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Athletes' Experience of Poor Coaching

Brian Gearity
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Brian Gearity entitled "Athletes' Experience of Poor Coaching." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Higher Education Administration.

Norma Mertz, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Vincent Anfara, Joy DeSensi, Terrell Strayhorn

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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                                  Carolyn R. Hodges

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Athletes' Experience of Poor Coaching

A Dissertation
Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Brian T. Gearity
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my family.

I thank (and love) my wife, Cayla, for helping make it possible to complete this

dissertation *and* see my kids. I thank Lorelei and Liam (my kids) for providing me with

just a little more momentum to achieve this goal with a sense of urgency. I thank my

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most significantly, I thank my mother (now deceased for 16 years), Dr. Lauree Gearity,

for being my first model of an educator and who I have tried to emulate with a 'tough,

but fair' approach.

ABSTRACT

Effective coaching has long been associated with winning. Because of this conceptualization of effective coaching, researchers have tended to study the behaviors and thought processes of winning coaches, but not how these behaviors and thought processes affect athletes. Very little research has looked at poor, ineffective coaching, specifically from the athletes' perspective. Because of this, our understanding of poor, ineffective coaching is limited. The purpose of this study was to explore collegiate, professional and semi-professional athletes' perceptions of poor coaching. An existential phenomenological research design provided the framework for understanding athletes' experience of poor coaching. Data were collected via in-depth interviews with 16 athletes (10 male, 6 female; 12 Caucasian, 4 African-American). Athletes described a total of 33 poor coaching experiences that occurred in a variety of sports (baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball) at several competitive levels (youth, middle school, high school, collegiate, and professional). Data were analyzed using phenomenological methods, similar to the constant comparative method, which led to the identification of five themes that constitute the essence of athletes' experience of poor coaching: Not teaching, Unfair, Uncaring, Inhibiting, and Coping. Because the athletes talked about poor coaches who were both winning and losing coaches, it was clear that for the athletes, poor coaching was not associated with losing.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Vince Lombardi

Americans have a national obsession with winning and winners (Farrey, 2008; Lipsyte, 2008). It is not for nothing that Vince Lombardi's pronouncement is not merely widely quoted, but rings out in locker rooms from peewee ball to the Super Bowl, and sportscasters seed their praise of winning coaches with references to it. Every year winning teams are brought to meet and be greeted by the President of the United States and have their winning legacy cemented with a photograph in front of the White House. Coaches of championship teams are lionized by the media and the public. Their faces grace the covers of magazines, the daily news shows lead off with stories about their successes, and the public can hardly hear enough about and from them. Thus, when Pat Head Summitt recently won her 1,000[th] game as head collegiate basketball coach of the Lady Vols, the media swarmed the campus before, during and after the event, commemorative posters were struck, the stands were filled with cheering fans, and even the commissioner of the Southeastern Conference came to pay homage. And winning coaches are routinely paid $25,000 to $50,000 for speaking at fundraisers, at corporate retreats, and even at university graduations.

Winning is seen as so important, universities across the nation often make the head football coach the highest paid employee. Nick Saban was recently lured away from the National Football League's (NFL) Miami Dolphins by the University of Alabama for

a record salary of more than four million dollars with the expectation that he would bring his winning ways to the college team. To win more and win now, the University of Tennessee recently fired head football coach Phillip Fulmer despite a career record 152 (wins) and 52 (losses), and was willing to pay 3.325 million dollars for new assistant football coaches alone (Edwards, 2009).

Bobby Bowden, Bobby Knight, Pat Head Summitt, Augie Garrdio, and Anson Dorrance are among the winningest coaches in college football, men's basketball, women's basketball, baseball and soccer, respectively. Their names are synonymous with winning. When one of these coaches speaks, the public and the entire sports community listen. When these coaches say, "This is the way we do things," other coaches accept and respect what is said, and seek to do these things. It is not solely because they win so much more than their competitors that they are revered and emulated. Rather, it is because their winning is seen as evidence of their effectiveness as coaches. Indeed, winning coaches have come to define and represent the essence of good coaching.

If winning represents the essence of good coaching, does that mean that anything a winning coach does in the role of the coach is an attribute of good coaching; that any of his/her behaviors are acceptable? In addition to winning, Bobby Knight is widely known for physically and verbally abusing players. Is abusing players a behavior to be associated with good coaching? New England Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichik, whose many accomplishments include three Super Bowl titles, was recently exposed for cheating by the NFL for illegally recording opponents' signals during games ("Belichik," 2007). Is

cheating consonant with good coaching as long as it results in winning? And if winning is the prime criterion for defining good coaching, what is one to make of the fact that John Wooden, often cited as the epitome of what a good coach is and recently named ESPN's coach of the 20th century, didn't win his first national championship until the 29th year of his career and 16th year at UCLA? Or, Pat Head Summitt, now the winningest coach in college basketball, did not win her first national championship until her 13th year of coaching? Were Wooden and Summitt good coaches when they were not winning or only when they were winning? And if good coaching is defined solely in terms of winning, how is it that in spite of losing twice as many games as he won (4-8), Duke's new head football coach, David Cutcliffe, is being recognized as a good coach because he is changing the culture of the team and community (Dinich, 2009). Is it possible to be a good coach without winning? Are there other criteria that define good coaches? For example, former head football coach Tyrone Willingham, led his Notre Dame team to a record 2.85 academic team grade point average, and former Notre Dame head coach Bob Davie, led the team to a 100% graduation rate ("Notre Dame," 2001; "Tyrone," 2004). Are these coaches poor coaches because they did not win championships or even have high career winning percentages (0.583)? They were certainly effective at having their players reach academic milestones. Are reaching such milestones part of what it means to be a good coach? Clearly, what makes good coaches good, what makes them effective as coaches, is not merely a matter of winning. It would appear to be something more complex than winning, as appealing and easy as that is to use as a marker of

effectiveness.

Since winning has long been equated with good coaching, it is hardly surprising that research on good coaching has tended to focus on the behaviors of winning coaches. Such research consistently confirms that the most commonly observed behaviors of winning coaches are instructive, information giving by the coach to the athlete or team before, during or after a skill (Dodds & Rife, 1981; Lacy & Darst, 1985; Langsdorf, 1979; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002; Williams, 1978), and praise, verbal or nonverbal compliments (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Potrac et al.; Williams, 1978). In terms of cognitive characteristics of winning coaches, research suggests that winning coaches plan for practice diligently and meticulously (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004) and focus on developing positive psychological characteristics of athletes such as self-confidence and motivation (Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995a, 1995b; Potrac et al.).

While the existing research provides some understanding of what winning coaches do and how they think, what is missing from that research is the effect of the coach's behavior on the athlete. For example, d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier, and Dubois (1998) found that athletes withdrew and ignored their coach in response to his negative communication. Was this the response the coach intended to engender? Unfortunately, this line of research does not address athletes' perceptions of the effectiveness of the coach's behavior or the effect of those behaviors on the athletes' performance or development.

Chelladurai (1978) attempted to address this omission in the research. He

hypothesized that athletes would be more satisfied when the coach's behavior was congruent with the athlete's preferred behavior. Subsequent research has validated this hypothesis (Chelladurai, 1984; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Schliesman, 1987). While there are individual differences in the behaviors they prefer, in general, it has been found that athletes are most satisfied when the coach's behavior focuses on training and instruction, social support, positive feedback, and democratic decision-making (Allen & Howe, 1998; Black & Weiss, 1992; Chelladurai; Dwyer & Fisher, 1990; Riemer & Chelladurai; Schliesman). While revealing about what athletes prefer, and helpful in noting the complimentary (with research on winning coaches) identification of instruction and praise, does satisfaction with the coach's behavior necessarily correlate with better performance by the athlete? Or dissatisfaction with poorer performance? Clearly, what it means to be an effective coach and what differentiates an effective coach from an ineffective coach remains unclear.

What is missing from the existing research is an understanding of athlete's perceptions of coaching effectiveness and the effect the coach has on an athlete. Becker (2007) looked at athletes' experiences of great coaching in order to understand how the coach's behaviors affected athletes. She concluded that the efficacy of the coach's behaviors was contingent upon athletes building a relationship with their coach and understanding the coach's philosophy, "Once a strong coach-athlete relationship is established and athletes understand their coach, the environment, and the system…serve as constants in the background of athlete experiences" (p. 69). Thus, athletes' perceived

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effectiveness of coaching would seem to have more to do with how coaches behave and how athletes' perceive that behavior than the frequency of the coaches' behavior or even athletes' satisfaction with that behavior.

Another way of getting at coaching effectiveness, particularly from an athlete's perspective, is to explore poor, ineffective coaching. Human beings are often more capable and comfortable with describing what doesn't work than what may be effective, and to be able to focus on the particulars of those behaviors. If nothing else, looking at poor coaching would allow for getting at specific behaviors that are perceived as ineffective and to explore the effect of these behaviors on athletes' behavior.

Research on poor coaching is extremely limited, resting primarily on fragmentary findings from studies of good coaching (Gould et al., 2000; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Johnson, 1998; Stewart, 1993). For example, as part of a study of good coaching, students enrolled in an introductory coaching course were asked to recall their least and most favorable behaviors of past coaches. More than 45 least favorable qualities were identified, primarily related to communication, motivation, trust, knowledge and care (Stewart). However, our understanding of how athletes are affected by those perceptions remains limited. Yet we need to know this if we are to prepare and educate coaches in ways that are likely to be effective in guiding athletes. Knowing what athletes perceive to be ineffective and understanding what effect these behaviors have on them would allow coaches and prospective coaches to assess the effects of various

behaviors more accurately and to avoid those behaviors which do not have the desired effects.

Statement of the Problem

Winning has long been viewed as the product of good coaching. Most of the research on coaching effectiveness has examined the behaviors of winning coaches. This research speaks to the frequency of these behaviors, but not to their quality. Further, such research does not account for the effect the coach has on the athlete. Because of this myopic perspective, we currently do not have a thorough understanding of good, effective coaching. One way to get at the relationship between specific coaching behaviors and their effect on athletes is to look at athletes' experience of poor coaching.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore collegiate, professional and semi-professional athletes' perceptions of poor coaching. In consonance with phenomenological research methods, the participating athletes defined what it meant to have been poorly coached (emic perspective) rather than be given an a priori definition of poor coaching. From their perceptions, an operational definition of poor coaching was developed in the study.

Significance of the Study

Because we lack a complete understanding of what good, effective coaching is outside of winning, or of the effects of coaching behaviors on athletes, this study helps fill the gap in the literature on coaching effectiveness by getting at athletes' perceptions of poor, ineffective coaching, about which little is known. The findings of this study also provide a clear, detailed description of poor coaching from the athletes' perspective. When looked at as a whole then, this study provides insight into the essence of effective coaching viewed through the lens of poor coaching.

To date, coaching education programs have been limited by a narrow understanding of coaching effectiveness. The findings of this study should be helpful in developing coursework and materials for coaching education programs that help coaches to become more aware of how their behavior affects athletes. Furthermore, they will have a clearer idea of behaviors that they might consider not using, no matter how devoted and habituated they may be to such behaviors. If one of the goals of coaches is to improve the physical and psychosocial development of athletes, the findings of this study provide evidence of the ways athletes perceive the coach did not maximize their potential.

Definitions

A generally accepted definition of poor coaching does not exist. In keeping with the tenets of existential phenomenology, poor coaching was defined in terms of the athletes' perceptions of poor coaching rather than imposing an a priori definition on their perceptions.

Limitations

Because this study was limited to 16 participants, the breadth of athletes' perceptions of poor coaching may not be fully revealed, thus limiting a full understanding of poor coaching from the athlete's perspective.

Although this study does not and can not achieve statistical generalizability, it achieved theoretical or analytical generalizability (Yin, 2003). Previous research and theories on coaching effectiveness have informed the research design of this study and the findings of this study were compared to this research. This comparison of findings improves the analytical generalizability of research on coaching effectiveness. Furthermore, this study hopes to achieve reader generalizability, which speaks to the perceived usefulness of the findings and the extent to which the findings resonate with the reader (Merriam, 1998).

Because existential phenomenology is inherently limited to describing the perceptions of participants, this study does not account for individual participant differences and other possible mitigating factors such as gender, class, power, race, or age.

Delimitations

While attempts were made to interview both male and female athletes from a variety of sports, neither gender nor respective sport differences were criteria for the selection of participants. Thus the findings do not speak to possible differences based on sport or the gender of the athlete.

Since the participating athletes were able to reflect on an experience of poor coaching at any level at which they experienced it, the findings do not speak to a particular level of play.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters.

Chapter One includes the background and context for the study, the statement of the problem, the study's purpose, the study's significance, limitations and delimitations, and this overview of the study's organization.

Chapter Two provides a critical review of the relevant research and literature on coaching. This review covers the literature pertaining to coaching effectiveness and poor coaching and describes existential phenomenology, the philosophical and methodological

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design that undergirds the study.

Chapter Three details the research design, the research population, methods, and procedures used in conducting the study, including data collection, data analysis, and the dependability and trustworthiness of the data.

The findings of the study are presented in chapter four in terms of the themes derived from the data.

Chapter Five provides a review of the study, a summary of the findings, and a discussion of those findings in relation to the relevant literature. It also includes recommendations for sports' stakeholders and policymakers and for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter provides a critical review of the research and literature related to athletes' experiences of poor coaching. The researcher conducted an exhaustive search of literature related to coaching effectiveness from numerous databases such as ERIC, Physical Education Index, and SPORT Discus. This review is organized into three sections: studies of effective coaching, studies of poor coaching, and a review of existential phenomenology, the approach used in the conduct of the study.

Effective Coaching

Over the past 35 years, three approaches have dominated research on coaching effectiveness. One approach, the behavioral approach, has examined the behaviors of coaches with a high winning percentage. A second, more recent, approach has examined elite level coaches' cognitive structures such as what coaches' think or why they use particular behaviors. And a third approach has examined athlete preferences and satisfaction with coaching.

Behavioral Approach

The behavioral approach to studying effective coaching has used observation as the primary method for gathering data about the behaviors of winning coaches using instruments created by the researchers (Lacy & Durst, 1984; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Williams, 1978). This approach assumes that the behaviors

of winning coaches are effective and, therefore, constitute a model of good coaching to be learned and replicated by other coaches. Tharp and Gallimore developed an observational instrument for their study of John Wooden, legendary UCLA basketball coach. Their instrument, based on observation-category systems long used in the study of classroom teaching, allowed for observing ten categories of behaviors: instructions, hustles, modeling-positive, modeling-negative, praises, scolds, nonverbal reward, nonverbal punishment, scold/reinstruction and other. These categories were based on the researchers' expectations about what would be observed in Coach Wooden's behavior during practice. After observing Coach Wooden for 15 practices during his final season in which he won the last of his 10 national championships, the researchers reported the frequency of the coach's behavior to be 50.3% instructions, 12.7% hustles, 8% scold/reinstruction, 6.9% praises, 6.6% scolds, 6.6% un-codable, 2.8% modeling-positive, 2.4% other, 1.6% modeling-negative, 1.2% nonverbal reward, and trace amounts of nonverbal punishment (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Gallimore & Tharp, 2004).

Based on previous observational studies (Dodds & Rife, 1981; Lacy, 1983; Langsdorf, 1979; Model, 1983; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Williams, 1978), Lacy and Darst (1984) developed the Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI), another observational instrument used to record coaches' behaviors. They developed what they considered to be a "refined tool" that "…has expanded on and modified several behavior categories to create a more sensitive tool, capable of collecting highly specific data on coaching behaviors" (p. 60). The resulting ASUOI contained 14 observational

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categories: pre-instruction, concurrent instruction, post-instruction, questioning, manual manipulation, positive modeling, negative modeling, use of first name, hustle, praise, scold, management, silence, and other. Since its development, numerous researchers have used the ASUOI, or a slightly modified version to fit the particular needs and constraints of the study, to record the observed behaviors of coaches at practices or games.

Lacy and Darst (1985) studied the behaviors of 10 experienced, winning high school head football coaches. All coaches had at least four years of experience as a head football coach and a career winning record of 60% or greater. The researchers observed and recorded the behaviors of each coach during three practices throughout the season which resulted in a total of 30 practices observed. The gender of the coaches was not reported, but they were likely male coaches due to the sport, football. The researchers used a coding system similar to the ASUOI, but instruction was reported as one category and they removed the category of silence. They reported the frequency of observed behaviors to be 42.5% instruction, 17.7% management, 16.9% hustle, 15.5% first name, 11.4% praise, 5.3% scold, 2.5% positive-modeling, 1.9% other, 0.9% negative-modeling, 0.5% nonverbal reward, 0.3% nonverbal punishment.

Becker and Wrisberg (2008) studied the behaviors of legendary Tennessee women's basketball coach Pat Summitt throughout the 2004-2005 season. The researchers believed knowing her practice behaviors could contribute to the body of literature on effective coaching because Summitt has "Inarguably…achieved the highest level of coaching success in her sport" (p. 209). After modifying the ASUOI slightly

(removed the category use of first name and silence) they recorded Summitt's behaviors at practices, which ranged from 30 minutes to two hours, every three weeks throughout the season for a total of six practices. They reported the frequency of Summitt's behaviors as 48.12% instruction, 14.50% praise, 10.65% hustle, 9.34% management, 6.86% scold, 4.61% questioning, 3.19% other, 2.09% positive-modeling, 0.58% negative-modeling, and 0.06% manual manipulation.

Bloom, Crumpton, and Anderson (1999) studied the behaviors of Jerry Tarkanian, former head men's basketball coach at Fresno State, throughout the 1996-1997 season. At the time, Takanian ranked second all-time in most wins of all Division I men's basketball coaches. Arguing that expert (experienced and accomplished) coaches differ from novice coaches, the researchers used a modified recording form originally created by Tharp and Gallimore (1976), adding a behavioral category that allowed for differentiating the type of instruction the coach used (i.e., technical, tactical or general). The resulting instrument contained 12 categories and was used to record Tarkanian's practice behaviors during the season. The total number of practices observed was not reported. The researchers reported the coach's frequency of behaviors as 29% tactical instructions, 16.0% hustles, 13.9% technical instructions, 13.6% praise/encouragement, 12.0% general instructions, 6.0% scolds, 2.8% uncodable, 2.2% modeling, 1.6% criticism/reinstruction, 1.0% humor, 0.6% nonverbal punishments, 0.3% nonverbal rewards.

Over the past 35 years, numerous studies have used the ASUOI, a slightly modified version of it, or a similar instrument to record the behaviors of winning coaches

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in a variety of sports such as women's collegiate basketball (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008)

men's collegiate basketball (Bloom, Crumpton, & Anderson, 1999; Tharp & Gallimore,

1976), high school basketball (Williams, 1978), university football (Langsdorf, 1979),

women's field hockey (Dodds & Rife, 1981), and high school football (Lacy & Darst,

1985). This research has established that instruction is the most frequently observed

behavior of winning coaches. Interestingly, research using the ASUOI also found that

losing high school tennis coaches exhibited more instruction than winning high school

tennis coaches, although this difference was not statistically significant (Claxton, 1988).

This was also found to be true of losing high school football coaches who exhibited more

behaviors related to instruction than any other behavior (Model, 1983). Thus research

suggests that both winning and losing coaches use instruction most frequently than other

behaviors.

