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Running Head: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL COACHES

The Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Communication Strategies of Successful Coaches: A Content Analysis of Books by Coaches
about Coaching

by

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A Paper submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

Degree Awarded:
11 December 2008

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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL COACHES: A CONTENT
ANALYSIS OF BOOKS BY COACHES ABOUT COACHING

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Degree: Master of Science in Communication & Media Technologies

Term Degree Awarded: Winter 2008 (20082)

Abstract

Communication behaviors of coaches are critical in motivating athletes and creating a climate of success. Coaches learn their techniques from a variety of sources—mentors, education, and lessons learned from other coaches. For this study, university coaches were surveyed to determine five books written by successful coaches: *The Smart Take from the Strong* (Pete Carril), *Sacred Hoops* (Phil Jackson), *Leading with the Heart* (Mike Krzyzewski), *Reach for the Summit* (Pat Summitt) and *They Call Me Coach* (John Wooden). Using grounded theory, the researcher analyzed these texts and discovered discernible categories of communication techniques deemed significant to the process of successful coaching. Furthermore, it is suggested that these techniques can be used by teachers, managers, and leaders outside of the athletic arena.

Key words: Coaching communication, Coaching behaviors, Leadership behaviors, Athlete motivation

Communication Strategies of Successful Coaches: A Content Analysis of Books by Coaches about Coaching

Communication plays a critical role in the athletic setting. Wang and Ramsey (1997) assert that the ability to communicate effectively is an essential skill in becoming a successful coach. Coaches strive to motivate the athletes they work with and provide them with the necessary tools to train effectively and improve performance. One coaching responsibility is to help athletes realize their full potential. To achieve their full potential, athletes must be able to maintain a high level of motivation over a long period of time, including practice and competition. However, motivation is multifaceted, and has challenged coaches at all levels and in all sports. Learning how to motivate athletes requires that coaches develop interpersonal relationship with their players that foster growth and development. Effective coaching communication and leadership behaviors can greatly enhance the learning process for athletes.

In the realm of communication research, coaching communication and leadership behaviors have come under increased study. This thesis presents both evidence and anecdote. The literature review consists of scholarly findings of motivation in coaching and the development of successful athletes. In addition to coaching communication research, many prominent coaches have published books on coaching, classifying and explaining their own communication methods and leadership behaviors. While successful coaches are often heralded for successful win-loss records and championships, at the heart of their success is their coaching philosophy. This thesis proposes to perform a constant comparative content analysis of popular autobiographical books written by coaches on their coaching philosophy.

Pete Carril, Phil Jackson, Mike Krzyzewski, Pat Summitt and John Wooden are legendary coaches whose coaching successes are unparalleled. The researcher will use grounded

theory to provide a comprehensive assessment of the communication techniques illustrated by the coaches in their books, and ultimately set forth a framework for successful coaching communication. The communication techniques used by the five coaches are deemed not only significant to the coaching process, but are relevant to leaders in many environments.

Rationale

Research into coaching has experienced significant growth in the last 25 years, and has shown that the coach plays an important role in the creation of a motivational climate (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). Effective and efficient communication is a central part of most successful individual and team performances. The importance of communication in coaching could be due to the fact that communication is often poorly understood and seldom carried out (Shelley & Sherman, 1997). When the coach fosters a positive coach-athlete relationship, it allows for effective and efficient communication to take place. Coach-athlete instructional communication research is worthwhile because of the important role coaches play in the development of successful athletes.

Coaching communication research overwhelmingly suggests that in the athletic setting the relationship between coach and athlete is similar to that of teacher and student (Turman, 2003b). With record numbers of students participating in athletics in high school (National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations, 2006) and at the college level (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2002), the relationships athletes develop with their coaches are becoming increasingly influential. In order to ensure optimal learning for athletes, it is essential that coaches understand how to efficiently and effectively communicate with athletes, making this area of research paramount to the coaching profession (Turman, 2003b). A content analysis

of autobiographical books written by successful coaches will further define the qualities of successful coaches. The authoring coaches have excellent coaching records and are recognized by peers as exemplary coaches, therefore it is assumed they have much to teach other coaches. De Marco and McCullick (1997) confirm, “legendary coaches guide our understanding of the development and application of the skills, knowledge, and perspectives emblematic of superior coaching” (p. 37). The researcher will establish common themes in the books, coupled with previous research findings, to suggest qualities of successful coaching philosophies of motivation aimed at assisting coaches in coach-athlete communication.

Literature Review Overview

The following literature review encompasses the broad range of existing coaching communication research. The review of the literature illustrates the complexity of the coach-athlete relationship and the proximity between communication and motivation in the athletic setting. The themes of coaching communication and leadership behavior found by the researcher in the scholarly research presented are motivation, coaching style (autocratic versus democratic), the role of the coach as teacher (instruction) and praise. Research shows a coach can positively or negatively impact the motivational climate for athletes with both verbal and nonverbal communication (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Turman & Schrodtt, 2004; Weinstein, Smith & Weisenthal, 1995). Additionally, observational studies of prominent coaches code specific phrases and actions utilized by each coach that supplement the content analysis performed in this study.

Literature Review

Turman (2003b) argues that although there has been a great deal of instructional communication research, it has focused almost entirely on the classroom setting, failing to acknowledge the similar interaction that occurs between coaches and athletes in the athletic context. Many researchers have examined leadership in a variety of environments, including organizations (Allen & Tompkins, 1996; Hackman, Ellis, Johnson, & Staley, 1999; Hackman & Johnson, 2000; Husband, 1985), small groups (Barge & Keyton, 1994; Cruz, Henningsen, & Smith, 1999), and classrooms (Kearney, Plax, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1984; Roach, 1995); however, research into coaching behavior has only emerged in the last 20 plus years as the coaching profession has gained recognition (Kahan, 1999; Turman, 2001).

Turman and Schrodtt (2004) state that equating success (i.e. winning) with coaching effectiveness de-emphasizes the importance of the learning environment coaches create for athletes. They argue that a coach's sole responsibility is not to guarantee team and individual success for their athletes, but more generally to provide learning experiences. Roberts (1984) disputes the current emphasis on competition within the sport environment, arguing that athletics offer athletes the opportunity to learn life skills, including "responsibility, conformity, subordination of the self to the greater good...effort, persistence, and delay of gratification" (p. 251). Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) differentiate between a performance climate and a motivational climate. In a performance climate, the coach placing an emphasis on "winning" and an accomplishment results in ego involvement. In contrast, a motivational climate focuses on "learning and mastery of skills," in which individuals are more likely to be task involved. The authors suggest that as the level of involvement increases, it is increasingly important for the

coach to assist in creating a balanced performance and motivational climate (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). Similarly, Joy (2008) defines integral coaching as an approach to coaching that encompasses all aspects of training: optimizing the individual's performance and personal development. An emphasis on both performance and growth results in a movement of the consciousness from "me" to "we" to "us" to "all of us" (Joy, 2008).

Hanin (1992) uses the Performance-Anxiety-Context-Enhancement (PACE) model to show the influential role of communication in successful performance and the mental states of individuals and teams. The PACE model suggests four components of sport psychology, and shows the relationship between them.

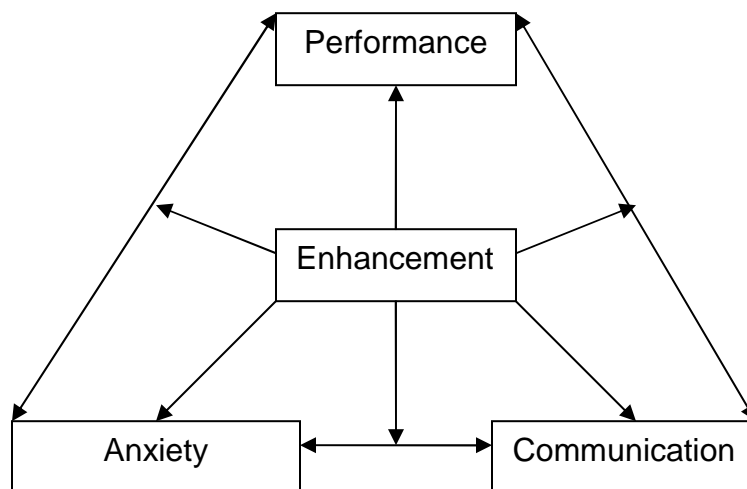


Figure 1. Performance-Anxiety-Context-Enhancement (PACE) model

Hanin (1992) breaks down the communication process into external (communicative behavior) and internal (cognitive, affective, and motivational) aspects. The support and instruction coaches provide to athletes considerably affects the motivational climate created (Hansen, Gilbert & Hamel, 2003; Rocca, Martin & Toale, 1998; Smith & Smoll, 1990; Turman, 2001; Turman &

Schrodt, 2004; Zhang & Jensen, 1997). Coaches use a number of motivational strategies, including direct positive reinforcement, verbally challenging behavior (as opposed to character) and physically challenging athletes (Hansen et al., 2003). Athletes report a preference for positive, immediate, encouraging and evaluative feedback that is reinforcing and rewarding and demonstrates social support (Sinclair & Vealey, 1989; Smith & Smoll, 1990). However, the degree to which coaches successfully do this varies. According to Shelley and Sherman (1997), frequent coach-athlete communication will help to develop an effective means for communicating, and reduce the occurrence of misunderstandings.

