The Journey:
Communication styles in Coaching at the Division 1 Level

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty in Communication and Leadership Studies
School of Professional Studies
Gonzaga University

Under the Supervision of Dr. John Caputo
Under the Mentorship of Heather Crandall

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies

By
Lindsay Sherbert
August 2015
Coaching Communication Styles

We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

Thesis or Project Director

Faculty Mentor

Faculty Reader

Gonzaga University

MA Program in Communication and Leadership Studies
Coaching Communication Styles

ABSTRACT

The following study explores different approaches to leadership and various coaching styles of both assistant and head coaches at Gonzaga University. Using interpersonal communication and the cognitive dissonance theory as theoretical basis, this study asked Gonzaga coaches to discuss their communication styles with their athletes and to describe how critics voices and the pressure of winning has impacted the way they coach today. Data are taken from interviews from six coaches and five current athletes. Gonzaga athletes were interviewed to measure and gauge the effectiveness of each coaching staff’s communication level and coaching styles, both on and off the court/field. Some coaches discovered early on in their careers that winning games wasn’t always the formula to becoming a successful coach. For most, they found that teaching with passion and building relationships with players was what truly left a lasting impression. Athletes found that their performance levels improved on the court/field when their coaches instilled confidence in them and when they developed a strong player/coach relationship that was built off trust. Coaches that understood how to push their athletes out of their comfort zones and that found ways to help their athletes transition from the high school level to the collegiate level were found to be the most effective from their current players.
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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Importance of the study

Leadership has been a topic of discussion for centuries as to whether or not it is a quality that someone has innately within them, or whether it is a skill that one can learn throughout life. So, what makes a great leader? What makes a great coach? People tend to think the great coaches in the sports world are those with the most wins and the men and women that can recruit the best players. But are those men and women truly the best leaders and coaches in the game? Year after year stories are published and awards are presented to coaches that made a difference and had an impact on an athlete’s life. While at the same time, the news releases reports of another coach who lost their job. There will always be individuals in the game that succeed and individuals that struggle to understand limitations and how to properly motivate athletes.

The following thesis project explores in total six assistant and head coaches at Gonzaga University to identify their coaching philosophies, belief systems, and ways in which they communicate with their athletes. In total five current athletes at Gonzaga University were also interviewed and asked to tell their stories, to describe how well they perform for their coaching staff, and to explain the level of success they have had on and off the field as a college athlete. Every aspiring collegiate athlete has their own story to tell and everyone’s journeys looks a little different when it comes to deciding what university to compete for. Many athletes don’t realize however, when they sign with a university, how big of a role their college coaches will have over the next four years of their lives. This study highlights the ways current collegiate athletes prefer to be coached, whether that is a more vocal approach, or to be addressed in a one on one setting. There are coaches that criticize their player’s performances day in and day out, and those that praise it. Every coach leads differently, yet not every coach is successful in getting the best out
of his/her players. This forces athletes to learn how to adapt quickly, or this leads to player’s losing a love and passion for their sport.

**Statement of the problem**

The problem is too many collegiate athletes enter college blindly, with false pretences, and with no understanding of what it actually takes to compete at the next level. Why is this? A lot of these problems originate from the coaching staff. During the recruiting phase it is easy to sell naïve prospects and their parents on the prestigious facilities, endless food points at the cafeteria, and a promised amount of minutes per game. At the end of the day however, these promises are usually made and usually aren’t kept. This is an issue. The problem is that too many coaches are receiving recognition and being praised as legends because of the number of wins they have next to their names rather than for the number of player’s weddings they attend after it’s all said and done. The problem is that the definition of a great coach has been skewed. The problem is that not enough coaches are lifting their players up and preparing young men and women for what is next. Winning does matter, but is it all that matters? This study and research is geared to bring awareness to college coaches around the country about different leadership styles current college athletes at Gonzaga University have found effective from both assistant and head coaches. With the help of five Gonzaga University’s coaches and five athletes this study was made possible.

