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# A Psychosocial Analysis of the Coach-Athlete Relationship Through the Lens of Coaching Efficacy

Kael G. Gouriluk

*Southeastern University - Lakeland*

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A PSYCHOSOCIAL ANALYSIS OF THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP  
THROUGH THE LENS OF COACHING EFFICACY

By

Kael G. Gouriluk

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# THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

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## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to understand the relationship between athletes and their coaches. More specifically, through review of precedential work and a survey study, to understand the effects of coaches' instruction methods and actions upon athletes in relation to their perceptions of their previous coaches' efficacy.

**KEYWORDS:** sports, psychology, leadership, coaching, efficacy, relationships

# THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Terms	5
Purpose	6
Problem	6
Research Questions	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review	8
Effective Coaching	8
Coaching Education & Development	10
Athlete Development	11
Styles and Behaviors	13
Athlete Abuse	14
Sportsmanship	15
Coach-Athlete Relationship	16
Chapter 3: Methodology	19
Rationale	19
Participants	19
Instrument	20
Chapter 4: Results	21
Chapter 5: Conclusion	38
Limitations	39
Application	41
References	42

## A Psychosocial Analysis of the Coach-Athlete Relationship

### Chapter 1: Introduction

The coach-athlete relationship offers up a variety of interesting topics to discuss. One such topic is the psychosocial dynamic of the relationship and how that affects each aspect of the dyad. Additionally, the nature of the relationship expresses itself through physical output in sporting activities. These factors combine to offer an interesting subject to explore. Athletes develop and perform physical feats based on their innate ability and the instruction of their trainers and coaches. This places a level of responsibility on both parties to contribute in order to succeed in their respective field. The coach instructs while the athlete competes. What the physical aspect of the relationship does not fully account for is the psychological and mental impacts that one party may have on the other. In some cases, the impact of a coach from an emotional or social standpoint may have more impact upon an athlete than their physical training contribution (Becker, J., Solomon, G., 2009).

Humans are complex creatures, having a variety of factors combining to create the single being, such as mental, social, psychological, and physical states. Each aspect has a nearly infinite amount of possible actions or responses to stimuli. With this in mind, an athlete or a coach is no different. Each individual has responses to the things that others say and do, and the coach-athlete relationship presents an avenue with which to study and discuss these interactions with regard to psychosocial understanding.

#### **Terms**

Psychosocial: of or relating to the interaction between social and psychological factors

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

Efficacy: capacity for producing a desired result or effect; effectiveness

Perception: a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression

### **Purpose**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the dynamic of the coach-athlete relationship, more specifically, the impact of one party's actions and behavior upon the other and the consequent responses. The objective is to see how a coach's instruction affects the athlete's self-perception and performance, as well as the concurrent perception of the athlete toward the coach. Additionally, the perceptions of each other in relation to one another's emotional and behavioral input offers an interesting look into the relationship's operation.

### **Problem**

Effective coaching to better equip athletes is a universal goal of coaches. The basis of their job revolves around ensuring that their athletes perform well and are successful in their endeavors. Efficacy, when understood in reference to relationships, cannot be thought of simply in the sense of self-efficacy, being one's own perception, but rather the perception of the other in the relationship, allowing the other's perception to dictate whether or not each member has contributed to the development of the relationship itself. Therefore, it is important to understand what athletes are looking for when determining the efficacy of their coaches. Additionally, understanding what types of athletes look for what characteristics, will allow coaches to better equip themselves with the proper knowledge and skillsets to best suit their target audience, being their athletes.

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer certain questions regarding efficacy in regard to coaching and the coach-athlete relationship. They are as follows:

Q1: What is the general consensus on efficacy from former high school athletes' perspectives?

Q2: Is there a difference in perceived efficacy based on athlete's gender?

Q3: Does location alter the dimensions of perceived efficacy in coaches?

Q4: Does the sport a coach instructs affect their perceived efficacy?

The structure of this paper seeks to present a framework for the reader to understand the dynamics of how coaches' relationships with their athlete go beyond the idea of pure physical training, such as the perceptions of efficacy from one party to the other. The following chapter is a review of precedential works presented to give the reader insight into several informational categories that relate to the subject at hand, being the coach-athlete relationship. Chapter 3 describes the manner in which the study was devised and conducted to test the research questions presented above. Chapter 4 describes the results of the study. The final chapter explores the implications that the study now presents, along with the limitations of the study itself and how future research in this field may be improved. Throughout the reading process, the objective is to gain a better understanding of the importance of the relationship between a coach and their athletes and how that relationship may, in turn, affect others.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The following section presents topics and discussions related to the coach-athlete relationship from different perspectives. A coach that instructs and does their job with efficacy provides the base of the relationship. The coach should probably have some form of education or training in their sport or discipline, whether that be from experiencing the sport themselves or receiving formal training in a classroom setting. From this point, the coach is then placed in a situation to do their job, training a more inexperienced athlete in their discipline, hopefully steering them in the correct direction for their life. The process of training athletes is varied from one sport and person to the next, giving coaches the prerogative to employ different training methods. In some cases, overuse or misuse of certain techniques may be of negative consequence to athletes. Additionally, the focus of actions by coaches may influence their athletes' focus, presenting such cases where the cost of winning may be to act out of line with social standards. The relationship that these two types of individuals share has the potential for both positive and negative outcomes. It is through proper maintenance of this relationship that both aspects, the coach and the athlete, may proceed on to improve the lives of others

### **Effective Coaching**

Coaching is a complex profession. One of the most intricate aspects of coaching is understanding the relationships and effects that coaches have in regards to their athletes. The very definition of an effective coaching according to Côté (2009) is “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athlete’s competence, confidence, connection and character in specific coaching contexts.” This understanding that Côté brings offers a great deal of insight into just how

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

multifaceted the coaching profession is. An effective coach is one that manages their own knowledge to better the situation of those under their charge. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory notes that "expectations of personal efficacy are derived from four principal sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological states." What this denotes is the variability that may exist in the development of one's perception of their own efficacy, meaning that one's perception of efficacy may very well change over the course of time based on their experiences.

