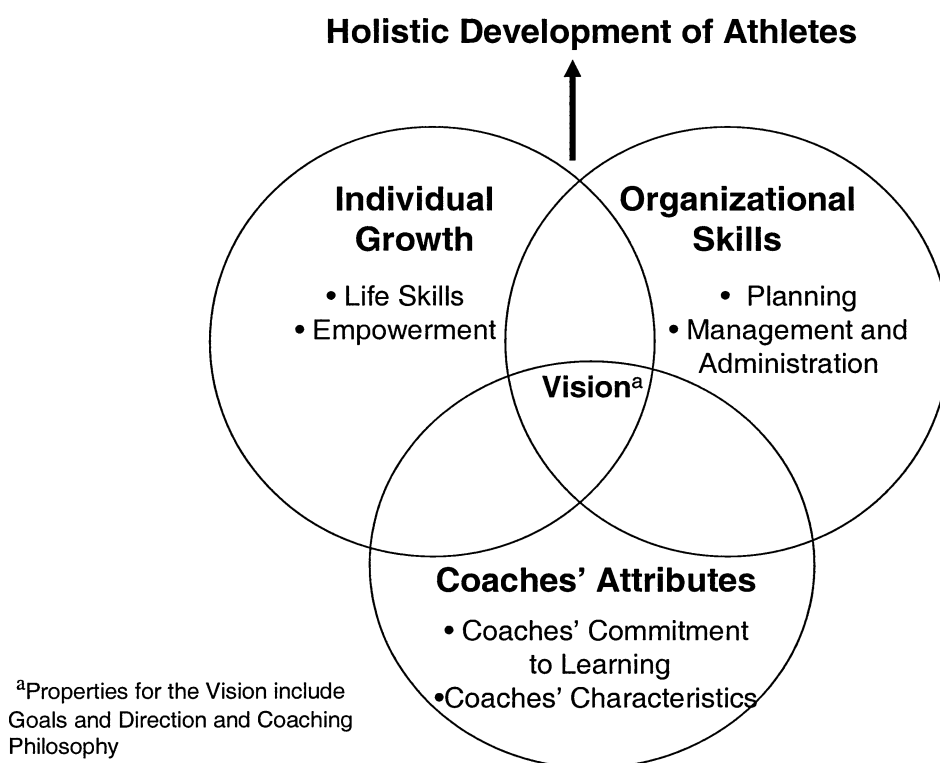
Holistic Development of Athletes

Individual Growth
• Life Skills
• Empowerment

Organizational Skills
• Planning
• Management and Administration

Vision[a]

Coaches' Attributes
• Coaches' Commitment to Learning
• Coaches' Characteristics

[a]Properties for the Vision include Goals and Direction and Coaching Philosophy

Figure 1. Conceptual model of expert coaches' perspectives on building a successful program.

Coaches' Attributes

The coaches' attributes category described the very nature or persona of the coach. The attributes of the coaches were distinguished by two elements: the coaches' commitment to learning and the coaches' characteristics. Both reflected the internal makeup of the coach.

Coaches' commitment to learning illustrated the common desire coaches had for acquiring knowledge. This quest for learning was achieved through sharing with other coaches (assistant coaches or fellow coaches) and through reading relevant literature:

> You have to continually be developing yourself as a coach. You have to stay on top of it. Even this past weekend, when I went to this coaches' [clinic], I got three or four new drills.... You do not just have to be working with people that are coaching at the next level, you can learn from people that are coaching high school, or junior high, or whatever. I think you always have to be working on your own game. (C3)

Furthermore, coaches openly talked about learning from their own mistakes and from their early coaching experiences. They considered the importance of self-evaluation during and after games, practices, and seasons, as part of this learning process. "I evaluated myself a lot when I first started coaching. I looked at myself in the mirror and said, 'I like that' or 'That does not work'." (C5)

> I made mistakes with players like everyone else and I would like to take back some words that I have said or some actions that I have done. But it is a part of life to accept that we are in roles where, in some respect, we learn through trial and error. We do not always know what the right solution is, so we have to take risks. (C2)

Although the expert coaches were very knowledgeable, they never used that knowledge to overwhelm athletes, put them down, or overpower them. This was evident from the emphasis the coaches put on athlete empowerment and on imparting as much knowledge as possible to every athlete. The goal of these coaches was not to create an authoritarian environment, but one that allowed the athletes to learn, grow, and reach their potential.