Hansen et al. (2003) situate motivation as one of the key elements in the field of coaching communication. Motivation is defined as “personality factors, social variables, and/or cognitions that are assumed to come into play when a person undertakes a task at which he or she is evaluated, enters into competition with others, or attempts to attain some standard of excellence” (Roberts, 1993, p. 406). It can be further separated into three main types: intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation. Intrinsic motivation is described as participating in the activity for the pleasure and satisfaction the activity itself provides (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007), and “the inner desire to make things happen” (Black & Weiss, 1992, p. 309). The opposite of intrinsic, amotivation shows a lack of motivation and reason to participate (Hansen et al., 2003). Situated between the two, extrinsic motivation involves participation in the activity as a means to an end or some external incentive (Hansen et al., 2003).

However, not all athletes are similarly motivated, and coaches employ many strategies to motivate athletes (Hansen et al., 2003). Motivation to perform has been shown to be affected by coaching behaviors, including error feedback and positive and negative verbal feedback (Hansen

et al., 2003). When defining motivation, coaches generally connect effort with motivation, and effort is something within the athlete's control. Therefore, coaches often expect athletes to be self-motivated to succeed. Coaches however, have noted that their own motivational style could impact their effectiveness as a motivator (Hansen et al., 2003). It is important for coaches get to know each individual athlete to better understand their goals and what makes them tick to provide effective motivation.

Athletes must be intrinsically motivated to consistently pursue excellence; however, the coach has been identified as playing an important role in the motivation of athletes. Although athletes are expected to be driven by an "inner desire," the coach can cultivate an athletes' motivation through coaching behaviors and leadership styles. The way in which coach's structure practices, their decision making style and quantity and quality of the feedback they provide to their athletes are behaviors that have significant implications on motivation (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007).

A number of theory-based studies have emerged to better explain athletic behaviors, shedding light upon how the coach can influence athlete motivation. Self-determination theory (SDT) argues that basis for participation and exertion in an activity can be categorized along a continuum of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2002). Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2007) investigated motivation in relation to self-determination theory, finding that "the more the athletes felt competent, autonomous, and senses of relatedness, the more their reasons for participating were self-determined in nature" (p. 666).

Harter's (1978, 1981) competence motivation theory stresses that individuals who perceive themselves as competent in an activity are more likely to sustain and enjoy their

involvement in that activity. A key component of Harter's (1978, 1981) theory is the influence of others on perceived confidence, affect and motivation. A number of studies have shown that athlete perceptions of their coaches' styles and behaviors are strongly related to motivational factors (Chelladurai, 1984; Horn, 1987; Smoll & Smith, 1989; Weiss & Friedrichs, 1986; Westre & Weiss, 1991). Black and Weiss's (1992) study also provides support for Harter's competence motivation theory and extends previous coaching behavior research. They found that among competitive age-group swimmers, frequent praise, information and encouragement positively influenced perceptions of ability, positive affect and motivation.

In support of previous research demonstrating the importance of identifying the determinants of athletes' motivation to coaches' development and implementation of effective motivational strategies, Kipp and Amorose (2008) examined how athletes' views of the motivational climate created by their coaches serve as determinants of athletes' sport motivation. Researchers proposed that the motivational climate participants experienced would influence their perceptions of competence, autonomy and relatedness, which would subsequently influence their motivational orientation. The study revealed that a task-involving environment was favorably associated with self-determined motivation. Kipp and Amorose (2008) suggested that coaches employ tactics that emphasize the importance of effort, learning and improvement. They acknowledged that while this may seem contradictory to the "win at no cost" attitude often expected of—or perceived by—coaches, "if coaches help athletes focus on the process of self-improvement, they should reap the benefits associated with a self-determined motivation" (p. 126). The authors advise coaches to foster athletes' self-determined motivation to maximize performance and success. In Giacobbi, Roper, Whitney and Butryn's (2002) coach interviews,

one interviewee noted, “I think that’s part of being a good teacher and a good coach just to find out what is the best button to push to get the best results” (p. 173). A successful coach will be able to determine how to communicate with each athlete to get the most out of that athlete. Coaches must motivate athletes, deal with conflicts among players on their team, and provide instruction, (Haselwood, Joyner, Burke, Geyerman, Czech, Munskey & Zwald, 2005), taking into consideration the differing personalities of individuals and the level of competition (i.e. elite vs. college vs. high school vs. youth athletics).

Critical to the communication process is the way in which messages are sent, including the timing, amount and content of message (Shelley & Sherman, 1997). Shelley and Sherman (1997) stress the importance of a coach’s active listening skills. Active listening requires a commitment on the coaches’ part to put in the time and effort necessary to understand what athletes might be thinking and feeling and how they view their role on the team. Additionally, the coach must put aside his or her own biases prejudices and judgments when listening. Active listening includes empathizing, clarifying, and summarizing. Shelley and Sherman (1997) define an emphatic coach as one who attempts to “grasp and understand an athlete’s experiences while maintaining their own unique perspective” (p. 112). The authors encourage coaches to adequately clarify statements and summarize their own thoughts and feelings in order to foster an open environment with mutual respect. In accordance with research findings that athletes prefer a democratic coaching style over an autocratic style, Shelley and Sherman (1997) state that by listening actively, a coach makes an athlete feel as though “one has input, a voice, or something meaningful to offer” (p. 113) often leading to a greater appreciation for the coach. Although Shelley and Sherman (1997) feel that active listening is an important component of successful

coaching communication, they also note that at its core, coaching is teaching and instructions, making the method by which messages are sent as important as the way in which they are received. Coaches are responsible for how, when, and where they decide to communicate their messages (Shelley & Sherman, 1997).

Giacobbi et al. (2002) conducted a qualitative interview study of 10 NCAA Division I coaches in order to better elaborate on the necessary components of successful development of athletes. The six major higher order themes derived from the interview data: developmental considerations, motivation/competitiveness, coachability, the coaches' influence, the teams' influence, and miscellaneous contextual influences. The findings showed that coaches at varying levels view loving to play the game, having a positive attitude and coachability as the most important determinants of athletic success. One of the most revealing statements made by a coach commented on the role the coach-athlete relationship plays in the coachability of an athlete: "coachability depends a lot on the coach. If players don't respect the coach, then the message isn't going to be well-received" (p. 170).

In an overview of instructional communication research, Sprauge (2002) urged scholars of communication research to broaden the context of instructional communication research beyond the traditional classroom setting. Sprauge (2002) provided a fundamental definition of education: "someone (teacher) teaches something (content/attitudes/ skills) to someone else (learner)" (p. 342). Coaching is a form of teaching. It embodies many of the fundamental elements of teaching (De Marco & McCullick, 1999; Turman & Schrodts, 2004). Coaches need to instruct athletes on correct technique and communicate with their athletes to cultivate a learning environment to help ensure positive learning results.

There has been significant research into teachers' use of humor in the classroom, focusing on teacher effectiveness, teacher evaluations, perceived teacher competency and student learning outcomes (Bryant, Cominsky, Crane & Zillmann, 1980; Gorham & Christophel, 1990; Gruner, 1966, 1967; Hauck & Thomas, 1972; Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977; Tamborini & Zillmann, 1981; Terry & Woods, 1975). Overall, the use of humor by instructors in the classroom results in a positive outcome for the teacher and student. The relationship between coaching and teaching suggests that if humor is effective in the classroom setting, it will also be effective in an athletic setting. In a 1995 study, Burke, Peterson and Nix examined the relationship between humor and coaching. The authors affirmed that if humor helps with increased athlete interest and receptivity, and the coach is viewed as being more approachable, humor would play an important role in coaching. The data from the study suggested that humor does play a role in athletes' perceptions of their coaches' abilities and the liking of their coaches. The authors suggested that perhaps sport psychologists should incorporate humor when working with athletes, as well as promote its use with and among coaches. Specifically, the study noted that humor may be a needed in athletics to alleviate the stresses that sometimes come with practice and competition (Burke *et al.*, 1995).

One of the main components of coaching communication research is the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) developed by Chelladurai and Saleh (1980). The three components of the LSS are athlete preferences, athlete perceptions and coach self-perceptions (Turman, 2003b). Loughhead and Hardy (2005) describe the LSS as representing five aspects of leader behavior in sport: training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support, and

positive feedback. Zhang and Jensen (1997) introduce a sixth behavior of leadership, situation consideration, to the Revised Leadership Scale for Sport (RLSS).

The LSS has provided a framework for studying sport leadership; however, there are a number of other instruments that incorporate additional aspects of coaching behavior. The Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS) (Myers, Feltz, Maier, Wolf & Reckase, 2006) and the Coaching Behavior Recording Form (CBRF) (Bloom, Crumpton & Anderson, 1999) are two behavior observation scales for observing coaches. These two scales have allowed researchers to systematically code coaching behaviors across different coaching levels to determine prevalent coaching behaviors.

Observational studies have provided further research into coaching behaviors and motivational methods by classifying the actions of coaches in practice and competition settings. In one of the most cited case studies of a highly successful coach, Tharp and Gallimore (1976) developed a 10-category system to observe the behavior of UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. During 15 practice sessions over the course of the 1975-76 season, Tharp and Gallimore (1976) analytically observed and recorded Wooden's coaching behaviors. Of the 2,326 feedback statements coded, verbal *instruction* represented the most frequent coaching behavior demonstrated by Coach Wooden (50%). The next most frequently observed behaviors included *hustle* (12.7%), *praise* (6.9%) and *scold/reproofs* (6.6%).