Erickson et al. (2007) sought to find out what makes an elite coach. Through a mix of participation, part-time experience, and mentorship, the formula for creating an elite coach is not a completely static combination of events, but there are many similar situations shared amongst elite coaches in their development. Participation in their sport as an athlete at the elite level was one such situation that was shared, where coaches were able to develop perspective to be able to relate to their athletes when faced with similar situations that they faced as athletes themselves. Carter and Bloom (2009) looked into this correlation and sought to expand upon this notion. They found, through their own study that, while having experience as an elite athlete in the same sport, successful elite coaches did not necessarily need this experience in order to achieve their level of success. Rather, their success was achieved through prolonged exposure to the sport, along with education and guidance from fellow coaches. Additionally, receiving feedback from their athletes and attempting the same drills and methods they employed on their athletes allowed them to, in a way, substitute the previous experience they otherwise missed out on. Other aspects of effective coaching include maintaining a desire to continue learning

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

about their sport like developing better ways to approach similar situations, educating themselves through different means to further advance themselves, and acknowledging their own personal impact within their job like communication and developing an empathetic relationship with their players (Bloom, G., Salmela, J., 2000).

### **Coaching Education & Development**

An important aspect to coaching efficacy is having proper education to deal with different situations. As Sullivan et al. (2012) explain, while having contextual experience is a significant benefit, the presence of proper educational understanding for the logistical and situational issues of the profession provide a more definitive effect on increasing coaching efficacy. Before a coach can train athletes, however, they themselves must be trained to lead. Campbell and Sullivan (2005) presented evidence supporting the use of standardized coaching training methods like the National Coaching Certification Program's Level One (NCCP L1) course's use of the Coaching Efficacy Scale (CES) to test coaches understanding, ultimately providing those coaches with a better understanding regarding the necessary qualities they must have to be effective. It must be noted, however that while having proper education is important, the correlation between the coach's education and their level of coaching efficacy (Weller, 2013). Besides understanding the fundamental aspects to their respective sports, coaches must additionally have training regarding different mental and psychological aspects of the profession. Olusoga et al. (2014) brought attention to the necessity for mental skills training to help better prepare coaches to deal with the high-stress work environment that coaching often is. Most specifically, the ability to relax and focus on the necessary methods of dealing with an issue while engaged in a pressure situation were shown to

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

increase after coaches were educated in mental skills training. Longshore and Sachs (2015) performed a study through which coaches were tested on their stress management abilities and emotional stability in relation to high-stress scenarios. The result found that when coaches were able to be mindful of their situation, meaning that their focus was deliberately placed on that situation without judging it, they were reported to experience decreased levels of anxiety and increased emotional stability. The practical translation of this information is in regard to how coaches are able to manage themselves, and, in turn, manage their athletes. The result of lower-anxiety coaches presents the idea of leaders with a firmer grasp of their situation, able to make rational decisions that will not end up having a negative impact on their followers/athletes. In a study by Weaver (2016), coaches of different levels of experience exhibited varying levels of autocratic leadership behavior. Specifically, those with less experience were less autocratic than those with more experience. This correlation of experience and autocratic behavior may draw merit from the understanding that gaining experience in their specific field led to increased feelings of self-efficacy, providing more confidence in their ability to lead and provide instruction.

### **Athlete Development**

The manner in which a coach behaves can have a significant impact on the development of an athlete. According to Erikson's 8 stages of psychosocial development, adolescents (12-18 years old) attempt to establish their own identity, using what they learn from those around them to serve as their template (Erikson, 1963). In the case of high school athletes, one of the biggest influences in their lives may very well be their coach. Over the course of an athlete's career, their need and reception of both social

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

support alongside training and instruction changes. The social aspect may increase over time, indicating that athletes feel greater need for personal connections as they age and progress, whereas training and instruction levels may decline as age progresses until the university level, from which point it increases dramatically. This contrast of preferences sees athletes seeking autonomous athletic training while seeking personal connections with others around them as they get older (Chelladurai, P., Carron, A. V., 1985). Gould and Carson (2011) presented the understanding of how an athlete's mental attitude regarding sports or certain situations in sport can be linked to the manner in which their coach approached that same or some related issue. One particular development is that of self-efficacy, being the belief in oneself to perform a certain task or function. Saville et al. (2014) discovered the link between how athletes developed their views of their own efficacy and how their coaches behaved in regard to their attempts at accomplishing something. Athletes seek to improve their abilities and impress their coaches at the same time. This forces the athlete into a tenuous situation where there exists a need to conform to the ideals of the coach, even if this may not match the athlete's own ideals (Lorimer, 2014). This can lead the athlete to perform actions that may not agree with their beliefs or abilities, which can be of negative impact. While the importance of interaction between a coach and their athlete cannot be stressed enough, there are certain cases where too much of something good can be bad. In a study done by Erickson and Côté (2016), athletes that were analyzed to have low and decreasing levels of competence, confidence, connection, and character (4C Analysis) received extra attention from their coach. The possible reasoning behind this is that their underperformance was reinforced by their coach taking additional time with them to ensure they were on the same page. Conversely, Chen and

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

Wu (2014) presented the argument that athletes that trusted their coach's input were shown to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem. If the athlete felt that the coach knew what they were doing, and that the action was of benefit to the team, the athlete would be more likely to follow through and be more confident in themselves.

### **Styles and Behaviors**

In order to address and instruct their athletes, coaches employ different instructional styles and behavioral techniques. Every individual's reception for different coaching styles, from free-form laissez-fair to strict autocracy, is highly variable. The nature of the relationship between the coach and the athlete plays into how the coaching style employed may be accepted by both parties and improves efficacy (Bennie, A., O'Connor, D., 2012b). If both parties accept and respect the relationship for what it is, whether that be focused on family and community or professionally-driven mastery, the effectiveness of the coach's instruction will be more potent. This draws from the understanding that the relationship is built upon respect and trust in each other's intentions and goals (Bennie, A., O'Connor, D., 2012a). For instance, the use of an authoritarian coaching style may be extremely effective so long as the athletes recognize the coach as being the ultimate leader of the team with the final say in matters. So long as both parties recognize this distinction and the coach is knowledgeable enough to bear the weight of that responsibility, the relationship's status is much more prone to success (Intoppa, 2016). For reinforcement, coaches can either use positive or negative feedback to motivate their athletes. Carron et al. (2014), however, noted that positive reinforcement was more effectively linked to winning teams, presenting the understanding that it was more beneficial for coaches to remain optimistic and positive while instructing.