The coaches' characteristics included the personality traits and leadership styles they displayed. It was noted that these coaches were open-minded, balanced, composed, caring, and genuinely interested in their athletes:

> You have to have balance in your life, otherwise you drive kids crazy. Again, that is all part of your development—maybe it is a family, maybe it is not... A lot of [athletes] are very committed to the game and they want to do well and play for a lot of years, but it is not their [life] career. If you are too obsessed, then it is like a job to them. You have to to have that balance. (C3)

> In terms of coaching in a game situation, it is important to be disciplined and not to "lose it." Always be in control of what is happening on the court, so that I can translate that composure to my athletes. I believe that athletes reflect their coach. If you are in control and disciplined, then I think your athletes have a greater chance to be that way. (C1)

> Always go in . . . and make it a habit to talk to the kids before practice about things outside of sport, like their families, boyfriends, girlfriends, social lives, and their school. . . . It is the fact they know you care about them. (C4)

> The message is clear. I tell them that the door is always open for individual meetings. Come in and chat, "What is the last movie you saw, the last book you read?" And in our discussions, we talk about all kinds of things. There are other things in life than sport. (C5)

The coaches' desire to excel and their striving for excellence also made them committed, motivated, and passionate about coaching and teaching. They demanded and set very high standards for their players. Coaches noted the importance of leading by example in setting high standards for particular behaviors such as respect, trust, communication, and time organization. This may explain why two coaches had noticed a perception of intimidation by some of their players. However, they worked at developing healthy personal relationships with their players:

> I have a little saying in my office that says, 'Kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.' That is how I care about them. However, I am not going to lie to them. They know that I am not so close to them that I am not the coach. I keep thinking of a benevolent dictator, but I am not sure that is the word I am looking for. I am tough on them but I really care about them. (C4)

The aforementioned quote accurately shows the different characteristics coaches displayed when faced with particular situations. Sometimes they noted how they had to change from tough to caring or from an autocratic to a democratic style:

> I would say I am between authoritarian and democratic. I do not look like someone authoritarian, but I think my message is clear. The players know I will not take out the whip, but if I am not happy, they know. (C5)

Some coaches noted that their players might even find them intimidating at times:

> Players are always afraid of me. It does not matter what level you coach. You come in with a certain reputation and they are afraid of you until they get to know you a little better, although sometimes they remain afraid. (C1)

> I think I have a management style that makes first and second year athletes feel a little bit intimidated and scared of me because I have a strong personality. I am intense and I am business-like when I am in the gym. . . . Once we go on road trips, if they are really brave, they will sit in the passenger seat of the van and we will start talking and get to know each other at a more personal level. It is not until the third or fourth year that they feel a little bit safer around me. (C2)

Individual Growth

The expert coaches aimed at developing each player into a high level athlete, instilling intrinsic motivation to maximize their potential. They equipped each athlete with skills, strategies, behaviors, and values that would build each individual into a champion on and off the court. Furthermore, they purposely used the university team sport experience as a platform to build highly confident people in general. Fostering individual growth was accomplished through life skills development and empowerment of each athlete. "This is my philosophy: [our sport] is life skills development. When the players finish their final year, I hope their toolbox will be full and that it will help them to succeed in life" (C5).

To teach skills, coaches established a positive and safe environment where they taught their athletes to become balanced people. Skills and values that were taught for the sport were promoted and encouraged on and off the court. Coaches mentioned dealing with issues such as emotions, the importance of academics, the need for communication, respect and trust, the issue of role acceptance, the reinforcement of a task-oriented training, and others. "Being a champion is in every part of their life, including how they carry themselves. It affects those

decisions they make around eating, sleeping, and hydrating. It is building that whole package" (C2).

> I teach the athletes that there are things you just cannot do, like reacting to referees. [I teach them] how to control their character and deal with their emotions. I believe these will serve them well in life. I do parallels with the work force. I teach things [for sport], but at the same time, it is also for after sport. (C5)

Empowerment consisted of encouraging and valuing athletes' independence, ideas, personality, potential, roles, and growth within a team concept. Coaches valued each player equally, and invested in them whether they were starters or bench players. For example, all coaches requested input from their athletes and promoted their leadership on the court. Our expert coaches also treated their support staff with the same respect. They had the ability to facilitate their athletes' and support staff's satisfaction and performance outcome on the team. Coaches also worked to build self-confidence in each player. Two coaches mentioned bringing role models in to speak and to practice with their squad. All mentioned positive reinforcement and persuasion as indispensable tactics to enhance self-confidence in their players:

> I think your players very much reflect your attitude as a coach. If someone ever mentioned anything about not being as good as or at a lower level, that was unacceptable. We spoke of ourselves as winners, as successful women, who would have no reason to look back at ourselves. We did everything that we could to give ourselves an opportunity to be successful. (C1)

All coaches in the current study stated that their ultimate philosophy included more than winning games. It involved developing well-rounded individuals who would be successful in life. One coach even explicitly stated that winning the national championship was not the end goal; rather it was to teach her athletes about life through sport:

> I work with people, not numbers. . . . Actually, I work harder in developing people than I work to win banners. . . . I will not be proud of myself if I win a national championship and the following year I have six players quit school. . . . Basketball is a means, not an end. This is why I focus on the development [of my athletes]. (C5)

Organizational Skills

The organizational skills category was best summarized as the modus operandi of the coaches. Each coach valued specific organizational skills that enabled her to achieve success. It was distinguished by two things: planning and management/administration.

Planning involved creating a seasonal plan, preparing practices, assuring readiness for games, and providing adequate rest time for recovery. On a daily basis, planning offered many challenges such as creating enjoyable yet effective practices. Included in overall planning was the preparation to face opponents, such as scouting reports and watching videotapes:

> I think [I made] them more game smart: [I show] them what they did and why it worked or why it did not work. Before, we would watch video and I would not say anything and they would be laughing [at themselves]. Now [after an evaluation of the effectiveness of the video sessions], I analyze the tape more from what I see, and I share that with them. I think that I sometimes assumed they knew the things that I knew, and many times they did not. . . . I think they were able to analyze the game better and carry that over into helping them prepare for the next opponent. (C3)

Even though planning was a major part of the coaches' work, most coaches mentioned that building a successful program was not merely proportionate to their knowledge of "x's and o's". Organizational skills also included management/administrative tasks. These tasks involved community work, fund-raising, and recruiting. Coaches emphasized that they recruited players that would fit with their philosophy and program. They did not always recruit the best athletes or players available; rather they looked for "coachable" and reliable people first, with great athletic potential coming second:

> I was very good at recruiting a team, not recruiting 12 individuals. I have always tried to have eight really good players and other kids that complement them by bringing us great rebounding, great defense, great off the court, or great work ethic. (C4)

Vision

In this study, the coaches' vision emerged as a fundamental element for understanding how coaches built their successful programs. Vision involved the coaches' goals and direction for their programs, as well as the introduction and selling of their coaching philosophy to their athletes. Each of our successful coaches had a vision of what they wanted their program to achieve on a long-term basis, which began before or shortly after their appointment as head coach. They all agreed that changes were needed from the previous program to improve and reach a higher level of success from season to season. "I think anybody starting a program has a vision. Early on, I had a total vision of what I wanted everything to look like. I knew, when I took over at this university, what I would be doing" (C4). "I wanted to put our university back on the map" (C5). "Originally, I wanted to come in and turn the program around" (C1).

As noted previously, coaches' attributes were powerful in creating a vision. One common element was their personal pursuit of excellence and high standards. Through their motivation and passion, they were able to convince the players to follow them and to buy into their system. The vision of what the program would become began to emerge within the coaches' minds, and was transmitted to the whole program. Their vision was created, carried, and achieved because of their persona. These coaches wanted their teams to become the best and they invested into building that legacy.

Individual growth constituted the purpose behind the vision. Each of the coaches' strategies was to develop the players into great athletes, as well as great people. They invested in building a successful program and in building individuals able to achieve a successful career.

The vision also influenced which organizational skills would be displayed in all aspects of the coaches' work. From planning to recruiting, or from preparing the team for competition to fund-raising, every action of the coach was made with the vision in mind. It determined every step of their mission, and gave purpose to the leadership they provided.

In conclusion, the four categories, guided together by the vision as its central piece, appear to provide the foundation upon which these coaches built their successful programs. According to these coaches, the success of their programs culminated in the holistic development of their athletes, and to a lesser extent, the building of a consistent program with a winning record:

> I really had a goal to do it with class. We were going to have certain standards that everybody had to meet whether they were Olympians or my 13th player. I probably started [as a head coach] with more goals around my program than around winning games. . . . I did not even think about [winning the championship]. I had to establish what I wanted the program to look like. . . . We dressed properly on the road; we treated other teams with respect; we treated each other with respect; and we played with class. . . . We wanted to be the best we could be. We may

not always have been the best, but we tried to achieve high standards inside and outside of the program. It is not just about basketball; for me, there is so much more. (C4)

DISCUSSION

Results of the current study suggested that four variables influenced the building of a successful university team sport program. As well, it can be speculated that the harmonic presence of the four variables in the leadership style of the expert coaches explained why each was able to resurrect a losing program and was able to maintain a championship level program year after year. The first part of this section will compare the current findings with literature in coaching psychology. The second part will present an unexpected contribution of this research study—namely, how the current results are related to a transformational leadership style. The article will conclude by discussing limitations and future recommendations, as well as practical implications of this study.