**Definitions of terms used**

*Interpersonal communication*: A process or way that people exchange information and feelings through verbal or non-verbal messages.
The cognitive dissonance theory: An aversive drive that causes people to (1) avoid opposing viewpoints, (2) seek reassurance after making a tough decision, and (3) change private beliefs to match public behavior when there is minimal justification for an action.

Qualitative research approach: Qualitative approaches are concerned with interpretation and understanding, whereas many quantitative approaches deal with explanation, testing of hypothesis, and statistical analysis.

Mindfulness: The opposite of multitasking, which is a skill that many contemporary people value very highly

Mindful Listening: Involves a curiosity for new information and a willingness to pay more respect to your speaker

Leadership Styles: The different ways in which people communicate and teach or influence those around them.

Organization of remaining chapters

Each chapter and sub section within that chapter throughout this thesis project serves a purpose and is designed to help the reader identify all elements and components of the study. Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical basis of the study and literature of previous research that has been done on coaching styles and coach/player communication levels will be presented. Following this will be chapter 3, which will touch on the scope of the project, the methodology used to perform the study, as well as all ethical considerations. Chapter 4 consists of the project portion of the paper. For the project portion a video was created to capture live footage of the Gonzaga athletes and coaches working with their players in practices and game settings. Gonzaga athletics gave permission for all footage in the film. The film also contains scenes from the interviews with the Gonzaga coaches on their philosophies on leadership and the athlete’s
stories on their journeys thus far in their careers. Using the guideline and framework for the project, the purpose of the film is to allow collegiate coaches to take a step back and look at the way they are leading and communicating with their own teams. The final chapter of the thesis project will include summaries of the study, the limitations of the project, as well as any other further recommendations.
Chapter 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Philosophical Assumptions

“Mindfulness is the opposite of multitasking, which is a skill that many contemporary people value very highly” (Shafir, 2000, p.1). College coaches and athletes both have a lot to juggle on a day-to-day basis and more times than not ignore the philosophy of being mindful. In order to be a mindful communicator a person needs to start practicing living one day at a time. For college athletes and coaches this concept can be a difficult one. Instead of focusing on the positives of what happened that day, they tend to think about what goals haven’t yet been met. “Cultural emphasis on constant accomplishment can divert us from important present-tense experiences: enjoying a discovery with a child, profoundly appreciating a beautiful view, taking in the aroma of a landscape, listening closely to a friend” (Shafir, 2000, p.2). Another skill that both collegiate coaches and players can practice is being a mindful communicator, but in order to do that, one must first become a mindful listener. “Mindful listening is already a part of you. However, it does require a desire to listen. A desire to listen involves a curiosity for new information and a willingness to pay more respect to your speaker” (Shafir, 2000, p.3). This philosophy of communication isn’t always the easiest one to master, however, for coaches and athletes at the division 1 level; taking on mindfulness could be a key component in achieving a more individual growth and team success.

Theoretical Basis

John Wooden, coach of the UCLA men’s basketball team from 1948-1974, was renowned as an inspirational leader and teacher to his players and colleagues. On the other hand, legendary Indiana Hosiers coach, Bobby Knight, was known as the object of near fanatical devotion when it came to leading his teams. Coaches develop their “identity” and understanding
of leadership quickly into their career. With that being said, the following research intends to use the cognitive dissonance theory to identify whether or not Gonzaga universities coaches, both assistant and head coach participants, have found their identities as leaders and teachers of the game, or if they have allowed critics voices to alter their motives. The cognitive dissonance theory is "an aversive drive that causes people to (1) avoid opposing viewpoints, (2) seek reassurance after making a tough decision, and (3) change private beliefs to match public behavior when there is minimal justification for an action" (Festinger, 1950, p.2). In the beginning of a coach’s career there is a lot of pressure to fix a plummeting program, or to uphold the traditions of a successful one. However, regardless if a program needs fixing or upholding, new coaches are going to bring change and fresh ideas to the table. The idea of change and new philosophies isn’t always easy for people to understand. “Dissonance theory differs from other consistency theories in that it posits the need to specify the resistance to change of cognitions, with this resistance determining the manner in which cognitive inconsistency will be reduced” (Shah, 2008, p. 71). It is important to note that when a new coach enters a program with their beliefs, mottos, and ideals, that not every player, colleague, and fan is also going to believe in those same things. It is important that coaches at all levels remain true to the philosophies and ideals they trust in, but at the same time are understanding of the fact that there is always room for growth and always more to learn.
The Literature