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

Additionally, the argument of whether autonomous-supportive or controlling methods are better suited for instruction is a debate. Hodge and Lonsdale (2011), however, noted that while autonomous motivation was linked to prosocial behavior, controlling motivation was linked to antisocial behavior, highlighting the importance of allowing athletes to think for themselves. On top of this, coaches using autonomy-supportive methods had athletes that were more motivated to respond and perform (Amorose, A. J., Anderson-Butcher, D., 2015). Smith et al. (2016) found that athletes in empowering environments were linked to autonomous-supportive motivation, whereas those linked to amotivation and controlling styles perceived their environments as disempowering. Another aspect to coaching behaviors is the type of climate that is established. In order to engage youth athletes, the use of a mastery climate, being that of effort and learning rather than personal ability or outcome, shows to be more effective (Curran et al., 2015). Athletes that are learning are more enthusiastic and dedicated to improve themselves. Granted, the support that a coach gives to an athlete can be perceived differently from one athlete to the next. Davis and Jowett (2014) expressed how the psychological attachment styles that athletes have in relation to their coaches affect how their perception of support from their coach is received. Those with secure attachments perceived more support than those that had avoidant or anxious attachments.

### **Athlete Abuse**

One serious issue within the realm of coaching is the looming threat of possible instances of athlete abuse by coaches. Abuse can be more than simply physical mistreatment. It can be psychological, neglect, or sexual misconduct as well (Raakman et al., 2010). Additionally, these types of abuse can be classified further as either direct or

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

indirect (Cook, E., & Dorsch, K. D., 2014), meaning that the abuse, whether directed at the athlete or someone else, can still have a significant negative impact on the athlete. Abuse can often stem from the instruction of the coach going beyond what it was intended or increasing in severity to the point of unattainability. While coaches often use the rationale that they do indeed care for their athletes, but the use of tactics that negatively impact the emotional state of their athletes express the opposite (Stirling, A. E., 2013). Many coaches, according to Owusu-Sekyere et al (2016), use these over-zealous practices to instill an understanding of mental toughness, supposedly strengthening them in the long run. Another way to interpret this would be that they are being scarred from exposure. As Gervis and Dunn (2004) explain, while all coaches seek to make their athletes better, some can go beyond what is necessary and impose impossible standards on their athlete, particularly those at the elite level of competition. These coaches want their athletes to succeed, and will compromise the athletes themselves to achieve this in the process. The way a coach treats their athlete can have many different effects, both positively and negatively, from the satisfaction that they feel in the school choice or their willingness to cheat during competition (Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2015).

### **Sportsmanship**

One matter of particular importance that coaching behavior has is with sportsmanship. Shields et al. (2007) expressed concern that the actions of coaches, more so than their words, could influence athletes to act in manners unsuitable for competition, particularly in contact sports with many spectators. The moral obligation of the coach is to ensure that their players follow the rules of their game and demonstrating other



## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

prosocial behavior. Kavussanu (2006) found that when athletes were placed in environments focusing on performance rather than skill mastery, antisocial actions associated with negative moral behavior. While not completely conclusively linked to sportsmanship, the association of these types of behaviors still merit mention, as the active use of sportsmanship in competition is a form of prosocial behavior. Therefore, the use of a mastery climate, focusing on the development of the athlete's knowledge and skill in their respective sport rather than simply focusing on winning, allows the athlete a better appreciation for the competition and officials, giving the athlete a better opportunity to play with proper sportsmanship. Bolter and Weiss (2012) (2013) established the Sportsmanship Coaching Behaviors Scale to measure just how coaches affected their athletes' adherence to sportsmanlike behavior. The result categorized actions into eight sections: expectations, reinforcement, punishment, discussion, teaching, modelling, and prioritization of sportsmanship over winning. Each of these aspects are important to develop positively between coaches and athletes. The coach must ensure that their athletes are performing to the set standard of expectations set before them, have a positive support system guiding them along, respond to punishment positively, are able to discuss any issues that they may be encountering, learn and act out what their coaches

### **Coach-athlete Relationship**

The coach-athlete relationship is extremely complex in nature. With regards to these relationships, efficacy can be understood in three aspects, being self-efficacy, other-efficacy, and relation-inferred self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the understanding of one's own efficacy. Other-efficacy refers to how one views another person's actions or behavior as being efficacious or not. Relation-inferred self-efficacy refers to an

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

individual's understanding of their own efficacy in relation to how they think others think about them (Lent, R., Lopez, F., 2002). Jackson, Knapp, and Beauchamp (2009) concluded that each of these aspects, while independent, can be linked in relation to one another. What this implies is that efficacy, regardless of the point of reference, may be influenced by experiences and perceptions from outside sources, such as coaching methods or athlete performance. Coach-athlete relationship compatibility may be perceived differently from athletes and coaches. Horn and Carron (1985) learned that differing levels of the perception of certain characteristics in coaching behaviors may lead to an unsatisfactory perception of the overall relationship. For instance, a coach exhibiting a more controlling leadership style than the athlete would like in the relationship may lead the athlete to perceive the relationship as being not satisfactory to them. While coaches may feel a certain way about their instruction methods, it is important to understand how their athletes feel about those methods in order to ensure that the relationship that they share maintains its cohesiveness. Every relationship is different, even on the same team with the same coach. This means that the same coach can be viewed differently by each member of their team (Coussens et al., 2015). Horn (2008) expressed that the athlete's perceptions are established by both their own personalities and their coach's behavior, eventually flowing into the athlete's motivation, performance, and overall behavior. Both sides can affect both one another, as well as the relationships of others. Hampson and Jowett (2014) noted that the perception of each coach-athlete relationship and the coach's behavior on the team combined to provide an estimation of the whole team's perceived efficacy. In a study performed by McLaren et al. (2015), the perception that athletes had of their coach could be altered after the coach

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

underwent motivational climate intervention, after which the athletes perceived the coach to be more task-oriented and have better cohesion with the group, furthering Bandura's social-cognitive theory development theory.

