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Examination of novice coaches' previous experience as athletes: Examples of autonomy

support and controlling behaviors as influences on future coaching practice

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Abstract

As part of a coach's informal learning process, previous athletic experience is a foundational element of an athlete's future coaching career, determining the perspectives, beliefs and behaviors the coach will utilize in their interactions with athletes (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). While it is investigated more generally, previous athletic experience is rarely considered in understanding specific coaching behaviors related to supporting athletes' needs and motivation. This study investigated fifteen novice coaches' personal athletic and coaching experiences to determine how these experiences influenced their own coaching practice with regards to use of autonomy supportive and/or controlling behaviors. Interview data revealed that novice coaches utilized their past experiences to inform their practice in three ways: 1) experienced controlling behaviors as an athlete which transferred to a desire to be more autonomy supportive in coaching, 2) experienced controlling behaviors as an athlete which transferred to a desire to be controlling in coaching, and 3) experienced autonomy supportive behaviors as an athlete which transferred to a desire to be more autonomy supportive in coaching. These results suggest the importance of considering previous athletic experience as an antecedent to utilizing autonomy supportive behaviors.

Keywords: Self-Determination Theory, coach behavior, informal learning, coach learning, antecedent

Introduction

Researchers indicate that the coach development process begins when the coach is still an athlete (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). Wherein, the individual learns about the coaching role through interactions with a variety of coaches over the course of their athletic career. These previous athletic experiences serve as a foundational resource to direct a novice coach's first few years in the coaching profession (Jacobs, Claringbould, & Knoppers, 2014; Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007). Upon entering the coaching role, previous athletic experiences become a primary resource in determining the beliefs, perspectives and behaviors the coach will utilize in their interactions with athletes (Cushion et al., 2003). In fact, research conducted to evaluate coaching education programs indicate that the primary sources for coaching knowledge were learning by doing and interacting with other coaches rather than formalized training in coaching education programs (Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008). This suggests coaches continue to value and rely on their experiences as a basis for future coaching behavior even beyond the first few years of coaching.

The role of athletic experience as a useful and positive source of coach learning is up for debate. However, athletic experience may have implications for future learning as these experiences may form a "lens through which new [coaching] knowledge is viewed" (Cushion et al., 2010, p. 69). Although previous athletic experience is not always required to fulfill a coaching position, many coaches of elite and youth athletes have acquired knowledge of the coaching role during their experience as athletes (for a full review see Cushion et al., 2010). Interestingly, elite coaches have reported athletic participation as being both an important (Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2004) and a relatively unimportant (Schempp, Templeton, & Clark, 1998) learning source for a coach in comparison to other modes of learning. It has therefore been

57 recommended for these experiences to be investigated with greater scrutiny (Cushion et al.,

58 2010) to identify the meaning and significance coaches have tied to their experiences.

59   Coach learning has been considered extensively (Cushion et al., 2010; Nelson, Cushion,

60 & Potrac, 2006; Walker, Thomas, & Driska, 2018; Werthner & Trudel, 2006) to delineate the

61 theoretical perspectives from which coaches develop. It is not the purpose of this work to review

62 all existing frameworks in the coach learning literature, but to illustrate the learning experiences

63 of novice coaches within the present study. Therefore, Coombs and Ahmed's (1974) widely

64 accepted framework of formal, informal, and nonformal learning will be included from which

65 coaching knowledge and practice have previously been conceptualized (Nelson et al., 2006).

66   Formal learning sources are defined as structured and institutionalized learning systems

67 such as coach certification and higher education degree programs with coursework specific to the

68 sport sciences and coaching. Informal learning is referred to as a lifelong process (Coombs &

69 Ahmed, 1974) in which knowledge is accumulated outside of a formal learning setting such as in

70 previous experience as an athlete, interactions with athletes and other peer coaches, informal

71 mentoring, guided and self-guided reflection, and practical coaching experiences. Finally,

72 nonformal learning includes organized and systematic learning activities conducted outside of

73 the framework of formal learning. These activities include coaching seminars, workshops,

74 conferences and clinics that are presented to a subgroup of coaches as additional sources of

75 learning (Cushion et al., 2010).

76   The formal, informal and non-formal components of learning are interconnected within

77 the complex coach learning process and may exist "simultaneously in concert or conflict"

78 (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 249). While coaches have been shown to prefer learning from informal

79 learning sources (Erickson et al., 2008) this does not indicate that coach learning should be

80 confined or catered to this source. As previous athletic experience was previously mentioned as a

81 foundational and informal element to establishing coaching practice (Jacobs et al., 2014; Lemyre

82 et al., 2007), it is of interest to explore the quality of these experiences and how they have

83 contributed to novice coaches' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives regarding coaching practice

84 and the resulting impact on coaching behavior. Combined with Cushion et al. (2010)'s

85 recommendation to investigate previous athletic experience with more scrutiny, an investigation

86 into influence of these experiences on a coach's behavior regarding athletes' motivation is

87 warranted.