Building a Philosophy

“A sound and definite philosophy is synonymous with good coaching and is the foundation upon which he predicates his success” (Wilkes, 1982, p.5). Coaching philosophies involve many factors and variables and are unique to every person. Every coach must develop a philosophy that they full heartedly believe in so that each of their players buys in to the program. “There are probably as many different coaching styles as there are coaches. No one style is necessarily better than another. No one style guarantees success” (Prudden, 2006, p.5). Once a coach has formed a philosophy they must then begin to learn what it takes to be effective in the sports world. The two most important characteristics of an effective coach are the willingness to continue to learn about the game and the desire to assist athletes in learning to love the game and to be challenged by its physical and psychological demands (Owens, D., & Bunker, L., 1989, p.7). Studies have also shown that effective coaches are excellent teachers of the game. “An effective coach must be the team’s main teacher. Like the conductor of an orchestra, coaches must see “the big picture,” so that all the members of the group perform their roles at the proper time and with skill” (Gendron, 2003, p.2). At the end of the day, a coach is being judged by the efforts and performance of the men and women on the court/field. It takes a lot of work and patience to get players to buy into philosophies and to then work hard on a consistent basis. It takes discipline, post-game and opponent analysis. It takes coaches that care about the relations on and off the field with the players; it takes a special individual to coach. (McKay, 1966, p.1).

Leadership Styles

Coaches come in all different shapes and sizes. Some yell after every play, and others don’t say a single word during a game. Legendary coach, John Wooden, was a teacher and coach
that held value to his beliefs and philosophies. “He was never the type to motivate his teams by berating them or instilling fear. He rarely raised his voice. He never swore. And yet he had such an impact on his players” (Williams, 2006, p. 134). Wooden set a platform for coaches all around the world to show that a leader doesn’t always have to be a loud voice. Wooden believed leaders were servants, people builders, and someone that has faith in those around them. Richard L. Schacht, a professor of philosophy at the university of Illinois, contends “one must seek a thorough awareness of the nature and significance of man generally. One must not merely look beyond the record to the athlete, but look beyond the athlete to the man as well” (Osterhoudt, 1973, p.5). A person remembers the impact that another person had on them in life. Statistics will soon become a faded memory from collegiate years, while relationships with teammates and coaches tend to always remain. Coach Wooden credits a lot of his successes to many of his mentors and teachers throughout his life for helping him understand this concept at an early age. He stresses the importance of having teachers in all aspects of life, not just the game of basketball. He states, “The truth is somewhere in between. It’s wrong to turn people into idols. But it’s wrong to lose hope, to believe that we can’t find good examples to inspire us. We need role models. Maybe role models are getting harder to find these days. That doesn’t mean that there aren’t any worth finding” (Smith, 2013, p.277).