Praise has been found to be the second-most frequently observed behavior in a

winning high school football coach (Williams, 1978) and a winning collegiate women's

basketball coach (Becker & Wrisberg), but not in a men's collegiate basketball coach

(Tharp & Gallimore). Interestingly, research using the ASUOI has also found praise to be

the second-highest observed behavior in losing high school tennis coaches (Claxton) and

losing high school football coaches (Model, 1983) suggesting that winning and losing

coaches exhibit similar frequencies of praise.

In order to determine any differences in the practice behaviors of winning or

losing coaches, Claxton (1988) used the ASUOI to record the practice behaviors of nine

more and less successful high school boys' tennis coaches. More successful coaches were defined as having a career winning record of 70% or higher, while less successful coaches were defined as having a career winning record below 50%. To further discriminate between winning and losing coaches, all coaches were required to have met the criterion for the win-loss percentage within the three years prior to the study. After identifying coaches that met these requirements, the final study included five more successful coaches and four less successful coaches. The gender of the coaches was not reported. Each coach was observed throughout the season on three separate occasions for 30 minutes per practice. The only comparative statistic about the observed behavior of more and less successful coaches reported was a statistically significant difference in questioning. More successful coaches questioned their players more frequently (2.8%) than less successful coaches (1.3%). Based on these findings, both winning and losing coaches appeared to exhibit similar frequencies of behavior related to instruction, praise, scold, etc.

Based upon previous observational research (Langsdorf, 1979; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Williams, 1978) of coaches, Model (1983) used a 10 category behavior recording form to record the practice behaviors of six head high school football coaches. These coaches were defined as non-winning coaches because they had accumulated a career record of 92 wins, 106 loses, and 6 ties. The purpose of the study was to determine if their practice behavior differed from winning coaches based on existing research. After recording the practice behaviors of each coach on three separate occasions during the

season, he determined the frequency of behaviors as 51.5% instruction, 15.2% management, 12.3% praise, 7.9% hustle, 6.0% coach interaction, 3.1% scold, 2.4% modeling-positive, 0.9% non-verbal reward, 0.5% modeling-negative, and 0.3% non-verbal punishment. When he compared these frequencies to existing research on winning coaches, the only significant difference was that losing coaches used more praise and less scold and hustle than winning coaches. Model concluded that other factors might be involved in winning games than solely the behaviors used by the head coach at practices.

While knowing the behaviors coaches used at practices has enriched our understanding of coaching effectiveness, there are still many questions that remain unanswered. The findings from these studies have been derived from a rather small number of studies largely restricted to winning coaches, and a limited range of sports and competitive levels. Furthermore, with few exceptions, this research does not differentiate good from poor coaching, particularly in light of the finding that winning and losing coaches exhibit similar types of behaviors (Claxton, 1988; Model, 1983). Simply knowing what behaviors coaches use is limited in other ways as well. While coaches may perceive their actions to be effective, and even outsiders (researchers) may interpret them as such, it is entirely possible that athletes perceive them differently. Critical questions remain unanswered by the existing behavioral research. Did the coach's behavior have the intended effect on the athlete? How did the coach's use of instruction, praise, scold, etc., affect the athlete, the team? Clearly, more research is needed that speaks to how the coach's behavior affected the athlete. Similarly, although these behavioral studies report

the frequency of specific coaching behaviors in practice sessions, it is not clear when or under what circumstances these behaviors were used, thus when it is more or less appropriate to use these behaviors. The use of a cognitive approach to the study of coaching allows for addressing some of the limitations of behavioral observation research, particularly when used in combination with a behavioral approach.

Cognitive Approach

A more recent approach in researching coaching effectiveness has studied the cognitive characteristics of 'expert' coaches which explores why coaches use certain behaviors. Common criteria used for labeling someone an expert coach usually requires the coach to have achieved ten years of experience, to have directly trained national or international level athletes or winning athletes or teams, and to have been recognized by other coaches as a good coach (Cote, Salmela, & Russel, 1995a). This line of inquiry assumes that expert or winning coaches possess, and can identify, those factors that explain why they use certain behaviors. This also assumes that coaches' behaviors directly affect athletes thereby enabling them to win.

Cote, Salmela, and Russell (1995a) studied why expert gymnastic coaches used particular behaviors during practices and competitions. They interviewed 17 expert Canadian gymnastic coaches, nine who worked with male athletes and seven with female athletes. None of the female coaches worked with male athletes, but four of the male coaches worked with female athletes. As a whole, coaches identified a wider breadth of knowledge used during practices than competitions (Cote, Salmela, and Russell, 1995b).

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During competitions, the knowledge coaches reported using focused on helping athletes achieve their potential. For example, during competitions coaches spoke about controlling potential distractions that might cause an athlete to lose focus which would ultimately reduce performance. Also, coaches reported being minimally involved with athletes prior to and during competition because they believed it was more important to appear relaxed and confident and that no positive outcomes would come from giving athletes instruction at this time.

The knowledge coaches used during practices focused on instruction and feedback, evaluating athletes' readiness, psychological skills, and competition simulations. Coaches believed training was a time for gymnasts to learn the skills necessary for competition. To accomplish this goal, coaches spoke about providing feedback and encouragement to athletes and using proper progressions when teaching technical skills. Coaches also reported using their knowledge to develop beneficial psychological skill such as motivation and the ability to deal with stress.

Based on their original study of UCLA coach John Wooden (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976), Gallimore and Tharp (2004) conducted a follow-up study in order to "…better understand the context of Wooden's practices and philosophy" (p. 119). They used a variety of data sources for this follow up study including reexamining the quantitative data from the original study, using previously unpublished qualitative notes, published sources (books authored by and about Wooden), a dissertation about Wooden, and interviews with Wooden and a former player. They concluded that "exquisite and diligent

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planning lay behind the heavy information load, economy of talk, and practice

organization" (p. 119). Wooden would routinely spend all morning preparing for practice

although practice lasted only two hours. He would also develop a "lesson plan" for

practice to create opportunities to teach players individually and as a group. Having noted

the relatively low amount of praise Wooden gave to players in the original study, in the

follow up study the researchers asked him why this was the case. Wooden said he

believed the large amount of instruction he gave to players and learning in itself was

positive. However, Wooden commented that he tried to give more praise to non-starters

than starters so they would know they were valued and appreciated.

Potrac, Jones, and Armour (2002) studied an English soccer coach who had the

highest level of football coaching certification through the English Football Association

and over 20 years of professional experience including a lengthy career as a professional

player in English soccer. The purpose of this study was to, "…provide a more holistic

understanding of the coaching behaviours of a top-level English football coach" (p. 185).

To accomplish this purpose, the researchers used a mixed-methods approach to describe

what this coach did and why. Behavioral data were collected utilizing the ASUOI and

then the coach was interviewed to discover why he employed the behaviors that had been

observed. The researchers reported the coach's frequency of behaviors as 26.10% post

instruction, 20.14% concurrent instruction, 13.19% silence, 13.10% use of first name,

11.29% pre--instruction, 11.10% praise, 7.30% management, 2.97% questioning, 2.95%

positive modeling, 2.60% hustle, 1.64% uncodable, 0.40% negative modeling, 0.33%

scold, and 0% physical assistance. The coach indicated that instruction was clearly important to the development of successful teams and the improvement of individual players. He also perceived individualized instruction to be necessary to meet the individual learning needs of athletes. Furthermore, the coach said he wanted to create a positive environment that developed confidence and self-efficacy in his players and saw praise as a means to achieve that goal. Although the coach acknowledged that players are often viewed by outsiders as "spoiled," he believed that a high degree of praise was necessary because he perceived these athletes to be insecure and frightened about competing at such an elite level. The coach rarely scolded players because he considered publicly berating players to be completely unproductive and felt that it would eventually lead to a loss of respect for the coach and a decline in players receptiveness. The coach asserted that a more effective strategy would be pulling a player aside to talk with him as a way to maintain respect in the coach-athlete relationship.

Jones, Armour, and Potrac (2003) utilized case study and life history methods to understand how an expert, male soccer coach constructed the knowledge necessary to succeed at a highly competitive level. The participant, Steve Harrison, was a 48-year-old English soccer coach for Aston Villa, a top club in the highest division of professional soccer in England. The researchers selected this coach because of his excellent winning record and reputation as an expert coach. Five interviews, lasting nearly eight hours in total, were conducted with the coach. Harrison identified several sources of knowledge necessary to be an effective soccer coach such as playing experience, observing other

coaches (mentoring), trial and error, players, and coaching certifications. Furthermore, it was Harrison's belief that the application of this knowledge in the everyday life of coaching was, for him, the essence of effective coaching. Harrison utilized this knowledge to create an enjoyable and fun environment that centered on cooperation between players and coach. He described practices as well planned and intense. He believed in giving concise, timely, and individualized feedback to players. The researchers concluded the cognitive functioning of this coach was not based on reason or planning, but rather based on situational factors that affected his ability to utilize his knowledge to make the proper decision.

While most research on expert coaches has focused solely on the coaches' perception, more recent research has sought to fill this gap in the literature by understanding athletes' perceptions of coaches' effectiveness. d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier, & Dubois (1998) examined "…coaches' and athletes' perceptions regarding their effective interactions, the underlying factors of these interactions, and the reasons for effectiveness" (p. 319). The researchers wanted to know what interaction strategies used by coaches were perceived to be effective by both coaches and athletes, and why these were perceived as effective. The researchers used interviews to collect data from three male, expert French judo coaches and six female, elite athletes. The coaches were "experts" because they were currently coaching the French national judo female team and had met previous criteria of expert coaches (Cote, Salmela, and Russell, 1995a, 1995b). The findings revealed that coaches and athletes perceptions of effective interaction

strategies were markedly different. Coaches identified six interaction strategies they perceived to be effective: stimulating interpersonal rivalry, provoking athletes verbally, displaying indifference, entering into direct conflict, developing specific team cohesion, and showing preferences. Athletes identified five strategies: showing diplomacy, achieving exceptional performance, soliciting coaches directly, diversifying sources of information, and bypassing conventional sources. Each perceived effective interaction strategy was paired with a corresponding reason for why it was effective. In general, coaches' perceptions of effective interaction centered on mental preparation, such as positive motivation and a winning spirit; mental testing, such as resilience and adaptation; and improved athlete commitment. Athletes' perceptions of effective interaction centered on positive consequences of self-determination, such as improved athletic performance and well-being, and a sense of autonomy, such as conflict avoidance and maintenance of the teacher-student hierarchy. Because coaches and athletes perceptions of effective interaction strategies were vastly different, the researchers concluded that the rigorous selection process and winning tradition of the French judo helped to create a system where coaches were expected be tough and impersonal and athletes were expected to cope and adapt to this style.

In a continuing effort to understand how athletes perceive a particular dimension of coaching effectiveness, a more recent cognitive approach has sought to describe athletes' lived experiences of great coaching (Becker, 2007). Becker's study included nine female and nine male athletes from a variety of sports including football, baseball,

soccer, volleyball, softball, and water polo. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 42 and each had participated at the NCAA Division I level. Using existential phenomenological methods to describe the lived experience of great coaching, the six themes Becker developed from the participants' responses were coach attributes, environment, system, relationships, coaching actions, and influences.

The theme of coach attributes described how athletes' experienced the core qualities and characteristics of a great coach. Coaches were described as being knowledgeable, passionate, and competitive. Athletes also talked about how great coaches took on other roles such as teacher, mentor, friend, and parental figures. The theme of the environment described how athletes' experienced an environment that facilitated positive and productive team and athlete development. Great coaches created an environment of open communication where the coach was approachable and accessible. Great coaches also eliminated distractions that might interfere with highly effective and efficient practices. The theme of the system described a "framework in which coaches implement their philosophies" (p. 47). This theme was described as the coach's established beliefs or philosophies that influence the coach's behavior. Expanding on this theme is difficult because it was described in less than one page and with only a few short quotes from participants. The theme of relationships described the care and respect the coach provided to athletes. Great coaches were described as having a professional relationship with athletes that was athlete centered and empowering. Coaches and athletes were both respectful and accountable to each other. Great coaches

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were described as having a personal relationship with athletes that was supportive and caring. Athletes described the great coach as honest and somebody they could relate with. The theme of coaching actions represented the various actions the coach directed to the athlete. Athletes described great coaches as great teachers, motivators, and communicators. Great coaches were also described as effectively preparing athletes for competition and making proper decisions regarding situational needs such as competition changes and athletes' needs. The theme of influences described the potential actions of the coach influencing "athletes' self-perceptions, development, and performance" (p. 68). While expanding on this theme is difficult because it was described in half a page, it speaks to the interaction between coaching actions and the potentially powerful effect the coach might have on an athlete.

The cognitive approach to studying coaching effectiveness has begun to enrich our understanding of what being an effective coach means and how one might become an effective coach. For example, Becker's (2007) study contributes to the literature on coaching effectiveness by furthering an understanding of critical factors athletes perceived in great coaches. Also, we now know that winning coaches plan extensively for practice and create opportunities for athletes to learn (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004; Jones, Armour, and Potrac, 2003). However, research has yet to examine the cognitive similarities and differences between losing and winning coaches. It is quite possible that losing coaches have knowledge similar to that of winning coaches and even think in the same ways. While we are beginning to learn more about why coaches use certain

behaviors, whether the coach's actions have the intended effect is also still unclear. It is entirely possibly for a coach to intentionally treat an athlete a certain way without achieving the desired outcome. As a whole, most of these studies have not considered how the coach's behavior affected the athletes, an important ingredient in the effectiveness equation. For example, in the study reviewed earlier (d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier, & Dubois, 1998), athletes perceived an effective interaction strategy to be to avoid conflicts with their coach and to seek other coaches for instruction, a questionable practice and outcome. If an athlete gets instruction, support, etc. from outside sources, is this coach then an effective coach? Once again, to begin to speak to this issue of athlete perceptions of coaching behaviors, another line of research has examined athlete preference and satisfaction with coaches.

Athlete Preference and Satisfaction

In order to better understand coaching effectiveness from the perspective of athletes, research has examined the coaching behaviors athletes prefer and their satisfaction with the coach. Chelladurai (1978) was a pioneer in researcher on athletes' preferred behaviors of their coach. Drawing upon leadership theory from business, he integrated three theories, the path-goal theory of leadership (Evans, 1970a; Evans, 1970b; Evans, 1974; House, 1971), the adaptive-reactive theory of leadership (Osborn and Hunt, 1975), and the discrepancy model of leadership (Yukl, 1971), to propose a multidimensional model of leadership in sport. Chelladurai hypothesized that the effectiveness of the coach, defined as athletes' satisfaction, was a function of athlete

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preferences and situational characteristics. He wanted to know if this model could inform coaching practice and if so, what behaviors coaches could use to maximize athletes' satisfaction.

Using this model Chelladurai and Saleh (1978, 1980) developed the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) in order to assess leadership preferences. They developed two versions of the LSS, one for athletes' preferences (subsequently called athlete preferred) of coach behavior and one for athletes' perceptions (subsequently called athlete perception) of actual coach behavior. While a brief review of the LSS is presented here, a thorough review of the development of the LSS and its psychometric properties can be found in Chelladurai and Saleh (1980). The researchers used questions from existing leadership scales in business and modified them to make them more specific to sport. Also, the questions were re-worded to measure athletes' preferences ("I prefer my coach to…") and perceptions of coach's behavior ("My coach…"). The questions assessed leadership (coach's behavior) on a five point scale that ranged from never to always. The researchers had three different groups [Group 1 = 80 male and 80 female physical education majors at Canadian universities, Group 2 = 102 physical education students (45 male and 57 female) at Canadian universities, Group 3 = 223 Canadian athletes at Canadian universities (gender not reported)] respond to these questions. Subsequent factor analysis resulted in a five factor structure with 40 total questions: 13 for training and instruction, nine for democratic behavior, five for autocratic behavior, eight for social support, and five for rewarding behavior or positive feedback. The amount of variance

explained by the three groups was: 41.2% for physical education students' preferences, 39.3% for athletes' preferences, and 55.8% for athletes' perceptions. These findings suggest that the final scale may not tap into all possible behaviors used by coaches. Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency, or reliability, was calculated for each of the three groups and ranged from 0.66 to 0.93, except on the subscale of autocratic behavior preferred by athletes which was 0.45. This finding indicates that all of the questions within each factor are closely related except for autocratic behavior.

Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) examined the effects of sex, task dependence, and task variability on athletes' preferred coaching behavior. In order to do this, they first categorized 24 common sports (football, baseball, and swimming) based on task characteristics of variability (closed or open) and dependence (independent or dependent). They defined variability as, "…the degree of environmental changes and the extent to which the athlete responds to these changes" and dependence as, "the extent to which the successful performance of a task depends upon the interaction with the other tasks in the team, and where the unit's success is dependent on the coordination of these tasks" (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978). They asked 160 (80 male and 80 female) physical education students enrolled at a Canadian university to chose a sport of their preference and then to complete the athletes' preference version of the LSS. The findings revealed that athletes in interdependent sports preferred more training and instruction than athletes in dependent sports, athletes in closed sports preferred the coach to use more training and instruction behavior than athletes in open sports, male athletes preferred more autocratic

behavior and social support than females, female athletes preferred more democratic behavior than male athletes, and males in closed sports preferred more social support than male athletes in open sports and all female athletes. They concluded that while athletes' preferences of coaches' behaviors were dependent upon the athlete and the sport, coaches should, "…focus on content factors, such as, training, social support, and rewarding the members" (p. 89).

Chelladurai and Carron (1983) wanted to learn if athletes' preferred coaching behavior varied by athletic maturity, defined as level of competition. Based on existing leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1977), they hypothesized that younger athletes would prefer more social support and less instruction, while older athletes would prefer less social support and more instruction. They had 262 basketball players, high school midget division (n=67), high school junior division (n=63), high school senior division (n=63), and university intercollegiate (n=69), complete the preferred version of the LSS. Contrary to their hypothesis, the findings indicated that younger athletes preferred less social support than older athletes, as seen in the following means for this factor: high school midget 2.88, high school junior 3.01, high school senior 3.09, and university 3.29. The findings on the factor of training and instruction demonstrated only partial support for their hypothesis as evidenced by the following means: high school midget 4.18, high school junior 4.11, high school senior 4.00 and university 4.23. With the exception of university athletes, younger athletes preferred more training and instruction.

Chelladurai (1984) examined the extent to which athlete satisfaction was related to the congruence between athletes' preferred coaching behaviors and athletes' perceptions of the behaviors the coach used. He also examined which would be a better predictor of athletes' satisfaction: these congruence scores, athletes' preferences, or perceptions of coaching behaviors. He had 196 varsity athletes (87 basketball players, 52 wrestlers, 57 track and field athletes) enrolled at Canadian universities respond to a satisfaction scale and to the athlete preferred and perceived versions of the LSS; preferred coach behavior and perceived coach behavior. The satisfaction scale tested athletes' satisfaction with individual performance, team performance, coach, and overall involvement. This 7 point scale ranged from very dissatisfied to very satisfied and consisted of a single question for each facet of satisfaction (i.e., How satisfied are you with your own performance?) The gender of the athletes was not reported.

The findings revealed that the congruence scores (athletes preferred behaviors minus athletes perceived behaviors) were better predictors of athlete satisfaction than athletes' preference or perception scores alone (Chelladurai, 1984). Satisfaction was highest for all athletes when they perceived their coach to use more training and instruction than they preferred (what might be labeled as positive incongruence). Basketball players also reported greater satisfaction when they perceived the coach to exceed preference in democratic behavior, social support and positive feedback. Basketball players reported less satisfaction with the coach when they perceived the coach to exceed preference in autocratic behavior. For example, basketball players'

congruence scores were negatively correlated -0.528 with training and instruction, but positively correlated 0.396 with autocratic behavior. This means that basketball players were more satisfied with the coach when they perceived the coach to provide more training and instruction than they preferred, but less satisfied with the coach when they perceived the coach to provide more autocratic behavior The only other statistically significant relationship occurred for wrestlers. Wrestlers reported greater satisfaction when they perceived the coach to exceed preference in social support.