88   Coaching behavior has been found to be highly impactful on athlete motivation (Amorose

89 & Horn, 2000; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), having the potential to be facilitative or restrictive of

90 an athlete's basic psychological needs and motivation. The self-determination theory (SDT)

91 distinguishes between two interpersonal motivational styles, autonomy-supportive and

92 controlling, that have been applied to the coaching context (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy-

93 supportive coaches satisfy athletes' three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence,

94 and relatedness, by engaging in several behaviors classified by Mageau and Vallerand (2003) as

95 being autonomy supportive. These coaching behaviors are 1) providing the athlete choice within

96 specific limits, 2) providing rationales for rules and instruction, 3) distinguishing and

97 acknowledging athletes' feelings, 4) allowing for independent work, 5) providing feedback in an

98 informational and non-controlling way, 6) avoiding overt control through criticisms and tangible

99 rewards, and 7) preventing ego-involvement. Athletes under the supervision of an autonomy-

100 supportive coach have been shown to experience autonomous motivation for participation, an

101 increase in athletic performance, and basic psychological need satisfaction (Occhino, Mallett,

102 Rynne, & Carlisle, 2014). Utilizing these behavior definitions, a variety of research has begun

103   the task of identifying specific application examples in coaching (Beauchamp, Halliwell,

104   Fournier, & Koestner, 1996; Berntsen & Kristiansen, 2019; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009;

105   Mallett, 2005; Sheldon & Watson, 2011). Further, Zougkou, Weinstein, and Paulmann (2017)

106   suggest that individuals can distinguish between behaviors that are more autonomy-supportive or

107   controlling in nature through the tone of voice and the characteristics of the wording from which

108   the directives are sent.

109   Controlling coaching, however, has the potential to thwart the basic needs of athletes by

110   actively undermining athletes' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Coaches who

111   engage in more controlling behaviors are distinguished by their 1) emphasis on tangible rewards,

112   2) controlling competency feedback, 3) excessive personal control, 4) intimidation behaviors

113   such as verbal abuse and physical punishment, 5) promotion of ego-involvement and 6) use of

114   conditional regard to shape desired athlete behavior (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøgersen-

115   Ntoumani, 2009). Psychological ill-being and negative athlete consequences have been linked

116   with controlling coaching interpersonal behaviors and have been observed in athletes' negative

117   affect, disordered eating, burnout, and depression, to name a few. Interestingly, autonomy-

118   supportive and controlling coaching behaviors have been shown to co-occur in order to elicit

119   desired behaviors indicating that these behaviors are not mutually exclusive (Bartholomew,

120   Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2011). Therefore, it is likely that these

121   behaviors can be used interchangeably by a single coach depending on what the coach perceives

122   to be the most effective method for producing desired athlete behavior. This allows for athletes

123   to be subjected to a myriad of coaching behaviors throughout their sport experience that may or

124   may not be facilitative of their psychological well-being and motivational tendencies.

125   Athletes have been shown to distinguish autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors even

126   at the youth level, including coaches' interest in athlete's input and praise for autonomous

127   behavior (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007). In furthering this line of research, Coatsworth and

128   Conroy (2009) observed that autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors such as praise for

129   autonomous behavior are important for need satisfaction and the development of initiative in

130   youth athletes. This opportunity for positive personal development within athletic participation is

131   often why parents have their children participate in sport in the first place.

132   Controlling forms of coaching have been observed in research (d'Arripe-Longueville,

133   Fournier, & Dubois, 1998; Erickson & Côté, 2016; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009) with further

134   evidence to suggest that despite negative repercussions, coaches believe controlling behaviors to

135   be effective and warranted in producing desired athlete behavior (Delrue, Soenens, Morbee,

136   Vansteenkiste, & Haerens, 2019; Ng, Thogersen-Ntoumani, & Ntoumanis, 2012). In some cases,

137   coaches are unaware of their controlling behaviors or personally have not experienced unpleasant

138   feelings while using such coercive methods (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Cushion and Jones

139   (2006) provided evidence from professional youth soccer coaches indicating coaches used more

140   controlling behaviors because it was "the easiest way" to coach amid the pressure within the

141   coaching environment. However, in this specific case, a harsh form of coaching was considered

142   traditional and acceptable in the training of future professional athletes as this same method was

143   present when these coaches were playing at the professional level. This perpetuation of

144   traditional controlling coaching behaviors despite the negative impact on athletes' motivation is

145   noteworthy and further affirms how previous experience plays a role in the future development

146   of coaching.

147   Research to uncover the antecedents to coaches' engagement in autonomy-supportive

148   and/or controlling behaviors has been established (Matosic, Ntoumanis, & Quested, 2016;

149   Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017). Whereby the nature of the cultural norms and the social-

150   environmental factors (stress, professional development opportunities, job security, work-life

151   conflict) coaches operate in was broadly identified as important to understanding why coaches

152   may engage in autonomy-supportive and/or controlling behaviors (Matosic et al., 2016).