Developing a Community and Instilling Confidence

“In American society where levels of informal social connectedness are rapidly decreasing and levels of social isolation are increasing, the need and desire for creating a sense of community (SOC) is becoming progressively more important” (Warner, S., & Dixon, M., 2011, p. 236). College sports teams act as there own mini communities amongst the much larger communities of people that exist on campuses all over the country. But what specific factors play
a role in developing a strong and united community within a college sports team? Research has shown that a strong player and coach commitment level results in a more united and productive program. “Through their leadership styles and motivational tactics, coaches impact athletes’ attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors” (Paskus, 2014, p. 36). With that being said, researchers have found that too often coaches are not easily approachable; therefore college athletes struggle with maintaining confidence in themselves and their abilities to excel on and off the court. A study performed by Highlen and Bennett (1979) investigated cognitive factors differentiating successful and nonsuccessful elite Canadian wrestlers. They found that self-confidence was the most important discriminating factor. “The successful wrestlers were better able to block their anxiety just prior to competition and better able to focus attention on specific wrestling moves” (Straub, W., & Williams, J., 1984, p.49). Confidence for some athletes is found within one self, but for others, confidence originates from someone believing in them. A lot of athletes lack the belief in the dream or lack a desire to spend time working on getting better. “For these athletes, the coach needs additional tools of motivation. These athletes first need to believe that they can succeed. Second, they need to accept that only hard work will lead to success” (Rees, & Van Der Meer, 2003, p.26). A lot of athletes are extrinsically motivated and coaches must learn early on that these types of players need outside forces to help them achieve. “Coaches can help athletes establish a confident frame of mind through constant encouragement coupled with successful practice and play” (Madonna, 2001, p.31).

Another large part of instilling confidence in players comes from developing an effective style of communication. Coaches have to first learn how to be teachers. When Wilt Chamberlain was traded to the Los Angeles Lakers, a reporter asked him if he thought Coach Bill van Breda Kolff could handle him. Chamberlain’s answer was, “No one handles Wilt Chamberlain. They
work with him” (Wooten, 2003, p. 13). Coaches need to be reminded that in order to build a strong team and community they must work with their athletes to create a successful learning environment. Communication off the field/court is where trust is built. “A coach and her players can reach an understanding about each other off the field and away from the stress that sometimes surrounds games and practices. Through off-the-field communication, you can show the players your concern for them and the respect you have for them” (Veroni, K., & Brazier, R., 2006, p.7).

Building Relationships

Talented, young athletes all around the world are forced to make one of the biggest decisions of their adolescent lives in deciding where it is they want to compete at in college. This decision for some is based off how successful the program has been in past years. For others, their decision is made because of the relationship they build with the coaching staff during the recruiting process. Researchers are learning increasingly more about the field and the influence that coaches have on their athletes (Blom, & Watson, 2006, p.4). The importance of the relationship between a coach and an aspiring athlete cannot be emphasized enough. A coach has great influence on developing their athletes. Many years after players have stopped playing the game they will still remember their collegiate coach and the impact they had on them (Bobo, M., & Dykes, S., 1998, p.1). Student-Athletes have noted that the community within the team strengthens or worsens more times than not as a result of the commitment level of the coaching staff. Much of the responsibility is placed on the coach to set the desired tone through policies and practices. “Coaches who provide high levels of encouragement, support, and autonomy are more likely to foster positive psychological responses in their athletes and ultimately lead to higher levels of performance” (Paskus, 2014, p.36). To further understand the interpersonal
dynamic between the coach and the player, it is important to understand the perceptions of the players with respect to effective coaching behaviors and practices” (Rezania, D., & Gurney, R., 2010, p. 1). Coaches have the opportunity to present him or herself as a player’s coach, one that is easy to talk to and approach with problems or concerns, or they can decide not to. Author Steven Connor discusses in his book, *A Philosophy of Sport*, how so many athletes lose site of why they play their sport throughout their collegiate years. “One of the most notable changes in sport is that, while it continues to be thought of as pleasurable, it has lost its associations with laughter. For the modern world, sport has become deadly serious” (Connor, 2011, p. 185). For a lot of college athletes the pressure to succeed and perform for coaches on a day-to-day basis becomes unbearable. Given the strong influence between coaching and athlete enjoyment, sport involvement, skill development, performance, motivation and attraction, the relationship between athletes and their coaches are often in need of improvement (Blom, L., & Watson, J., 2006, p.3). Research has shown that both the players and coaches must prove and show a level of commitment to the overall well being of the team to gain respect for one another. The coach-athlete relationship is intentionally developed through appreciation and respect for each other, it is both dynamic and complex and requires discovering and fulfilling needs of both the coach and athlete. Numerous authors suggest that an effective coach-athlete relationship is necessary for a successful coaching outcome (Rezania, D., & Gurney, R, 2014, p. 2). A coach can be someone throughout an athlete’s college experience that improves the community of the team by being present and consistently demonstrating a strong commitment level, or they can be the reason for a dysfunctional team.

