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A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE KEY LEADERSHIP

SKILLS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED HEAD COLLEGIATE

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACHES

By

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A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of the Key Leadership Skills and Characteristics of Selected Head Collegiate Women's Basketball Coaches

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Researchers and practitioners alike have long been interested in those key skills and characteristics that a leader must possess in order to be successful in his or her chosen field. Countless studies have been undertaken and books written in business, military, and athletic domains, all trying to determine which of these attributes are the most important for a leader to hold. For coaching applications, an understanding of these skills and characteristics would be helpful for those engaged in self-development or for inclusion in coach education programs and clinics. In order to further the knowledge in this area, qualitative interviews were conducted with 12 head collegiate women's basketball coaches. The top five most common themes extracted through interviews were communication, relationship building, organization, recruiting, and knowledge of the game. Further examination revealed that these skills and characteristics make up a fairly complete and accurate list of focus areas for coaches wishing to improve or advance in the field. Surveys were then completed by nine of the original 12 head coaches and fourteen of their respective assistant coaches and 88 players from various women's basketball programs in the Northwest. Quantitative ranking surveys indicated that players and assistant coaches feel that knowledge of the game is the most important skill and/or characteristic possessed by head coaches, while head coaches favored recruiting and relationship building skills. Results also indicated that success is not only defined by wins and losses; other definitions included teamwork or unity and improvement as a group. The results of this study concluded that there is no recipe for success in coaching.

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CHAPTER ONE

Statement of the Problem

The Problem

Every year, women's basketball coaches put countless hours into helping the teams they coach to be successful. Every coach has his or her own philosophy which has evolved through playing and coaching experiences, coaches' education programs and clinics, self-development, and unique personal characteristics. Coaches' clinics and education programs are well-attended nationwide. Considerable effort is expended and sacrifices are made by participants and administrators of these clinics and programs. Even with these programs in place, most of the teaching is based on hearsay. Currently, very little research exists that examines the skills and characteristics of coaches that help someone to excel in the field. Because the success of a team is dependent upon countless variables, examining the particular behaviors of coaches alone is not enough to determine team success. However, in order to make coaches' education programs and clinics more helpful, it is still essential to examine which skills and/or characteristics are seen as most important for a head collegiate women's basketball coach. To consider the most influential viewpoints, this question must be asked of head coaches, assistant coaches, and players. Information gathered that relates to this inquiry will help create a direction and focus for future coaches' education programs and clinics, as well as self-development.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this analysis was: Which skills and characteristics do coaches, assistant coaches, and players identify as being the *most important* skills and/or characteristics for someone to possess as a head women's collegiate basketball coach?

Pertinent Questions

1. What do head collegiate women's basketball coaches feel are the most important skills and/or characteristics for someone to possess in their position?

2. How do head collegiate coaches rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as identified by head coaches?

3. How do assistant collegiate coaches rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as identified by head coaches?

4. How do collegiate players rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as identified by head coaches?

5. How do head coaches, assistant coaches, and players combined rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as identified by head coaches?

6. What additional skills and/or characteristics do head coaches, assistant coaches, and players feel are necessary when comprising a list of the most important skills and/or characteristics for someone to possess as a head collegiate women's basketball coach? Such skills and/or characteristics would be in addition to those previously agreed upon by head coaches alone.

7. How do head coaches, assistant coaches, and players define "success" in collegiate women's basketball programs?

Limitations

The following are the limitations of this study as it was conducted:

1. Interviews were conducted over the phone, as opposed to in person.

2. Qualitative information is not generalizable outside the selected population.

3. The sample size included more players (88) than coaches as well as more assistant coaches (14) than head coaches (9). Due to the imbalanced sample, the combined responses of all subjects favor those responses provided by players and assistant coaches over head coaches.

4. This study was conducted with a small sample and therefore, no comparisons were possible based on the demographic information that was collected from participants. A larger sample size would have allowed for comparisons

between male and female coaches, at different levels, with varying levels of experience, different numbers of assistant coaches and/or players in the program, varying college playing experiences, and different win/loss percentages.

5. While quantitative data is generalizable across the selected population under examination, results are limited to head collegiate women's basketball coaches in Montana, Washington, and Oregon. The conclusions of this study do not apply in different states or geographical regions of the world.

6. Data collected in this research applies to women's basketball alone. It does not apply to men's collegiate basketball.

7. Because this study only examined head coaches' skills and/or characteristics, the results may not be applied to assistant coaches.

8. Information gathered in this study is not generalizable to all sports; it is limited to basketball.

9. Because this study deals with collegiate women's basketball, it may not be of use when investigating different levels of sport.

Definitions of Terms

NCAA Division I – National Collegiate Athletics Association member school that offers at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women), with two team sports for each gender.