Schliesman (1987), following Chelladurai, also wanted to know if athlete satisfaction was related to the congruence between athletes' preferred and perceived coach behavior. Testing Chelladurai's (1978) multidimensional model of leadership in sport, Schliesman hypothesized that the discrepancy in preferred and perceived coach behavior would be related to athlete satisfaction. He had 40 male university track and field athletes complete two versions (preferred and perceived) of the LSS and two questionnaires related to satisfaction. Both satisfaction questionnaires used a seven point scale that ranged from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. One questionnaire consisted of one question to assess satisfaction with leadership (coach), while the other consisted of five questions related to specific leader behaviors (satisfaction with each of the factors on the LSS). The findings yielded the following means for preferred coach behavior: training and instruction 4.25, positive feedback 4.32, democratic behavior 3.62, social support 3.34, and autocratic behavior 2.21. There existed a significant linear relationship between general satisfaction and the discrepancy scores for democratic behavior and

social support. That is, if athletes' preferred behavior and perceived behavior were close, then they reported more satisfaction with leadership (coach). There were no significant relationships between discrepancy scores for training and instruction, positive feedback, and autocratic behavior and satisfaction with leadership. Further, there existed a significant linear relationship between satisfaction with specific leader behavior and the discrepancy scores for training and instruction, social support, and positive feedback. That is, if athletes' preferred behavior and perceived behavior were close, then they reported greater levels of satisfaction specific to these factors. There were no significant relationships between discrepancy scores for democratic behavior and autocratic behavior and satisfaction.

Chelladurai, Imamura, Yamaguchi, Oinuma, and Miyauchi (1988) wanted to know if differences existed in athletes' preferences and perceptions of leader (coach) behavior and satisfaction with this behavior among different cultures. They had 115 Japanese and 100 Canadian male university athletes complete two versions of the LSS (preferred and perceived) and two questionnaires related to satisfaction. Both questionnaires measured satisfaction on a seven point scale that ranged from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. The questionnaire that measured satisfaction with leadership (coach) contained 10 items, while the questionnaire that measured satisfaction with personal outcomes (individual performance) contained three items. Both questionnaires were factor analyzed to ensure they were measuring what they purported. Factor loadings on satisfaction with leadership ranged from 0.80 to 0.87 and from 0.70 to 0.85 on

personal outcomes. Internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, of the LSS ranged from 0.55 to 0.91 in Canadian athletes and from 0.55 to 0.89 in Japanese athletes. The factor of autocratic behavior had the lowest reliability, less than 0.60, in both groups for both versions of the LSS. The results indicated that Japanese athletes preferred more autocratic behavior and social support while Canadian athletes preferred more behavior related to training and instruction. Compared to the Canadian athletes' perceptions, Japanese athletes perceived their coaches more frequently used autocratic behavior. However, Canadian athletes perceived their coaches more frequently used behavior related to training and instruction, democratic behavior, and positive feedback than Japanese athletes. Lastly, Canadian athletes reported greater satisfaction with leadership and personal outcome than Japanese athletes.

In a review of the literature related to leadership in sport, Chelladurai (1990) noted limitations of the LSS and of this line of research. He noted that the LSS measures preferred or perceived frequencies of leader behavior, but does not speak to the context of when and how the behaviors are used. Thus it cannot explain when a coach should be democratic or autocratic, nor, since most athletes report preferring positive feedback, when the coach should give this feedback. These questions remain unanswered by this line of research. Also, Chelladurai noted that the questions in the LSS came from business and might not be germane to sport. He recommended, "Future research could focus on generating items based on the experience and insights of both coaches and athletes" (p. 340). Chelladurai (citing Gordon, 1986; Summers, 1984) noted that research

had not always confirmed the five factor structure of the LSS. Other research (Jambor &

Zhang, 1997; Solomon, 1999; Zhang, Jensen, & Mann, 1996) has confirmed this critique

and supported Chelladurai's assertion that questions on the LSS might not be germane to

sport.

Because the LSS was the first leadership scale specific to sport, its use has been

pervasive. In general, research using the LSS suggests that athletes' satisfaction, both

general and specific to individual leader behaviors such as training and instruction, social

support, positive feedback, and democratic decision-making, is maximized when athlete's

perception and preference of coaching behavior is similar (Allen & Howe, 1998; Black &

Weiss, 1992; Dwyer & Fisher, 1990; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995). Related research

confirms athletes' reports of beneficial outcomes (e.g., greater levels of self-confidence

and satisfaction) with coaches who provide high levels of training and instruction,

positive reinforcement, and positive feedback (Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1979).

With regard to athletes' preferred behavior, most research using the LSS suggests

athletes' prefer, coaches to exhibit behavior related to (in order of preference): training

and instruction, positive feedback, social support, democratic behavior, and autocratic

behavior (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai et al. 1998; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995;

Schliesman, 1987; Serpa, Pataco, & Santos, 1991; Terry & Howe, 1984). However,

making broad generalizations regarding athletes' preferred coaching behavior is difficult

as preferences vary according to factors such as gender, age, competitive level, culture,

sport, and personality (Chelladurai, 1990). Solomon (1999) concisely summarized the

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potential problem of providing a clear understanding of athletes' preferred coaching behaviors: "In general, results demonstrate that athletes vary on preferred leadership behavior based on level of competition (high school, college), type of sport (interdependent, independent), type of task (open, closed), team status (starters, substitutes), performance (win-loss record) and gender" (p. 26).

What does knowing athletes' preference and how athletes are most satisfied have to do with effective coaching? According to this line of research, coaching (leader) effectiveness is about maximizing the satisfaction of athletes' (subordinates). Given what we know, if a coach wants to maximize athlete satisfaction, he or she should know what the athletes' prefer and give feedback that matches these preferences. Thus, based upon existing research, the coach should exhibit a high percentage of behaviors related to training and instruction, social support, and positive feedback. The coach should also take into consideration the situation, the age, gender, and experience of the athlete, as well as the sport, competitive level, and culture.

While knowing athletes' preferences may be of use to coaches and a guide to action, it is still unclear when, how, and if coaches should meet these preferences. While meeting their preferences would seem to be related to their satisfaction, does satisfaction relate to performance (i.e., what is the relationship between matching and not matching athletes' preference and their athletic performance?) And the performance of the team? Satisfying athletes' preferences may or may not equate with being an effective coach. Some athletes may be most satisfied when they are calling plays during games

(democratic behavior), but is that in the best interests of the coach or the team? Who would consider a coach effective if all of the athletes were satisfied, but every game was lost? Or what if the opposite occurred? That is, if all of the athletes were dissatisfied, but won every game, is this, then, an effective coach?

Limitations to Defining Coaching Effectiveness

The preceding review detailed three approaches, behavioral observation of winning coaches, the cognitive structures of elite or winning coaches, and athletes' preferences and satisfaction with coaches' behaviors, which have dominated research related to coaching effectiveness. Similar themes have were developedd from these approaches, and collectively, they have contributed to what is currently known and thought about good, effective coaching. For example, two of these overlapping themes suggest effective coaches teach athletes skills and concepts related to the sport and they praise and provide positive feedback to athletes. This research also suggests that athletes' prefer their coach to provide frequent amounts of these behaviors. Indeed, these findings have helped to define what it means to be an effective coach to date.

It may not be wise to assume that effective coaching occurs only in winning coaches. It may be that effective coaching abounds, but is overlooked if the team, or coach, is not a winner. Also, this research assumes that the coach (leader) is directly responsible for the team's winning record. However, the link between what coaches do and the subsequent effect it has on athletes remains unclear. Understanding why some

teams win and some teams lose is itself complex and multifaceted, "Conventional measures of performance (e.g., win/loss) are contaminated by several external factors (e.g., opponent's performance and referee's decisions)" (Chelladurai, 1990, p. 349). If it were really that easy to understand why a team wins, then everybody would be winning or at least be doing the same thing? Nevertheless, because it's quick and easy to look at wins and losses as a measure of effectiveness, this definition seems to be ubiquitous for defining effective coaching in the absence of a more comprehensive conceptualization. Perhaps a more effective coach does indeed win more games, but because winning and losing is an inherent consequence of sport, defining effective coaching as winning leads to a rather narrow definition of effective coaching.

In order to expand upon the current conceptualization of coaching effectiveness and due to the fundamental role athletes play in sport, it may be of use to understand how athletes' perceive effective coaching. What may help us to begin to discern that is to consider what happens to athletes when they experience an ineffective coach?

Poor Coaching

To date, poor coaching is a phenomenon that has received little attention in the research and literature on coaching. While no study has specifically examined poor coaching, what we know about poor coaching has been drawn from research on coaching in general or effective coaching that has also asked about poor performance or undesirable behaviors of coaches. For example, Stewart (1993) asked 87 students

enrolled in an introduction to coaching class to write a paper describing their favorite and least favorite coaches. No demographic data was provided about the students. He categorized the reported behaviors for favorite and least favorite coaches into three groups, cognitive, affective or physical behaviors. Cognitive behaviors were related to knowledge attributes such as teaching, affective behaviors to feelings such as motivation, and physical behaviors to quantifiable behaviors such as showing up late or stressing winning above everything. Stewart reported more than 45 least favorable coaching qualities such as the coach didn't know the game (cognitive), the coach showed favoritism or was selfish (affective), and the coach was lazy or degrading to players (physical). While the report of the study did not allow for assessing the rigor of the design and methods used in the conduct of the study, it nevertheless addressed student perceptions of least favorite coaches' behavior.

As part of a study on factors identified by athletes and coaches related to positive and/or negative performance at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, athletes identified the coach as a factor that negatively affected their performance. In order to understand why some Olympic athletes succeeded while others failed, Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, and Peterson (1999), developed an interview guide based on existing literature related to "peak performance". They conducted focus group interviews with two to four athletes from eight teams. A total of 11 male and 12 female Olympic athletes who had participated in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games were interviewed. With respect to how the coach had negatively influenced their performance, they cited having a negative

attitude toward the coach, poor athlete-coach communication, a lack of athlete-coach trust, a desire for more access to personal coaches, and a need for defining the coaches' roles more clearly. While athletes' desire for access to personal coaches may be idiosyncratic of Olympic athletes, other factors may be more indicative of poor coaching. The researchers noted that, "Athletes from one team in particular focused much of their discussion on coaching issues" (p. 389). While it appears that athletes were significantly negatively affected by the coach, more cannot be drawn from this study as the affect the coach had on athletes was not the primary focus of the study.

In a similar study, Gould et al., (2000) examined factors athletes perceived had positively and/or negatively affected their performance during the 1998 Winter Olympic Games. The researchers conducted in-depth, phone interviews with seven Olympic athletes and surveyed an additional 83 Olympic athletes who participated in the games. The gender of the athletes was not reported. These athletes perceived nine coaching actions to have negatively affected their performance: poor communication and information, poor personnel and selection decisions, equipment changes and problems, lack of support and encouragement, poor planning, tactical or strategic errors, lack of enthusiasm and effort, unfair treatment, and negative attitude. The researchers did present comparison findings of athletes' perceptions of how the coach positively affected their athlete performance:

In particular, coaches who were highly trusted by athletes, held realistic expectations for their athletes, and were totally committed to helping the athlete

succeed, were seen as having highly positive performance impacts. Coaches

lacking these characteristics were reported to have negative performance impacts.

(p. 4891)

Similar to previous research on Olympic athletes (Gould et al., 1999), it appears that the

athletes perceived that the coach directly affected their performance. While this study

speaks to negative coaching factors as identified by athletes, it does not speak to how

these factors influenced performance or what happened that caused athletes to identify

these as negatively factors.

As part of a study on coaches' and athletes' perceptions of coaching effectiveness

(Cross, 1995), some of the findings were related to poor coaching. Six Scottish national

hockey players, 1 male and 5 female, were interviewed about factors they perceived as

effective coaching. The interview protocol was not provided; nor was a detailed

description of the methods used for data collection. However, two players, 1 male and 1

female, identified several factors related to ineffective coaching, or what Cross called

"limiting factors". These limiting factors included lack of commitment by the coach, poor

coaching style, coach's lack of knowledge, coach's inability to motivate, and coach's

lack of intuition. Unfortunately, the researcher did not provide anything more than the list

and did not deal in depth with their answers or the context in which these behaviors were

limiting factors.

Johnson (1998) studied athletes' lived experience of being coached. He

interviewed eight, former NCAA Division I athletes: four males who played baseball,

diving, football and track, and four females who played soccer, softball, tennis, and volleyball. Three themes were developed from the data: there for me/not there for me, knowing and being known personally, and authority/power. The theme of there for me/not there for me spoke to how athletes experienced the coach as providing a facilitating or hindering role. When the coach was 'there for me' he or she was perceived as facilitative. Athletes talked about how the coach cared and guided them on and off the field. The four sub-themes that comprised that theme were: guidance/knowledge of what I should do, help/pull me through, confidence in me, and care about me. Athletes also talked about how the coach was 'not there for me' and was perceived as a hindrance. The two sub-themes that comprised that theme were: being abandoned and being disrupted. In describing this theme athletes talked about how the coach took away from their performance. Athletes spoke about how they wanted and expected instructional feedback, but didn't receive any, and how they felt abandoned when the coach would lie to them leaving them to question whether or not to trust the coach anymore. When athletes were disrupted by the coach, they talked about how they lost focus and concentration on performing a skill. A typical experience would be the coach yelling or screaming at an athlete that in turn would cause the athlete to focus on the coach rather than the upcoming play or event.

The theme, knowing and being known personally, was about the relationship athletes developed with their coach. Athletes talked about how the coach was open-minded, a good communicator, and developed trust which subsequently led to a strong

coach-athlete relationship. They also talked about how the coach seemed to know each athlete so well that he or she knew how to motivate them individually. However, when the coach was irregular or erratic athletes became frustrated and even depressed. The coach's unpredictability caused athletes to question whether or not to believe their coach or even talk to him or her. The subthemes that comprised this theme were: open-mindedness/communication/trust, coach knows how to motivate me, knowing my coach personally, and not knowing my coach (unpredictable).

The theme authority/power was about the myriad of ways athletes perceived the coach's power was facilitative or restrictive. Athletes talked about how coaches overstepped their role in an attempt to control the athlete's behavior, but also how this power guided athletes during uncertain and difficult times. Athletes also had to go against convention at times in order to challenge the coach's power. The three subthemes that comprised this theme were: authority/power imposed upon me, authority as a source of guidance, and confronting the coach as the authority.

This limited research related to poor coaching has provided some sense of the characteristics athletes perceive to be detrimental to performance or development. Since poor coaching was not the focus of these studies, most of them presented their findings about poor coaching in the form of a 'laundry list' of poor coaching qualities or behaviors. Presenting such a list is severely limited because it does not speak to the context and depth of how or why athletes' experienced those behaviors as being poor. From these studies we can not learn when or how a coach loses an athlete's trust, or why

athletes' perceive their coaches to be unable to motivate them. In order to more fully describe the phenomenon of poor coaching in terms of the context in which it occurred, a suitable way to get at this would be to study athletes' lived experience of poor coaching.

Existential Phenomenology

Existential phenomenology is a contemporary qualitative research method that seeks to describe human beings' lived experience (Giorgi, 1985; Van Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994, Thomas & Pollio, 2002; Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks, 'What is this or that kind of experience like?" (Van Manen, p. 9). As a qualitative research method, existential phenomenology was developed from the philosophies of both existentialism and phenomenology. Having grown out of a rich tradition in philosophy, existential phenomenological research is rooted in ontological and epistemological assumptions. The ontological assumption underlying existential phenomenology is that human beings must exist prior to the essence of a lived experience. Furthermore, the essence of a lived experience does not exist outside of the person who had experienced it. Existential phenomenology assumes that all meaning is derived from the "life-world" of humans, which is the everyday life in which people acquire lived experiences (Van Manen). In terms of epistemology, existential phenomenology explores human consciousness to identify and describe what human beings' know about a phenomenon (Thomas & Pollio). To get at this

consciousness, existential phenomenology explores what humans were aware of, or conscious of, during a lived experience.

Because of the rich, diverse, and often obscure history of existential phenomenology as both a philosophy and method (Moran, 2000), several approaches or 'schools' of doing phenomenological research have were developedd (e.g., Creswell, 1998; Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Thompson & Pollio, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). While all of these approaches study lived experience, each has unique and distinguishing characteristics that affect the specific methodology used. This study follows the methodology developed by Thomas and Pollio (2002) and Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, (1997) who cite the existential phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2003) as the inspiration for their conceptual framework. A unique characteristic of this methodology is the role of perception, which contains a figure/ground relationship, as noted in Gestalt psychology. The figure/ground concept posits that human beings perceive some things (figures), while other things drop back and serve as the ground from which these figures were developed. The figures in the figure/ground relationship represent those meaningful aspects that stood out from the ground and that the perceiver was most aware of during a lived experience. Four major existential grounds (time, body or self, other or social relationships, and space or world) serve as the backdrop from which figures were developed (Thomas & Pollio; Pollio, Henley and Thompson).

The methodology of existential phenomenology has been shaped by these

assumptions in several ways. After deciding on a phenomenon to be studied, the researcher engages in a bracketing interview to become more aware of any biases or preconceptions he or she has before data is collected. Again, the aim of existential phenomenology is to understand the lived experience of some phenomenon, not the researcher's perceptions. Participants selected need to be able to meet two criteria: (1) they have experienced the phenomenon being studied, and (2) they are able to clearly articulate and describe their lived experience (Polkinghorne, 1989).

In order to allow participants to speak freely and fully about their lived experience, existential phenomenology does not use existing theories or frameworks to guide in the development of interview questions. To do so would be to lead, direct, and assume what the experience was like for participants, which ultimately would restrict the essence of the experience from emerging. The interview with participants is guided by a single question, a grand tour question (Pollio, Henley, and Thompson), carefully formulated to allow the participants to describe their lived experience. Using the one question, and possible follow up probes to enhance the depth and breadth of the participants' answers, participants are engaged in an extended, in-depth, open-ended interview. During the interview, the researcher makes every effort to avoid shaping or leading the participant's response. Lengthy interview protocols are specifically not used because the researcher wants to understand what was figural for the participant during their lived experience. To do otherwise would be to impose upon the participant's lived experience and the findings would be directed and distorted by the researcher's

preconceptions and biases. Existential phenomenological research is interested in getting at the 'naïve' description of participants, the participants' recollection of a lived experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). The participant's response should focus on what they were aware of (consciousness) during the experience rather than having them analyze or explain their experience. This rests on the methodological assumption that the best way to get at the lived experience is for the participant to describe what they were aware of during the experience (what was figural), not their thoughts or explanations after the experience occurred. This is important because existential phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experience as it occurred, rather than human's conceptualizations, reflections, categorizations, abstractions, theories, or opinions of that experience (Van Manen, 1990). A good interviewer will thus help to keep the participant's response focused on what he or she was aware of during the experience without leading the participant's response (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Accordingly, the interview unfolds from the participant's response and the interviewer will inquire only into items brought up by the participant. A sample interview question might be, "Tell me about a specific time you experienced (phenomenon)?"