Looking back on their 1976 study, Gallimore and Tharp (2004) regretted not further investigating the intention and motivation behind Coach Wooden's statements, admitting that while they could note his tone and nature, they could not interpret it. They attributed this to the "objectivity" *zeitgeist* of the 1970s," and that they simply did not have the nerve to further

impose on Coach Wooden by asking for an interview. Re-examining the original study, Gallimore and Tharp (2004) apply published accounts of Wooden, his players and their own correspondences with him to better understand his teaching methods. In addition to being a teacher, Wooden was a student. From correspondence with a player, researchers learned that “besides library searching and reading, he also surveyed and interviewed successful coaches and players in an attempt to distill out effective principles to be adapted into the program at UCLA” (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004, p. 127).

A number of studies emerged based on Tharp and Gallimore’s (1976) study. Langsdorf (1979) conducted an observational study of Frank Kush, former football coach at Arizona State University. Langsdorf’s study coded 36% of Kush’s behaviors in the *instruction* category. *Hustle*, *scold/reinstruction*, and *praise* were the next three highest ranked behaviors. Lacy and Darst (1985) analyzed the behaviors of 10 winning high school football coaches, finding that *instruction* occurred three times more frequently than any other form of communication. They used eleven specific coaching behavior categories, modified from Tharp and Gallimore (1976), including *use of first name*, *praise*, *scold*, *instruction*, *hustle*, *nonverbal reward*, *nonverbal punishment*, *positive modeling*, *negative modeling*, *management* and *other*. The *instruction* category accounted for 42.5% of all behaviors during the season, dominating in such a way comparable to other observational studies (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976).

Bloom et al. (1999) conducted a similar observational study of Jerry Tarkanian, head basketball coach of a Division I program, whose win-loss record at the time of the study ranked him second in most career wins of all Division I basketball coaches. Bloom et al. (1999)

modified Tharp and Gallimore's (1976) Coaching Behavior Recording Form to further break down *instruction* to include tactical, technical and general instruction, referring to it as the Revised Coaching Behavior Recording Form. At the end of the season, Bloom et al. (1999) conducted exit interviews with Tarkanian and his longest-serving assistant coach, to see if their perceptions of Tarkanian's coaching behaviors matched the researchers' results. Each ranked the top five categories as *tactical instructions*, *hustle*, *praise/encouragement*, *technical instructions* and *general instructions*. Interestingly, the assistant coach noted that Tarkanian's instructions were more tactical in nature during defensive portions of practice, whereas during offensive portions Tarkanian's philosophy was to "keep players' minds free and let them play instinctively" (Bloom et al., 1999, p. 164). Bloom et al. (1999) found that almost one-third of Tarkanian's behaviors were *tactical instruction*. They attribute this to the fact that coaches at this level might expect their athletes to already have sound fundamental skills or that they expect their athletes to work on individual skills outside of team practices. Thus, team practices are spent trying to out smart opponents with tactical aspects of the sport (Bloom et al., 1999). Bloom et al. (1999) note that coaches at a higher level may have more time and resources than those at lower levels to focus on tactical strategies. If Tarkanian's behaviors were not centered on tactical issues, he verbalized "positivism"—comments intended to energize, praise or correct players' behavior (Bloom et al., 1999). This differed from Wooden, who rarely used positive statements during practices (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976).

More recently, Pat Summitt, women's basketball coach at the University of Tennessee, became the winningest coach in NCAA Division I history and is the main focus of an observational study of coaching behaviors (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008). Becker and Wrisberg

(2008) classify Coach Summitt as an “exemplar of coaching success” comparable to Coach Wooden, based on the statistics of her coaching career. During six practice sessions over the course of the 2003-2004 season, Becker and Wrisberg (2008) systematically observed and recorded Summitt’s verbal and nonverbal coaching behaviors. Results revealed a total of 3,296 feedback statements that were coded into 10 different behavioral categories. Of these, those most frequently exhibited by Coach Summitt were *instruction* (48%). Of her instructional behaviors, the majority were concurrent: “as players executed various tasks, she frequently provided them with technical and tactical information. Doing so allowed players to actively adjust their behaviors and make corrections without interrupting the flow of action” (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008, p. 205). Stoll, Lau and Stoeber (2007) differentiate between positive striving perfectionism and self-critical perfectionism in athletes. Coach Summitt demands perfection, however encouraging her athletes to set high and challenging personal standards for their performance and striving for excellence could result in positive affect, according to Stoll et al. (2007). When learning a new task, researchers found that perfectionism may enhance performance, and that the negative consequences of perfectionism lie in a negative reaction to imperfections (Stoll et al., 2007). *Praise* (14.5%) and *hustle* (10.7%) rounded out Summitt’s three most prevalent coaching behaviors.

The results were compared to those of Tharp and Gallimore’s (1976) study of Wooden. *Instruction* accounted for about half of both Wooden and Summitt’s coaching behaviors, and results across observational studies of successful coaches demonstrate that highly successful coaches use training and *instruction* more than any other type of coaching behavior (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Bloom et al., 1999; Kahan, 1999; Lacy & Darst, 1985; Segrave & Ciancio,

1990). Becker and Wrisberg (2008) attribute the importance of instruction to the fact that players are making the transition from high school to college, where “players need and even prefer to receive greater amounts of instruction” (p. 205).

While the percentage of praise in each study may be considered low by some, coaches of athletes at the collegiate level expect athletes to be highly self-motivated, and consequently do not view motivation as one of their primary coaching roles (Hansen et al. 2003). Tharp and Gallimore (1976) explain Wooden’s infrequent use of praise, hypothesizing that “with players who are highly motivated toward specific goals, John Wooden did not need to hand out quick rewards on the practice court” (p. 78). Additional positive reinforcement is needed with “students less motivated than Wooden’s players, social rewards may be necessary as incentive to keep them in reach of instructions, modeling, feedback, and other behaviors that do produce learning” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976, p. 77).

Wooden asserted that positive coaching behaviors are not necessarily praise, but instruction (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004). Furthermore, both Wooden and Summitt generally followed admonishments with instruction (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008). Summitt characterizes her coaching style by stressing the importance of positive reinforcement (Wrisberg, 1990). In meeting individually with athletes, Summitt hopes to express the feeling that she cares about them and believes in them. Additionally, Summitt builds confidence in practice and competition by not penalizing or providing negative reinforcement in game situations (Wrisberg, 1990). Summitt also utilizes nonverbal communication, specifically when positively reinforcing something, because she feels that “eye-to-eye contact tells a player that ‘you are significant, you are good, and I believe in you’” (Wrisberg, 1990, p. 182).

Another of Coach Summitt's coaching behaviors identified by Becker and Wrisberg (2008) was the high level of intensity she brought to practice sessions to simulate a game environment. *Hustle* statements were used to reinforce the importance of intensity. Likewise, John Wooden's *hustle* statements comprised 12.7% of his practice communication (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). One aspect of Wooden's coaching style observed by Tharp and Gallimore (1976) was that "the practices were tightly organized and conducted with clock-like precision...the intensity level was kept at a remarkable high level" (123). Therefore, one factor critical to the success of these two coaches might be the attention paid to creating intensity in practice. Coaches and athletes need to become accustomed to communicating under duress because, "Many times the pressure of time in timeouts, halftime, overtime periods, interact with coaches' ability to communicate effectively with their players. That is why the messages by the coaches should be clear and short and the players should stay focused, even when they are tired" (Athanasios, 2005, p. 255). Haselwood et al. (2005) found that coaches had stronger perceptions, compared to the athletes, that their messages were clear, understandable, and that they had a good command of the language. Therefore, it is important that coaches clarify that athletes understand the message they are attempting to relay. Tharp and Gallimore (1976) characterized Coach Wooden's "teaching utterances" during practice as "short, punctuated, and numerous. There were no lectures, no extended harangues. Although frequent and often in rapid-fire order, his utterances were so distinct we could code each one as a separate event...he rarely spoke longer than 20 seconds" (p. 120). Proficient communication is coveted among coaches to assist in the relaying of information, however, Parry (1959) found that 60% of almost 200 coaches polled do not heavily rely upon pep talks to motivate their teams and feel they are over-rated.

Contrary to previous research (Sinclair & Vealey, 1989), Becker and Wrisberg (2008) found that Coach Summitt was relatively consistent in the amount of feedback she provided to high and low expectancy players. They note this could be attributed to the fact that outside of the Tennessee basketball program, all of Summitt's athletes might be considered high expectancy. However, because Summitt rated her players in terms of ability, it might be concluded that some of Summitt's coaching success is attributed to the fact that she puts effort into developing the abilities of all of her players. Gallimore and Tharp (2004) found through reanalysis of Coach Wooden's coaching behaviors that he did not exhibit the same behaviors toward low and high expectancy players. It was his general philosophy to develop a very tight knit core group, consisting of the starting line-up and perhaps two players who would come off the bench for playing time. The remainder of the squad would serve as "practice players," as he also practiced the core group of seven as a unit. He wanted them to be accustomed to playing together. Although Wooden gave more positive comments to reserves, he made more overall comments to regulars (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). Although his intentions were to make the reserves realize how important they were to the success of the team, he acknowledged that reserve players may have felt slighted: "By practicing and playing only 7...I don't think it made for better harmony for the team as a whole...I think I sometimes failed to get reserves to see how important they were" (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004, p. 131).

Becker and Wrisberg (2008) conclude that although assessing athlete ability is a natural component of the coaching process, "coaches must be aware of how their assessments affect their communication patterns" (p. 207). Every observational study on a successful coach has shown the importance of providing athletes with instructional feedback during practices (Bloom,

et al., 1999; Kahan, 1999; Segrave & Ciancio, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). Becker and Wrisberg (2008) suggest that coaches continue to develop their own coaching and improve their knowledge by attending clinics, reading relevant books and articles, observing other great coaches and/or talking to their athletes, in order to best provide their athletes with specific and accurate information.