On the other side of the relationship, in a study by Turnnidge et al. (2014), research found that athletes of differing mental or physical capabilities received no different treatment from each other from coaches. This understanding could be that coaches, when trained, are less partial in their relationship management with their athletes than vice versa. Regardless, the development of a personal relationship between the two parties is necessary in ensuring that athletes are able to properly develop to their fullest potential (Jowett and Cockerill, 2002). If proper relationships are not formed with progressive goals in mind, leaving the athlete without a support system, they run the risk of burn-out, giving up on their sport (Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2016). In the end, the coach-athlete relationship is not much different from any other form of professional relationship, be it in the athletic or corporate world (Jowett et al., 2010). The only differentiation is the contexts within which each are formed and maintain, as well as the individuals that compose the duality. That being said, coach-athlete relationships are not much different from any other type of close relation learning relationship; they should not be over-complicated or over-thought. Both coaches and athletes alike are simply human beings that require support from one another. That support may be expressed in different manners, but the base of the relationship remains the same.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

The coach-athlete relationship presents itself as an open book from which can be drawn different types of data. For this case, the qualitative aspects of coaches are compiled and compared against each other to help determine the characteristics of effective coaches in certain demographic situations.

### **Rationale**

The subjects of the study were targeted because the purpose of the exercise was to ascertain a retrospective analysis of each individual's experience. Participants were college students that had previously participated in athletics while in high school. Retrospective understanding was sought due to having an analysis of current coach-athlete relationships possibly being inconclusive as the extent of the relationships may not have come to full fruition yet, such as a freshman recruit that hasn't been on their team long enough to provide an accurate understanding of the coach beyond their initial interactions. Thus, looking into the past allows for a more full analysis of the entirety of a relationship that has since been played out, being as the former athletes are no longer in the direct coach-athlete relationship with their respective coaches.

### **Participants**

Participants were acquired using purposive convenience sampling methods in two separate settings. Subjects were approached along a populated walkway on campus as well as in a classroom setting following scheduled class and asked whether they participated in high school athletics. Those individuals that responded in the positive were asked to fill out a survey built around the Coaching Efficacy Scale (CES) (Feltz et

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

al., 1999) in relation to their experiences with their high school coaches. While a target sample size of 100 subjects was set, 72 surveys were completed by the end of the study.

### **Instrument**

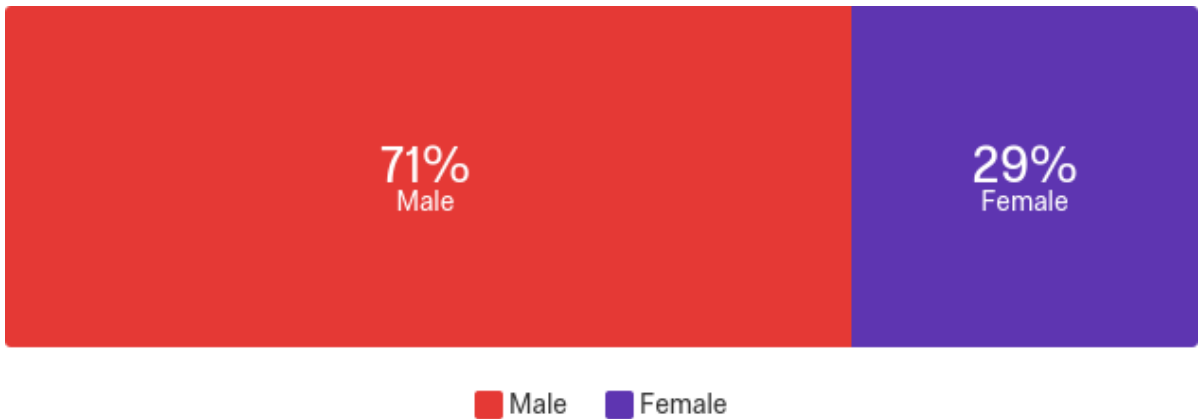
The measurement instrument used was, as previously mentioned, a 23 question survey, rating on an 11-point Likert scale, using the CES to determine each athlete's perception of their coach while in high school based on the CES's 4 dimensions: game strategy, motivation, teaching technique, and character building. In the event that a subject participated in multiple sports, they were instructed to respond with their most enjoyed or most influential sport. Demographics of gender, sport, and location were additionally recorded for reference.

### Chapter 4: Results

This study analyzed a sample of former high school athletes in search of their perceived standards of efficacy in relation to their former coaches. Data was compiled through Qualtrics statistics software, using demographics such as gender, geography and the sport played as the independent variables. Dependent variables were the dimensions that the CES uses as measurements: Character building, Technique, Game strategy, and Motivation. The following chapter is divided into three sections, the first providing the demographic data as the independent variables, the second section provides the data for all samples in relation to the four dependent variables, and the third section gives the full data analysis of the each of the samples in relation to their dependent variables, being the dimensions of the instrument, organized by each of the demographic categories.

Demographics were collected to provide depth to the data that was collected, giving parameters within which specific questions can be answered to some degree. The first demographic requested was based on gender. A response of either male or female was presented. This parameter was selected to allow the dimensions presented later to have multiple variables to run through.