The concept of figure/ground returns at the end of the study when the results are presented. Like other qualitative research, the results are presented as themes. However, unique to existential phenomenology, the themes symbolize the meaning, or essence, of the lived experience. As it relates to figure/ground, the themes (figures) speak to those aspects that participants' were aware of during the lived experience (Thomas & Pollio).

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Ground represents the backdrop from which these figures (themes) were developedd. Both play a role in reporting the lived experience of the participants.

The existential phenomenological method was most appropriate for use in the conduct of this study for several reasons. This method is designed to get at how a phenomenon is experienced, and is thus uniquely appropriate to getting at how athletes have experienced poor coaching without imposing a framework that might restrict their rich description. The meaning of what it means to be a poor coach were developedd form the perspective of those whom have experienced it. Also, by understanding how athletes' experienced poor coaching, the findings provide insight into how the coach's behavior affects athletes. In turn, coaches may use this information to modify their behavior for the purpose of becoming a more effective coach.

CHAPTER 3

Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to explore collegiate, professional and semi-professional athletes' perceptions of poor coaching. This chapter describes the methods and procedures used in the conduct of the study. It is organized into the following sections: research design, population, method, phenomenological reduction, procedures, data collection, data analysis, and dependability and trustworthiness.

Research Design

Existential phenomenology was the research design chosen for the conduct of the study. The design allowed for describing the essence of an experience in its entirety (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989) and for determining "what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Since the intent of the study was to get at the essence of the experience of poor coaching as experienced by athletes, it was the most appropriate design for accomplishing that intent. Further, existential phenomenology has proven to be an effective design in the past for studies of coaching (Becker, 2007; Johnson, 1998), thus establishing a precedent for its use in this context.

Sample

Participants in this study were limited to a convenience sample of 16 current or former athletes who have played at the collegiate, professional, or semi-professional level and met the criteria for participants in an existential phenomenological study. These criteria included: having had "the experience that is the topic of the research" and having "the capacity to provide full and sensitive descriptions of the experience under examination and to generate a full range of variation in the set of descriptions to be used in analyzing a phenomenon" (Polkinghorne, 1989, pp. 47-48). Since the purpose of phenomenological research is to "describe the structure of an experience, not…the characteristics of a group" (Polkinghome, p. 48), participation was open to athletes regardless of age, sport, or gender, and their experience of poor coaching was not limited to any particular level of sport. Nevertheless, in an attempt to account for the variety of experiences of poor coaching, the researcher invited both male and female athletes representing a variety of sports and ages to participate. A composite description of the athletes who participated in this study, which includes ethnicity, highest competitive sport, gender, highest competitive level, and the number of poor coaches experienced, is presented in the next chapter (see p. 61).

Participants who were current collegiate athletes were drawn from a large, public university located in the Southeastern United States. Athletes from this university compete at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I level. A senior administrator at this university granted written permission to approach these

athletes about participating in the study.

Participants who were professional or semi-professional athletes or former NCAA Division I athletes were drawn from existing relationships with the researcher. These participants met the same criteria for inclusion as the current athletes. The procedures used by the researcher to obtain the voluntary participation of these athletes are detailed in the section on procedures.

Method

Intensive one-on-one interviews were used to explore athletes' perceptions of poor coaching. Following guidelines recommended for the conduct of phenomenological studies, and to avoid leading participants, one unstructured, open ended question was asked of the participants (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). An underlying assumption of this approach is that "All questions flow from the dialogue as it unfolds rather than having been determined in advance…. (and) that central or personally relevant issues will were developed repeatedly throughout the dialogue" (Pollio et al., p. 30). Consistent with these strictures of existential phenomenology and heeding the admonition of Maxwell (1996) that "research questions should have a clear relationship to the purposes of your study" (p. 6), each participant was asked the following question: "Tell me about a specific time you experienced poor coaching."

After participants had the opportunity to respond fully to that question, probing questions were used to further explore the participants' experience of poor coaching, to

gain additional details about the experience, and to clarify the participants' responses. Examples of probes included: "Have you had any other experiences of poor coaching that stand out"? "Can you tell me more about these experiences"?

Phenomenological Reduction

Two types of phenomenological reduction were used to help the researcher become more aware of his own biases. The first type involved the writing of what is called a 'self-interest statement' that explicates how he became interested in the topic of poor coaching (Appendix A). The second involved a bracketing interview before beginning the study. A trained researcher in phenomenology conducted a bracketing interview with the researcher one month before any data were collected from athletes. Husserl (1962) used the word *bracket* in the way it is used in mathematics, to withhold or to remove from context. By bracketing one's experiences and biases, the essence of athletes' experience of poor coaching that were developeds from the participants can be seen with greater clarity, less fettered by the researcher's experience. Throughout the analysis of data on athletes' experience of poor coaching, the researcher compared those findings with those derived from the bracketing interview to ensure that researcher bias was not affecting the analysis. In this way, bracketing helped to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings by having the researcher go back to the findings of his bracketing interview to compare them with participants' responses and ensure that the themes that were identified derived from participants' perceptions rather than from the

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researcher's biases. The themes derived from the bracketing interview are presented in Appendix B so that the reader is able to compare the findings from the bracketing interview with those from the participants.

Procedures

After securing IRB approval from the University of Tennessee and the participating university to conduct the study, the researcher asked current or former athletes who played at the collegiate, professional, or semi-professional level to participate in the study. When approaching prospective participants the researcher explained that the purpose of this study was to explore athletes' experience of poor coaching. Prospects were informed that in participating they would be helping to add to the research on coaching effectiveness and possibly helping coaches avoid poor coaching behaviors. All prospective participants were informed that their responses would be confidential through the use of pseudonyms and by changing any identifying comments upon transcription of data, and that they were free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. The researcher also answered any questions that participants had about the study and their participation in it. Lastly, prospective participants were informed that any written reports of the study would use pseudonyms and any identifying comments would be changed.

In order to address the potential for current athletes to feel coerced to participate by the researcher because he was employed as an assistant strength and conditioning

coach at the same university, he informed potential participants that their participation

was strictly voluntary and that there would be no consequences if they decided not to

participate. If any prospective participants indicated in the slightest way that they were

not interested in participating, or had any reservations about participating, the researcher

immediately stopped attempting to get them to participate. Furthermore, the researcher

informed all prospective participants that they needed to have a genuine interest in

participating because it was important for them to provide open and candid responses for

the study to be a meaningful inquiry.

Upon agreeing to participate, each participant signed an informed consent form

(Appendix C) acknowledging their voluntary participation. The form described the

purpose of the study, provided the researcher's contact information, and detailed how the

study would be conducted and the data handled. It also reiterated that participation was

voluntary, and that the participant could withdraw at any time without penalty. Further, it

explained that confidentiality would be maintained by giving participants pseudonyms

and by changing any identifying factors that could link them to the study.

Individual interviews served as the only source of data. The interview began with

a phenomenologically oriented question (open-ended and non-leading), "Tell me about a

specific time you experienced poor coaching?" Follow up questions probed the

participant's reported experience.

After the bracketing interview and subsequent analysis, one athlete was randomly

chosen to be interviewed. The researcher transcribed and then read this interview as an

initial analysis of the data. The researcher then arranged a meeting with a phenomenological research group to analyze the data and to help with the researcher's interpretation of data. The purpose and description of how the phenomenological research group was used can be found below in the section on data analysis. After the group analyzed this data, the researcher conducted 15 more interviews, one at a time, following the guidelines described earlier. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher within two days of its completion.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Data were collected via phenomenological interviews conducted by the researcher. Each interview was audio taped, lasted between 30-85 minutes, and occurred in a location and at a time chosen by the participant. The researcher determined experiential saturation, the point at which participants did not offer any new perceptions (Merriam, 1998), occurred at 16 interviews. At this point the collection of data was considered complete.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Because maintaining the exactness and integrity of participants' language was essential, the researcher transcribed data verbatim to keep intact the participants' non-verbal communication, nuances, and language. However, superfluous utterances, such as 'uh' or 'um' were deleted from the transcripts if they appeared irrelevant to the response.

Data were analyzed using existential phenomenological methods described by Pollio et al. (1997). This type of phenomenological data analysis is similar to what qualitative researchers refer to as the "constant comparative method" (Merriam, 1998). Analysis began by the researcher reading the first interview transcript to get a sense of the data. The researcher then took the first interview transcript to a research group trained in phenomenology or qualitative research for analysis. Prior to beginning analysis, all members of the group signed a pledge of confidentiality which stated that they would not share the information contained in the transcript with anyone outside the research group (Appendix D). Group interpretation of the transcript involved reading, analyzing, and discussing the transcript. A member of the group, other than the researcher, led the group line by line through the transcript as the group made comments and analyzed the data. At points throughout the analysis and at the end of the analysis, the researcher asked questions of the group and vice versa. The phenomenological group provided a critical rather than a consensual interpretation of the findings. All transcripts used during group analysis were collected at the end of the meeting.

After the initial group analysis, the researcher analyzed the remaining transcripts one at a time. Each transcript was read individually to get a sense of the data. The first iteration of data analysis involved drawing out the smallest meaningful units, known as *meaning units*, of each participant's response. For example, one of these meaning units was, "I just feel like she [coach] really didn't know me." During the second iteration, which involved clustering similar meaning units into sub-themes, this meaning unit was

categorized under the subtheme 'not there for athlete'. During the third and final iteration of data analysis, all sub-themes were compared and clustered across all transcripts to create the themes characterizing the participants' experiences of poor coaching. The sub-theme of 'not there for athlete' was categorized under the larger of theme 'uncaring'. The researcher constructed a code map to show how the analytic themes were derived through three iterations of coding (Appendix E) (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). As a complement to the code map and to provide further transparency, the researcher constructed a table linking the participants' comments to the themes derived from those comments (Appendix F). After the researcher completed this third iteration, he took the results back to the phenomenological research group for their reflection on the analysis. The researcher presented his analysis of the data to the group while they listened, made notes, and then questioned the researcher about the themes. Based on the group's feedback, no changes were made to the content of the themes, but the thematic structure was modified to use consistent language.

After all of the transcripts were analyzed, a process known as *member checking* was implemented (Maxwell, 1996). Participants were sent a three page summary that described each theme and its corresponding sub-themes, and included a quote that best exemplified that particular sub-theme. As stated earlier, any identifying information was changed or removed, and a pseudonym was used. This summary permitted each participant to review the findings and to modify, dispute, or corroborate those findings. Participants had one week to review the findings and provide written feedback to the

researcher. While all participants were encouraged to participate in member checking, only two participants provided written feedback. That feedback confirmed the researcher's interpretation of the data and the corresponding themes.

Dependability and Trustworthiness

Several procedures were incorporated into the study to enhance its dependability and trustworthiness. An audit trail was maintained to enhance the dependability of the study (Appendix G). This audit trail describes, in detail, the procedures and issues related to the collection and analysis of the data to clarify how the study was conducted and the data handled. The bracketing interview conducted with the researcher was included in the report of the study to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. In addition, the researcher transcribed all interviews to help him become more familiar with the data during analysis and more thoroughly account for the participants' responses, such as pauses and other non-verbal communication. This step provided another opportunity for the researcher to analyze what the experience was like for the participants, thus helping to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings by improving the researchers' ability to more fully and accurately describe and interpret the phenomenon (Maxwell, 1996). To address the question of the trustworthiness of data collected from participants with whom the researcher had a relationship (Hatch, 2002), the researcher emphasized that participation was voluntary and that the researcher was not seeking any particular response. Furthermore, based on previous interviews conducted with athletes, the nature

of the topic, and the participants' long and detailed responses, there was no reason to believe that the participants' responses were not honest and forthright.

To enhance the methodological rigor of this study, several steps were taken. First, in-depth, unstructured interviews were used to account for the participants' experience of poor coaching. This step enhanced trustworthiness by allowing the essence of poor coaching to be described by the participants, rather than being a product of potentially leading interview questions that might have directed participants' responses. Second, the researcher constructed a code map showing the iterations of analytic coding and a table of the participants' comments linked to the analytic themes. These steps enhanced trustworthiness by addressing how the researcher interpreted and categorized the data. By making the data analysis public, challenges to the interpretations may be made. Third, transcripts with identifying information were removed and stored for later reference in the event interpretations are challenged. Fourth, having participants check the findings ensured that the participants' perspectives were represented accurately. Fifth, using a research group early in the data analysis helped ensure that the findings were reflective of the participants' responses by improving the researcher's interpretive gaze and development of themes, as well removing researcher bias.

Most importantly, the research findings include a rich, thick description of the experience of being poorly coached. According to Pollio et al. (1997), if such a description is sufficiently rich and thick, then the connection between the participants' experience and the research findings should be obvious. "Plausibility refers to whether

the reader is able to see the relation between the interpretation and the data" (p. 54).

Quotes from participants demonstrated the connection between the purpose and the

findings. The researcher allowed the data to speak for itself, coinciding with the zeitgeist

of phenomenology to 'return to the things themselves'.

CHAPTER 4

Findings of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore collegiate, professional and semi-professional athletes' perceptions of poor coaching. Using phenomenological interviews, 16 former or current collegiate, professional and semi-professional athletes were asked to talk about a specific time they experienced being poorly coached. Data were analyzed using the constant comparison method which led to the development of themes that characterized the athletes' experience of poor coaching.

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. First, descriptions of the athletes who participated in the study and the coaches they talked about are presented. The researcher intentionally chose not to link these two pieces of information in order to protect the identity of both the athletes and the coaches. In all cases, pseudonyms were used and possible identifying characteristics (i.e., school name, opponent's name, sport, and hometown) have been changed. Then, the themes that characterized the athletes' experience of poor coaching are identified and explained.

Description of Athletes and Coaches

A total of 16 athletes participated in the study, seven of whom were currently playing while nine had withdrawn or retired from sport prior to the interview. With respect to gender, 11 of the athletes were male while five were female. All of the athletes were less than 30 years old, but older than 18. Twelve of the athletes identified

themselves as Caucasian while four identified themselves as African-American. A composite description of the athletes is presented in Table 4.0.

Although athletes from a variety of different sports were represented (i.e., baseball, basketball, football, softball and soccer), the highest level of competitive sports identified in the table may not correspond with the poor coach they spoke about. The column heading 'number of poor coaches experienced' represents the number of different coaches athletes talked about during their interview. For example, Buck talked about five different coaches while Mary talked about one. Ten of the athletes talked about more than one poor coach.

While athletes described 33 poor coaches, because some of the athletes described the same coach, only 26 different coaches were identified. Of those 26 poor coaches, 17 were head coaches, and nine were assistant coaches. As shown in Table 4.1, athletes perceived poor coaching at a variety of competitive levels (e.g., summer teenage traveling team, middle school, high school, Junior College, NCAA Division I, NFL, MLB) and sports (5).

Table 4.0

Description of Athletes Participating in the Study

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Highest Competitive Sport	Gender	Highest Competitive Level	Number of Poor Coaches Experienced
Dan	Caucasian	Baseball	Male	Minor League	2
Buck	Caucasian	Baseball	Male	Minor League	5
Charlie	Caucasian	Baseball	Male	NCAA D1	1
Zeid	Caucasian	Baseball	Male	NCAA D1	4
Dominick	Caucasian	Basketball	Male	NCAA D1	2
Jim	Caucasian	Basketball	Male	NCAA D1	1
Mickey	Caucasian	Basketball	Male	NCAA D1	1
Damien	African-American	Football	Male	NFL	2
Adam	African-American	Football	Male	NCAA D1	4
Jack	Caucasian	Football	Male	NCAA D1	1
Ron	African-American	Football	Male	NCAA D1	1
Annie	Caucasian	Soccer	Female	NCAA D1	2
Mary	Caucasian	Soccer	Female	NCAA D1	1
Amanda	Caucasian	Softball	Female	NCAA D1	2
Daisy	Caucasian	Softball	Female	NCAA D1	2
Lydia	African-American	Softball	Female	NCAA D1	2

Table 4.1

Description of Poor Coaches Referenced in Interviews

Gender	Coach's Title	Sport	Level Where Coach was Experienced	Number of Athletes who Referenced Coach
Male	Head	Baseball	NCAA Division I	4
Male	Assistant	Baseball	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Head	Baseball	Minor League Baseball	1
Male	Head	Baseball	High School	1
Male	Head	Baseball	High School	1
Male	Head	Baseball	Summer Teenage Traveling Team	1
Male	Assistant	Baseball	Junior College	1
Male	Head	Basketball	NCAA Division I	2
Male	Assistant	Basketball	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Head	Basketball	High School	1
Male	Head	Basketball	High School	1
Male	Head	Basketball	High School	1
Male	Head	Basketball	Middle School	1
Male	Head	Football	NFL	1
Male	Assistant	Football	NFL	1
Male	Head	Football	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Assistant	Football	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Assistant	Football	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Assistant	Football	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Assistant	Football	NCAA Division I	1
Female	Head	Soccer	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Head	Soccer	NCAA Division I	1
Male	Head	Soccer	Summer Teenage Traveling Team	1
Female	Head	Softball	NCAA Division I	3
Male	Head	Softball	NCAA Division I	3

Athletes' Experience of Poor Coaching

"Any bad quality you could think about a person, I feel like they have it.

Between the two of them [coaches], they have it." Daisy

While Daisy's comment accurately reflects the essence of athletes' experience of poor coaching, the richness of the findings rests in the depth of the athletes' responses and in the rich description of poor coaches they provided. The 16 athletes spoke passionately, and at length, about their experience of poor coaching. Many of them saw the interview as therapeutic and commented that it was the first time they had gotten to tell their side of the story. In contrast to their experience of poor coaches, they saw the interview as a caring and humanizing experience. Many of the athletes thanked the interviewer for asking them to participate and were genuinely interested in hearing about the findings of the study.

In regard to the findings as a whole, all of the athletes said they felt frustrated or confused with poor coaches. They commonly used the words *we*, *us*, *team*, or *people,* instead of *I* or *me,* seemingly because they saw it as a shared experience with their teammates. Athletes appeared to be struggling inside to understand why the poor coach they spoke about treated them so poorly and why the coach would think this was an effective way to behave. They indicated that they knew what the coach's intentions were (e.g., motivating and teaching), however, it was the methods the coach used to achieve these goals that were perceived as unnecessary and even harmful. The subtitle of the study, "Coach kept people from really reaching their full potential as a person or as a player", is a slightly modified quote from an athlete speaking about the frustration and

disappointment experienced from poor coaching. The athletes earnestly believed they could have been better with a different coach. Furthermore, they felt they had been cheated of opportunities, both athletically and personally. Therefore, the poor coach, as experienced by athletes, was perceived to have directly and significantly inhibited their development as athletes in particular and humans in general.

In describing their experience of poor coaching, all of the athletes would compare the poor coach with a better coach. Athletes developed some conception of the better coach from: a previous experience with a better coach, their friends' experiences of a better coach, or merely from an intuitive sense of what a better coach would do. Thus, the *better coach* served as the ground for athletes' perceptions of poor coaching [see p. 45 for fan explanation of figure/ground]. Poor coaching stood out for them because they had a mental model of a good coach, thus they knew when they were being poorly coached. The ground of the better coach is evident, or at least implicit, in many of the quotes the athletes used. Zeid captured the way in which the better coach was the ground against which the athletes perceived the poor coach:

> I think I've been blessed with being with some really good coaches since high
> school… you always had a chance to go talk with them regardless of whether you
> wanted to hear what they said or not, but you never had a chance with the guy
> [poor coach] that I'm speaking of. To really sit down and talk to or anything. You
> had *zero* interaction.