153   However, much of the antecedent literature has not explored the beliefs coaches have formed

154   regarding the effective strategies to develop athlete ability and the normalized behaviors

155   associated with the coaching role as a result of their athletic participation. This may be attributed

156   to coaches not being able to recognize how their assumptions and personal experiences are

157   guiding their coaching practice (Harvey, Cushion, & Massa-Gonzalez, 2010; Strean, Senecal,

158   Howlett, & Burgess, 1997) and the difficulty associated with effectively measuring such a

159   dynamic construct. Despite this, coach development literature has identified coaching practice to

160   be reliant on intuition, tradition and emulation of other coaches' behaviors rather than evidence-

161   based findings often learned in formal coaching education (Williams & Hodges, 2005). In this

162   sense, coaching behavior is shaped through informal learning sources such as the coach's athletic

163   history, his or her personal experiences in coaching, cultural norms within the coaching context,

164   and the contextual forces (antecedents) enacting on the coach.

165   Given this information, novice coaches could be expected to draw upon their own

166   experiences as to what coaching methods were effective or ineffective within their athletic

167   participation, adhere to the traditional forms of coaching they observed, and mimic the behavior

168   of the coaches they have been exposed to through their coaching practice. In this regard, it is

169   anticipated that the autonomy-supportive and/or controlling coaching behaviors novice coaches

170   have experienced within their own sport participation could inform and shape their coaching

171   practice.

172   With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to investigate novice coaches' personal

173   athletic and coaching experiences to determine how these experiences influence their own

174   coaching practice, especially with regards to how they communicate with athletes. A secondary

175   purpose of this study was to outline examples of autonomy-support and control within novice

176   coaches' experiences as an athlete and a coach. Mageau & Vallerand's (2003) examples of

177   autonomy-supportive behaviors and Bartholomew and colleagues' (2009) examples of

178   controlling behaviors guided the organization of novice coaches' experiences and coaching

179   practices.

180   **Methods**

181   **Participants**

182   Participants were 15 students (ten male, five female) between the ages of 20-24 years (M

183   = 21.53) who were enrolled in coaching education courses at a large Southeastern university.

184   Participants reported race/ethnicity as eight White, five Black, one undisclosed, and one

185   Hispanic, and had varying levels of coaching experience ranging from less than six months

186   (three participants), at least six months (nine participants), three years (one participant), and five

187   years (one participant). Within these experiences, 11 participants coached both males and

188   females and three participants only coached males. Participants coached a variety of sports to

189   include soccer, skateboarding, volleyball, track and field, rifle, football, bowling, lacrosse,

190   basketball, t-ball, and softball. Coaching assignments varied for participants in terms of level

191   coached and head/assistant coach assignments. Table 1 highlights the specific experiences of

192   coaches according to age group and coaching position to account for twenty-one coaching

193   experiences described by the fifteen participants.

194   *Insert Table 1 here*

195   All participants indicated they would like to work as a coach after they completed their degree,

196   with 12 indicating they would like to work part-time and three indicating they would like to work

197   full-time as a coach. Athletic experience for each participant is located in Figure 1. This

198   information highlights the variety of sport experiences and potential exposure to multiple

199   coaches throughout each participant's athletic history.

200   *Insert Figure 1 here*

201   **Procedures**

202   Following IRB approval, participants were recruited from coaching education courses by

203   the secondary researcher. Here, recruitment was purposeful within the courses of Technology in

204   Sport, Psychology of Coaching, and Principles of Coaching to garner responses from novice

205   coaches. Students were advised that course grades would not be contingent on participation in

206   the study to eliminate obligatory participation. Another researcher recruited participants from a

207   course in the event the primary researcher was the instructor for that course. Participants

208   completed informed consent forms before participating in the semi-structured interviews.

209   Interviews were audio recorded and took place in a private room on campus.

210   Demographics were collected at the beginning of each interview including age, gender,

211   race/ethnicity, years of coaching experience, gender of athletes coached, and course taken in the

212   coaching education program. The semi-structured interviews included questions about

213   participants' experiences as a coach and an athlete, the sports they participated in as an athlete

214   and at what ages, their coaching philosophy and what formed that philosophy, interactions with

215   previous coaches, familiarity with autonomy-support and examples of what autonomy-support

216   has looked like in their experiences. Interviews were semi-structured to allow for the exploration

217   of responses in more detail and took approximately 45 minutes to complete, ranging from 30 –

218   60 minutes. The interview protocol can be reviewed in Appendix A. It should be noted that the

219   data obtained for this study was part of a larger project, therefore questions related to other

220   aspects of the project are not included in the appendix.

221   **Data Analysis**

222   To address the primary and secondary purposes of this study, a dual approach was

223   followed during analysis. First, a directed content analysis was chosen to guide the identification

224   of autonomy-supportive and controlling coaching behaviors within the participants' experiences.