In an analysis of coaching behavior research, Kahan (1999) found that regardless of the observational method used, coaches predominantly demonstrated instructional behaviors. Additionally, they found that coaches employed more positive than negative behavior. They determined the following coaching sequence: “initial instruction which may include demonstration by the coach, silent observation of player performance, concurrent- or encouraging statements, further observation of player performance, and repetition of the cycle until the task is changed (which requires some sort of managerial behavior)” (Kahan, 1999, p. 41). When observed, Coach Wooden utilized positive and negative modeling, halting play to demonstrate the correct way to perform an act (M+), and then imitate the incorrect way the player has just performed (M-). He then remodels the M+. This sequence...appears to be an extraordinarily effective way of providing both feedback and discrimination training (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004, p. 123).

Lacy and Darst (1985) surmise that “informational feedback is a prerequisite for effective teaching/coaching” (p. 296). Additionally, they recommend coaches self-evaluate their coaching behaviors to become aware of their behavioral habits, and potentially modify their behaviors to become more effective coaches. An important conclusion in all of these studies was that

instruction was the most observed coaching behavior. This suggests the importance of the coach as a teacher.

Kassing and Pappas' (2007) study of coaches' memorable messages found that athletes' recalled challenge/motivation and life lessons most often, whereas instructional memorable messages were recalled least often. The recall of topics that transcend sport highlights the significance of athletics as an important socializing environment. Although coaching behaviors have been found to be most often instructional in nature, these instructional messages are not the ones that athletes recall. Rather, athletes recall the messages that are applicable outside of the athletic environment, and relevant to their life (Kassing & Pappas, 2007).

Interpersonal communication is defined as the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, generally with the goal to influence or motivate behavior (Daft, 2000). In a study of the communication barriers that exist among coaches and players in professional sports, Athanasios (2005) asserts that successful communication is "a key factor in the cohesion of any group of people working together to achieve a common objective" (p. 252). Effective communication is necessary for the organization of any group; the growth of good personal relationships and trust within the team; the creation of a healthy environment within and around the team, leading the team's efforts to the successful realization of its goals (Athanasios, 2005). A coach is responsible for the facilitation of these factors within the team; therefore, it is essential that coaches understand how to foster coach-athlete communication. Pat Summitt has a two pronged-approach to her psychology of coaching: "I spend a great deal of time in one-on-one contact with the player, talking with each athlete about how she perceives herself as an individual, where she wants to

go, what motivates her. Second, I do a lot in a group setting, talking with the team about their goals as a collection of people” (Wrisberg, 1990, p. 182).

The coach-athlete relationship has proven to be a contributing factor in the satisfaction, performance and motivation of athletes (Frey, Czech, Kent & Johnson, 2006; Greenleaf, Gould & Dieffenbach, 2001; Kenow & Williams, 1999; Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon & Templin, 2000), and several things may influence this relationship (Burke et al., 1995). Coaching immediacy is the perceived closeness a player feels to his or her coach (Rocca et. al., 1998). It appears that an immediate coach would create a positive relationship between him/herself and the athletes. This could lead to greater learning of the sport, and possibly greater performance by the athletes.

Chelladurai and Saleh (1978, 1980) identified five leadership styles that coaches adopt: (1) an autocratic style identifiable by those behaviors that coaches use to distance themselves from their athletes, often by establishing their authority and position as coach; (2) a democratic style including behaviors that encourage student athlete input in team decision making; (3) a social support style that aids in meeting the interpersonal needs of the athletes; (4) a positive feedback style includes behaviors that coaches use to communicate a sense of appreciation for their athletes; and (5) a training and instruction style which includes those behaviors that coaches use to improve their athletes’ skill and knowledge. Research has shown a preference among athletes for positive feedback (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Smith & Smoll, 1990). Although it may be obvious to the coach, athletes may not be able to discern that not everyone has the same skills and abilities. Athletes tend to seek out roles that are the most glamorous or appealing (Shelley &

Sherman, 1997), not roles they may be best suited for. Coaches must help athletes to define their individual formal and informal roles, and what is expected of them (Shelley & Sherman, 1997).

A coach's influence is not always positive (Weinstein, Smith & Weisenthal, 1995) and coaches do not influence every player the same (Sinclair & Vealey 1989). Coaches who use aggressive communication are perceived as less favorable in terms of communication, and as a result their athletes exhibit less sportsmanship, are less satisfied with their coaches, and have lower win-loss percentages (Kassing & Infante, 1999). Turman and Schrodtt (2004) found that autocratic leadership styles were negatively associated with athletes' affective learning. Coaches who employ only autocratic leadership behaviors may find their athletes demonstrate less appreciation for the sport, their teammates, and their coach. The authors recommend coaches "create an optimal learning environment for their athletes' by using an autocratic decision-style that is moderated by the use of pro-social, motivational techniques" (p. 139). Research has shown that coaches threaten punishment when faced with inadequate performance (Miles & Greenberg, 1993). John Wooden and Jerry Tarkanian were noted as not using physical or negative punishment (Bloom et al., 1999). Miles and Greenberg (1993) noted that "coaches may believe that aggressive communication is necessary to improve performance, but these communication choices may come at the expense of sportsmanship and player satisfaction" (p. 117). Their findings support other research examining athletes' preferences for democratic leadership and positive feedback (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Turman & Schrodtt, 2004).

Most of the research outlined thus far has been typical hypothesis driven qualitative research; however, there are other ways of researching the complex coach-athlete relationship. This study directly addresses the question of what communication techniques successful coaches

use when motivating athletes, and seeks to categorize these communication techniques. In the interest of developing new ideas and theory about successful coaching communication strategies, the researcher undertook the constant comparative method of grounded theory, as elaborated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), to content analyze the books written by coaches about coaching.

Grounded theory runs under the assumption that research evolves during the research process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) demonstrated the possibility of building a theory from data in an effort to legitimize qualitative research. As Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 7) state, “Theories can’t be built with actual incidents or activities as observed or reported; that is, from ‘raw data.’ The incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analyzed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels.” The four stages of analysis in grounded theory are codes, concepts, categories and theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Codes are the key points extracted from the text which are grouped into similar concepts, in order to make them more practical (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). From these concepts categories are formed, and used to create a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory allows the researcher to reach a hypothesis through a reverse method and is not restricted by initial constructs. As detailed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory explains theoretical formulations that are closely grounded in raw data, generally text of some form. Larsson et al. (2006) assert grounded theory is a sensible approach for studies that deal with the theory-generating aspect of research instead of theory testing or evaluation. Similarly, the “conceptual relationships” grounded theory explores are preferred by Bhal and Leekha (2008) to the “measured relationships” required by hypothesis.

Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to suggest qualities of successful coaching philosophies of motivation derived from a content analysis of autobiographical books written by coaches on their coaching philosophies. The books to be analyzed are popular books that have had a media presence, and were suggested by coaches approached in an open-ended e-mail requesting books they would put on a “must-read” reading list for coaching. Following an investigation of scholarly findings of motivation in coaching, the five books will be content analyzed by the researcher. From the common themes that exist in the books, the following Research Questions will be answered:

1. What types of communication techniques do coaches use to motivate athletes?
2. What do the authors write about communication between coaches and athletes?

The researcher hopes that in answering these research questions, this thesis will be able to suggest qualities of successful coaching philosophies of motivation to assist coaches in developing their own coaching philosophy.

Method

Five books by coaches about coaching were analyzed to discover communication-related categories or themes consistent across the texts. Using constant comparative method, the data were repeatedly analyzed and shared communication techniques of the five coaches emerged.

In order to select appropriate texts, 59 Division I, II and III collegiate crew coaches who attended a Joy of Sculling Coaching Conference Workshop and Plenary Session, December 7-9, 2007 in Saratoga Springs, were asked via email for their suggestions. The data collection process consisted of sending an open-ended e-mail that asked, “what books would you put on a

‘must read’ list for coaching?” “What books would you recommend to other coaches?” Of the 59 coaches e-mailed, 19 responded. Some coaches suggested technical rowing books, not autobiographical books; if a recommended book did not pertain to the thesis topic of coaching communication and was not autobiographical in nature, it was eliminated.

The following five books were most frequently suggested by the coaches who replied to the survey: *The Smart Take from the Strong* (Pete Carril), *Sacred Hoops* (Phil Jackson), *Leading with the Heart* (Mike Krzyzewski), *Reach for the Summit* (Pat Summitt) and *They Call Me Coach* (John Wooden). Attention to the literature review shows support of these selections, as previous scholarly research has studied the coaching communication and leadership behaviors of some of these coaches specifically. Interestingly, all five books are written by basketball coaches.

The constant comparative method was chosen to develop a grounded theory suggesting various strategies and tactics used in coaching communication. Coupled with theoretical sampling, the constant comparative method comprises the foundation of qualitative analysis in the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Straus, 1987; Glaser, 1992). Glaser and Strauss (1967, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 339) illustrate the constant comparison method as following four separate steps:

1. comparing incidents related to distinct categories,
2. integrating categories and their properties,
3. defining the theory, and
4. writing the theory.

The analysis of the five books written by coaches about coaching closely follows these guidelines, facilitating an in-depth understanding of how successful coaches effectively and efficiently communicate with athletes. The constant comparative method was chosen to allow the researcher to identify the shared strategies and tactics of the five coaches. Tesch (1990, as cited by Boeije, 2002) identifies comparison as crucial to the development of a theory that is grounded in the data:

The main intellectual tool is comparison. The method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns (p. 96).