Gender and Coaching
Research has shown that women’s sport has changed dramatically in recent years while men’s sport has changed little. In 1971, a Connecticut judge decided against a girl who was suing for the right to participate on an all-boy school team. The judge asserted, “sports build character…we don’t need that kind of character in girls” (Holland, J., & Oglesby C., 2014, p. 81). Society has come along way in 40 years, and so have female athletes and coaches. More and more women are securing leading positions in business, politics, and education, yet the number of women who have achieved the position of head coach lags in comparison to the increase in participation opportunities for female athletes. (Lough, 2011, p.30). Why do women who aspire to become leaders and coaches at the collegiate level continue to struggle? “Women coaches often find it more difficult to overcome the effects of stereotyping and discrimination by their peers and other sport officials” (Theberge, 70). When you turn on the television more men are coaching women, however the opposite is not true. Why is this? Fewer than 2 percent of men's intercollegiate teams have female head coaches. "The door has swung in only one direction,” says Linda Jean Carpenter, a professor emeritus at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York who taught physical education and exercise science and has collected statistics on women's athletics for about 30 years (Wilson, 2007, p.42).

A recent study however performed by Kelli Miller-Moran and Lisa Flores proves that female athletes coached by women are more likely to aspire to head coaching positions. Findings from this study suggest that female coaching role models may be an important facilitator in developing coaching self-efficacy. (Moran-Miller, K., Flores, L, 2011, p.109). In recent years, college administrators have began to take notice to the gender inequality in coaching that exists still today. Author, Cindra Kamphoff performed a study in which she investigates female coaches experiences at the collegiate level. She states, “There needs to be women on the staff...
and it doesn't always necessarily have to be the head coach, there has to be a diversified staff and so as women come in and learn the role of coaching” (Kamphoff, 2010, p.363).

**Research Rationale**

“When an individual holds two or more elements of knowledge that are relevant to each other but inconsistent with one another, a state of discomfort is created. This unpleasant state is called dissonance” (Shah, 2008, p.5). As a former collegiate athlete and aspiring coach, it is important to recognize that there isn’t a “right way” to lead. After interviewing six collegiate coaches, with all different philosophies, they made it known that there isn’t one formula for success. For some coaches, in the beginning of their careers, success meant winning, and for others success meant seeing player’s understand the game in a different light.

Earlier it was mentioned that cognitive dissonance causes people to do one, if not all of the following three things. (1) Avoid opposing viewpoints, (2) Seek reassurance after making a tough decision, and (3) Change private beliefs to match public behavior when there is minimal justification for an action (Festinger, 1950, p.2). For anyone leading an organization, team, or group of people it would be easy to fold under pressure and begin avoiding conflicts, seeking reassurance, and change one’s beliefs so that everyone else is happy. These leaders however, don’t remain leaders for very long. The people that remain leaders of companies and programs seem to be the people that figure out a way to get people to buy into their beliefs, yet are willing to hear what everyone believes in as well.

The following research explores the different paths that coaches took to get to the collegiate level and highlights each of their struggles along the way. These struggles and learning curves are what helped them understand the bigger picture and appreciate the little things about sports and teaching athletes the fundamentals of the game.
Design Questions:

1. What coaching styles do athlete’s find effective at the division 1 level?

2. What challenges do athlete’s face in college athletics that is different from high school sports?

3. How big of a role do division 1 coaches have on a college athlete’s experience both on and off the court/field?
Chapter 3 Scope and Methodology

The Scope of the study

The study focuses on a set of interview questions that were asked to a total of 11 participants. Coaches and athletes from Gonzaga University’s men’s basketball, women’s soccer, women’s crew, women’s basketball, and baseball team helped make this study possible. The research is based solely off these 11 individuals. One staff member from the following teams were interviewed along with one player from each of these teams.