#### Do you consider yourself male or female?



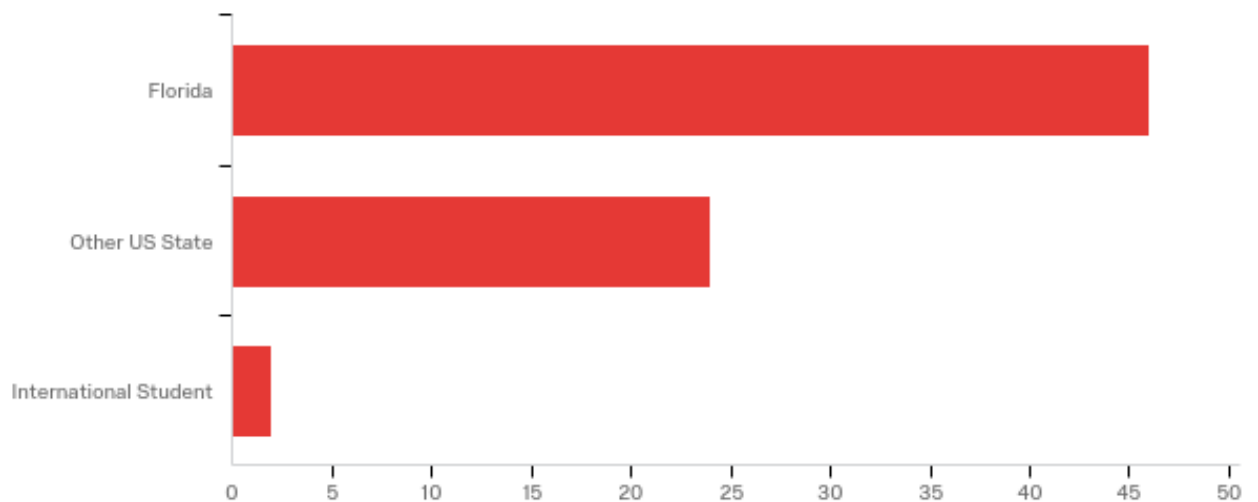
## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	70.83%	51
2	Female	29.17%	21
	Total	100%	72

The large majority of sample responses collected were male. The inferences behind this is that male responses were easier to obtain either because they were more comfortable and willing to respond to their past athletic experiences, that because football encompasses a large amount of athletic population in both the target sample's current and past environment from which the data is relevant, or that males were simply more willing to respond to the request because the survey distributor was male, based on like-gender comfort.

The second demographic parameter was based on geographic location.

### Which state did you attend High School?



## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Florida	63.89%	46
2	Other US State	33.33%	24
3	International Student	2.78%	2
	Total	100%	72

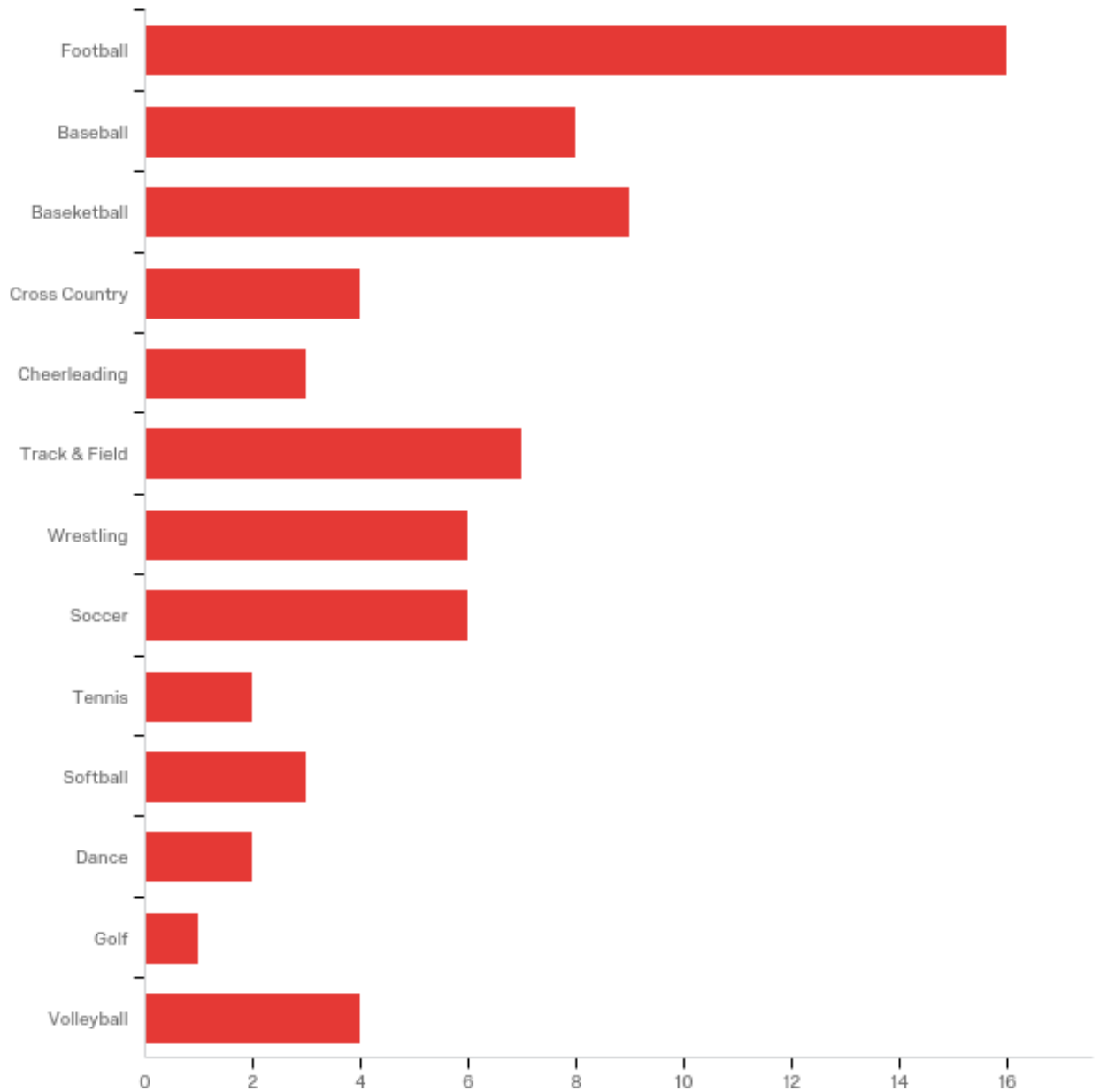
The geographic demographics were broken into three categories, Florida, other US States, and international responses. The reason this was done was because responses of Florida were in the large majority, with a response frequency of 63.89% or 46/72, where other states responses composed significantly less frequency, accounting for 33.33% of a responses. The high response frequency for Florida was largely due to the survey being conducted in central Florida. All other states were combined into a single category to avoid having a multitude of individual categories with one or two responses each, as that was the actual response rate for the majority of non-Florida responses, which would have added multiple categories with frequencies of <2%. International responses were of even less frequency, accounting for only 2.78% of all responses, but accurate statistical analysis requires all responses to be accounted for. Responses were later reevaluated further to encompass responses of either Florida or otherwise, simplifying the responses into more easily-analyzable content.