225   This approach was chosen as it allows for an existing framework or theory to be extended or

226   validated and focuses the research question (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As part of this process,

227   Mageau & Vallerand's (2003) examples of autonomy-supportive behaviors and Bartholomew

228   and colleagues' (2009) examples of controlling behaviors were used as predetermined codes. On

229   subsequent passes, an interpretive approach, utilizing both deductive and inductive analysis,

230   guided the coding of novice coaches' experiences in comparison with their reported use of

231   autonomy-supportive and/or controlling behaviors within their coaching. The use of an

232   interpretive paradigm "allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and

233   experiences of the participants" (Thanh & Thanh, 2015, p. 24) and is recommended for exploring

234   the coaching process which is heavily influenced by social context (Strean, 1998). From these

235   experiences, the researchers were able to interpret these viewpoints while accounting for the

236   specific context of the social environment of being a novice coach. As the primary purpose of

237   this investigation, the researchers felt that this interpretivist paradigm was appropriate in

238   determining how novice coaches draw upon their previous experiences to inform their coaching.

239   This study followed a ten-step process for analysis: 1) recorded interviews were

240   transcribed verbatim; 2) researchers familiarized themselves with the data by independently

241   reading and re-reading the transcripts; 3) researchers independently coded all reported coaching

242   behaviors, and coaching philosophies using N-Vivo 12 software while athletic participation

243   timelines were constructed and chronicled using Microsoft Excel; 4) researchers independently

244   matched coaching behavior codes with a set of thirteen predetermined codes (definitions for

245   autonomy-support and controlling) using a directed content analysis approach (Hsieh &

246   Shannon, 2005); 5) remaining codes that did not fall within the predetermined codes were

247   independently organized into similar categories to account for potential biases of the directed

248   content approach; 6) researchers met to discuss each stage of the coding process (steps 3-5) to

249   refine each code or grouping and ensure an accurate interpretation of the data; 7) an interpretivist

250   approach (Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000; Strean, 1998) was used for subsequent

251   passes through the transcripts to compare individual novice coaches' experiences with their

252   reported use of autonomy-supportive and/or controlling coaching behaviors. In this stage,

253   researchers independently coded supporting and non-supporting evidence of novice coaches'

254   behavior replication or adaptation; 8) researchers again met to discuss codes from the

255   interpretivist stage and refine groupings 9) internal and external member checks were utilized to

256   ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Participants were given copies of transcripts as well as

257   their sport participation timelines to check for accuracy. Member checking was also used during

258   the interviews to verify participants' responses were accurately conveyed and understood.

259   Although recent commentaries suggest that member checking is not a way to establish rigor in

260   qualitative research (Smith & McGannon, 2017), the researchers utilized this technique to ensure

261   that the data represented was accurate before coding began. In addition, during the interviews,

262   researchers would paraphrase or restate information back to the participant throughout the line of

263   questioning; and 10) a critical friend reviewed the transcripts and all classified codes to offer an

264   outside perspective and prompt further exploration and reflection upon the interpretation of the

265   data as a means to achieve methodological rigor.

266   **Results**

267   Novice coaches briefly discussed their coaching philosophies as an insight to how they

268   perceive their role as a coach. Four main categories emerged from the interview data. Novice

269   coaches described in their philosophies the specific coaching qualities and behaviors they

270   embody, the coaching climate they create, the expectations they hold for their athletes, and the

271   outcomes they seek to produce in their athletes. Coaching behaviors included listening and

272   talking to athletes, being flexible and attentive to players' needs, providing equal treatment and

273   specific feedback while upholding coaching qualities of honesty, patience, respect, and

274   humbleness. Descriptions of the climate included maintaining structure, consistency and a team

275   focus, placing a low emphasis on winning and a high emphasis on skill development and having

276   fun, and facilitating a positive and encouraging environment. Coaches expected athletes to do

277   their best, exert effort, and be selfless and committed teammates. Finally, coaches aspired to

278   facilitate several athlete outcomes including character development, good sportsmanship,

279   confidence, self-discipline, mental toughness, career and academic development, and the

280   learning of life lessons.

281   During the interviews, novice coaches spoke of their previous experiences as athletes and

282   as coaches. Towards the end of the interview, the researchers asked the participants if they knew

283   what autonomy-supportive coaching was. Definitions were then given to the participants, along

284   with examples taken from participants' own experiences. Novice coaches were then asked to

285   describe any other experiences they may have had that would be indicative of an autonomy-

286   supportive motivational climate within their previous experiences as athletes as well as behaviors

287   in their own coaching. All experiences, both before and after the last question asked, were

288   categorized by the researchers as being one of the seven reported autonomy-supported behaviors

289   (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) as shown in Table 2. Novice coaches also described coaching

290   behaviors indicative of a controlling motivational climate within their athletic histories and

291   within their own coaching. These experiences were not directly investigated in the interview

292   protocol but were memorable and described by all fifteen of the participants. Therefore, novice

293   coaches' controlling examples were also categorized and are shown in Table 3 which were

294   categorized by one of the six controlling behaviors (Bartholomew, et al., 2009).