Coaching Psychology

The results of the current analysis complement earlier research on the different elements of the CM (e.g., Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Salmela, 1996). In particular, the current results indicated the primary goal of an elite Canadian coach was to develop the athlete, both as a person outside sport and as a participant inside sport. Our results provided insight on the manner in which the coach accomplished this goal, which can be seen by examining the four higher order categories that emerged from our analysis.

Coaches' Attributes

The category called coaches' attributes encompassed coaches' traits, personalities, characteristics, and knowledge. The results of the present analysis pointed towards an existing synergy among the multiple attributes expert coaches possessed; these attributes enabled them to display favorable behaviors at different times.

The results from the coaches' attributes category provided insight into the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 1978, 1990). Chelladurai's model suggests that when coaches' behaviors correspond to those preferred by athletes and those required by the environment, athlete satisfaction and performance increase. Since the results of the current research identified the wide spectrum of coaches' attributes, from tough to caring or from autocratic to democratic, it seemed likely that when equipped with a wide range of attributes, coaches were more prone to display preferred and required behaviors in a specific situation. The results provided evidence on the value of possessing a broad spectrum of attributes to display different behaviors when required.

Many of the current findings of coaches' attributes are also comparable to earlier research in coaching psychology which examined the personal characteristics of individual and team sport coaches (e.g., Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995; Walton, 1992). However, the present results showed that expert coaches possessed a broader range of characteristics and coaching styles than was previously found. The current results suggested that success may be partly attributed to the relationships these coaches formed with their athletes. While previous research in coaching psychology aimed at providing a broad understanding of all aspects of coaching, the current study provided an in-depth examination of coaches' leadership styles by focusing on this aspect in the interview guide.

Individual Growth

Individual growth referred to the overall philosophy of personal development that coaches promoted as part of their successful programs. In the current study, the expert coaches desired to develop each of their athletes' athletic abilities as well as their individual attributes. The coaches purposely invested a significant amount of time in building self-confidence, enhancing maturity, and creating a sense of ownership in their athletes during training. In the same way, coaches developed mutually respectful relationships with their support staff and viewed them as valuable sources of help, encouragement, and insight, both on and off the court. This category offered many practical coaching conclusions that will be discussed in light of existing literature on arguably the most successful university coach of all time, John Wooden.

Many great coaches have espoused the importance of investing in their players' individual growth and in establishing strong relationships with them (e.g., Bloom & Salmela, 2000; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995; Salmela, 1996; Walton, 1992). In his book, *They Call Me Coach* (Wooden, 1988), John Wooden expressed, "I often told my players that, next to my own flesh and blood, they were the closest to me. They were my children. I got wrapped up in them, their lives, and their problems" (p. 62). From this viewpoint, Wooden's definition of success is comparable to the philosophy of most, if not all, of our expert coaches. Wooden expressed that, "success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming" (p. 89). One of the coaches in our sample clearly expressed that winning a national championship was not the be-all and end-all of coaching success. It was a genuine investment in the personal development of players regarding their behaviors, leadership characteristics, and ability to set high standards. Seemingly, winning then emerged from such a philosophy.

Organizational Skills

Organizational skills of coaches included a process through which coaches structured and put into place optimum training sessions and competitions throughout the season (Bloom, 2002; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995). Results of the current study suggested that coaches' responsibilities extended beyond planning practices and preparing the team for competitions; rather, they included multiple tasks such as recruiting, community involvement, and fund-raising projects.

One unique contribution of the current study was the separation of the relational aspect of coaching from other organizational aspects. For example, some researchers (e.g., Côté & Salmela, 1996; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995; Desjardins, 1996; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000) included working with assistant coaches, dealing with parents, promoting team cohesion, and helping athletes with personal concerns in the organization category. The results of the current study found the relational aspects between coaches and support staff, parents, and athletes were better suited in the individual growth category because they involved the development of personal relationships with people rather than organizational tasks, such as planning, management, or administration.