The final demographic parameter established was which sport/activity subjects participated in during their high school athletic experience, or at least which sport they participated in had the most significant impact in their lives. It was assumed that the sport with the most impact was directly related to the coach with the most influence or impact during the athlete's experience.



# THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

## Which Sport did you play in High School?



## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Football	22.54%	16
2	Baseball	11.27%	8
3	Basketball	12.68%	9
4	Cross Country	5.63%	4
5	Cheerleading	4.23%	3
6	Track & Field	9.86%	7
7	Wrestling	8.45%	6
8	Soccer	8.45%	6
9	Tennis	2.82%	2
10	Softball	4.23%	3
11	Dance	2.82%	2
12	Golf	1.41%	1
13	Volleyball	5.63%	4
	Total	100%	71

The responses follow the trend of the gender responses, with male-dominant sports receiving the highest response rates, with gender-neutral or coed sport in the middle, and female-dominant sport receiving the lowest frequency responses. Additionally, pure team sports generally had higher response rates than individually-based sports within the same gender-type category, i.e. golf and tennis with 1.41% and 2.82% respectively versus soccer and basketball with 8.45% and 12.68% respectively. Football (American) had the highest response frequency with 22.54%; this frequency is nearly double the next highest sports response, basketball, with 12.68%. This high frequency is probably due to the sheer size of football teams, accounting for the

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

equivocal male participants per team. Additionally, the popularity of football in the United States when compared to other sports also contributes to this notion.

The following section presents data collected from all samples without including variance in terms of gender, geography, or sport. Rather, this is the general overview of the entire sample set. The purpose of the data set is to determine which of the CES's dimensions, character building, technique, game strategy, and motivation, showed to be most significant from the subjects' perspective. This allows the predicate assumption of which characteristics of coaches are considered to be the most effective in influencing their athletes. Subjects were presented 23 situations/topics relating to efficacious coaching practices, rating their confidence in their former coach's abilities and competencies from 0 to 10, with 0 meaning that this characteristic was not present or evident in any way and 10 meaning that they were extremely effective and competent in that area. The purpose of this data set was to answer the first research question: What is the general consensus on efficacy from former high school athletes' perspectives?

### Character Building

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Character Building	1.00	10.00	8.17	2.23	4.97	72

### Technique

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Technique	2.00	10.00	7.54	2.23	4.97	72

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### Game Strategy

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Game Strategy	1.00	10.00	7.90	2.07	4.28	72

### Motivation

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Motivation	2.00	10.00	7.99	2.30	5.29	72

Without the demographic parameters, the entire sample set's characteristics are able to be analyzed. The most significant data point to look at is the mean value of each of the dimensions, as this shows the average score for each dimension in relation to all responses and will be used as the basis for determining scoring relevance. The Minimum score indicates the lowest score that was submitted in that particular category; the Maximum score indicates the highest score that was submitted in that category. SD indicates the standard deviation that was present in relation to each category's mean score. Variance indicates how widely the numerical scoring of the categories varied within themselves. According to the samples, the most significant dimension present was Character Building with an 8.17 mean score. The second most significant dimension was Motivation with a 7.99 mean score, followed by Game Strategy with a 7.90 mean score and finally Technique with a 7.54 mean score.

The first independent variable introduced to the dependent variables was gender. Gathering data from the two categories allows the ability to compare one group's characteristic preferences to each other as well as to the whole sample set. In this case,

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

the research question that sought to be answered was: Is there a difference in perceived efficacy based on athlete's gender?

**Red- Males | Blue- Females**

### Character Building

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Character Building	1.00	10.00	8.29	2.29	5.23	51
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Character Building	4.00	10.00	7.86	2.05	4.22	21

### Technique

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Technique	2.00	10.00	7.71	2.23	4.99	51
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Technique	3.00	10.00	7.14	2.17	4.69	21

### Game Strategy

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Game Strategy	1.00	10.00	8.00	2.12	4.51	51
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Game Strategy	3.00	10.00	7.67	1.91	3.65	21

### Motivation

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Motivation	2.00	10.00	7.96	2.45	6.00	51
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Motivation	2.00	10.00	8.05	1.89	3.57	21

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

For males, the most significant dimension was Character Building with an 8.29 mean score. The second highest dimension was Game Strategy with an 8.00 mean score, followed by Motivation with a 7.96 mean score and Technique with a 7.71 mean score. From this, there can be inference that males relied less on their coach for in-game abilities and more so for individual competency in and out of competition.

For females, the most significant dimension was Motivation with an 8.05 mean score. The second highest dimension was Character Building with a 7.86 mean score. The third and fourth dimensions were Game Strategy with a 7.67 mean score and Technique with a 7.14 mean score, respectively. This can infer that females perceive that their coaches were more effective when looking at their emotional or relational characteristics, rating motivation and character over strategy and technique.

Comparing the two sets yields some interesting points to consider. In both sets rankings, the males' scores were all higher than the females' score by a minimum of .14 in mean score. For instance, males' top dimension Character Building scored 8.29 while females' top dimension Motivation scored 8.05. For the most part, this characteristic carried down through all the rest of the dimensions, actually increasing in disparity except for the second-ranked dimensions. Disparities from 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> ranking were as follows: 0.24, 0.14, 0.29, 0.57. What this data may imply is that females had generally rated their former coaches characteristics lower than males had, even though when comparing minimum scores for all dimensions, males had either equal or lower scores.

Additionally, the scores of all female dimensional score indicated lower standard deviation and variance than male scores. The inference that can be made from this is that while males may have higher variability in their perceptions of their coaches, they

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

generally tend to think more highly of them. In contrast, females tend to think less of their coaches, but not so low as to think that they have no competency in any area. In essence, the data provided indicates that while females are more critical of their coaches, their perceptions are not as dramatic as males may be. The contrasting inference can be made that some males may be exposed to more incompetent coaches but the majority perceive their coaches to be effective. These data-based inference may, however be skewed by the sample sizes for males and females, given that males accounted for around 71% of responses, allowing for possibility of greater variance while still maintaining higher scores.