Zeid developed his expectation of what the coach should have done from previous

experiences with better coaches. Many athletes compared the effects of the poor coach versus a better coach:

> Good coaches put in the effort which makes you want to put in the effort and I've had several coaches that have put in good effort and then I've had several that haven't. And the ones that haven't are the ones that I don't talk to today. And the ones that have, I still keep in touch with and you actually build a relationship with somebody like that and I guess that relationship is a big part of how you want to perform for that person (Buck).

Mary too compared the disparate treatment of the poor coach with previous, better coaches, "I never had a coach treat me like that before. Usually if you're injured they [coaches] give you a little bit more attention because they understand that you're upset, you can't play." Athletes frequently made recommendations about what the poor coach should have done based on their expectation of what the better coach would have done.

Five major themes were developed from the participants' experience of poor coaching: *Not Teaching, Uncaring, Unfair, Inhibiting, and Coping.* The first four themes described how athletes experienced the coach as poor, while the theme of *Coping* described how athletes dealt with being poorly coached. Each of the five themes is detailed below.

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Theme 1: Not Teaching

"I can't remember a time that I felt like I was being coached by him...the lack of his

coaching was his poor coaching…he didn't do anything." Jim

As reflected in Jim's quote above, when athletes discussed not being coached,

which each of them did, they were referring to the coach not teaching them. As a result,

the athletes felt they did not learn, as captured succinctly by Dan. "I didn't learn anything

from that man, ever, ever." All of the athletes talked about times when they perceived

their coach to be a poor teacher. The three consistent ways they perceived their coach to

be a poor teacher were by *not instructing* them on the skills related to the sport, by *not*

individualizing their teaching to correspond with the unique needs of each athlete, and by

not being *knowledgeable* about the skills and qualities needed to teach effectively.

Not Instructing. Athletes reported several ways the coach was a poor teacher

including not being present for practices or meetings. Because the coach wasn't there,

literally, athletes felt they had to learn on their own or from a teammate. On the occasions

the coach was there for practice, athletes described the coach as providing useless

instruction or ineffectual feedback related to the skill being practiced. At best, the coach's

instruction was perceived as simplistic and inadequate. Charlie resented that he "never

got instruction on how to fix it [hitting]." Buck described something similar:

I really don't know of any instruction that he did pretty much besides giving you a

little hint of advice here and there…'Keep your hands back,' 'Keep your hands

up,' 'Use your hands.' I mean something like that, but there's a lot more to hitting

than to just doing stuff like that…he didn't tell you at all or instruct you at all on

what to do or how to do it.

Damien described how his football coach was teaching him the wrong technique:

And so, he's teaching me something that has nothing to do with running routes

and it's just [pause] and I get out there and try to do it his way and the quarterback

is looking at me like, "What the hell are you doing?" And I'm just like [frustrated

look]. So. And it's like everything he taught me and everything he's teaching me

[is] like wrong, cause it's getting me killed.

Beyond offering low quality instruction or no instruction at all, poor coaches did

not respond to athletes' instructional needs and requests. Feeling frustrated by the lack of

useful instruction they received, athletes reported seeking out their coach for additional

help only to be met with disappointment. Their coaches discouraged and prevented them

from asking questions and made them feel uncomfortable about approaching them with

questions. Daisy explained:

Like on the field like, if I'm hitting on the field and ask her a question she's like,

'Well what do you think you're doing wrong?' And I'm like, 'Um, I don't know.'

It's like if I knew what I was doing wrong, don't you think I'd fix it? Is what I

wanted to say. But I'm like, um, just say something, 'Oh, I'm pulling my hips

out.' And she's like, '*Noooo.'* Like [she] just tries to make you feel stupid

[be]cause you don't know what you did wrong so if she would just tell me then I

can fix that, but of course she won't.

Athletes also noted that the timing of the coach's instruction was poor and inappropriate. They perceived that the only time they received instruction from the poor coach was when they were struggling or performing poorly. At those times, however, they neither appreciated nor respected their coach for trying to come to their rescue. Instead, they felt the coach should have been working with them earlier to prevent problems from happening in the first place.

Athletes talked about a myriad of skills their coach didn't teach including physical, mental, and life skills. As Buck described it:

Just all the coaches I've been through, pretty much every one of them, has said that baseball is 90% mental, at least 90% mental. And this guy, he didn't ever say anything about the mental game....He was (also) a bad coach in the fact that he didn't coach the new ways of playing.

Similarly, while expecting their coaches to teach them life skills, some athletes found poor coaches to have failed at this:

He would talk about all these [pause] trying to teach you life lessons and stuff like that, become more ah, more respectful, more responsible, goal oriented, and then we see him out in the community and he's cheating on his wife, he's getting divorced, he's getting DUIs and it just…a coach to me should be someone who is a role model and if you're gonna ask your players to do something you should be held accountable in the same instances. (Mickey)

Athletes also perceived poor coaches to be inept at instructing them during games.

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Dominick reported that "when it came down to pressure situations…(and) he had to make a tough decision on his own,… they usually weren't the right decisions to make". Zeid discussed how his coach always made the wrong decision during baseball games:

> He would call bunts at awful times and take chances when he didn't need to take chances or steal when it was a bad time to steal. He was notorious for being very conservative with sending guys home, but the times he did need to be conservative he'd always shoot himself in the foot cause he would send a guy home and they'd get out.

Similarly, Jim perceived his coach to be unable to determine what strategies to use. "Oh, we flip flopped offenses, we flip flopped defenses… when it comes down to game time he's the coach, he's the one calling the plays, but he really didn't have *a clue*."

Not Individualized. Poor coaches were described as using identical motivational or instructional strategies for all athletes. Athletes perceived this approach as neglecting the individual needs of each athlete. While they conceded that the coach's method for teaching or motivating might be effective for a teammate, it was not necessarily best suited for them. Amanda shared her experience of the coach trying to have everybody hit the same way:

> He [coach] just, the whole time thinks everybody should hit the same way. He never adjusts to anybody's technique at all or if somebody is hitting well, but if it's not the way he wants it, he doesn't let it go. He basically rebuilt everybody and it doesn't work for everybody. Same with me. He totally changed my swing

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and I was hitting better my old way and I just don't understand that.

While athletes thought they "knew" what their coach was trying to do (intention), what the coach did was still perceived as unnecessary and even detrimental. Lydia described how her coach's language was the wrong approach for attempting to motivate her:

> Well, we take a lot of personality tests and just things like that about what motivates you and we spend all this time as a team filling them out and then we turn them in and then nothing changes about the way he tries to motivate me or the way he approaches me when I make a mistake or the way he talks to me when I'm angry or when I'm upset. He'll …talk to everybody the same and you can't do that. And so, he may be attempting to get a certain reaction out of me but he'll come at me the wrong way and it just makes things worse.

Resentment and lack of respect resulted when coaches were perceived to miss the mark on how to best to teach each athlete. Several athletes shared what the coach could have said without sacrificing the coach's goal. Ron reported that a better approach would have been for his coach to have just "talk(ed) to him" and simply said "Pick it up, Ron." He added, "some players need…cussing you out type stuff…but I'm not that type of player." Athletes wanted the coach to let them know what to do without being told they were stupid or lazy, words they reported the poor coaches used frequently in talking to them.

Unknowledgeable. Lastly, athletes perceived the poor coach as lacking the requisite knowledge and understanding of the sport, as well as not putting forth sufficient effort. Poor coaches were thus perceived as lazy and unprepared to coach. In describing why the coach had failed as a teacher, a number of athletes attributed the coach's lack of knowledge to his/her lack of playing experience. Dan's perceptions echoed those of many of the athletes:

> A coach that has experienced that grind and walked a mile in your shoes is far more capable of understanding where you're coming from…If you've never been there and done it, and all you've every done is coached, you can't explain it and you can't effectively teach what needs to be done…And he lost all credibility when he said, 'I throw batting practice every day.' And I said you are going to equate throwing batting practice to me going out and pitching against professional hitters? You are going to put those two on the same page? Tell me what Smithy, when you've been there and done what I've done and you've felt what I felt, then we will have this conversation, and don't you ever question my manhood again.

Adam put it another way. "He was a quarterback's coach and he never played the running back position and it's hard for somebody to know the intricacies of a running back position when you never played it and you're just looking at it with a naked eye."

Being unknowledgeable was more than just not knowing one or two aspects of the game. Being unknowledgeable made the coach's deficiencies stand out and caused the athletes to believe their coach to be inferior and incompetent. Consistently, athletes

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perceived poor coaches to be unknowledgeable about the technical and tactical skills of sport and in their ability to empathize with athletes. They were also described as not knowing how much effort was required to succeed or with becoming complacent which led to less than optimal results. Several of the athletes also described their coach as being too old and of failing to change with the times. While Buck conceded that his coach had good communication skills and methods for achieving athlete learning, he perceived his coach lacked up-to-date knowledge of hitting and even tried to change his swing to mirror the "split hands" approach of "Mickey Mantle." For Buck, the coach taught the material well, but was teaching the wrong material. This was unlike most of the athletes who perceived their coach to be poor at both.

Theme 2: Uncaring

"He didn't care about me as a player. Certainly didn't care [about me] as a person and really he was all about the w[in], not about the player, the development, [pause]… the [winning] was his assignment." Dan

All of the athletes in this study described the poor coach as uncaring. Coaches were seen as uncaring because they put their own interests ahead of the athletes and didn't provide any emotional or relational support to the athletes. Athletes thought their coach should have a genuine interest in their personal well being and athletic development, but instead found the poor coach to be selfish and not really concerned with them. Not only were poor coaches overly concerned with their own agenda, they didn't make themselves available for athletes. In response to the coach being uncaring, athletes

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felt like they were on their own and, metaphorically, had no coach. According to Charlie, "You couldn't talk to him about anything…they (poor coaches) were just never there…you didn't have that bond with them. The two consistent ways athletes perceived their coach as uncaring were by being *there for the coach* and by being *not there for athletes.*

"There for Himself/Herself". When poor coaches were described as being there for the coach, athletes spoke about them being 'coach (self)-centered' and putting their own interests ahead of the team; usually by being overly focused on winning. The coach was described as being driven to win, rather than help athletes, of doing whatever it took to win and of quickly taking credit for those victories. Athletes talked about the coach having a big ego and of being selfish. Players felt like they were treated as a means to an end. "I mean it is a business by [which] we were just pawns" (Zeid). "He's there to win games, not really to coach" (Mickey). Lydia described this "winning is everything" attitude and the imbalances that resulted in the coach's philosophy:

I would have to say my time here at [University] is when I've seen or experienced poor coaching the most and I would say because of all my years as an athlete and playing under coaches, this coaching staff here is really focused solely on winning…So, I feel like they don't embrace like a holistic view of coaching…I can say that because they really aren't focused on you as a person or the development of your character or making like a team environment. It's really about what can we do to push you to win. Kind of like at all costs.

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During the coaches' pursuit of victory, if athletes could not help the coach win, they perceived they were discarded like batteries that had run out of energy. "While you're here…I'm gonna get what all I can out of you and then after that I'm kind of done with you" (Mickey). Injured athletes were often pushed aside for healthy, more productive athletes:

> …the second I would get [sic] injured she would first of all just get mad and like deny that I was injured and then she would basically treat me like I was nothing. Like, she wouldn't even talk to me on the sidelines… She'd [coach] see me at practice, (and) she wouldn't even walk over and approach me. So, I guess my biggest thing with that is that she didn't know how to treat me as a person like when I wasn't actually playing. (Mary)

Coaches were so self-centered that they often made decisions that were not necessarily in the best interests of the team, but perpetuated the appearance of the coach doing a good, effective job. Like actors in a play, poor coaches put on a mask to make themselves look good to others. Rather than spending time with the team, athletes reported that poor coaches would schmooze athletic department boosters to appear favorably. Amanda talked about how her coach played a certain player on the team not because the player was the most qualified, but because the coach had given this player a large sum of scholarship money and if she didn't play her then it might make the coach appear stupid. To demonstrate their greatness, athletes reported that their poor coaches were often self-promoting and attempted to glorify themselves before the team.

And then he'll [coach] start spouting off about, 'I know there's nothing wrong

with me. I coached the [elite level team to a championship] so I know that I'm a

good coach. But are y'all good players? No, you're not. I get paid 10,000 dollars

to go talk about hitting for 30 minutes. I know what I'm talking about. I tell y'all

what to do, but y'all can't even do it.' He just like spouts off …about how great

he is and wants to reassure us so we know how great Tom is. So, we know that

he's the best, like he's basically Jesus. (Daisy)

These coaches were described as being so full of themselves that they often didn't go to

practices where the real work was being done, but rather just showed up for the games. If

the result of the game was a loss, the coach would blame the team, but if the team won,

the coach took credit for the victory.

     "Wasn't There for Me". Another way athletes perceived poor coaches as uncaring

was the way coaches did not build a relationship with athletes. For the athletes, this

demonstrated that the coach did not really care about them. Poor coaches were seen as

bad at casual conversation and unable to relate with athletes. They not only failed to

establish a bond with the athletes, but were so apathetic that they were perceived as

having no desire to get to know athletes or to understand them. Because poor coaches

struggled with athletes relationally, they were described as not being a "players-coach."

Poor coaches were frequently described as "never there" and on the rare occasion they

were, their "office was always closed," which made athletes feel "like you were just

distant from everything" (Zeid). Consequently, athletes talked about how the coach

wasn't there for them and perceived him/her as inaccessible, aloof, uncommunicative, and detached. Zeid talked about how his coach was indifferent:

> He was never accessible. And so, you would want to go talk with him about something or you would want to throw a question out there,… (but) there wasn't a player-coach relationship; there wasn't a friend-friend (relationship); there was just (a) zero relationship… (And) even if you wanted to go find him, you couldn't find him to talk to him about something…you could never, ever find a time to go sit down and talk to him… and that really irritated me.

Beyond having a "zero relationship," athletes also thought these poor coaches had no desire to get to know them. "She didn't want to get to know me…or the things that I was doing" (Mary). Poor coaches had little empathy with or desire to understand the athletes' world. Amanda talked about how her coach was unyielding and unsympathetic to the multiple demands of being a collegiate athlete:

> He doesn't try to understand us. It doesn't really feel like he wants to understand us or understand (our) issues, 'Hey, I've had a terrible, terrible week. I have four papers due. All this stuff. Can I please come half way through practice?"

An occasional evening at the coach's house for dinner could not make up for the everyday callousness of the coach. Dominick shared:

> It was a very fake player-coach relationship… If he tried to have a Bar-B-Q out at his house people went because they had to go, not because they wanted to. People didn't want to be around the guy… he might try to start a conversation [pause],

act like he was one of the guys, but it was so random, and …you could tell that he was like trying to make a random effort at becoming one of the guys. …You're just like, 'What?' You never even talked to him (before).

Theme 3: Unfair

"They pick on Michelle a lot, she was the one with the injury. She'll make a mistake and it just turns into this big deal… it's like she'll make one mistake and then somebody else will make a mistake and it's like, 'Here, just get another ball let's fix this.'

And it's not fair." Lydia

All the athletes who experienced poor coaching described the coach as being unfair. When describing the coach as unfair athletes talked about how what the coach was doing wasn't right or was unwarranted. Being unfair meant the coaches were excessively hurtful and inequitable. Because athletes perceived their coaches to be unfair, over time, they learned not to trust them.

Athletes described three consistent ways they perceived poor coaches to be unfair. Coaches were described as *dishonest* because they told outright lies or failed to uphold their promises; *played favorites* and were unequal in their treatment of athletes; and *degraded* them by using demeaning communication and failing to use praise.

Dishonest. Athletes talked passionately about how they had been lied to and betrayed by their coach which ranged from the recruiting process to inconsistencies in the coach's everyday communication. Many of the collegiate athletes talked about how their coaches were dishonest during the recruiting process, making grandiose promises about

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playing time, academic choice, and scholarship money that turned out to be untrue:

> Well, I had my visit with Tom and Jerry and stuff and of course basically that
> they just kind of told me everything that I wanted to hear about. Anywhere from
> the ball, to academics, scholarships, what comes with what…You get told you
> have a certain scholarship and you don't. You get told that you're gonna be able
> to major in what you want to major in, which you should be, and you don't.
> (Daisy)

They also spoke about how the coach would say something and then later contradict
him/herself, "He always said, 'Don't worry about the outcome, we're focused on the
process…but he never focused on the process *ever*…it's just a bunch of propaganda that
doesn't mean anything" (Zeid).

Athletes were acutely aware of how their coaches were hypocrites, and although
they talked a good game, they didn't live up to their own words:

> The coach stresses like being on time…being 10 minutes early to everything and
> never be late, like whatever. And if that happens then we have to run or we get in
> trouble, but like the coach is allowed to show up like 20, 30 minutes late and
> we're waiting on the coach…to me I think that's hypocritical…if you want your
> team to do something you also need to set the example and do the same
> thing…give the team the respect that you expect. (Annie)

Playing Favorites. Numerous athletes talked about how the coach was unfair by
playing favorites and putting some athletes up on a pedestal. The coach's favorites were

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seen as receiving preferential treatment and rewards such as easy clean-up duties at the baseball field. The coach might bend the rules for his/her favorites, but others were consistently punished. Some of the coaches would develop their favorites during the recruiting process:

> My sophomore year we had a couple of high named players…right when they walked on campus they were put on a pedestal. And so, it wasn't that they had worked harder than you. It wasn't that they had tried and done more things than you; hadn't taken more swings. They had just created such a name for themselves from when they were younger that they came in and they were just put up. Like, they were supposed to be the next gift (Charlie).

The coach's favorites were usually the highest performing athletes on the team. Some athletes talked about how they might have been a favorite at one point, but when their performance dropped, so did they from the pedestal the coach had placed them on. According to the athletes, the coach's favorites received more praise, instruction and encouragement, while non favorites were put down and called out unjustly:

> He [coach] really doesn't give people a chance. As soon as they get in here…I almost feel sorry for the people who come in from [State] now because it's like (the favorites) have an unfair advantage…he praises them and almost like degrades us (Amanda).