The data included in the project/video includes athlete’s responses to the transition process from high school athletics to college. It also includes what the pursuit of excellence at Gonzaga University means and how much appreciation these student-athletes have for their sport and teammates. In regards to the coaches, the data included in the film touches on how to help athletes grow both on and off the court/field. Coaches discuss instilling trust, teaching toughness, setting clear expectations, and how to invest in people rather than coach at them. Footage that was not included from both the athletes and players was more of a discussion of their journeys to coaching and playing at the division 1 level. Also, the discussion about their mentors was not included in the film. The film also consists of footage filmed during practice settings as well as actual Gonzaga game footage, which the researcher was given permission to use by Gonzaga athletics.

The Methodology of the study

The following research is an example of a case study that uses the qualitative research approach. Carla Willig asserts, case studies “are not characterized by the methods used to collect and analyze data, but rather its focus on a particular unit of analysis: a case” (Willig, 2008, p. 74). This study examines a specific set of individuals, Gonzaga coaches and players, by using an
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interview process. In determining leadership styles the researcher found that a qualitative approach would allow for a better understanding and interpretation of what it takes to coach at the division 1 level. “Quantitative research is more prone to structured, standardized, and abstracted modes of collecting and analyzing empirical data” (Eriksson, 2008, p.5). A thorough interview process allowed the researcher to gather effective information, rather than rely on a set of numbers as a means of data. “Unlike a quantitative study, a qualitative study does not convert all observations into a single, common medium such as numbers but leaves the data in a variety of nonstandard shapes, sizes, and forms” (Neuman, 1997, p.200). With that being said, it is up to the researchers to draw their own conclusions from the study. “Qualitative research largely involves developing a description of how we use working ideas while making observations” (Neuman, 1997, p.206). The following study was successful because the case study allowed room for observations, if this study were to have been based off numbers alone, the information would have not been enough to uncover the following research questions. This paper will help aid current collegiate coaches and those who aspire to coach at the collegiate level to have a better understanding of what it takes to be a respectable and admirable leader both on and off the court.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant in this study gave verbal and written consent to be a member of this project. Every participant had the option to opt out of this study if they did not feel comfortable answering and of the interview questions. Every piece of data collected for this research was gathered from the 11 active participants, there was no previous data used. The do no harm principle guided each and every interview. The well being of the participants came before anything else. Thoughtful considerations were taken throughout the entire research process and
the project as a whole was built off a high level of respect for college athletes and coaches. Each participant is aware of the fact that his or her responses will be observed in this paper and seen by the researcher. The Gonzaga coaches and athletes help was much appreciated and has helped the researcher have a better understanding of what it takes to be not only a good coach, but also an effective one at the collegiate level. Leadership styles vary from person to person, and at times coaches become more concerned with what others think of them, rather than focusing on what is really the most important matter. This research, with the assistance of the following participants, allows people to see where coaches’ need to improve in this area and what they need to maintain doing in order to achieve success within a program.
Chapter 4 The Project

Project Description

For the project portion of the paper, the researcher compiled a video of Gonzaga coaches and athletes from men’s basketball, women’s soccer, women’s crew, baseball, and women’s basketball teams discussing their thoughts about what it takes to compete and coach at the division 1 level. All 11 participants gave both verbal and written consent to be apart of this project. The film begins with a personal introduction about the researcher herself, a former division 1 athlete, and the highs and lows she experienced throughout her career. She discusses the transition from high school to college and the struggle of playing for so many coaches, with different philosophies and ideas about the game of basketball. At the end of the introduction several of the research design questions are asked about the different motivations of college coaches and athlete’s on a day-to-day basis. The video then begins with the women’s soccer coach discussing her growth as a coach over the years and how it took her a long time to realize that winning wasn’t everything. She highlights the importance of teaching strategy and skill, but also how essential teaching life skills are as well. Throughout each of the interviews from each sport, game film or practice film is included to help show the audience Gonzaga coaches and athlete’s in action. After women’s soccer, the women’s crew coach discusses three styles of coaching that she believes in: clarity, consistency, and compassion. She rowed for the coach that she is now working with and gave a unique perspective on leadership. She explained that it took her a while to understand some of the tough lessons her coach was trying to instill in her and her teammates during her collegiate career and that it wasn’t until becoming a coach that she realized why he did the things he did. Following the crew coach are the baseball coach, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball coaches who all have similar philosophies on knowing the personnel.
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They all touch on how important it is to know each athlete and what makes them tick. Rather than coach everyone the same way, it is crucial to know how to get the best out of each player. Athletes from each of the following sports teams were also interviewed to add another element to the study. The athletes added feedback on ways in which they have enjoyed being coached at the division 1 level and ways in which coaches can improve and strengthen relationships.