Constant comparisons consist of analyzing the data through close reading and rereading, involving several comparison and reflection sessions on “old” and “new” material (Boeije, 2002). As the techniques used by the coaches were recorded and classified, they were then compared across categories. Goetz and LeCompte (1981) note that “as events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered” (p. 58). Thus, the original observations undergo continuous modification throughout the data collection and analysis process.

The procedure for constant comparison described here focuses on comparisons between the five books to answer the research questions. According to Boeije (2002), constant comparative method supports the cyclical process in qualitative research. The constant

comparative analysis results in evolving themes of grounded theory, versus defined linear coding schemes. Thorough readings of each book allowed the researcher to content analyze the subject matter, letting the data reveal itself as common themes and methods of coaching communication and leadership behaviors of these successful coaches emerged.

The constant comparative method looks for themes within a data set. The coaching communication themes uncovered in this study are derived from a systematic series of steps where the researcher reviews and revisits the data. The five distinct steps were:

1. reviewing the data,
2. re-reading the data,
3. pulling out communication oriented content and quotations from the data,
4. taking content and re-reading, before placing into categories,
5. repeating cycle until data solidified and no new categories appeared.

In this case, the data is the content of the books written by coaches about coaching. The books were read through one after another, and then re-read four times over the course of the constant comparison, to identify the communication strategies recognized by each coach. The open coding consisted of comparing and contrasting the communication strategies to develop initial categories of coaching communication techniques. It was important for the researcher to take time between readings to reflect on the analysis results, allowing each individual analysis of the data to speak for itself. In doing this, the researcher was able to approach each reading and coding session with an open mind. Following each reading of each book, the researcher analyzed all the books by comparing the communication strategies used by the coaches, creating a shared list of coaching communication techniques. The researcher was able to discern how the

categories and subcategories related, reconstructing the data in order to better explain the shared communication techniques central to effective coaching communication. Lastly, the categories were refined and incorporated to generate a grounded theory to explain the elements of effective coaching communication.

The content extracted were comments beyond technical or strategic aspects of sports, specifically information concerning interactions between coaches and athletes. The selected examples from the texts helped to articulate and support the communication techniques identified by the coaches. For instance, comments about a coach yelling were put into a “fear” category. The researcher allowed the data to shift through subsequent readings as different comments emerged and were categorized and re-categorized, creating new categories like “negative motivation.” The comment about a coach yelling ultimately ended up in a “fear as motivation” category. This process of percolation and distillation resulted in clear strategies and tactics used by successful coaches.

Results

The results of the constant comparison revealed seven distinct categories of coaching communication. They are:

- promoting close coach-athlete relationships
- balancing praise and criticism
- using succinct commands during competition
- using fear to motivate
- using freedom to motivate
- emphasizing “we over me”

- emitting confidence

The function of grounded theory is to develop conceptual links between concepts and not simply to describe categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher read and re-read the texts five times over the course of the constant comparative analysis, continually revealing categories of coaching communication techniques. As the process evolved, the seven shared communication techniques used by the coaches crystallized. Subsequently, the researcher found common underlying elements of the coaches' leadership styles, including the role of the coach as teacher and an expectation of discipline. These elements provide a foundation for the success of the communication techniques the coaches employ and support the interlinkages of the communication techniques. The shared communication techniques of the coaches are interrelated, and are not considered mutually exclusive of each other, as they each play a vital role in suggesting qualities of successful coaching philosophies. Each theme will be discussed and supported with quotations and paraphrasing from the texts. Additionally, research from the literature review may be revisited to show scholarly support of a theme.

Pete Carril, Phil Jackson, Mike Krzyzewski, Pat Summitt and John Wooden have all developed distinctive systems and coaching philosophies through decades of experience. Fundamentally, however, these coaches are similar because they have perfected the art of knowing when and how to motivate or criticize and discipline athletes. There are differences in their coaching strategies; however, they share similar communication techniques and fundamental values. The results demonstrate the closeness of communication and motivation when coaching, and the communication techniques depicted by the coaches in each book are deliberate and calculated to get the most out of their athletes. Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski,

Summitt and Wooden have been recognized for their numerous coaching accomplishments. All are members of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and are considered by their peers to be at the pinnacle of the coaching profession.

The Smart Take from the Strong outlines Pete Carril's basketball philosophy, centered on outsmarting and outworking stronger opponents. Carril coached Princeton to 13 Ivy League titles and 11 NCAA tournaments, compiling a 514-261 (.658 winning percentage) record. Upon his retirement in 1996 he was the only Division I coach to win 500 games without offering athletic scholarships to his players. *The Smart Take from the Strong* is organized into small vignettes of Carril's reflections on basketball, and was called "warm and wise...disarmingly candid" by *Publishers Weekly* in a review on the jacket cover. Carril's book focuses on the fundamental skills of basketball, and the attention to detail Carril demanded of his players.

Sacred Hoops is Phil Jackson's coaching philosophy of mindful basketball, heavily influenced by Eastern and Native American ideals. Jackson defines mindfulness as simply paying attention to what is actually happening. He contends that creating a successful team is fundamentally a spiritual act, requiring team members to surrender their self-interest for the greater good (Jackson, 1995). Jackson, one of the most successful coaches in NBA history, coached the Chicago Bulls to six NBA titles. He is described as a "'human assets' leader, who focuses on managing people and the relationship between them, in part by fostering certain attitudes and values in an organization" (Bryant, 1996, March 6, p. D1). Jackson is the first coach in NBA history to lead a team to three consecutive championships three different times. In 1996 the Bulls posted the best regular season record in NBA history at 72-10, and Jackson was named NBA Coach of the Year. With these impressive statistics, Jackson asserts,

Winning at *any* cost didn't interest me...winning is ephemeral. Yes, victory is sweet, but it doesn't necessarily make life any easier the next season or even the next day...true joy comes from being fully present in each and every moment, not just when things are going your way (1995, p. 4).

People magazine called *Sacred Hoops* “an earnest and refreshing answer to the dollar-driven soulfulness of modern professional sports.” Likewise, *Booklist* defends Jackson as,

an excellent tactician and a shrewd motivator who contributes greatly to the Bulls' success. . . . Jackson has always had a reputation for being a little off center, and this book will provide fuel for his critics. His genius isn't for devising strategy but for inducing wealthy, pampered, often petulant young men to pull together spiritually to attain a common goal. To the cynics who will mock his spiritual approach to leadership, we can only offer the lyrics to an old song: 'What's so funny about peace, love, and understanding?' Thought-provoking reading. . . (1995, September 1, p. 2).

Coaching the championship Chicago Bulls of the 1990s, Jackson's goal was “to give everybody...a vital role on the team...I wanted to build a team that would blend individual talent with a heightened group consciousness. A team that could win big without becoming small” (1995, p. 4).

Jackson preaches selflessness and mindfulness in *Sacred Hoops*. Dealing with a superstar of Michael Jordan's caliber, selflessness involved getting individuals to buy into working toward a common goal. Jackson defines mindfulness as the process of emptying the mind of thoughts so allow awareness to occur. Though some players were skeptical, Jackson held team meditation sessions to put players in the right frame of mind to compete—focusing attention on the breath

rising and falling, returning focus on the breath if your mind wanders. Jackson sometimes conducts entire practices in silence, which results in a high level of concentration and nonverbal communication. Additionally, Jackson encourages and practices visualization. Visualization is “an important tool for me. Coaching requires a free-ranging imagination, but during the heat of the season it’s easy to get wound up so tight that you strangle your own creativity” (Jackson, 1995, p. 121).

In *Leading with the Heart: Coach K’s Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business, and Life*, Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski provides an intimate depiction of his coaching model, stressing empathetic and effective leadership. In a review of *Leading with the Heart*, Library Journal writes,

For six-time National Coach of the Year Krzyzewski...coaching basketball is all about leadership and team building. . . . The five fundamental qualities that he looks for in each team that he coaches are communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring, and pride. The basic principles he tries to teach each group include integrity, planning, always working to improve performance, and always thinking about what you are doing and how to do it better—the same principles that make a good leader or coach. . . . Recommended for most sports or coaching collections (2000, April 15, p. 98).

Krzyzewski now has 12 National Coach of the Year honors to his name in 28 years at Duke.

Leading with the Heart showcases his driven work ethic, but also the fierce belief he has in the athletes of the Duke program. He demands loyalty, but in return, “I want every player who plays for Duke to know that our relationship will always be there—that friends do not disappear once the journey is concluded” (Kryzyzewski, 2000, p. 198).

Pat Summitt's *Reach for the Summit* details the "Definitive Dozen System," the success formula she has established in 35 years at the helm of the Tennessee Lady Vols. Summitt is the all-time winningest coach in NCAA basketball history (men or women), and enters the 2008-2009 season approaching her 1000th career win. She is a demanding taskmaster who describes her coaching style as "aggressive verbal and physical" (Summitt, 1998, p. 202). *USA Weekend* calls Summitt "one of the best coaches in basketball history—male, female, college or pro...[She has] an extraordinary combination of grit and tenderness." Cited on the back cover of *Reach for the Summit*, Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*, writes, "As a manager and master motivator, Pat Summitt transcends sports. The most experienced CEO can learn from her contagious work ethic and ingenious methods."