Admittedly, poor coaches were perceived to have higher expectations of their favorite athletes, but also to be thought of and treated as if they would succeed. Coaches nurtured

and coddled their favorites, but antagonized and neglected their least favorites:

I could sit there and not make one mistake all practice and have one turnover and then he's just all over my back and just chewing my ass…and then a guy who is just mentally weak but has had kind of a terrible practice and is just getting away with mistake after mistake and…he doesn't ever criticize them or get on them, yell at them, but when I would do something it was like he ah [pause] [coach] magnified the situation…it makes a lot of people lose respect of the coach because you could tell that the coach was almost, sometimes he would be yelling scared and kind of cowardly to get on the superstar player and they would take all that out [at]…the nice guy who was willing to do anything for the team because it's easy to yell at that guy because you know he won't start yelling back and be a discipline problem. That he'll [nice guy] just sit there and take it. Whereas another guy, where he might have to face maybe an argument or something, getting on him. He was scared to do it. He'd just continue to baby him. (Dominick)

Degrading. There were numerous ways athletes perceived the coach to be degrading, including the constant use of demeaning comments and by failing to use praise. Not being told what they did wrong and being embarrassed in front of their teammates were two frequent ways athletes reported being degraded. No matter how hard they worked or performed at practice, athletes perceived they could never get a compliment, "…I always got the negative" (Jack). Athletes perceived poor coaches to

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under appreciate them and to overly rely on hurtful communication. When athletes reported being degraded, they were not whining or complaining about the coach's harsh tone with them, but rather appeared sincerely upset by how and why the coach put them down. Athletes found no purpose or sense to the coach intentionally making them feel so small. While some coaches degrading communication would be brief and to the point, "She [coach] would take stabs at my character" (Mary). At other times, coaches would yell, scream, and shout obscenities which were intense, passionate tirades:

> If my man [opponent] caught the ball twice in one possession it was, 'Go run on the sidelines. Go stand in the corner'. Kick you out of practice. It was M-F this, M-F that. I mean every name in the book I'm getting…if you didn't stare him [coach] in the eye or if you happened to yawn. I remember one time we had a kid during [practice] (and) …he…yawned (while coach was talking). He [coach] went berserk (laughing). He just went nuts on him (be)cause he yawned at him...he went off about his, 'Is what I'm telling you…boring you? Is it making you tired? Do you want to go to sleep? I'll put you to sleep!' He was nuts man. He was nuts. (Mickey)

Appearing austerely serious when degrading athletes, the words coaches used were intensely authentic, "The thing is when Tom says something that is hurtful or humiliating it's always really sincere because he always says it with such *passion*" (Lydia).

Athletes reported that poor coaches often publicly questioned whether or not they were competitors, and if they had any school pride or self-pride. "Am I a true competitor?

Do I really want to be here? Like am I excited and proud to be a Bison…constant…kind of like jabs to the heart" (Mary). Athletes reported that if the coach perceived them as not competing, they were quickly labeled weak or soft. Several of the male athletes said they were called a pussy. Being berated by these coaches was commonplace. Although he expected to be yelled at, Charlie still found this verbal abuse to be disorienting and confusing: "You expect to be brought down sometimes and yelled at and I expect all that, but he'd bring you down and just demoralize you to where you didn't know what was going on."

A few of the athletes even reported being physically attacked by their coach. Mickey shared, "I had everything from a chair, a garbage can and chalkboard thrown at me," while Jack described a milder form of physical abuse at football practice, "Getting hit with whistles upside the head or upside the helmet." Zeid's experience of being yelled at without knowing why captured the experience of several athletes, "I think with this particular bad coach, you would get blown up [yelled at] and you had no idea what you got blown up for or why. And you'd sit and you were confused about it."

In perhaps a less harsh way, some athletes felt degraded because the coach never offered them any praise, "during practice, no matter what happened, nothing was ever right. Even if it was, it was never, 'Good job.' It was … always negative" (Jack). Athletes reported that despite working tremendously hard, poor coaches rarely praised them or acknowledged their effort. Poor coaches didn't appreciate the time and energy athletes put into their sport. Instead, poor coaches were described as always negative and

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unappeasable. Athletes thought their coach should give them a "Good job", at least some of the time and that it was unfair for the coach to be so hard nosed. If the coach was ever pleased, it was only when they were winning and even then this was only for a fleeting moment. While athletes reported that the coach did indeed praise some of them, it was usually only the best performers, which left the other athletes feeling of lesser value. "[Coach] praise(ed) people that did really well on the field and really crapped on people that didn't" (Zeid). Numerous athletes discussed how they worked hard to please their coach and to help the team, yet no matter what they did, it was never enough; they never felt appreciated by their coach. Dominick explained that he was one of those players that could never please the coach despite doing everything he could. "I mean there would be times where I was diving on the floor, taking a charge, whatever it took for the team and no matter what I did it really wasn't enough and I could never get a compliment from the guy."

Theme 4: Inhibiting

<center>*"I could have been a lot more successful."* Daisy</center>

In terms of quantity and depth of responses, all of the athletes spoke about how their poor coach inhibited them. Unanimously, they perceived their coach to have stalled, prevented, or blocked their development. Daisy's quote above speaks for all of the athletes who wondered how successful they might have been. Annie felt paralyzed and helpless with her coach. "When I played for him, I felt like I wasn't gonna get anywhere. I wasn't gonna improve." Although several athletes played on teams that won many

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games, even championships, they still believed they would have been more successful with a different coach. In response to the coach inhibiting them, athletes felt they underachieved.

There were several ways athletes perceived the coach to be inhibiting. In the heat of the action, usually during a game, coaches were perceived to be *distracting* and to cause athletes to lose focus. Athletes also talked about how coaches inhibited them by *engendering self-doubt* through the harmful things they did. Further, by not encouraging them, they perceived poor coaches to be *demotivating*. Lastly, poor coaches were seen as not only inhibiting individual athletes, but as *dividing the team.*

Distracting. Contrary to achieving an optimal mental state such as being in the zone or experiencing flow, athletes talked about how poor coaches made the game harder by inhibiting their ability to focus. Rather than paving the path to success, poor coaches were seen as an obstacle to overcome. Dominick described how his coach had disrupted the flow of the game:

> At one point during the season he said, 'There's a 35 second shot clock. No one can shoot until it gets under 10 seconds except for player A and player B.' So, everyone's just sitting around there, they could be wide open, whatever it is (pause) just playing not natural at all, but scared to be taken out of the game. They're looking at the shot clock wondering, 'Am I allowed to take a shot at this point?

Because poor coaches often gave erroneous instruction during the game, athletes found

their attention diverted:

> He would just go nuts anytime, …yelling kind of, like, 'Do this, pass it here, pass it there, pass it there.' When …you're playing a game you gotta play without thinking. You just gotta play. And he tried to play the game by coaching. Like control it completely…'Pass here, pass there, pass there' when in all reality you just gotta go play and he's over there jumping up and down stomping. So you're out on the floor and you're seeing your coach jump up like an idiot and you're not thinking about just playing the game. You're thinking 'Good gosh this guy needs to calm down a little bit.' (Jim)

Amanda felt her coach's demands distracted her while she was stepping up the plate:

> There's been so many times he's like, 'Amanda, I need a home run right now.' And I'm just like, can I, I haven't hit [laughing], in two games or three games and I'm just focusing on …want(ing) to help the team and usually in an RBI situation …And that's where it gets in all of our heads that you have GOT to get a hit instead of, 'Hey, see the ball.' And that's something that we all have had to work on ourselves cause if I don't get a hit, I don't get a hit.

Just being around poor coaches and the environment they created was enough to have athletes focus on and worry about the wrong things. "Hard enough to hit a 90 mph fastball, hard enough to get people out on a routine basis. Shouldn't have to worry about what you're gonna have to encounter in the clubhouse" (Dan). In contrast, Dan reported about what happened when his coach took a vacation. "The hitting coach would run the

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show. Another rover would do his job and it was great because the whole atmosphere of the clubhouse changed. It was fun, it was loose, it was relaxed."

Engendering Self-Doubt. Athletes talked about how their coach did not help them build confidence, but instead engendered self-doubt. "He made me feel like such a failure" (Amanda). While many of these athletes were stars in high school or even on their most recent team, they talked about how the poor coach engendered self-doubt:

> He would just make me feel like I was the worst player in America...He took everything away from me that I had gained in high school and I had to start over [pause]. I went from thinking I was a great high school baseball player to thinking I would not have the chance to be a great college baseball player …and you feel like you're the biggest failure in the world (Charlie).

Often because poor coaches didn't instruct athletes, but rather constantly degraded them, athletes determined, and believed, that they must indeed be "horrible". Dominick described how it worked. "You're a young kid and you're just repeatedly getting criticized and pulled and the coach loses confidence in you and you lose confidence in yourself."

Several of the athletes discussed how losing confidence directly affected their performance on the field and made them play tentatively. They became fearful that the coach would take them out of the game or worried excessively about what the coach might say. And this self-doubt had far reaching effects for at least two of the athletes, Annie and Mickey who talked about how they took this self-doubt with them to the next

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teams they played on. Mickey's explanation was particularly poignant:

> You know what…to this day my biggest regret about my playing was that I
> became afraid to fail. I worked out so much and so hard all the time…I liked
> working out but (not) the competition part …I just worried so much about not
> failing…I was trying not to mess up because I knew if I messed up, I was coming
> out…. So, I was playing not to make mistakes and it just *wore* me (out). That's
> why when I got done playing in college I was ready to be done.

Demotivating. Athletes talked about how their poor coaches were discouraging and dampened their enthusiasm. Beyond not having fun or enjoying their sport, athletes dreaded going to practices and having to grind it out. Poor coaches were significant contributors to a poor athletic experience because they undermined the athletes' intrinsic motivation. "I never wanted to produce for the first coach because he never…put anything in for me so I felt like why should I put anything in for him?" (Buck). Athletes used words like "hate," "dread," "resent," "not motivate," "over with," and "detrimental" when describing the coach's failure to motivate. For Dan, by the end of the season his coach had taken away every bit of commitment he had for the game. "Let's micromanage this situation down to a point where everybody hates playing for you. By 75 to 80 games in the year we are all, 'Just get through August. Let's just get this over with and be done.…'" Zeid had a similar experience playing college baseball. "That was something that really makes you not only resent the coach, but for me, resent the game. I wanted to be done when I was finished with the year for the guy I had."

Athletes knew they were losing motivation when they wanted to avoid their coach and skip practice. Mary suggested that although athletes should normally want to go to practice, she did not:

> Every time that I went to soccer, like, I wouldn't want to be there…like, I dreaded going to practice…I would rather be in class than be at practice and that's just not right. Like, that's not how it should be and so I think that just my overall well being was affected.

The loss of fun and motivation was not limited to collegiate athletics. Although he played high school basketball all four years, Mickey said playing for his coach was a grind and that many of his teammates had quit because of how bad the coach made it. "Not many guys that …played for him … enjoyed continuing to play because they just… hated it, (although) they loved just playing with their friends and pick up and having fun with it."

Interestingly, athletes talked about wanting to win, but not win for their coach, "We do not win for them because they don't do shit for us" (Daisy). Athletes experienced conflicting feelings about wanting to win, but knowing that winning also meant their coach won, which would subsequently, and contradictory to athletes' perceptions, make them appear like they were a good coach. When comparing two coaches, one he perceived as good and the other as poor, Dominick talked about the opposing feelings he had. With the good coach he was motivated to work hard and cared about what happened. However, with the poor coach he was apathetic and hardly inspired. "After the game when you lost you felt bad that you lost but you didn't feel bad for the coaching staff."

Athletes were not motivated to win for the poor coach; they wanted to win for themselves or for their teammates. When talking about how they felt after losing a game, a number of despondent athletes shared their secret hope that the coach would be fired, "Hey we lost again, hurray maybe Smithy will get fired tomorrow" (Dan). Dominick elaborated on this notion:

> You could tell that guys didn't even really care to win for this guy…I missed a (winning) buzzer shot …, and a player said to me on the bus… 'I know you're down about missing it, but at least that's another loss for his record. It's another foot out the door for him.' Trying to get him fired and you're like, man, I don't wish that upon [him]. I don't ever want to take that approach, but it really did get to that point and guys kind of giving up on the season, planning spring breaks before even knowing if we were gonna go far in the conference tournament. They just assumed we were gonna lose. They'd much rather have an off-season than have[ing] another day around this guy.

Dividing the Team. Poor coaches not only inhibited individual athletes, but they inhibited the cohesiveness of the team by having teammates challenge each other and call each other out. "We have so much conflict because the coaches like, try to push us against each other" (Daisy). When poor coaches "push(ed)" teammates "against each other" it was not in a positive, team-centered way. Rather, to the coach's delight, athletes were coerced into signaling out their teammates, and encouraged athletes to confront each other:

In front of the whole team, they will sit there and be like, 'Eileen you should want to beat out Daisy. You should want to take her spot.' All this stuff instead of …saying, 'Everybody be the best you can be and whoever starts, starts…because this is a team sport', not, 'I'm against all my teammates' and that's the way it is….everybody fighting against each other. (Daisy)

Athletes were very uncomfortable confronting a teammate and didn't think this behavior was beneficial. Lydia shared a heartfelt experience about how this behavior inhibited team development:

After every game, win or lose, it's like the blame game. Like whose fault is it? It's either the pitchers' fault or it's the batters' fault and they [coaches] really wanted us to like dig into each other. They really encouraged one player to call another player out in front of the whole team, even if that meant embarrassing them or like making them feel ridiculous. And if you didn't call somebody out the coaches would turn it on you… So, it was really like a hard situation… you're playing against the other team and you're playing against the umpires and you're playing against the coaches and then at the end of the day you're working against your teammates too.

Some athletes commented that although they knew the coach was trying to establish a shared accountability, the coach's approach was perceived as harmful.

He'd kind of like, turn the team against each other and try to get rid of people, but say it was like a team decision…I don't think trying to manipulate your players

into thinking how you think … is…how you coach…. especially against each other when you're a team. You're supposed to bring the team together (Annie). Several of the athletes commented that dividing the team led to feelings of resentment and inequality, and by not having everybody on the same page, there was a lack of unity on the team. "We were on the same team, trying to accomplish the same goals, but it didn't feel like we were trying to accomplish the same goals. So, that's what created … adversity throughout the whole team" (Charlie).

Theme 5: Coping

"I just adapted to it (poor coaching). I still think that's (sic) a bad thing, but like I said, being here 5 years I've learned how to adjust to it and adapt to it. I take the good and the bad. It still happen(s) but I just learned how to deal with it now." Ron

In response to the constant stress and strain poor coaches caused, eleven of the sixteen athletes talked about how they endured the situation and the strategies they used to cope. Being able to cope with poor coaching helped these athletes persist in sport. Two common strategies athletes used to cope with poor coaching were to avoid the coach, "If I find an idiot, I run from them" (Dan), and to not listen to the coach. Ron talked about how as a younger player he would internalize everything his coach said and was consumed with the coach's degrading messages. In response, he said he learned to block out the coach's messages. . Daisy talked about how the team coped with poor coaching:

We're [the team] (in the)… huddle and I can quote this from one of our seniors last year. 'Fuck them. We're not playing for them, we're playing for us…If they

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say anything to us, in one ear and out the other. Like, just ignore them, don't even

listen to anything they say [be]cause nothing they say is good anyways [sic] so

why even listen to them anymore.

Other athletes responded to poor coaching by becoming apathetic and developing an

attitude of "Whatever." As they expressed it, they thought, "If you're not going to be a

big leaguer, you just end up saying, 'Oh. I'm just going to ride it out" (Zeid).

While the athletes in this study had the ability to endure, to tolerate and adapt to

this stress, they reported that quite often their teammates did not persist. Mickey said he

couldn't simply quit playing basketball in high school because he wanted to play in

college. He knew that his coach would talk to other coaches and potential recruiters, so

he had to continue to endure the distress of being poorly coached. However, Mickey said

he had a friend who stopped playing after his junior year because "he couldn't deal with

it anymore." The athletes that couldn't handle the poor coach usually quit or transferred,

consequences that Amanda thought were a shame, "I came in with eight girls and there's

two of us left. And there's been four All-Americans in the past two years to transfer

because they just can't take it anymore."

Athletes also responded to this distress by seeking other ways to learn about their

position or sport:

I pretty much watched TV and would watch sidearm pitchers all I could and I

would go get video of them and read about it. Anything I could find. Internet.

Articles and anything. Just figuring it out…And that really wasn't my job. My job

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was to be going to that coach and getting it from him and he wasn't helping me

out, so, I kind of had to coach myself like I said. (Buck)

Summary

Five major themes were developed from the athletes' experience of poor

coaching: *Not Teaching, Uncaring, Unfair, Inhibiting, and Coping*. The first four themes

described how athletes experienced the coach as poor, while the theme of *Coping*

described how athletes dealt with being poorly coached. When talking about the poor

coach, all of the athletes compared this coach to a better coach. Thus, these five themes

describe the athletes' experience of poor coaching and stood out, or were figural, to the

ground of the better coach.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Discussion of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore current and former collegiate,

professional and semi-professional athletes' perceptions of poor coaching. Open-ended,

in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted with 16 athletes to get at their

experience of poor coaching. Data were analyzed using existential phenomenological

methods described by Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997). This type of

phenomenological data analysis is similar to what qualitative researchers refer to as the

constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998). A summary of the findings is presented in

this chapter followed by a discussion of those findings and conclusions. The chapter ends

with recommendations for sports stakeholders and policymakers and recommendations

for future research.

Summary of the Findings

Athletes talked at length about their experiences of poor coaching. For many of

the athletes this was the first, and only, opportunity for them to talk about an important,

and negative, aspect of their life. Based on the depth and candid nature of the responses

the athletes' seemed truthful, forthright, and sincere.

Five themes were developed from the interviews that describe athletes'

experience of being poorly coached: not teaching, uncaring, unfair, inhibiting, and

coping. The theme of not teaching represented the multiple ways athletes' perceived the

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coach to be unknowledgeable and poor at providing instruction, individualizing instruction, and managing. This failure to teach was directly associated with what the athletes talked about as not learning from their coaches. The theme of uncaring related to the athletes' perception that poor coaches failed to provide emotional or relationship support; that the coach wasn't there for them and that they were on their own. Rather than caring about the athletes, poor coaches were described as concerned only with winning and making themselves look good. The theme of unfair represented the way the coaches' treatment of players was perceived to be inequitable and just wrong. Poor coaches lied to athletes, degraded and ridiculed them and were unfailingly negative. Athletes reported that poor coaches treated some players more favorably than others, and that they felt they could never please their coach. In turn, athletes developed a strong sense of distrust towards their coach. The theme of inhibiting represented the numerous ways coaches were perceived to damage the mental performance of athletes and the team. Athletes perceived poor coaches to do things (i.e., divide the team, engender self-doubt, distract and demotivate) that made their performance worse. In turn, athletes perceived that that led them to underachieve athletically. The theme of coping represented the ways athletes dealt with and adapted to the poor coach. Athletes used several coping strategies such as directing their own learning or not listening to their coach.

Discussion

In general, the findings of the study were consistent with the findings of research on winning and expert coaches, albeit diametrically opposite. Research has consistently revealed that the observed behaviors of winning coaches used high levels of instruction which were assumed to correlate with successful athletic performance (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Claxton, 1988; Dodds & Rife, 1981; Model, 1983; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Williams, 1978). Athletes in this study perceived that they failed to receive instruction in many cases, and what they received was unhelpful, insubstantial and was detrimental to successful athletic performance.

Research on expert coaches suggests that a combination of praise and/or instruction is important for having athletes learn motor and tactical skills (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004, Potrac et al. 2002). Research also reveals the importance of creating a fun, positive, and serious learning environment (Becker, 2007; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003). Contrary to the findings from this research, athletes who experienced poor coaching talked about how they didn't want to go to practices because they were not having fun and that they didn't learn anything. Practices were not a learning experience, but rather a place where athletes would be yelled at and the coach could demonstrate his or her power by making athletes feel subservient. In contrast to the research about expert coaches, instead of creating a positive learning environment, the findings suggest that poor coaches created a negative environment that caused athletes to be less receptive. Moreover, it led athletes to use strategies which made them appear to be receptive, while

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secretly ignoring or disregarding the coach. This finding is consistent with previous research that athletes' receptivity towards the coach and a loss of respect may occur through constant scolding and demeaning communication (d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier, & Dubois, 1998; Potrac et al., 2002).