Vision

In the current study, the vision emerged as an essential element in understanding how coaches built their programs. According to the present results, the vision originated in the coach's mind upon, or shortly after, her head coaching appointment. Early on, coaches worked at changing past philosophies, setting higher standards and goals, and leading the team in a new direction. Coaches also emphasized the importance of athletes buying into their vision for the team to achieve success.

The current results are in agreement with other empirical work covering this topic (e.g., Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., 1995; Desjardins, 1996; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000). For example, Côté, Salmela, Trudel and colleagues noted that expert gymnastic coaches assessed the potential of their athletes and then created a mental model of what their athletes could become. Similarly, Desjardins found that to become successful, team sport coaches started a season with a vision of what their team could achieve that year. The current results differ from previous research in respect to its relationship with the other three categories. Specifically, the current results suggested the vision was influenced by coaches' attributes, which then influenced the individual growth of players, which was achieved because of the organizational skills of coaches. Similar to Côté, Salmela, Trudel, et al., our results indicated that the coach's mental model of her athletes' potential was influenced, in part, by the coach's personal characteristics. The degree of influence, however, appeared to be stronger in the current study. Coaches' attributes became a determining factor in how the vision would be created, presented, organized, and sold to the athletes. The current results suggested that athletes bought into the vision because they believed in and trusted their coach. The most plausible explanation for these differences with respect to other coaching research lies in the purpose of the current study, including the nature of the interview guide. The current study focused on understanding coaches' organizational skills in more depth, specifically the vision, as a possible indicator of success when building a sport program.

Conclusion of Coaching Psychology

Research in coaching psychology has identified methods and behaviors through which coaches and athletes can increase their satisfaction and performance outcome. Despite the recent advances in coaching psychology, no research has explicitly examined and conceptualized how and why the best coaches built and maintained their successful programs for an extended period of time. The present study bridged this gap by extending previous models of leadership and coaching (e.g., Chelladurai, 1978, 1990; Côté, Salmela, Trudel et al., 1995). The results of this study verify and extend the existing literature.

Transformational Leadership

It is not unusual to find an unexpected result when inductively exploring a topic in qualitative research. Such was the case with the current study. Interestingly, the four categories and their interrelationships from the present study appear similar to the four characteristics of transformational leadership (i.e., inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; Bass, 1999), as well as with other research and writings dealing with this leadership style (e.g., Armstrong, 2001; Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Gardner, 1990; Graham, 1987; Sashkin & Burke, 1990).

The idea of such a superior leadership style emerged when Weber (1947) presented his seminal work on charismatic leadership. Research and writings about transformational leadership have mostly been found in the fields of business, management, industry, spirituality, politics, education, health care, and military (e.g., Avolio, Waldman, & Einstein, 1988; Bass, 1990, 1998; Carless, 1998; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Kane & Tremble, 2000; Leithwood, 1992). With regards to coaching, Horn (1992) stated that most attempts to apply general leadership theories to sports have yielded minimal success. In fact, apart from the non empirical work of Armstrong (2001), little or no research has directly connected transformational leadership to coaching. A series of papers and writings published by Bass and Avolio (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994) suggest that transformational leaders were, among other things, inspirational motivators. According to these authors,

inspirational motivation was one of the four "I's" that characterized a transformational leader. The three other characteristics were idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration.

Inspirational Motivation

Bass (1999) defined inspirational motivation as the leader's ability to envision the future, articulate a vision, sell the vision to the group, and gain commitment from the followers towards a specific vision. In the current study, both the Vision and the Organizational skills category corresponded to the inspirational motivation element of transformational leadership. It appears the coaches in the current study were visionaries, motivators, goal-setters, and organized leaders who were able to achieve success by gaining commitment and enthusiasm from their followers, and by having them buy into their vision.

Idealized Influence

The results further parallel those of Bass and colleagues (e.g., Bass, 1990, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994) in terms of the characteristic idealized influence. Bass discovered that leaders acted as role models and cultivated admiration and respect in their subordinates. In the current study, the Coaches' Attributes category included those qualities needed in a role model to offer an idealized influence on their followers. It appears the coaches in the current study were able to lead by example because of their personalities and their capacity to determine high-performance goals. Furthermore, the coaches consistently acknowledged that their relationships with their athletes were a key to the team's success. The coaches wanted their players to respect them and enjoy playing for them. Throughout the current interviews, the coaches stressed how the positive relationships they developed with their players were a key to the team's success. The coaches worked very hard at developing healthy personal relationships with their players based on trust, respect, communication, and care for the person.