John Wooden is arguably one of the most successful coaches of all time. He was voted ESPN's Coach of the Century, and won an unrivaled 10 national championships at UCLA. In *They Call Me Coach*, Wooden outlines the Pyramid of Success he developed over 29 years at UCLA. *The Los Angeles Review* said of the book in a review on the cover:

What Knute Rockne was to football, Connie Mack to baseball, and Wilbur and Orville Wright to flying, John Wooden is to basketball. This book captures the full flavor of the man, the philosophies that work in life, and the philosophies that work on the court. I commend it to people who want to succeed at either--or both (Wooden, 2004).

Wooden considers himself to be a teacher first, and his goal was to provide a foundation upon which his players could build the structure.

At some point in their text, each coach outlines the components he or she believes are necessary for success. The success they have achieved is due in part to their unwavering quest

for excellence. For Carril, success comes when attention is paid to every detail. He writes, “I want things to go right all the time every day. Winning is in the details” (Carril, 2004, p. 27). He defines success “as having a chance to win every game. It’s my job to give my players the chance to have their character, their drive to win, determine the outcome. And then the quality of your teaching—your own character—comes out” (Carril, 2004, p. 18). The headings of Carril’s text and the subsequent content stress the importance of doing everything to the best of your ability. Similarly, Wooden writes, “There is no replacement for sound fundamentals and strict discipline. They will reinforce you in the toughest circumstance. The importance of little things cannot be overemphasized” (2004, p. 168). The forward of *Reach for the Summit* asserts, “Any realistic formula must include five things: people, system, communication, work ethic, and discipline” (p. xi). Krzyzewski’s (2000) five fundamental qualities that make every team great are communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring and pride. Jackson’s experiences showed him that “the most effective way to forge a winning team is to call on the players’ need to connect with something larger than themselves” (1995, p. 5.). He echoes Krzyzewski’s emphasis on compassionate coaching. Playing with an open heart is one of Jackson’s Zen-inspired essentials: “Strategy is important. But once you’ve done the mental work, there comes a point when you have to throw yourself into the action and put your heart on the line” (1995, p. 52).

The books by Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski, Summitt and Wooden have earned considerable critical praise and are regarded as must-reads for coaching and leadership and managerial professions. Using grounded theory to analyze *The Smart Take from the Strong*, *Sacred Warrior*, *Leading with the Heart*, *Reach for the Summit* and *They Call Me Coach*, the

researcher discovered discernible categories of communication techniques deemed significant to the process of successful coaching. Summitt writes, “There is a lot more to communicating than just plain talking...if you really want to get something across, body language, facial expression, eye contact and listening are all necessary parts of communicating. Sometimes so is yelling...There are oratories, sonnets, tantrums, codes, tirades, signals, and just plain declarative sentences. Each form has its uses” (1998, p. 65). Although there are differences and distinctions in the coaching philosophies of the five coaches, the shared themes of promoting close coach-athlete relationships, balancing praise and criticism, using succinct commands during competition, using fear to motivate, using freedom to motivate, emphasizing “we over me” and emitting confidence establish that there are specific communication techniques that stimulate coaching success.

Promoting Close Coach-Athlete Relationships

The communication strategies of Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski, Summit and Wooden are most successful when they are supported by close coach-athlete relationships. Communication and motivation are closely intertwined, therefore many of the communication techniques used by the coaches focus on how best to motivate athletes. Establishing a close coach-athlete relationship provides the coaches with an understanding of what is going to most effectively motivate an athlete, and significantly impact the remaining six shared communication techniques. Krzyzewski writes, “The leader of the team is responsible for getting to know the players well enough to understand what methods are the most effective for each individual—as well as the team as a whole. And so we’re back to relationships and communication again” (Krzyzewski, 2000, p. 211). Depending on the situation, a coach can successfully or

unsuccessfully motivate using the shared communication techniques in the five books: praise and criticism, succinct commands, fear, freedom, an emphasis on team success and/or a conveyance of confidence. For Krzyzewski,

I look at how people react to different things—as individuals and as a group. A leader has to get into a person's head—and then know what button to push at any given moment. In general, my style is to be flexible and versatile. In other words, I think there's a time to get in someone's face and there's a time when you just put it on the line without yelling. There's also a time when you pat on the back. And there's a time when you hug (2000, p. 211).

Krzyzewski (2000) asserts that almost everything in leadership comes back to relationships. As the level of trust rises, the level of cooperation on a team increases. Krzyzewski prefers face to face communication, asserting,

I never use a whistle in practice. I want the players to get used to reacting to my voice—just like in a real game...a whistle puts some distance between me and the players. And I'm a big believer in cutting out anything that tends to add to that distance...that's one reason I don't rely very heavily on e-mail, phone messages, or memos. There's something impersonal about them. They don't tend to foster relationships among people. I'd rather sit down and talk (2000, p. 90).

It is important to get to know people better, so that your understanding of them increases and you can be a more effective leader. All of the coaches attribute some of the coach-athlete relationship to meeting with players individually. For Jackson, it is important to know the players on a personal level outside of the athletic arena:

Though some coaches try to settle differences in team meetings, I prefer to deal with them on an individual basis. This helps to strengthen my one-on-one connection with the players, who sometimes get neglected because we spend so much of our time together *en masse*. Meeting with players privately helps me stay in touch with who they are out of uniform (Jackson, 1995, p. 163).

Jackson (1995) believes it is important to listen closely to players, in order to determine the spoken and unspoken messages they are sending out.

One tool used by Summitt is the Predictive Index, a survey that categorizes personality traits. She has each athlete complete one, because, “If I understand the inner workings of someone, I know better how to motivate him or her” (Summitt, 1998, p. 146). By better understanding players—their strengths and their weaknesses—Summitt has an idea of who can handle what. She writes,

It’s not like I make our players lie down on a psychiatrist’s couch. I don’t want to pry into their psyches too much. But I do believe that there is a basic blueprint for coaxing performances out of athletes or any other talented people. The blueprint is this: knowledge, confidence, relaxation, results. Knowledge builds confidence, which causes you to be relaxed, which gives you good results (Summitt, 1998, p. 147).

However, communication is more than the information that the coach conveys. Summitt says,

What I have learned is, coaching is not all about me going into a locker room and telling them everything I know about basketball. It’s a matter of knowing how they think and feel and what they want and what’s important in their lives. Listening has allowed me to be a better coach (Summitt, 1998, p. 70).

The coaches all emphasize the effectiveness of recognizing the athletes as more than athletes in order to positively affect athlete performance. Additionally, they all recognize the impact a positive relationship can have to the future of the athlete.

Balancing Praise and Criticism

Each coach stressed the importance of striking a balance between praise and criticism.

Summitt believes,

the trick to communicating with a group is to maintain the credibility of both praise and criticism. Too much praise loses effectiveness—just as too much criticism does...I'm not going to rah-rah every time you sprint down the floor, because you're *supposed* to sprint...the best way to maintain the credibility of compliments and criticisms is to use them meaningfully. Don't overuse them" (Summitt, 1998, p. 78).

In order to preserve credibility, it is important for the coach to communicate using praise and criticism smartly. According to Carril,

You show respect by praising them when they do the things that deserve praise. They must learn the difference between what is done right and what is done wrong, and if you try to make them similar with easy praise you'll never succeed in teaching them the difference (2004, p. 117).

He calls praise "the cheapest form of reward," and writes that his criticism is "accurate and it's always honest. I don't praise them for doing what they know they can and should do in the first place" (Carril, 2004, p. 70). Neither praise nor criticism should be used arbitrarily, in order to ensure the effectiveness of both to motivate an athlete. Wooden (2004) suggests using praise to

counterbalance criticism in practice. It is important when using criticism to motivate to not allow it to overpower your communication, and become too disheartening for the athlete.

On some level, criticism is an inherent aspect of coaching because it is the coach's role to change and modify aspects of an athlete's performance. Jackson acknowledges that,

The relationship between a coach and his players is often fraught with tension because the coach is constantly critiquing each player's performance and trying to get him to change his behavior. Having a clearly defined set of principles to work with reduces conflict because it depersonalizes the criticism. The players understand that you're not attacking them personally when you correct a mistake, but only trying to improve their knowledge of the system (Jackson p. 90).

In order to allow criticism to be an effective tool, the athlete must be able to understand that generally, the coach's criticism not personal. Jackson attempts to alleviate some of the pressure surrounding criticism by bringing in humor. He sometimes uses movie clips as teaching devices, and in one example mixes vignettes from *The Wizard of Oz* with clips from a game where the Bulls had been man-handled by their opponent:

One sequence showed B.J. dribbling to the basket and being flattened by the Detroit front line, followed by a shot of Dorothy arriving in the Land of Oz, looking around and saying to her faithful dog, 'This isn't Kansas anymore, Toto.' B.J. laughed. The message? You're not playing against college players anymore; you're playing against hardened professionals, who'll stomp all over you if you give them half a chance...in one way or another, the tape poked fun at everyone on the team. That was important. I didn't want to single out any one person for criticism (Jackson, 1995, p. 108).

This example shows how Jackson was able to successfully diffuse the threatening nature of criticism. Through the humorous clips, he is able to point out to individuals what they were doing wrong; however, it was done in a non-threatening environment, resulting in acceptance and understanding of the criticism.

Using Succinct Commands during Competition

The coaches use succinct commands during competition to quickly and clearly issue directives and communicate with their athletes. This does not involve simply giving succinct commands during competition, but creating an understanding with the athletes that sometimes curt remarks are necessary to get a point across during pressure situations. Summitt divides her communication into three different categories:

Off the court I am a confidante and substitute mother...my chief role is to listen, advise, and comfort. In practice I speak as a teacher who sometimes needs to employ severe methods to maintain the attention of the students. In a game I issue blunt commands and motivate our players to endure adverse situations. It's a competitive situation with no time for politeness or misunderstanding" (1998, p. 68).