The following video was created to show people rather than tell them about leaders, coaches, and athletes at the division 1 level, specifically at Gonzaga University. Fans in the seats enjoy watching athlete’s compete every game, but more times than they don’t see what happens behind the scenes. This video will allow people to see that the journey isn’t always pretty. This video shows viewers that coaches have failed, athletes have struggled, but at the end of the day the sweat and tears is worth it.

Video link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lvFI-mqUWY&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lvFI-mqUWY&feature=youtu.be)
Chapter 5 Summaries and Conclusion

Each chapter of this project serves a specific purpose and adds a unique element to help better understand the ways in which college coaches communicate with their players. Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical basis of the study and break down literature of previous work that has been done on coaching styles and coach/player communication levels. Chapter 3 touches on the scope of the project, the methodology used to perform the study, as well as all ethical considerations that were taken throughout the project. And in Chapter 4 the project component will be broken down. For the project portion, a video was created to capture live footage of the Gonzaga athletes and coaches in action with their athletes. The film contains scenes from the interviews with the Gonzaga coaches and the athlete’s journeys leading up to today. Using the guideline and framework for the project, the purpose of the film is to allow collegiate coaches to take a step back and look at the way they are leading and communicating with their own teams.

Limitations of the project

The project was limited to only one division 1 university and five athletic teams. For the study to be more effective, more division 1 athletes and coaches from other division 1 universities could have been interviewed and selected. The project also only focused on five Gonzaga athletes and coaches. To add more credibility the entire coaching staff as well as more athletes from those teams could have been interviewed to strengthen the findings. The data obtained was sufficient, yet more interviews could have allowed for a better understanding of what it takes to be a successful player and coach at the collegiate level. Lastly, due to the time of year and recruiting priorities, a lot of coaches and players were not available to set up a time to meet for an interview.
Further Recommendations

For anyone aspiring to be a collegiate coach or for anyone interested in leadership, performing a study like this one not only allows you to meet incredible people, but it also allows you to get insight from some of the very best in the game. Other studies that could be performed involving athletes and collegiate coaches at the division 1 level could consist of a look into the recruiting process. Are coaches honest with high school prospects? Someone could also study the effectiveness of women coaches versus male coaches and what communication looks like between different genders. A study could also be done on first year head coaches and how they build their philosophies and programs in that year.

Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis project was to see how great of an impact coaches have on their players and how different leadership styles can affect an athletes’ ability to succeed on the court/field. After interviewing 11 participants in total on Gonzaga’s campus, it was noted that a lot of coaches are doing positive things and getting the best out of their players, yet there is always room for growth. Findings showed that coaches that put their time and energy into the player’s well being over their own personal fame and glory were seen as effective and more winning coaches. Findings also showed that all five athletes respond well to consistent feedback (both positive and negative) from coaches after a win and a loss. Both the male and female athletes in this project reported a strong respect level for their coaching staffs and showed appreciation for the work they put in day in and day out. Each coach, whether that was a head coach or assistant coach believed in teaching the whole person, not just the athlete. All Gonzaga coaches also discussed the significance of building a relationship with each of their athletes and
instilling trust in their team. If players don’t trust in their leaders, achieving success and excellence isn’t going to be easy to accomplish.
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