295   In summary, novice coaches experienced autonomy-support from their previous coaches

296   in six out of the seven categories of autonomy-supportive behaviors. Drawing from examples of

297   their previous coaches, frequencies of autonomy-supportive behaviors reported from the athlete

298   perspective were as follows: rationales for rules and instruction (11 coaches), providing

299   informational and non-controlling feedback (9 coaches), providing choice within specific limits

300   (5 coaches), inquiring about athletes feelings and allowing independent work (4 coaches), and

301   avoiding overt control (3 coaches). Interestingly, none provided examples of preventing ego-

302   involvement.

303   Participants all had varying levels of personal coaching experience from which they

304   provided dialogues of their coach-athlete interactions and use of autonomy-supportive behaviors.

305   Overall, thirteen of the fifteen participants gave examples of how they engage in at least one of

306   the seven autonomy-supportive behaviors as coaches. Ten coaches described acknowledging

307   athletes' feelings, six coaches reported avoiding overt control and providing informational and

308   non-controlling feedback, use of rationales for rules and instruction was reported by five

309   coaches, while four coaches gave examples for preventing ego-involvement. Finally, three

310   coaches gave examples for providing choice and allowing for independent work. Table 2 lists the

311   specific autonomy-supportive actions of participants' previous coaches and participants' own

312   actions in more detail.

313   *Insert Table 2 here*

314   Participants also gave several accounts of how their previous coaches engaged in all six

315   categories of controlling behaviors. The frequencies of these behaviors are as follows: excessive

316   personal control (8 coaches), intimidation behaviors (7 coaches), promotion of ego-involvement

317   (4 coaches), conditional regard and controlling competency feedback (2 coaches) and coaches'

318   use of tangible rewards (1 coach). Although reported more infrequently in comparison with those

319   of autonomy-support, controlling behaviors were identified by five novice coaches' accounts of

320   how they would coach or currently coach their athletes. Among the controlling behaviors, the use

321   of intimidation behaviors and the promotion of ego-involvement were each reported by two

322   coaches while the use of excessive personal control and emphasis on tangible rewards was

323   reported by one coach each. Table 3 lists the specific controlling behaviors of previous coaches

324   and participants' own coaching.

325   *Insert Table 3 here*

326   One final theme was identified within the interview data that could not be categorized as

327   part of novice coaches' coaching philosophy or as a part of the definitions for autonomy-

328   supportive and controlling coaching. This theme was the cultivation of team culture. Novice

329   coaches described how they sought to develop a team culture and/or shared their experiences of

330   team culture as athletes. Subthemes included coaches emphasizing the building of relationships,

331   participating in team building activities, producing a never-give-up and process driven mentality,

332   nurturing a family-type atmosphere, promoting equal treatment among team members, holding

333   athletes responsible for their actions, and encouraging athletes to play for each other and have

334   fun.

335   The interpretivist approach to the data analysis revealed several nuances when comparing

336   novice coaches' previous athletic experiences with their current coaching practices. Several

337   novice coaches explicitly linked the way they currently coach to events they experienced as an

338   athlete in one of three ways: 1) novice coaches experienced controlling forms of coaching as an

339   athlete and therefore formed their coaching behavior to be more autonomy-supportive, 2) novice

340   coaches experienced controlling forms of coaching and consequently found themselves

341   exhibiting similar controlling behaviors within their own coaching, and 3) novice coaches

342   experienced autonomy-supportive forms of coaching and replicated autonomy-supportive

343   behaviors with their athletes. Examples of each are presented in the following dialogues.

344   **Controlling coaching experiences transferring into autonomy-supportive coaching**

345   In recalling his experience as a lacrosse player, Don noted how his coaches conditioned

346   the team to run and execute various skills. In his description of the training, Don indicated his

347   coach's strict and controlling approach to conditioning athletes to run and how he has taken a

348   more autonomy-supportive approach. He accomplishes this by allowing the athletes autonomy in

349   choosing when they run during practice while also providing athletes a rationale for doing so:

350   "...my coaches in high school were definitely of those guys that you know 'you're

351   running right now whether you want to or not' and that's something I brought to college

352 where I'll tell my guys we play lacrosse, we have to be conditioned, we have to run...We

353 can either run now or run later and that's the choice usually that I give them , they can

354 choose to run tired or they can choose to run fresh it's up to them"

355 Don also discussed how his coaches approached skills training in a controlling way, which

356 included an example of punishment for not following coaches' directives. In reflecting upon how

357 this experience negatively impacted his ability to develop specific skills, Don chose to adopt

358 strategies that allowed for a more flexible learning approach that did not involve punishment.

359 Similarly, Gloria was able to recognize that more controlling behaviors such as yelling and using

360 running as punishment are not in best practice to motivate athletes.

361 "I really, I hated this one coach. He was just...extremely hard and it was middle school

362 level. It was track. He just used to yell at us...I think there's other ways to approach

363 players especially at a young level because...young athletes are so easily discouraged

364 sometimes and if you're constantly yelling at them, that can be a great potential athlete

365 and you never know because they'll never come back to practice cuz of the vibes given at

366 practice."