Her communication techniques during game-like conditions are altered in order to accommodate the fast-paced competition environment. Summitt uses direct language to further ensure that the players are attentive with the distractions of a game situation. Likewise, Krzyzewski warns athletes that in the heat of competition, there is often not enough time to sit down and have a conversation. He writes,

We can't always take the nice polite way of saying things to each other...we need to communicate in ways that are more direct than most people are used to. We can only do

this if we learn to tell the truth, to trust each other, and to understand that we're not trying to hurt each other with our words (Krzyzewski, 2000, p. 40).

Krzyzewski wants his players to be able to perform with excellence at the drop of a hat. It is important to note that he distinguishes the competitive environment as one sometimes requiring communication others might not be familiar or comfortable with. Whereas someone with no understanding of the situation might be offended by the communication used during competition, the athletes must understand that a direct form of communication is not meant to be insensitive, but a necessary directive.

Using Fear to Motivate

Fear can be an excellent motivator because it causes a reaction. Individuals react when they are fearful, and Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski, Summitt and Wooden all note examples when they have used fear to motivate a team or an individual athlete. Krzyzewski believes that fear can be used in a positive way to encourage performance:

Am I tough on the team? Absolutely. If they don't show respect for the program, for the university, for one another, I'm all over them. I don't want fear to be my primary motivator. But the team has got to know that if they are screwing up, the hammer is going to come down. I'm not going to accept mediocrity at practice. I'm not going to coach them if they're not going to give me their best effort (2000, p. 46).

Similar to Krzyzewski, Summitt does not want her players to be afraid of her, but "I do want them to have a healthy respect for the consequences if they cross me. Recognition of the consequences is the surest way to instill discipline" (1998, p. 93).

Of all the coaches, Summitt most readily admits using any means necessary to instill belief: it is a matter of whatever works.

Our players need to be dragged out of their comfort zone on the basketball court. They fall into a rut. They all have strengths and weaknesses, and they tend to want to play to their strengths, naturally. If I don't shake them out of their routine, they'll never learn, and they'll never develop their game. To outsiders, I'm that mean lady on the sidelines, yelling at them again. But I'm determined to get the maximum potential out of them. I don't care if I have to coax, pull, push, or haul it out of them. When I challenge them, what I'm really saying is, 'You're better than this, and you don't even know it.'

(Summitt, 1998, p. 234).

Using fear to motivate is similar to succinct commands during competition because it is often interpreted as "meanness," when in fact it is a communication technique coaches use to get the most out of athletes. Additionally, Summitt uses challenges to motivate athletes:

There is this to be said for negative reinforcement: It will motivate you. I know, when I ride my players, how deeply they ached for a good word. And I use it against them, to bring out the competitor in them...But the trick to using negative reinforcement is to always phrase it as a challenge. There's not much I won't say to challenge our team.

Tiffani Johnson, can you not guard Kara Wolters? Do we need to put someone else on her? Is there anybody in this room who can guard Saudia Roundree? Latina Davis, would you like to try again? She only got twenty-five off you in the first half. (Summitt, 1998, p. 74).

This type of communication gives the athlete an opportunity to rise to the challenge and in essence, prove the coach wrong. It is imperative that Summitt have established a close relationship with the athlete to ensure that when she challenges them, they will not buckle under the pressure but use it as motivation to perform.

Effective communication is commanding the attention of those you are speaking to, although sometimes not saying anything, and doing something, is more effective than talking. Summitt has thrown cups of water at athletes, yanked jerseys and gotten in an athlete's faces, and taken public criticism for it. She admits, "I shouldn't have thrown the water, of course. It was hardly an example of mutual respect. But I felt that I had to do something to impress on her the seriousness of the situation" (Summitt, 1998, p. 16). While this may seem foolish, Summitt trusts that because she knows her athletes well enough, she will get the fired-up response she is looking for that results in superior performance.

Using Freedom to Motivate

Just as the coaches use fear to motivate, they also use freedom. Using freedom to motivate, the coaches allow the athletes to grow and develop without being too constrained by rules. Jackson writes that, "Some coaches feel threatened when their players start asserting their independence, but I think it's much more effective to open up the decision-making process to everybody" (Jackson, 1995, p. 106). This supports a democratic coaching style, which all five coaches believe is an important aspect of their coaching philosophy. Giving athletes a sense of ownership makes them more committed to the team, and allows them to use their own creativity. When Summitt first started coaching,

I practically wanted to control the way our players thought. But basketball is a game of quick, fluid changes. Our players didn't have time to think, *Now what would Pat do in this situation?* Today, I am a much better teacher. I impart what I know about the game and let them make intelligent decisions on their own (1998, p. 225).

Jackson acknowledges that using freedom to motivate means the coach must trust the athletes.

He writes,

The most important part of the job takes place on the practice floor, not during the game. After a certain point you have to trust the players to translate into action what they've learned in practice...when a team reaches that state, the coach can step back and let the game itself 'motivate' the players. You don't have to give them any 'win one for the Gipper' pep talks; you just have to turn them loose and let them immerse themselves in the action (Jackson, 1995, p. 92).

Summitt tells of an opportunity she had to meet with Jackson to discuss the offense he was running, and what she learned from him:

I was a sponge. I could not stop asking questions. It was the chance of a lifetime, of course...What I learned from Phil Jackson that day is that he has the capacity to allow people space; he has a patience and a tolerance for individuals, without abandoning his team principles. He lets people be who they want to be within his framework (Summitt, 1998, p. 230).

Now, Summitt is more flexible, understanding that more independence and input allows the athletes a sense of ownership, resulting in higher motivation and commitment.

A democratic coaching style allows the athletes to use their creativity. During a game, Carril would ask his players about what was going on: “How do we want to play this out-of-bounds play?” He even notes that he should have done more of this, because one person cannot always see everything that is going on. By involving team members in the decision-making process, a coach is showing that he or she has confidence in them and their abilities. However, although each coach favors a democratic coaching style, they all acknowledged that as head coaches, they had the final say. Wooden writes,

Only one man could make the decisions, but I wanted all the evidence and information possible before making them. I continually reminded myself that I had to be open to the various ideas, not bull-headed and stubborn. Each decision had to be made through reason, not emotion. Wilfred A. Peterson best illustrates this point in his essay on leadership, ‘a leader,’ he said, ‘is interested in finding the best way—not in having his own way’ (Wooden, 2004, p. 119).

Wooden and the other coaches are interested in finding the best way to ensure success, which sometimes means loosening, not losing, control. They acknowledge that in order to adapt to the continuous nature of athletics, they must be flexible and allow the athletes to demonstrate their own creativity. On some level, the coaches want their teams to be able to function without them. Jackson’s goal is to become invisible. He wants the team to grow to a point where they are able to function without him as a unit. This often requires him stepping back and letting the team come up with a solution to a problem as a team (Jackson, 1995). Carril was ejected from the game that provided him with the most satisfaction of any game he’s ever coached, “because it

showed me that my teaching had taken effect, that they could play and know what to do without me and win” (2004, p. 123).

Emphasizing “We Over Me”

One of the common aspects of the coaching styles in the books analyzed is communicating the importance of the team over individual to the athletes. Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski, Summitt and Wooden foster “we before me” attitudes with their athletes. The coaches all express the belief that if a team is able to relinquish personal glory, they will be better positioned to achieve success. The heart of Jackson’s *Sacred Hoops* is selfless basketball, which differentiates him from many leaders, because:

Most leaders tend to view teamwork as a social engineering problem: take x group, add y motivational technique and get z result. But working with the Bulls I’ve learned that the most effective way to forge a winning team is to call on the players’ need to connect with something larger than themselves...it requires the individuals involved to surrender their self-interest for the greater good so that the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts (Jackson, 1995, p. 5).

Jackson stressed that individual players must “surrender the ‘me’ for the ‘we’” (1995, p. 21), just as Summitt states you must “surrender the mistaken idea that you can go it alone, and realize that you won’t achieve your individual goals without the support of your colleagues” (1998, p. 162). The coaches all express the belief that if a team is able to relinquish personal glory, they will be better positioned to achieve success. Carril tells players,

they have to share. You have to worry less about yourself and more about the team...every time you help somebody else, you help yourself...You can only play if the

letter 'I' is nonexistent in your vocabularies. Each has to understand what contribution each can make (2004, p. 70).

According to Summitt, teamwork is taught, and one way she achieves this is by hosting team pot-luck dinners where every player is responsible for contributing one thing to the meal: "The lesson is obvious. If they perform their assigned role, if they each fulfill their small share of responsibility and bring that specific dish—whether they like that dish or not—then we all get a big dinner" (1998, p. 165).

When Krzyzewski begins creating teamwork, his goal is to get the players to believe they are involved in something bigger than themselves. He starts fostering this atmosphere at the onset of the season:

It's important to begin using plural pronouns right away. 'Our' instead of 'my.' 'We' instead of 'I.' 'Us' rather than 'me.' I don't want the guys to be thinking this is 'my' team—Coach K's team. I want them to believe it's 'our' team (Krzyzewski, 2000, p. 7).

Summitt talks about tearing down personal constructs and rebuilding them within the team (1998, p. 167). This helps the athletes to see that the outcome is the responsibility of the team—they win and they lose together.