Comparing the two sets to the data as a whole shows that while both generally value Character Building as a part of coaching efficacy, they also indicate that Technique was much less in effect from their coaches. From this, we can assume that coaches are perceived as generally lacking in terms of technical prowess, but are also perceived as being good people that can still teach life skills to their athletes effectively.

The second independent variable introduced to the sample data was in relation to geographic location. Rather than create a category for every location that was stated, data was organized into being either Florida or otherwise due to the overwhelmingly large frequency of Florida responses. For the purpose of this study, the inferences will be made in relation to Florida and all other locations.

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

**Red- Florida | Blue- Other States and International**

### Character Building

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Character Building	1.00	10.00	8.28	2.21	4.90	46
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Character Building	3.00	10.00	7.96	2.24	5.04	26

### Technique

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Technique	2.00	10.00	7.52	2.23	4.99	46
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Technique	3.00	10.00	7.58	2.22	4.94	26

### Game Strategy

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Game Strategy	4.00	10.00	8.02	1.86	3.46	46
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Game Strategy	1.00	10.00	7.69	2.38	5.67	26

### Motivation

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Motivation	2.00	10.00	8.09	2.22	4.95	46
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Motivation	2.00	10.00	7.81	2.42	5.85	26



## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

Responses indicated that the highest perceived dimension for Florida-based coaches was Character Building with an 8.28 mean score. The second highest dimension was Motivation with 8.09, followed by Game Strategy with 8.02 and Technique with 7.52.

Non-Florida responses indicated a similar trend. Character Building was the highest dimension with a 7.96 mean score. Motivation was the second highest dimension with a 7.81 mean score. Game Strategy and Technique followed behind with 7.69 and 7.58 respectively.

Comparing dimensions based on location shows minimal amounts of variation between the two sets. One of the most noticeable differences was how non-Florida responses were more evenly spread in terms of dimensional mean score ranking than Florida responses. The non-Florida response dimensional mean spread showed a 0.38 difference from the highest ranked dimension to the lowest, while a Florida response dimensional mean spread showed a 0.76 difference from highest to lowest dimension. The inference for this information can be that coaches not based in Florida may be perceived as being more evenly equipped to effectively coach, even if that means they are less effective in certain areas that Florida-based coaches may be more effective in.

In relation to the complete set of data, the geographic dimensions did not indicate anything that was significantly different from the whole, meaning that location is not completely useful as an indicator of coaching efficacy.

The final independent variable that was introduced was in relation to the sport that athletes participated in during high school. The larger amount of categories with fewer responses per category allow specifics to be identified within sports, but may also allow

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

for outlying responses to be presented with the same statistical significance as responses that follow along with the rest of the category.

### Character Building

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Football	3.00	10.00	8.13	2.50	6.23	16
Baseball	1.00	10.00	7.63	2.83	7.98	8
Basketball	6.00	10.00	9.22	1.23	1.51	9
Cross Country	7.00	10.00	9.00	1.22	1.50	4
Cheerleading	4.00	10.00	6.00	2.83	8.00	3
Track & Field	5.00	10.00	8.57	1.68	2.82	7
Wrestling	7.00	10.00	9.17	1.21	1.47	6
Soccer	3.00	10.00	7.67	2.69	7.22	6
Tennis	9.00	10.00	9.50	0.50	0.25	2
Softball	5.00	7.00	6.33	0.94	0.89	3
Dance	6.00	10.00	8.00	2.00	4.00	2
Golf	8.00	8.00	8.00	0.00	0.00	1
Volleyball	7.00	10.00	8.00	1.22	1.50	4

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### Technique

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Football	4.00	10.00	7.56	1.94	3.75	16
Baseball	3.00	10.00	7.13	2.52	6.36	8
Basketball	3.00	10.00	8.56	2.06	4.25	9
Cross Country	3.00	8.00	6.50	2.06	4.25	4
Cheerleading	8.00	9.00	8.67	0.47	0.22	3
Track & Field	5.00	10.00	8.29	1.91	3.63	7
Wrestling	7.00	10.00	9.00	1.15	1.33	6
Soccer	2.00	10.00	6.00	2.89	8.33	6
Tennis	3.00	9.00	6.00	3.00	9.00	2
Softball	6.00	7.00	6.67	0.47	0.22	3
Dance	7.00	8.00	7.50	0.50	0.25	2
Golf	8.00	8.00	8.00	0.00	0.00	1
Volleyball	3.00	10.00	6.75	2.59	6.69	4

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### Game Strategy

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Football	4.00	10.00	8.06	1.89	3.56	16
Baseball	4.00	10.00	7.63	2.06	4.23	8
Basketball	5.00	10.00	8.89	1.66	2.77	9
Cross Country	5.00	10.00	7.75	1.79	3.19	4
Cheerleading	6.00	8.00	7.00	0.82	0.67	3
Track & Field	5.00	10.00	8.86	1.73	2.98	7
Wrestling	8.00	10.00	9.17	0.69	0.47	6
Soccer	1.00	7.00	5.50	2.29	5.25	6
Tennis	9.00	9.00	9.00	0.00	0.00	2
Softball	5.00	8.00	6.67	1.25	1.56	3
Dance	6.00	10.00	8.00	2.00	4.00	2
Golf	7.00	7.00	7.00	0.00	0.00	1
Volleyball	3.00	10.00	7.75	2.77	7.69	4

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### Motivation

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Count
Football	2.00	10.00	8.19	2.83	8.03	16
Baseball	2.00	10.00	6.38	2.50	6.23	8
Basketball	6.00	10.00	8.11	1.45	2.10	9
Cross Country	7.00	10.00	8.75	1.09	1.19	4
Cheerleading	5.00	9.00	6.67	1.70	2.89	3
Track & Field	8.00	10.00	9.57	0.73	0.53	7
Wrestling	7.00	10.00	9.00	1.15	1.33	6
Soccer	3.00	10.00	7.33	2.92	8.56	6
Tennis	9.00	10.00	9.50	0.50	0.25	2
Softball	2.00	9.00	6.00	2.94	8.67	3
Dance	7.00	9.00	8.00	1.00	1.00	2
Golf	8.00	8.00	8.00	0.00	0.00	1
Volleyball	7.00	9.00	8.25	0.83	0.69	4

Analyzing the data found through this variable revealed some interesting aspects about these sports. First of all, looking at the dimensions revealed that very few sports shared the same sequential ranking. For instance, the highest dimension for Track & Field was Motivation with 9.57 mean score, followed by 8.86 in Game Strategy, 8.57 in Character Building, and 8.29 in Technique. No other sport specifically shared that order of Motivation, Game Strategy, Character Building, and Technique. Even those that do share the same dimension sequence, the level to which each dimension is ranked is different from one another. For example, even though Football and Volleyball both show Motivation as their highest ranked dimension, Volleyball has it at 8.25 whereas Football has it at 8.19, and so on. From this knowledge we can infer that there is no true

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

combination of coaching techniques that can be applied to all sports with complete effectiveness. Every sport is different in practice, and as such, must be approached with different tactics in order to be effective.