367 In her own coaching, Gloria indicated she would use creative ways to condition athletes to where

368 they would enjoy running instead of using it as a punishment. She valued the use of discipline in

369 a fair and consistent way. In Tina's experience, she found it difficult to adapt her coaching style

370 because she had experienced a coach who utilized yelling and punishment in his coaching.

371 However, she recognized that this was not an ideal way to coach youth:

372 "You know it's hard to adapt what I've learned and what I've been taught from my club

373 coach...it was a huge adaptation for me…my coach is always for the fitness punishment.

374 Like if you're talking you'd go run two laps...you can't do that with 8-year-olds...it's

375   definitely been a challenge for me to kind of adapt how I speak and how I think and stuff

376   like that to how they're gonna want to learn...For example...you don't yell as many strict

377   or like harsh comments at them because they're 8 year-olds...You gotta say, oh great

378   job…way to get that ball, instead of, you need to do better."

379 Tina was able to reflect upon her formal educational experiences which informed her of the

380 appropriate methods for creating an adaptive motivational climate for youth athletes. This was

381 compared with her personal experiences, which were driven by more controlling motivational

382 behaviors. Ultimately, she explained how she adopted a more autonomy-supportive approach

383 despite having been exposed to more controlling behaviors. Terrance saw his coach's controlling

384 behavior within position selection and felt he was not given the opportunity to make choices for

385 himself. However, when asked how he would provide choice to his athletes, he emphasized the

386 importance of giving athletes opportunities to learn and try new positions in the early stages of

387 sport development. He felt in this way, he could accommodate athletes needs and potential.

388 Through this example, it was apparent Terrance adapted his coaching strategy as a result of his

389 experience to better align with his values. For Terrance, the role of the coach is to facilitate

390 athlete development by considering what the individual wants to get out of a sporting experience

391 and acting in a manner that would not restrict those possibilities.

392 **Controlling coaching experiences transferring into controlling coaching**

393   A few participants indicated that their previous coaches' controlling behaviors were

394 reflected and utilized within their own coaching. Elijah described this directly:

395   "Well, one thing I emulate is how firm they [my coaches] were. Because they were so

396   firm with me, it's like in my head I talk to myself. I'm not gonna be so firm with the kids I

397   was coaching, but I've seen that to be able to lead a team, you have to be firm, you have

398   to make the harder decisions, you have to say no, put your foot down...I'd like to be more

399   like that, more firm, [and] not be afraid to communicate ideas."

400   Elijah accepted the behavior of firmness to be associated with the coaching role as a necessary

401   characteristic despite his initial resistance to this notion. He further explained how he aspires to

402   continue this behavior through his communication with athletes and how he associates the

403   characteristic of firmness with effective leadership. Here, it is evident that Elijah's previous

404   experience has largely informed his continuation of firm coaching. In considering the nature of

405   the coaching environment, Dominic explained how he grew accustomed to players being yelled

406   at consistently by coaches:

407   "...when I was playing youth football...I knew I was gonna get yelled at from day one.

408   So, I just was used to coaches yelling and them telling me you got to do it this way or

409   you're not gonna do it at all. So, I mean I'd incorporate that somewhat [in my coaching]

410   but you can only yell at someone so much before they just stop caring about it."

411   In response to what his coaching would look like Dominic replied:

412   "Depending on what kind of group I'm coaching. If I'm coaching high schoolers, I'm

413   probably gonna do a lot of yelling because I feel like that's the only way they'll listen is

414   yelling, you discipline them. Whereas [if] I'm coaching the youth group, I can really more

415   talk to them and you know this is how they do it when you get to high school, you want

416   to play in high school you should do it this way. But less yelling for the youth and more

417   yelling for high schoolers."

418   Dominic's account is particularly interesting in that he internalized his coaches use of yelling

419   during his youth and high school football participation to inform his own coaching methods.

420   Dominic identified his use of yelling as a form of discipline for his high school athletes.

421   However, Dominic indicated a difference in his communication with his youth athletes than that

422   of his previous coaches. This shift in communication is described as him talking to athletes and

423   yelling infrequently in comparison with high school athletes.

424   **Autonomy-supportive coaching experiences transferring into autonomy-supportive**

425   **coaching**

426   It was apparent within the interviews that coaches replicated autonomy-supportive

427   coaching behaviors that they experienced within their own coaching. For example, Elijah's coach

428   often used game-related scenarios to test athletes' problem-solving abilities. Elijah sought to

429   replicate this teaching strategy as a way to provide rationales for learning important game-related

430   skills while also allowing athletes to think independently. Christine felt her coaches were open

431   and personable with their athletes which facilitated strong coach-athlete relationships. She valued

432   and appreciated those qualities in her coaches and indicated she wants to do the same for her

433   athletes. Stephany felt that her coaches gave her a lot of freedom as an athlete to explore her

434   skills and replicated these same behaviors:

435   "[In my coaching] I'd want to say I would be flexible with anything...I really am an open-

436   minded person...I was never told I wasn't allowed to do something and so I feel as a

437   coach...I think I'd be very flexible with someone trying maybe a new position [or] trying

438   what they wanted to ...but depending on the age like we could always do a game or

439   something that would make the players comfortable and...I'd listen to my players and

440   what needs to be done or like kind of see what needs to be done versus just doing what I

441   think personally."