Expert gymnastic coaches believe it is important for them to appear relaxed during competitions so athletes feel confident and remain focused on their skill (Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995b). Contrary to this finding, athletes in this study talked about how the poor coach was a distraction, causing them to lose focus, play tentatively, and fail. They also talked about how the coach made them doubt their abilities and question whether or not they were good enough to play at that level of competition. That athletes need to develop self-efficacy precisely because they may question their abilities as the level of competition increases is consonant with the beliefs of a top-level English soccer coach (Potrac et al., 2002). Expert gymnastic coaches (Cote, Salmela, & Russell) also believe that minimal involvement with athletes immediately prior to competition is beneficial to maintain athletes' confidence and focus. Contrary to this, athletes in this study perceived poor coaches to be trying to "over-coach" during the game by changing strategies and giving too much instruction. Poor coaches disrupted the flow of the game which caused athletes to play unnatural and tentative.

Research suggests that winning and expert coaches plan extensively for practices and attempt to provide individualized instruction (Jones et al., 2003; Gallimore & Tharp, 2004; Potrac et al., 2002). In contrast to this, athletes in this study talked about how

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practices were ill planned and a waste of time and poor coaches did not individualize

instruction, but rather said similar things to all athletes. They also did not take individual

differences into account, athletic or personality differences, and made little attempt to

adapt their communication to particular athletes. Many poor coaches were reported to not

go to practice or lead film sessions.

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings on athletes' preferences

and satisfaction (Chelladurai, 1978, 1984; Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai,

Imamura, Yamaguchi, Oinuma, & Miyauchi, 1988; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980;

Schliesman, 1987), although opposite. In contrast to athletes who are satisfied with their

coaching experience, athletes who experienced poor coaching perceived their coach to be

ineffective in terms of instruction, social support, and positive feedback. Although

athletes did not use the word dissatisfaction in describing their experience of poor

coaching, there is little doubt that they were not satisfied with the coach or the

experience. Athletes spoke about how they did not like or respect their coach and felt

they could have been better, better people and better athletes, with a different coach.

Consistent with research on athletes' perceptions and experiences of poor

coaching, the findings of this study confirmed that athletes perceive they did not learn

necessary sport skills (e.g., technical, tactical, and mental) from poor coaches (Gould et

al. 1999, 2000; Cross, 1995; Johnson, 1998). While research on poor coaching has

demonstrated the importance of providing instruction, this study found that

individualizing that instruction was equally important to be able to teach the athlete

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effectively. The findings of this study are also similar to other research on poor coaches that spoke overwhelmingly to how the coach inhibited the mental performance of athletes (Cross, 1995; Johnson, 1998). The findings of this study are also consistent with this poor coaching research that has revealed that poor coaches engendered a lack of trust in the coach-athlete relationship and that athletes identified poor coaches as overwhelmingly negative (Gould et al. 1999; 2000; Johnson, 1998). This study expanded upon this research by providing authentic experiences from athletes that speak to how this lack of trust occurred (e.g., lying, not fulfilling promises, being hypocritical). With respect to the coach being perceived as uncaring, the findings of this study were similar to those of Gould et al. (1999, 2000) which found that athletes perceived poor coaches did not provide 'support' and were relationally uncommunicative.

A comparison of this study's findings and the findings of related research on poor coaching is presented in Table 5.0. Items that were idiosyncratic to previous research and could not be categorized in relation to this study are presented at the bottom of the table under the heading 'Outside Taxonomy.'

Table 5.0

Comparison Findings of Research on Poor Coaching				
Gearity (2009)	Cross (1995)	Johnson (1998)	Gould et al. (1999)	Gould et al. (2000)
Theme 1: Not Teaching		decrease in performance		
Not Instructing		lack of instructional feedback	poor communication	poor communication, information, personnel and selection decisions, planning, tactical or strategic
Not Individualized				
Not Knowledgeable	lack of commitment, knowledge, intuition			lack of effort
Theme 2: Unfair				unfair treatment
Dishonest		can't trust, inconsistent communication	lack of trust	
Degrading		loud and abusive language	negative attitude	lack of encouragement, enthusiasm, negative attitude
Playing Favorites				
Theme 3: Uncaring				
There for Himself/Herself				
Wasn't There for Me			poor communication	lack of support
Theme 4: Inhibiting		decrease in performance, psycholoigcal harm		
Dividing the Team				
Demotivating	unable to motivate	loss of motivation		
Engendering Self-Doubt		loss of confidence		
Distracting		loss of focus		
Theme 5: Coping				
Coping		athlete didn't listen to coach		
Outside Taxonomy	poor coaching style	poor coaching style	wanting more access to personal coaches, defining coach's roles	equipment changes

As may be seen, Cross (1995) and Johnson (1998) both found coaching style to be associated with poor, ineffective coaching. However, because 'style' was likely a general summative statement of poor coaches' behaviors, one could infer that athletes who experienced poor coaching would assert that their coach had a poor coaching style. The findings of Gould et al. (1999, 2000) that do not fit with the current findings appear to be germane to Olympic athletes (e.g., wanting access to personal coaches, equipment changes).

Reflecting on the Findings

Because athletes were asked to talk about a specific time they experienced poor coaching, it was anticipated, not surprising, that they would describe poor coaches as poor at teaching sport skills. Clearly, athletes expect coaches to teach physical, mental, tactical, and technical skills. Similarly, while coaches may proclaim that they care about their athletes, the finding that athletes perceived poor coaches to be uncaring was also not surprising. In their focus on themselves and on winning, it is hardly surprising that poor coaches spent little time talking with, and listening to, athletes about personal problems or caring for athletes' non-sport related issues. In light of the research in sport and what we have come to expect from coaches, however, there were a few unexpected findings that warrant further discussion.

It was surprising that when athletes were asked to participate in the study nearly all of them were readily able to identify having been poorly coached and that they had experienced poor coaching at every competitive level. One might have anticipated that at

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higher, more elite levels of coaching, there would have been fewer readily identifiable poor coaches. But that was not the case. Not only that, but that the athletes were so able to identify so many ways in which the coach was a poor coach. Beyond this, the degree of intensity and passion they brought to recalling the experience of poor coaching was unanticipated. Athletes spoke candidly and passionately about their experience, probably because sport, and the coach, played a meaningful part in their life. This passion was especially visible during one of the interviews when, upon sharing her experience, an athlete became so upset that she had to pause to stop herself from crying.

An interesting finding of this study was that the athletes used a conception (conceptual framework) of the better coach as the ground for thinking about the poor coach. The ground of the better coach represented athletes' preferred coaching behaviors and they compared the poor coach to the better coach. In explaining what the poor coach did that was wrong, it was invariably in terms of what the coach should have done; what a good coach would have done. If athletes have a conceptualization of good coaching, and expect that coaches will realize these expectations, if may be that they will be more responsive to the coach if he/she can tap into these behaviors. This would require the coach to believe that meeting the expectations of athletes is important. This does not mean acceding to athletes' simple pleasures and preferences, or for restricting the considered judgments of the coach. Rather, it is about using the information to build more effective ways to reach athletes where they are.

Because of the prominence praise and scolds have in the literature on the

observed behaviors of all coaches, it was interesting to note how athletes in this study talked about these behaviors. None of these studies has found that coaches scold athletes more than praise them (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Bloom, Crumpton, & Anderson, 1999; Claxton, 1988; Dodds & Rife, 1981; Lacy, 1983; Lacy & Darst, 1985; Langsdorf, 1979; Model, 1983; Potrac et al., 2002; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Williams, 1978). In this study, the athletes perceived poor coaches to scold them frequently and praise them rarely. While it may be interesting to know if this perception corresponded with the coach's actual behavior, this finding powerfully suggests how meaningful this was to the athletes and how much the negative, degrading communication stood out and affected them. Equally compelling is the fact that on the rare occasions the athletes perceived the poor coach to use praise, they interpreted it as insincere. This finding suggests that overreliance on scolds and scant use of praise may render the praise that is used meaningless. On the other hand, this may be part of the total coach-athlete relationship, and if athletes perceive their coach to be unfair or uncaring, it is then that the coach's praise may be perceived as disingenuous, no matter how much scolding or praise is used. At any case, more information is needed to determine the efficacy and affect the coach's use of praise and scold has on athletes than merely the frequency of these behaviors.

Although sad, athletes in this study persisted in sport in spite of the horrible things poor coaches did. What would cause an athlete to endure such an unpleasant experience? Athletes' in this study demonstrated the ability to adapt to and cope with being poorly coached, although they often identified teammates who quit or transferred in response to

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the poor coach. Are there differences in the characteristics of athletes who persist versus athletes who quit? If there are, this may suggest that those athletes who have reached higher levels of athletic success have done so because of their ability to cope and persist rather than some other factor such as innate athletic ability. If the athletes who quit because of the poor coach could learn how to cope and persist, then they might be able to achieve greater athletic success; albeit having to suffer through being poorly coached. At the same time, because athletes coped by directing their own learning, not listening to the coach, or receiving emotional support from others, the success of these athletes may not have been caused by their poor coach. While we may, perhaps erroneously, credit or blame the coach for everything that happens to them, it is clear that athletes are also independent beings with the freedom and ability to shape their sport experience.

It is interesting to note the similarities in the theme of inhibiting with what seem to be universally accepted and central concepts in the sport psychology literature. It is commonplace for literature in mental performance training to address mental skills such as motivation, self-efficacy, focus and concentration, and team cohesion (e.g., Williams, 2001). Can it be that the poor coaches identified in this study were unaware and therefore unknowledgeable about this literature? Or perhaps they knew this literature but chose to behave in a contradictory way because they either found that literature not to be compelling or were driven by factors that had higher priority? Because athletes in this study spoke about how poor coaches didn't improve these mental skills and may have actually made them worse, it seems important to understand why coaches behaved this

way.

An unexpected finding of the study was that athletes perceived both winning and losing coaches as poor coaches. How could a winning coach be perceived to have been a poor coach? This finding seems to contradict the conventional wisdom that associates coaching effectiveness with merely winning games. Our current conceptualization of coaching effectiveness, and research on the same, is dominated by considerations of winning and losing. Thus, researchers have tended to study only winning coaches and to attempt to unlock the mystery of securing championship performances from the behaviors of winning coaches. However, that focus has diverted attention from making explicit what it means to be an effective coach and to distinguish effective coaching from winning alone. From the athletes' perspective of poor coaching in this study, effectiveness in coaching is less about winning than about developing athletes athletically and personally.

Logically, the notion that a coach, athlete, or team is effective or ineffective based upon a 50% chance of winning or losing, makes little sense. Indeed, the findings of this study raise serious questions about the prevailing assumption that winning is evidence of effective coaching. Effective coaching may or may not lead to winning, however, effective coaching is certainly more than the outcome of competition, at least from the perspective of athletes involved in the competition.

Athletes who experienced poor coaches perceived them to have been poor at teaching, as well as unfair, uncaring and inhibiting. While this finding should alarm

coaching education programs and the sport's community in general, it may not be surprising that coaches affected athletes in this way. Given the focus on a "winning at all costs" attitude that has permeated American culture, the potential for abuse and inhumane treatment in coaching has perhaps become the norm rather than the exception. If this is the case, it suggests the need to develop a philosophy of coaching that is more humanistic and caring; to look for more caring and respectful ways to educate athletes. Instead of focusing on an outcome (winning) which they may only partly be able to achieve, coaches might be better served to focus on ways to develop, educate, and train athletes in a healthy and helpful way. Do we really want coaches to "do whatever it takes" to win at the expense of young athletes? If sport is to be a healthy, educational experience, supported by schools and universities across America, then we need to do our best to make certain that the outcomes of sport are positive, inspiring, and constructive. Coaches might look to bell hooks (1994) and her view on engaged pedagogy to guide a more caring philosophy of coaching:

> To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (p. 13)

Implications for Higher Education

While collegiate athletic departments are often viewed as a separate entity (business) from the university, this simply is not the case. Athletic departments fall under the supervision of the university and it might be argued that the university is responsible for holding the athletic department accountable for providing a good, quality educational experience in the same way that academic departments are expected to do. The mission of the athletic department should be consistent with the overall mission of the university which focuses on the growth and welfare of the student. Collegiate sports could serve this mission by providing a place for athletes to develop friendships and interpersonal skills, to train and hone their physical skills, and to come to terms with their personal identity and purpose in life.

Clearly, since numerous participants in this study reported that their collegiate sport experience was overwhelmingly negative and harmful, it's logical to conclude that at least some athletic departments and coaches are not fulfilling the mission of the university. Collegiate coaches, who are supposed to be stalwarts of the university in helping to educate and develop student-athletes, apparently have used methods inconsistent with what athletes perceive to be positive and helpful. This inconsistency between what should be going on with what is going on begs the question of what higher education administrators are doing to supervise what coaches do in the name of the institution and of whether or to what extent they hold them accountable for upholding the mission of the university. At least in the case of the participants in this study, it appears

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that higher education administrators have chosen to ignore the abuse, mistreatment, and lack of educationally sound practices used by these collegiate coaches.

If college sports are viewed as part of the educational experience, then perhaps coaches should be viewed as we do faculty (i.e., as educators), as some coaches and academicians already do (Fulmer, 2008; Jones, 2006). While it is commonplace for students to evaluate their professors, it is practically unheard of for collegiate athletes to evaluate their coaches. This is interesting since student evaluations have a long history of being used as one way of evaluating teacher effectiveness (Costin, Greenough, & Menges, 1971; Cohen, 1981). Since athletes in this study described their coaches as being poor teachers and as inhibiting their mental performance, knowing this alone would be of use to administrators and coaches. Further, knowing if athletes were being subjected to behaviors like those talked about in this study (e.g., being degraded, lied to), things that would normally be considered reprehensible in the classroom, would be critical to protecting athletes from such behaviors. If higher education administrators were serious about creating a positive learning environment in line with the mission of the university, then surely such coaching behaviors would be considered unacceptable. Unfortunately, the popular image of an authoritative-degrading-dictator-coach is so widely accepted as the norm in sports that coaches and administrators may view these behaviors as an inherent part of the coaching process and perhaps even necessary to win. However, one has to seriously question the methods coaches are allowed to use in the pursuit of winning.

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Administrators have been known to make evaluative decisions about coaches, but only when their behaviors have been extreme. Extreme is used here to indicate behaviors which are far from what is normally acceptable. For example, a few headlines that have caused administrators to take action against a coach include: a coach posting a nude photo of a 15-year old cheerleader on the internet ("Ohio"), a coach lying on a resume ("O'Leary"), a coach being cited for driving under the influence ("Texas"), and a coach physically abusing a player ("Knight's"). Unfortunately, these types of reactionary actions do not help to develop more effective coaches. What is needed is a proactive, systematic process of feedback and evaluation in order to help make coaches more effective. Along the line of student evaluations of faculty, higher education administrators could use athlete evaluations of coaches as one way measure of coaching effectiveness. It would also provide crucial feedback to coaches about how athletes perceive them. Furthermore, it provides a way of moving beyond the criteria of wins or losses as the sole evidence for effective coaching. Instead, higher education administrators might measure athletes' perceptions of effective coaching as a part of an expanded evaluative process to ensure that collegiate coaches are not only effective, but are also upholding the mission of the university.

In order for athletes to evaluate coaches, there is a need to create criteria upon which coaches can be evaluated. Based on the findings of this study, four specific areas that could be used to evaluate coaches are teaching, caring, fairness, and mental training. Coaches, like teachers, could be evaluated with respect to achievement of learning

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outcomes and thus, for example, the coach's ability to teach sport skills. In regards to caring, coaches could be evaluated on their interpersonal skills, interaction with athletes, and the relationship they have developed with athletes. Also, coaches could be evaluated on fairness by assessing whether or not they degrade or lie to athletes. Lastly, coaches could be evaluated on their ability to develop athletes' mental sport-skills (e.g., self-efficacy, motivation, team cohesion, focus). Although existing inventories measure many mental sport skills (Ostrow, 2002; Duda, 1998), they do not assess how the coach facilitated or inhibited the development of the respective mental skill. Rather than measuring the athlete's mental state (e.g., perceived self-efficacy or preferred leadership behavior), evaluative inventories need to be able to measure the effect the coach had on the athlete or team.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, a few conclusions are offered:

1. Athletes associated poor coaching with specific coaching behaviors, not fulfilling the role of teacher, not caring about them, being unfair, and inhibiting their athletic development.

2. Athletes did not associate poor coaching with winning.

3. Athletes used coping strategies that helped them to persist and to succeed in sport in spite of the poor coach.

Recommendations for Sport Stakeholders and Policymakers

The findings of this study may be of considerable use to coaches who want to understand how to influence and affect athletes. Given that athletes in this study all perceived their performance was inhibited by the coaches they discussed, and coaches generally seek to maximize athletes' performance, coaches should consider the findings of this study in relation to that goal. Since the end desired is maximizing performance, there may be behaviors that have the opposite effect and based on the perceptions of athletes, coaches might be wise to avoid using them, or at least to use them with caution. For example, coaches should probably focus their communication on athlete learning and skill development rather than using feedback that combines instruction with degrading comments. To avoid being perceived as unfair and as playing favorites, coaches should make team rules explicit and enforce them consistently with all players. To avoid being perceived as uncaring, coaches should get to know athletes personally and engage them in authentic and caring dialogue.

Although no athlete would knowingly want to play for a poor coach, the findings suggest athletes were able to adapt and persist in sport despite this less than optimal condition. If a coach is offering unhelpful instruction, athletes should direct their own learning through outlets such as television, video, books, friends, intuition, or other coaches. If a coach is uncaring, athletes should seek support from friends, family, other coaches, support staff or perhaps counselors. Depending upon the situation, athletes may want to talk with the coach to inform him or her of their predicament. While we might

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assume that the poor coach would not be receptive to such a discussion, it may serve to alleviate a miscommunication or difference of 'opinion' between the coach and athlete. For those athletes who do seek out their coach, it is recommended that they be respectful and do not blame the coach for their problems, but rather demonstrate they are trying to get better and are looking for the coach's guidance.

Because of the degrading, and perhaps unethical, communication poor coaches' used, administrators of sport such as principals and athletic directors should hold their coaches accountable for being positive teachers and role models. It is imperative that administrators manage coaches to protect against the potentially harmful effect coaches may have on athletes not only athletically, but in general as well. Administrators must lead the way to establishing a culture of athlete learning and development in sport, not a philosophy of wining at all costs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research are presented:

1. Replicate this study with a different sample of athletes to confirm the findings.

2. Undertake a series of studies replicating this study, but holding potentially critical variables (age, gender, competitive level, and ethnicity) constant.

3. An existential phenomenological study should be undertaken to look at coaches' lived experience of coaching, as well as their experience of being great or poor

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coaches, and to compare it with that of athletes' experiences.

4. Based on the findings of this study, a scale of effective coaching should be developed and validated. This would allow for conducting a large scale study of athletes' perceptions of effective coaching.

5. Based on the finding of athletes' ability to adapt to poor coaching and persist in sport, a future study should explore these coping strategies. One of the coping strategies athletes identified was to 'act' like they were listening to the coach, but to secretly dismiss what they were saying. A qualitative study using Goffman's (1959) framework from the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* may provide a useful framework for identifying how and why athletes become 'actors' in order to cope with their experience of being poorly coached.