Intellectual Stimulation

Along the same lines, the individual growth and organizational skills categories of the current study appear to offer a strong match to intellectual stimulation of transformational leadership. Intellectual stimulation was defined as the ability the leader had to challenge the followers, as well as incorporating their opinions into the decision making process (Bass, 1999). As part of the Individual Growth category of the current study, coaches were found to empower their players, to involve them in the decision-making process, and to promote players' leadership and responsibility both on and off the floor. Moreover, the Organizational Skills category involved challenging athletes to reach higher levels of achievement through creative and effective training sessions.

Individualized Consideration

Finally, the results of this study support the fourth segment of transformational leadership called individualized consideration, which expresses the leader's awareness of the followers' needs. In the current study, the Individual Growth category concurred with individualized consideration by promoting the importance of the coach giving particular attention to every team member. The successful coaches in the current study were respectful of their players' personal differences and aimed at empowering each athlete as an individual.

Conclusion of Transformational Leadership

Considering its make-up (i.e., the four characteristics), it is not surprising that transformational leadership was viewed as an ability of a leader to elevate the interest of his or her followers

and to foster their commitment and energy towards the group and its goals (Bass, 1990; Gardner, 1990; Graham, 1987). It was defined as a superior leadership performance, which elicited exceptional outcomes from the followers (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Sashkin & Burke, 1990; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Particularly in business and management literature, transformational leaders were found to give regular feedback, implement a participative decision-making process, provide solutions to crises, and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Sashkin & Burke, 1990).

Currently, Armstrong (2001) has written the most direct account of transformational leadership and coaching. In this non empirical article, Armstrong suggested that transformational leaders did not merely display a strict "top-bottom" hierarchy, but they provided a relationship where a "transformation" occurred in both directions. This suggested that transformational leaders could be found to be both autocratic and democratic. Coaches viewed their athletes as being capable of bringing contributions to the team, and treated them with respect. Coaches were educators helping players understand life lessons, not just their sport. For example, Armstrong discussed that while winning was no less important, great emphasis was put on fair play, total group effort, and honesty. The coaches in the current study valued high ethical standards and led by example. This helped the followers duplicate the coaches' behaviors and philosophy.

The current results suggest that the relationships between the four variables were essential to effective transformational leadership in sport. As portrayed in a conceptual model (Figure 1), the four variables fostered the holistic development of the athlete. They corresponded to the characteristics of transformational leaders, who had the ability to elicit extraordinary outcomes from their followers and to invest in their maturation process. We are hopeful that this study is a starting point in linking and applying the transformational leadership style to the field of coaching.

Study Limitations and Future Research

Although this study enhanced the understanding of how expert coaches built a successful program, some limitations need to be addressed. First, the interviews focused solely on the coaches' perceptions. Therefore, athletes' viewpoints were not examined or considered. Thus, the validity of Figure 1 could be confirmed with a qualitative assessment of players that have been coached by transformational leaders. Second, results might be specific only to female coaches. While none of our coaches raised any "female-only" points in their interviews, it might be interesting for future research to compare the current results with an expert sample of Canadian male coaches. Trying to determine if any gender-related differences exist in coaching was beyond the scope of the current study. Third, the results might only apply to coaches working at Canadian universities. Perhaps it would be interesting to investigate whether similar results would be found at American universities. For example, do coaches from the elite Division I programs in the United States, where players sometimes enter the professional setting (especially in men's basketball), have a similar philosophy of athlete development? Lastly, the transformational leadership style should be tested on coaches of individual sport teams, as well as coaches at other levels such as youth, recreational, or professional sports.

Practical Implications

The findings from this study offer several implications for those individuals who are trying to build successful coaching programs, by highlighting some important elements of their coaching repertoire. First, coaches should realize that investing in the personal development

of their athletes may lead to better long-term results than might solely aiming to win at all costs. Second, athlete empowerment may lead to a better coach–athlete relationship. Third, it appears that a broad range of characteristics is ideal for coaches in order for them to reach their athletes' preferred behaviors. Fourth, coaches should possess strong organizational skills to help them balance the multitude of noncoaching administrative and managerial tasks. Fifth, when coaching a new team, coaches should begin by creating a vision that includes the goals and directions for their program.

The current study is an initial step in connecting a transformational leadership style to coaching. Although this study provides insight into how coaches develop their programs, it cannot be concluded that coaches who do not posses the four characteristics of transformational leadership will be unsuccessful.

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