442   Here, Stephany illustrated how she adopted a similar approach to coaching to align with her

443   autonomous experiences. She felt that considering what athletes want to get out of practice could

444   take priority over what she may have had in mind.

Discussion

446   Within the framework of self-determination theory, the purpose of this study was to

447   investigate novice coaches' personal athletic and coaching experiences as well as outline

448   examples of autonomy support and control within these experiences. Our findings indicate that

449   novice coaches' previous experiences as athletes contributed to their knowledge of the coaching

450   role and subsequent interactions with their athletes. Further, results revealed that novice coaches

451   had experienced and enacted several autonomy-supportive behaviors as athletes and coaches,

452   respectively. Examples of controlling coaching were also reported from the athlete and coach

453   perspective, however, novice coaches described controlling behaviors less often than autonomy-

454   supportive behaviors.

455   The relative infrequency of reported controlling behaviors could in part be explained by

456   the nature of the interview protocol. Novice coaches were not explicitly asked to recall

457   experiences related to controlling coaching behaviors and instead, these behaviors emerged as a

458   natural result of participants recollecting their athletic experiences. However, it was apparent that

459   the controlling behaviors of excessive personal control (conveying a lack of choice) and coaches'

460   intimidation behaviors (yelling and punishing) were exceedingly memorable and impressionable

461   moments of novice coaches' athletic careers that warranted attention. It is therefore our

462   recommendation that future works more intentionally explore coaches' previous experience of

463   controlling coaching in relation to coaches' perceptions of coach-athlete communication.

464   The fact that novice coaches' previous experience contributed to their knowledge of the

465   coaching role is supported by previous work (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Williams &

466   Hodges, 2005). Novice coaches were shown to process the relevant behaviors associated with

467   coaching during the interviews as they reflected upon how a variety of autonomy-supportive and

468   controlling coaching behaviors contributed to their overall athletic experience and development.

469   In this way, novice coaches subconsciously adopted coaching behaviors that they felt were

470   qualities of a 'good coach' (Jacobs, Claringbould, & Knoppers, 2014), even without knowing

471   that the behaviors could be autonomy-supportive or controlling. Coaches' behaviors were also

472   focused on conversations surrounding team culture. Novice coaches frequently reported an

473   intentionality toward implementing team culture ideals of a caring and family-type atmosphere

474   among players which was a prevalent feature of their personal athletic experiences. Novice

475   coaches viewed themselves as an integral part in facilitating the development of strong bonds

476   among team members. While not explicitly autonomy-supportive, there is support in the

477   literature for autonomy-supportive and caring climates to produce positive outcomes for athletes

478   (Gano-Overway et al., 2009).

479   **Coach learning**

480   Previous athletic experience served as an informal learning source for the novice coaches

481   within this study which has been similarly reported in the literature (Cushion et al., 2010).

482   Although the current study structured the interview to explore these informal learning

483   experiences within autonomy-supportive and controlling coach-created climates, it is important

484   to note that novice coaches also alluded to their formal learning experiences as contributing to

485   their coaching practice. Don said:

486   "These classes have been beneficial towards my coaching experience. It's taught me a lot

487   of things and also [revealed] a lot of bad stuff about my previous coaches."

488   Meanwhile, Trevor indicated his coaching philosophy has shifted as a result of his coursework.

489   He claimed his coaching philosophy was initially reflective of what his previous coaches did,

490   both good and bad. Trevor now believes his coaching is more congruent with what he has

491   learned. This information is supported by other volunteer and recreational level coaches who

492   have similarly noted the importance of formal education in the first few years of coaching

493   (Walker, Thomas, & Driska, 2018).

494   Based on this information, it appears that novice coaches' coaching practice was

495   therefore informed by multiple experiences (both formal and informal) which illustrates the

496   interconnected nature of coaching learning (informal, formal, nonformal). In fact, it is when

497   these experiences are combined that the learning environment is optimized (Cushion et al.,

498   2010). Although the present analyses intended to capture how novice coaches learned of the

499   coaching role from their previous experience as athletes, we must acknowledge the sources of

500   learning are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, future research should consider the interaction of

501   what novice coaches have learned in their formal coaching education experience as well as the

502   lessons learned from coaches' previous experience as an athlete.