Emitting Confidence

The coaches use verbal and non-verbal communication to convey and instill confidence in their athletes. Krzyzewski advises those who want to be leaders, "Whether you completely believe it or not, you must have the expression on your face and the words in your mouth that the team *is going to win*" (2000, p. 158). This is an important aspect of coaching communication because coaches often find themselves in a situation where they need to instill belief in their

athletes. Krzyzewski gives an example of a game where the players were in shock following a last second shot by their opponent to take the lead. With 2.1 seconds left, he called a time out:

As they walked back from the other side of the court, I saw their dazed looks and I noticed that they were physically apart. It was clear to me that they were thinking individually, as people tend to do in a crisis...I instinctively realized that I had to get them to snap out of the daze they were in and I had to make them believe, positively, that they could win this game...So when we got the timeout, I didn't wait for them to come to the bench. I walked out on the court to meet them. They saw my confident walk before they heard me speak. They saw my face before they ever heard my words... 'We're going to win!' I said immediately. 'We're going to win...we're going to win! Do you understand? We are going to win!' It was like being in the emergency room with a heart attack patient and putting the electronic pads on his chest. 'We are going to win! Poomf! We are going to win! Poomf! Wake up! Poomf! Come back to life! Poomf!' Finally, they came back to life. They heard me. Finally I could see in their eyes that they were over the shock (Krzyzewski, 2000, p. 160).

Summit also stresses the importance of positive, affirmative statements reinforced with body language. She states:

"You communicate with gestures and body language all the time without realizing it. How you sit in a meeting may send a message. Which chair you choose to sit in might send one also. You can unconsciously project confidence or uncertainty. Generally I don't sit on the sidelines. I stand because I feel closer to the game and in a better position to communicate with our players. Also I am aware that my body sends a message from

ninety feet away. Good eye contact, straight posture, and a thumbs-up can impart conviction. Or, if they jack up a bad shot, I stand there and stare a hole through the middle of them...It's not enough to say 'I'm confident.' You can say the words one hundred times over, and no one will buy it if your shoulders are slumped and your voice cracks. You have to project it, particularly when it comes time to persuade others" (Summitt, 1998, p. 72).

In an example similar to Krzyzewski's, Summitt makes sure that what the shooter hears in a pressure situation is an affirmative: "the first and last things she heard were absolutely positive, a dead certainty." Wooden also stresses the importance of positive statements. When discussing his aversion to calling the first time out, he would tell his teams that he wanted the other team to need the first time out: "I didn't say that I *thought* we were going to be in better condition or that we were going to *try* to be. I said that we were *going to be* in better condition—a positive statement" (Wooden, 2004, p. 132). The coaches realize that it is just as much *how* they say something to their athletes as it is *what* they say. Also, a coach can convey confidence without words, simply through their body language and facial expressions. In order to instill confidence, the coaches use deliberate verbal and nonverbal communication with their athletes in high-pressure situations.

Discussion

Coaching communication research has explored the intricate nature of the coach-athlete relationship and furthered the understanding of coaching behavior. Coaching is a demanding profession, and the constant comparative method of analysis of the books written by coaches about coaching demonstrate the strategies and tactics successful coaches employ to communicate

effectively and efficiently with athletes. The communication-related categories or themes consistent across the texts, including promoting close coach-athlete relationships, balancing praise and criticism, using succinct commands during competition, using fear to motivate, using freedom to motivate, emphasizing “we over me” and emitting confidence, are tried and true communication techniques that successful coaches utilize.

Discovering the process of how successful coaches communicate represents an important step in coaching communication research. The autobiographies of the five coaches attest to more than their win-loss records—such as Wooden’s unrivaled 10 NCAA national championships and Summitt’s all-time highest win percentage—which are simply interesting statistics. Reynolds (2007) asks:

How did these coaches get to be so successful? In talking with a number of active wins leaders, it's clear that across sports, there are a few common denominators: passion for the job; endurance; patience; and a focus on the players' well-being, both on and off the playing field. Nearly all of the coaches have been in the profession for at least two decades, some more than five. To have that type of longevity in any career -- but especially one as grueling as coaching -- you have to be successful, not only in the wins column, but also with your players.

In addition to the shared communication techniques discerned from the texts, the researcher also found a theme echoed by all five coaches that have aided in their successful coaching careers. Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski, Summitt and Wooden are all master teachers. This is due to the emphasis their coaching philosophy places on the role of the coach as a teacher, and the

discipline they instill in and expect of their athletes. Research has shown a link between instructional communication and coaching communication, and Wooden feels similarly:

I use the word *teacher* purposely, because I've always considered a coach to be a teacher, the only difference is that he is teaching a particular sport rather than English or chemistry or philosophy. I do believe, however, that a teacher/coach has a better opportunity than the regular classroom teacher to build cooperative values and the acceptance of responsibility. Furthermore, I believe most coaches—not all—attempt to do that (2004, p. 200).

Carril also notes the correlation between teaching and coaching. He writes:

I was reading in the newspaper once about a professor who was retiring and the kind of teacher he had been: very demanding, always insisted on best effort, a little cantankerous. I thought, 'Hey, they're talking about me, except that I yell and swear' (Carril, 2004, p. 19).

The passion each coach has for teaching is evident in their autobiographies, and the success they have experienced is due in part to their unrelenting work ethic. Reflecting on learning from Gary Carter, a catcher with the New York Mets, that he carried *They Call Me Coach* with him throughout the baseball season, Wooden writes:

The fact that he had read the book pleased me. The fact that he read it almost daily flattered me. My objective in writing it was not so much to recite a history of my coaching career but to emphasize to readers the teaching role all coaches play in working with young people (2004, p. 199).

The lessons of these coaches set them apart and demand our attention. Managers, administrators, corporate leaders, statesmen, scholars, and aspiring coaches, “can gain insight and inspiration from these giants among history’s coaching elite” (Walton, 1992, p. xii). Carril, Jackson, Krzyzewski, Summitt and Wooden have perfected the art of knowing when and how to motivate or criticize and discipline athletes, and this knowledge is imparted on others through the texts.

The researcher is confident that the thorough analysis of the five texts resulted in discernable categories of communication techniques significant to successful coaching. These proven coaches have much to offer other coaches in terms of solidifying successful careers through effective coaching communication and leadership behaviors. The discussion of this thesis is focused on a content analysis of autobiographical coaching books; however, it is important to keep in mind that their actual behaviors were not observed. Therefore, the results are more of a representation of successful coaches’ reflections on communication and motivational strategies. Although not observational, the findings deserve significant consideration due to the combined achievements of the coaches. The reader is encouraged to analyze his or her own coaching communication styles and leadership behaviors to maximize the communication process with their athletes.

Some researchers feel a universal model for effective coaching will not be adequate, due to the many variables when investigating coaching behaviors (Kahan, 1999; Wandzilak et al., 1988). However, this research simply suggests qualities of successful coaching to potentially incorporate into one’s leadership style. In coaching, it is important to develop and hone your own individual coaching style, not mimic another’s. Krzyzewski advises, “Any blueprint to leadership has to be used as a guide. It can only be structured so much. There has to be room for personal

creativity. And every leader has to put his own signature on his leadership style” (2000, p. 231). However, studying the philosophies of other successful coaches is recommended as a means of clarifying one’s own coaching philosophy.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study provided valuable insight into how successful coaches communicate with athletes, limitations exist. First, the research focused solely on the five books, all written by coaches coaching basketball. While the method for selecting the books was a strategic and credible one, the books were similar. Nonetheless, they were identified by the surveyed coaches as being influential books for coaches to read. Second, this research was limited to team-based coaches, which might present an inadequacy in the research. Research into individual sport coaches might introduce additional elements and communication behaviors. Finally, the data from this study was analyzed by a single coder. Though the researcher provided a detailed description of the data analysis, reliability is an issue. Considering the time involved in this type of research, multiple coders was not realistic. The bias brought to the research by the researcher as a coach herself is specific to the process. Qualitative research relies heavily on researcher holistic and personal process. As a qualitative researcher, the researcher is trained to pull back from her own perspective to see data in as objective a way as possible.

For future researchers interested in coaching communication, consider having a team of coders to provide a system of checks and balances. Communicative behaviors are often examined using self-report measures such as scales, inventories or questionnaires, and systematic observation. Further research is suggested utilizing the latter since self-reports are widely used and present methodological and practical problems. Kahan (1999) proposes research into

coaching behavior should utilize a broad range of multiple data collection processes to provide “additional insight into coaching behavior, what it affects and is affected by” (p. 43). It might be fortuitous to follow up systematic observation of coaches with in-depth interviews aimed at understanding the coach’s reasoning behind the communication behaviors observed. In addition to other methodologies, one might also choose to expand to incorporate individual sports, coaches coaching other sports and gender (men coaching men, women coaching women, men coaching women). The emergence of scholarly interest in the coaching profession and behaviors may indicate a need for communication training for coaches to assist coaches in providing athletes with the necessary social support and technical instruction. The communication techniques of coaches can impact the development of athletes, and the coaching autobiographies analyzed in this study only begin to outline the strategies coaches employ in the process of successful coaching.

Conclusion

Effective coach leadership is one component of building productive and high performing teams. Sports permeate our culture, and Pete Carril, Phil Jackson, Mike Krzyzewski, Pat Summitt and John Wooden are seminal names in the history of sport’s culture. The complexity of the coach-athlete relationship complicates coaching communication research, making the study of the communication techniques of these coaches paramount to preserving a record of their methods. Scholarly research supports the detailed communication techniques used by the coaches in *The Smart Take from the Strong*, *Sacred Hoops*, *Leading with the Heart*, *Reach for the Summit* and *They Call Me Coach*. The lessons found within their pages assist coaches, and others in leadership positions, create dynamic environments conducive to successful leadership.

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