6. Based on the finding that poor coaches 'acted' in ways to portray themselves favorably (e.g., there for the coach) to athletic department donors, the media, and their peers, a future study should explore this phenomenon. Again, a qualitative study using Goffman's (1959) framework might provide a useful framework for identifying how and why coaches become 'actors' in order to make themselves appear successful.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

BRACKETING I: SELF-INTEREST IN POOR COACHING

I am currently a strength and conditioning coach at the University of Tennessee. I played sports when I was a youth and in high school, which eventually led me to playing football at John Carroll University, classified as a NCAA Division III school. Ever since I was in high school, I can remember thinking about wanting to become a coach. However, I told myself I would never do it because of the low pay and long hours. As it turned out, I was wrong. While much of what I read in college was about exercise science (physiology, biomechanics, and injury prevention), I was exposed to little in terms of what I now know many call coaching science.

Throughout graduate school I read a lot of research on coaching science through the perspective of a sport psychologist, sport manager, or sport sociologist. As I was a strength coach all the while, I often reflected on what it meant to be a great strength coach. Why did some athletes 'buy-in' to some coaches and not others? Did athletes have to like you to be a great coach or did they just have to respect you? How should we evaluate or measure the effectiveness of coaches? At that point I did not have much training in research methods, but I knew I could ask good questions.

A phenomenological study of poor coaching was actually not my first dissertation topic. I switched to this topic for several reasons, the first of which was because I lost interest in my original topic, which focused on Bourdieu's Cultural Capital theory and its relationship to student-athlete persistence. Probably not the first time that's ever

happened to someone writing their dissertation! After much reflection, I decided to study a topic that would hold my attention and curiosity: coaching. I then decided to combine my interest in coaching, philosophy, and research methods by conducting a phenomenological study of the experience of effective coaching. After talking with the director of mental performance about my dissertation topic, I soon learned that one of his graduate assistants, a Ph.D. candidate in sport psychology, was almost finished with that study (Becker, 2007). I was devastated. I had abandoned my previous dissertation for what I thought to be a unique study. Again, I reflected on my interests and the relevant literature in coaching and decided to study athletes' experience of poor coaching. I thought of it as a nice complement to the study of effective coaching, while being potentially enlightening and unique in its own right. I then learned that a graduate student in sport psychology had conducted a phenomenological study of the experience of being coached (Johnson, 1997). So, here at one university in a ten year period, we would have three different, complementary phenomenological studies exploring the phenomenon of coaching. My hope is that researchers and practitioners will be able to use all of this information to help question, answer and further the field of coaching from both an applied and theoretical perspective.

Appendix B

BRACKETING II: FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW ON RESEARCHER'S
EXPERIENCE OF POOR COACHING

Bracketing Findings

The purpose of the bracketing interview was to help ensure that during data analysis, themes were developed from participants' perceptions rather than from the researcher's biases. The results of the researcher's bracketing interview revealed three themes of being poorly coached: not qualified, not instructional, and immoral. The theme of not qualified represents the researcher's experience of thinking his coach was unknowledgeable and disorganized. He also thought one of his coaches was poor at making the right calls and decisions during games. The theme of not instructional represented the low quality of instruction he perceived was given to during practices. Instead of offering instruction related to being a defensive lineman, the researcher described one coach who would joke or demean him following a repetition at practice. Also, he described another coach who didn't provide quality instruction because he was "lazy," "not around" and "did nothing." Lastly, the theme of immoral represented the demeaning language coaches used and the wrong messages and values they communicated. Coaches were also described as being unfair by not enforcing team rules or inequitably enforcing the rules.

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT
"Athletes' Experience of Poor Coaching"

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, "Athletes' Experience of Poor Coaching." The purpose of this study is to explore athletes' experience of poor coaching.

Data will be collected from interviews with participants, which will be made available only to Brian Gearity, a research analysis group, and Dr. Norma Mertz, Professor, Higher Education Administration, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, who is chairing my doctoral committee. In order to ensure confidentiality, participants' names will be replaced with pseudonyms and participants' responses that reveal personal information (e.g., a specific coach's name, school) will be changed during transcription. All written documentation (e.g., transcripts, final study) will use these pseudonyms and masked information. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed by Brian Gearity and erased upon completion of transcription. Paper copies of transcriptions will be kept locked in the office of Dr. Norma Mertz, 1122 Volunteer Blvd. office 315, Jane and David Bailey Education Complex.

Interviews will take approximately 45-90 minutes to complete. After all interviews have been collected and analyzed, you will be sent a copy of the results for verification or amendments for which you will have one week to respond.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you may choose not to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime, again without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed.

You may find it rewarding to reflect on your own athletic experiences and the opportunity to share your voice regarding poor coaching. The results of the study will contribute to (a) research on coaching effectiveness, (b) the education and development of coaches and athletes, and (c) the potential to create evaluative measurements of coaches. There are no known risks for participating in this study, nor will there be any monetary compensation doing so.

If you have any questions about the study or the procedures being used, contact the researcher, Brian Gearity, by email btgearity@yahoo.com or phone (865) 405-1336. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Research Compliance Services section of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

Consent--I have read and received a copy of the above information. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature_____ Date_____

Primary Investigator's Signature_____ Date_____

Appendix D

RESEARCH GROUP MEMBER'S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

As a member of a phenomenological group analysis team, I understand that I will be

reading transcriptions of confidential interviews for the study of "Athletes' Experience of

Poor Coaching". The information in these transcripts has been revealed by research

participants who participated in this project in good faith and with the understanding that

their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a

responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any

information in these transcriptions with anyone except Brian Gearity, the primary

researcher of this project, Dr. Norma Mertz, his doctoral chair, or other members of this

research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of

ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so. By signing below I agree to the terms listed

above.

RESEARCH GROUP MEMBER'S SIGNATURE   DATE

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis (to be read from the bottom up) (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002)

(THIRD ITERATION: ESSENCE OF ATHLETES' EXPERIENCE OF POOR COACHING)

Theme 1: Not Teaching	Theme 2: Uncaring	Theme 3: Unfair	Theme 4: Inhibiting	Theme 5: Coping

(SECOND ITERATION: PATTERN VARIABLES)

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
1a *Not instructing*	2a *There for himself/herself*	3a *Dishonest*	4a *Demotivating*	4a *Coping*
1b *Not individualized*	2b *Wasn't there for me*	3b *Degrading*	4b *Engendering self-doubt*	
1c *Not knowledgeable*		3c *Playing favorites*	4c *Dividing the team*	
			4d *Distracting*	

(FIRST ITERATION: INITIAL CODES/SURFACE CONTENT ANALYSIS)

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
1a Didn't teach/learn	2a Better than everybody	3a Lies	4a Player apathy	4a Avoid coach
1a Bad/failes strategies	2a Make coach look good	3a Betrayed	4a Want to win, but not for coach	4a Seek out teammates/others
1a Wrong technique	2a Win at all costs	3a Coach's personality shift	4a Hated coach, practice	4a Friends quit
1a No mental training	2a Injured athletes are no help	3a Hypocrisy		4a Endure/persist
1a Unavailable	2a Pawns in a business	3a Jekyll/Hyde & inconsistencies	4b Coach loses confidence in you	4a Learn on own
1a No life skills			4b Lose confidence in yourself	
	2b Uncommunicative	3b Cussed at	4b Coach's communication led to doubt	
1b Same tactics	2b Unapproachable	3b Demoralized	4b Afraid to fail	
1b Same motivation	2b Inaccessible	3b Name calling	4b Breaks/tears me down	
1b Same instruction	2b No relationship	3b Physical abuse		
1b Wrong method	2b Didn't know me	3b No praise	4c Call each other out	
1b Talk to everybody same			4c Turn team against each other	
		3c Bend the rules	4c Maniuplate players against each other	
1c Lacked knowledge		3c Up on a pedestal		
1c Lacked experience		3c Unequal communication	4d Worry about coach during performance	
1c Lacked empathy		3c Unequal expectations	4d Focused on coach	
1c Lacked effort			4d Unnatural play	
			4d Focus on outcome	
DATA	DATA	DATA	DATA	DATA

Appendix F

PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS AND THEMES

THEME: NOT TEACHING		
Subtheme: Not Instructing	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	yelling with no instruction
	Mary	emotions affected strategy
	Annie	didn't learn, couldn't comm,practices waste, used wrong strategy
	Jack	no instruction, teach don't call them an idiot,focused on other
	Damien	wrong technique, warm ups at practice, game decision making
	Adam	plays didn't work, (general)
	Jim	not there, changed offense, game tactic, no preparation
	Mickey	didn't teach life skills
	Charlie	advice, leadership skills, lack of instruction, not enough time
	Dominick	involvement, bad decisions in games, switch identity
	Dan	didn't teach, mismanaged pitchers, running for new purpose
	Amanda	doesn't fix, coach, comm, wromg tech, bad practices
	Buck	no advice, no mental, wrong strategy/time spent
	Zeid	terrible game time coach
	Lydia	no coaching, tunnel vision, not getting better
	Daisy	don't get any coaching from them, 3 parts-no focus
Subtheme: Not Individualized	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	relate to player, comm
	Mary	different personalities react to different coaching
	Annie	
	Jack	
	Damien	
	Adam	coach needs to adapt
	Jim	
	Mickey	didn't know how to deal with those kids, every individual
	Charlie	
	Dominick	I ddint need that/mental tough
	Dan	didn't take into account intelligence/personality
	Amanda	hit same
	Buck	issue of neg/pos instruction
	Zeid	
	Lydia	works for some people, lack of personality
	Daisy	
Subtheme: Unknowledgeable	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	
	Mary	
	Annie	didn't know what he was doing, lacked effort
	Jack	
	Damien	lacked exp at position, lack of control/know what to do
	Adam	Empathy, lacked experience, type, effort
	Jim	look to asst, didn't know what he wanted, had no clue, lacked time/effor
	Mickey	
	Charlie	
	Dominick	not knowing what he was talking about, know game plan, understand, effort
	Dan	no exper, empathy, effort in teaching, doesn't know what to do
	Amanda	
	Buck	wrong tech, effort
	Zeid	
	Lydia	
	Daisy	no effort/time with us

THEME: UNFAIR		
Subtheme: Dishonest	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	
	Mary	decitful, flip flop
	Annie	rules lied
	Jack	
	Damien	
	Adam	
	Jim	recruiting switch not what it seemed
	Mickey	asked us to do things he didn't do them, lack of trust
	Charlie	fooled me during recruiting
	Dominick	completely different in recruiting
	Dan	flip flopped
	Amanda	call me/not there, lie to face, no trust
	Buck	
	Zeid	said focus on this but didn't do it (inconsistent), dependable, accountable
	Lydia	make promises they don't keep, flip flop, lied to parents in meeting
	Daisy	recruiting, scholarship, school
Subtheme: Degrading	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	stupid, talk down to you, cursing
	Mary	soft, stabs at my character, no matter what no credit
	Annie	demeaning, praised others, quick to yell not build up
	Jack	embarrased, hit with whistles, language of yelling, punished, always negative
	Damien	hard nose tough all the time
	Adam	in front of teammates
	Jim	scolded/yelled for no reason, berserk/nuts bc kid yawned, negative mindset
	Mickey	degrading tones, messages, abusive
	Charlie	yelling, demoralize, wouldn't praise us
	Dominick	yelled at no reason, repeatedly criticized, all over me at practice
	Dan	coward, challenege manhood, I can't believe you can't do that
	Amanda	calls out, yells, accusations, eat less fries, praise them degrades us
	Buck	you're scared, yelled at, always criticizing
	Zeid	didn't appreciate effort, respect, praised other
	Lydia	ridiculing me, hurt me, always negative
	Daisy	never worked hard blah, ran for wrong reason, never think to hear sorry
Subtheme: Playing Favorites	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	rules
	Mary	better treatment
	Annie	rules, better player better treatment
	Jack	took other under wing
	Damien	
	Adam	
	Jim	
	Mickey	
	Charlie	pedestal, focused on some, unequal expectations
	Dominick	had his guys, not treated equally
	Dan	his boys, rules
	Amanda	help everybody, like some, unequal expt
	Buck	more partial to me
	Zeid	
	Lydia	expectations, mind made up, pedestal
	Daisy	enforce rules, some states, opportunities/expectations

THEME: UNCARING		
Subtheme: There for Himself/Herself	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	
	Mary	only there to play, didn't appreciate me, soccer is life
	Annie	do as I say, not as I do, power of asst to make him look good, reputation
	Jack	
	Damien	asst covered his butt
	Adam	
	Jim	
	Mickey	no outside activities, no AAU, need to get wins, treat as robots
	Charlie	wouldn't show up comm service/not role model
	Dominick	asst cover the butts, hc not loyal to us
	Dan	cared about W not me
	Amanda	asst/head conflicts, academics, winning is all
	Buck	yelled to get off his chest
	Zeid	take take take, burned teammates redshirt
	Lydia	all about the W, us vs them, not my best interests at heart
	Daisy	change major, taking $, coach is Jesus, win
Subtheme: Wasn't There for Me	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	know athletes by building relationship, comm
	Mary	didn't treat me as a persom, couldn't approach
	Annie	
	Jack	not sincere apology
	Damien	can't talk to, gen care
	Adam	relate to player, comm
	Jim	no comm to non starters, no relationship
	Mickey	lack of relationship/empathy understanding, no mutual agreement, not there to help
	Charlie	didn't care, pushed aside, couldn't talk to, not there to watch
	Dominick	fake relationship, didn't want to be around, not there to watch
	Dan	workable relationship but not amicable, no effrot to relationship, not there to watch
	Amanda	doesn't try to understand
	Buck	never grew close to coach
	Zeid	never accessible, zero relationship, he was never there, closed door
	Lydia	unapproachable, cant talk to, doesn't know us
	Daisy	no respect for us-don't care

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THEME: INHIBITING		
Subtheme: Dividing Team	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	favorites build negative vibe
	Mary	playing fav?, created drama
	Annie	1 girl as cancer
	Jack	team doubted me, questioned me?
	Damien	
	Adam	
	Jim	
	Mickey	best friend turned on me
	Charlie	on same team but didn't feel like it
	Dominick	not in this together
	Dan	not effective to move as one
	Amanda	turn team
	Buck	
	Zeid	build resentment on team-bc of unfair praise
	Lydia	dig into each other
	Daisy	push us against each other
Subtheme: Demotivating	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	that's (neg comm) is not motivating
	Mary	didn't want to go to practice, nothing inside to play for her
	Annie	
	Jack	negative only motivates for so long
	Damien	
	Adam	
	Jim	
	Mickey	grinded it out
	Charlie	
	Dominick	nofun,dread, didn't want to win
	Dan	everybody hates playing for you, get over it
	Amanda	
	Buck	why should I put anything in for him
	Zeid	doesn't make you work harder bc degarding/lack of praise
	Lydia	doesn't motivate the way I need
	Daisy	show in play-we don't want to win for our coaches
Subtheme: Engendering Self-Doubt	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	down on myself, feel like your nothing
	Mary	lowest it had ever been
	Annie	told not that good
	Jack	lack of praise led to lack of confidence
	Damien	lack of prep-play slow
	Adam	(general)
	Jim	no conf in coach, ourselves
	Mickey	afraid to fail, regret
	Charlie	doubt from lack of care/involvement
	Dominick	fear of failure, lack confidence in players
	Dan	
	Amanda	fear of failure
	Buck	others lost confidence
	Zeid	
	Lydia	awful job of building confidence
	Daisy	told me how horrible I am, why am I worst
Subtheme: Distracting	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	messes with my head, lose focus
	Mary	added pressure, worried about what she would say, think
	Annie	
	Jack	
	Damien	flow/other way of doing it
	Adam	flow
	Jim	don't screw up, control coaching
	Mickey	I didn't want to mess up bc I diont want to come out
	Charlie	
	Dominick	focused on coach-taken out
	Dan	worry about encountering coach
	Amanda	focus on outcome, coach's fighting
	Buck	
	Zeid	
	Lydia	
	Daisy	

THEME: COPING		
Subtheme: Coping	**Athlete Pseudonym**	**Meaning Unit**
	Ron	accept good/block bad, make wall
	Mary	learned to expect it, eating disorder, sought out others
	Annie	
	Jack	
	Damien	
	Adam	say nothing to them, coach myself
	Jim	
	Mickey	can't not play, can't quit
	Charlie	hard to learn on own
	Dominick	give up?
	Dan	avoidminsubordination/pop off
	Amanda	whatever, don't listen, work on own, made me not relaxed
	Buck	teach yourself bc no hitting coach, work this out
	Zeid	
	Lydia	others transfer, whatever tom
	Daisy	they way ive dealt w them, go to each other, apathy towards coach

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Appendix G

AUDIT TRAIL

The number in parentheses below was a running count of the number of times the researcher read each of the participant's transcript.

The researcher conducted, transcribed, and analyzed the bracketing interview.

The researcher conducted one interview (1). The researcher transcribed this interview within two days (2). The researcher read and then wrote notes of this transcript to get a sense of the data as a whole (3). The researcher brought this transcript to the phenomenological group for analysis.

The collection and subsequent analysis of the remaining data followed the pattern described above: conduct—transcribe—read each transcript for a sense of the data as a whole. The researcher wrote individual notes of each transcript and general notes of phenomenon. Each transcript was transcribed within two days. After 15 more interviews, the researcher determined theoretical saturation had occurred.

The researcher completed the 1st iteration of data analysis by reading and analyzing each of the 16 transcripts separately to create meaning units (4). The researcher completed the 2nd iteration of data analysis by constantly comparing the meaning units of each transcript separately and grouping these meaning units into similar categories.

The researcher wrote notes across transcripts for the purpose of developing the overall thematic structure (5).

The researcher completed the 3rd iteration of data analysis by constantly comparing the categories that resulted from the 2nd iteration of data analysis. The researcher read all of the transcripts individually in relation to the thematic structure (6). The researcher wrote more notes and slightly modified the thematic structure, thus completing the second draft of the thematic structure.

The researcher presented the second draft of the thematic structure to the phenomenological group. Based on the group's feedback, the researcher modified the thematic structure to use consistent language, but not the content of the themes.

The researcher read all of the transcripts one last time to confirm the thematic structure (7).

The researcher gave this second draft to participants for the process of member checking. There were no changes suggested by the participants, thus confirming the thematic structure.

Having read and analyzed each transcript no less than seven times, the researcher determined the thematic structure was complete. Throughout this process, the researcher went back to the findings of the bracketing interview to ensure that the researcher's bias was not distorting the thematic structure.

Having received feedback from his doctoral committee chair, the researcher re-read all of the transcripts (8) and made a few modest modifications to the thematic structure. These modifications entailed joining two sub-themes for both the theme of Not Teaching and Unfair. The researcher removed the sub-theme Coping from Inhibiting and made it a separate theme. Lastly, the researcher changed the titles of the two sub-themes in the theme of Uncaring to more accurately reflect the athletes' experience.

Vita

       Dr. Brian Gearity is currently an assistant strength and conditioning coach at the University of Tennessee (UT). He completed his doctoral work in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with a major in Higher Education Administration while specializing in qualitative research methods, statistics, and philosophy of education. In 2001, Brian earned a B.A. degree in exercise science and physical education with a major in athletic training and fitness specialist from John Carroll University in Cleveland, OH. He earned a M.S. degree in Sport Management from UT in 2003. He is a polymath of sport and education with knowledge and interest in education and learning, sport performance, sport sociology, sport psychology and sport pedagogy. He is a certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS), a certified athletic trainer (ATC) and holds additional certifications with the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association (CSCC), United Stated Weightlifting Association (Club Coach), and United States Track and Field (Level 1, Level 2 Sprints & Hurdles, Level 3 Sprints & Hurdles). He will be joining the University of Southern Mississippi in the fall of 2009 as an Assistant Professor in the Coaching Education program in the school of Human Performance and Recreation.