503   **Previous experience as an antecedent to autonomy-supportive coaching**

504   The findings of this study support previous athletic experience as an antecedent to

505   autonomy-supportive or controlling coaching. Here, the novice coaches' provision of autonomy-

506   supportive or controlling coaching behaviors was associated with participants' beliefs regarding

507   the coaching role. Similarly, literature has identified social-environmental factors as antecedents

508   to a coaches' need-supportive or need-thwarting behaviors (Matosic et al., 2016) to include

509   evidence of teachers utilizing more controlling behaviors in the classroom in collectivistic

510   cultures as a result of a cultural norm or belief in the effectiveness of controlling behavior (Reeve

511   et al., 2014). Participants described the 'cultural norms' of their sport experiences which

512   embodied both autonomy-supportive (consistent provision of choice) or controlling coaching

513   behaviors (consistent yelling and restriction of choice). These coaching norms were found to be

514   replicated given the novice coaches' interpretation of the experience as facilitative to their

515   athletic development.

516   **How coaches interpret past experiences to structure future behavior**

517   Our results indicated that novice coaches utilized their past experiences to inform their

518   practice in three ways: 1) experienced controlling behaviors as an athlete which transferred to a

519   desire to be more autonomy supportive in coaching, 2) experienced controlling behaviors as an

520   athlete which transferred to a desire to be controlling in coaching, and 3) experienced autonomy

521   supportive behaviors as an athlete which transferred to a desire to be more autonomy supportive

522   in coaching. In some cases, novice coaches were able to draw from autonomy supportive

523   experiences easily, while others struggled to adapt their coaching due to previous experiences.

524   Stephany, for example, was able to provide a flexible environment for her athletes based on her

525   previous experience as an athlete, but Tina struggled to work with young athletes because she

526   recognized how controlling her previous coaches had been. Jacobs, Claringbould, and Knoppers

527   (2014) gave a similar account from a coach who was attempting to change his coaching practices

528   after a coach education course. This coach felt he was a "prisoner of his own sport history" (p.

529   13) in his replication of previously experienced coaching methods even though they caused

530   friction on his team. He felt that he did not have other examples of coaching behavior with which

531   he could reference as a basis for changing his behavior. Both Tina and the coach from Jacobs et

532   al. (2014) were therefore able to recognize coaching methods that were not as facilitative to their

533   athletes' sport experiences but found it difficult to adapt given their limited perspective of more

534   autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors. However, it was apparent that Tina's beliefs regarding

535   effective coaching were informed by her formal learning experiences in a way that inspired her

536   to create a more facilitative and autonomy-supportive environment.

537   Other explorations of the coaching process have shown coaches utilize their 'lived

538   experiences' to determine how their athletes may be feeling based on their own feelings in a

539   similar situation when they were athletes (Saury & Durand, 1998). Terrance illustrated this when

540   he spoke of his coach who did not consider the position Terrance wanted to play in football

541   leaving him feeling unsatisfied and underwhelmed. Therefore, Terrance actively engaged in

542   coaching behaviors that acknowledged individual preferences to prevent future athletes from

543   experiencing similar feelings that he endured. He felt that in letting athletes have the option to

544   choose which position they wanted to play he was less likely to inhibit their sport development.

545   Finally, novice coaches reported emulating coaching behaviors they viewed to be

546   consistent with more traditional forms of coaching (Williams & Hodges, 2005). This was clear in

547   accounts by Elijah and Dominic who endured more controlling forms of coaching, such as

548   yelling and a strict coaching approach. These conversations revealed a subtle resistance to

549   perpetuate such behaviors, however, both of these novice coaches rationalized their use of these

550   behaviors as necessary to the role and in-line with their previous encounters with their coaches.

551   These examples illustrate how both positive and negative athletic experiences were internalized

552   or adapted to inform and shape the behaviors of novice coaches. Indeed, coaching behavior

553   involves assumptions about what it means to be a coach (Harvey et al., 2010; Jacobs et al., 2014;

554   Strean et al., 1997) that in many cases, have first been considered from the athlete perspective.

Limitations

In considering the results of this study, it is important to highlight some limitations of the work. First, most of the participants were interviewed early in their coaching education experience, having only a few courses taken and less than 2 years of coaching experience. Knowing that perspectives can change over time, capturing the experiences of this particular group was paramount, helping to explain the process early in their careers. We recognize that perspectives might have been different if participants had more experience and therefore recommend that future studies investigate the role of previous athletic experience at various stages in the careers of sport coaches. Second, many participants were operating as assistant coaches. The interview protocol did not explore whether participants' head coaches may have influenced their practice. However, participants did not report conflict with the head coaches they worked with. While we did report the level of coaching of our participants, we did not explore how these coaching positions may have impacted our results. Lastly, the data collection methods within the study did not take into account actual coaching behavior. It would provide a more well-rounded view to match perspectives of participants to actual coaching behaviors. This would allow for the triangulation of data and subsequently contribute to the trustworthiness of the findings.

Conclusions

Even without formal knowledge of autonomy-supportive and controlling coaching behaviors, novice coaches were able to identify autonomy-supportive and controlling interactions they had as athletes and connect them to how they coach currently. As part of the coach learning process, we believe that consideration of previous athletic experience as an antecedent to engaging in autonomy supportive coaching behaviors is warranted. Coupled with

578   formal education and opportunities for reflection, examination of previous athletic experience

579   could have the potential to influence more positive and adaptive coaching behaviors.

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