Additionally, there was only one sport that bore resemblance to the overall sample data. Character Building, Motivation, Game Strategy, and Technique was only the characteristics of Cross Country. This information further reinforces the previous statement that no sports are necessarily the same, and that the effective manner of coaching in one sport may not be recognized as being effective in another sport.

This chapter attempted to provide quantitative results for qualitative concepts. Data was analyzed in order to answer certain research questions, being: 1) What is the general consensus on efficacy from former high school athletes' perspectives? 2) Is there a difference in perceived efficacy based on athlete's gender? 3) Does location alter the dimensions of perceived efficacy in coaches? 4) Does the sport a coach instructs affect their perceived efficacy? Each of these questions are answered in relation to the entirety of the data sample with the assumption that the information acquired is accurate. The complete answers will be provided in the final chapter with the reasoning behind the answers provided.

### Chapter 5: Conclusion

An effective coach is described by Côté (2009) as being “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athlete’s competence, confidence, connection and character in specific coaching contexts.” What is necessary to provide that support to the athlete is actually the difficult aspect to the job. A person’s wants, needs, and preferences may vary greatly from another person. Regardless of this, the data gathered from this study may at least provide a glimpse into what an effective coach looks like to a collective audience.

According to the study, the perceptions of an athlete of an efficacious coach sees the athlete as less of a person playing a sport and more of a human being that requires guidance. Character Building is the highest perceived dimension of efficacy in coaches, meaning that an effective coach makes it a point to develop personal relationships with their athletes, at least trying to get involved in their lives more than simply instructing them in their respective sport. The coach must also provide motivation to their athletes, ensuring that they remain excited in their activities, even if they are not the best performer in competition. Coaches are responsible for providing insight for solving problems in the heat of the moment during competition, applying inventive strategies to give the athlete/team the edge to overcome any obstacle they are faced with. Finally, the coach is charged with instructing their athletes with the technical and mechanical aspects to their sport, giving athletes proper techniques to hone their skills and improve their physical capabilities.

The perceptions of efficacious coaching practices do vary slightly when in relation to gender, in fact. Referring back to the data shows that males tend to see their

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

coaches being effective when acting as a sort of athletic mentor. They value character building traits that allow them to mature. Alongside this is value of the instruction and strategy provided by coaches while in competitive scenarios. Slightly less value is placed on motivation and technique. This can be seen as male athletes feeling competent enough in their own ability to motivate themselves and confidence in their technical grasp of their sport. Female athletes, according to this study, see effective coaches providing emotional and psychological support more so than being strategic and technically competent.

When looking geographical differences in the perceptions of effective coaches, there is not much data to suggest that there is any significant influence of location on the efficacy of coaches. Using the locations as variables revealed the same information that was already presented by the sample as a whole without including the variables used in the study.

Understanding whether or not the sport that a coach instructs affects in any way the level of efficacy that they may have is too inconclusive. The perceived efficacy of an individual may be different from person to person based on their own preferences and how they view effective coaching practices to look like. The study attempted to look into multiple sport to draw any form of information out only to find that no two sports are exactly alike. Even the basis for selecting the quantitative data was selecting an average from all responses from different athletes in the same sport, not a specific number or value.

### **Limitations**

With any study, there exists limitations to which information can be accurately obtained without ignoring unforeseen variables. In this study there existed several such



## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

limitations and variables that were not accounted for. One major limitation was the fact that the entirety of the study was based on the perceptions of one individual in relation to another. Effective behavior can be seen as different from one person to the next, so providing an accurate depiction of a truly efficacious individual, even within a specific context like a coach, is highly variable based on the values that each individual considers of value to being effective.

Within the study, several limitations presented themselves in regard to independent variables themselves. When acquiring subjects for the study, there was an overwhelming large response from males over females. The result was that males accounted for around 71% of all responses, which may have skewed data in favor of male characteristics. Additionally, a large amount of those male respondents were football players, at least formerly. This led to the football sample size being almost double the size of the next largest category. Similarly, the study was conducted in a central Florida university campus where the majority of students are Florida residents. The result of this was having the geographic variable heavily altered to the point where Florida responses accounted for over half of all responses, leaving single state and international responses with little weight in the argument.

Future studies in this field may be able to focus on the other types of efficacy, like relation-inferred self-efficacy, in regards to the coach-athlete relationship. Also, the use of more stable variables that can be easily accounted for would also be another adjustment that can be made. Studies on specific aspects addressed in general in this study, like perceived efficacy in specific sports or geographic locations, would be another aspect that could be addressed.

## THE COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### **Application**

This study focuses on the concept of other-efficacy, where efficacious behaviors and practices are determined based on the perceptions of others. Coaches must realize that this is the reality that they face. Their job is centered on the concept of finding out how to draw out the maximum potential of their athletes to achieve the goals and aspirations that they have set before themselves. In order to accomplish this, coaches need to understand that effective coaching relies on their athletes genuinely believing that they are, in fact, effective coaches. Figuring out how each other athletes operates and perceives efficacy may be a difficult task. There may be certain practices that one athlete may see as being necessary that another athlete sees as being unbecoming or detrimental to proper coaching methods. The key is finding the balance to keep all their athletes satisfied with their leadership. Every individual is different, and their perceptions matter to those around them. Being an effective coach may not fall under a cookie-cutter formula, but the beauty of the profession allows the expression of many different methods to help accomplish this.

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