NCAA Division II – National Collegiate Athletics Association member school that offers at least five sports for men and five for women (or four for men and six for women), with two team sports for each gender.

NCAA Division III – National Collegiate Athletics Association member school that offers at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender. No financial aid is awarded to athletes based on athletic ability.

NAIA – National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics member school (average student enrollment nationwide is approximately 2160 per school).

Junior College/Community College – Two year institution of higher education.

Efficacy – Expectations about a desired outcome.

Assumptions

The following are the assumptions that were made in this study:
1. There were no leading questions in either the qualitative interviews or the quantitative ranking surveys.
2. Interviews and surveys were completed by the intended subjects.
3. Subjects were honest in reporting their opinions as well as demographic information.

4. Interviews and surveys were completed by subjects independently and free from outside influences.

5. Head coaches followed protocol when administering surveys to assistant coaches and players.

6. All subjects followed the survey protocol.

7. All subjects were volunteer participants, as established in the study procedures.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In an effort to examine the complex nature of the coaching profession, it is important to

first consider leadership in general and its ties to coaching. Next, business and the

military both provide relevant canvases for examining leadership in a competitive

environment. And finally, as the subject matter is narrowed down to women's collegiate

basketball, there are studies that address coaching in general, college basketball, and

women's sports that need to be visited.

General Leadership

If one were to examine leadership in various contexts, would the demands of the position

be similar across different disciplines? There are leaders in every aspect of society, both

formal and informal. Formal leadership has been studied in business, education, politics,

medicine, and the military. Generally speaking, the most common themes that surround

leadership include integrity, honesty, concern for others, having a vision for the future,

and the ability to learn (Cole, 2007).

Additionally, for the interested reader, most of the books available on coaching

oftentimes address not only sports, but business and other aspects of life as well. In a

book written by Jim Calhoun (2007), head men's basketball coach at the University of Connecticut, he lists the seven leadership secrets for success in business, sports, and life. Through his experiences, Calhoun has discovered that having passion, establishing high standards, being motivational and flexible, having the ability to perform under pressure, always striving to improve, and keeping things in perspective are the keys to successful leadership. Calhoun's book is entitled "A Passion to Lead" and its messages parallel many of the ideas presented in "Leading with the Heart," by Mike Krzyzewski (2000). Krzyzewski is the head men's basketball coach at Duke University and he writes about his successful strategies for basketball, business, and life. He preaches trust, passionate communication, and pride. Both coaches explain that these lessons are not just about athletics, but more so about being an effective leader in any arena.

Business and the Military

Leadership is an essential part of thriving in the business world and effective functioning in all branches of the military. Both of these sectors of society are heavily reliant on leadership for success and thus, emphasize leadership development as one moves up the ranks.

Modern business management curricula are based on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that foster professional growth within potential leaders. According to Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008), the goals of such development programs deal with functional knowledge, communication, and problem-solving – to name a few. This

research indicates that many of the objectives established in business leadership development overlap with those in the world of education as well. Possibly due to its competitive nature, it is worth noting the similarities observed between leaders in athletics and those in business.

When asked to cite a setting in society in which leadership plays an extremely important role, one may mention the various branches of the military. It has been long understood that the effectiveness of different groups in the military greatly depends upon the quality of the leadership. According to General Schwarzkopf (2005), great leaders are a product of character, competence, selfless service, and caring about people and the issues at hand. Schwarzkopf also claims that leadership is an art, not a science, stating, "It can't be reduced to a few simple mechanical equations that you apply… much of leadership is gut feeling and risk-taking (Schwarzkopf, 2005, p.3)." This military perspective indicates that, while training is important, leadership requires motivation and critical thinking and decision-making as well.

General Coaching

A coach is defined by Cambridge University Press (2008) as, "someone whose job is to teach people to improve at a sport, skill, or school subject." While this definition sounds simple, the art of coaching has been a work in progress for thousands of years. It is said to be a field influenced by teaching, psychology, communication, social work, counseling, organizational development, mentoring, consulting, performing arts,

management, philosophy, spirituality, and others. The coaching profession is heavily influenced by culture and oftentimes involves a competitive aspect which inspires its members to strive for success. It is hypothesized that coaching has existed for as long as humans have been interacting with one another (The Foundation of Coaching, 2007). This form of directive, inspirational communication is present in all walks of life and is producing a growing industry with life and executive coaches; however, it is most commonly referred to in the athletic field. It is a demanding profession that requires various skills and proficiencies; however, there are countless ways in which to get the job done. While investigating coaching, one must also consider the context of the job and its many variables along with the ultimate goals.

In a 1985 study conducted by Martin (1985) regarding collegiate soccer coaching practices, coaches were asked to complete self-evaluations about their own leadership behaviors. Results showed that situational variables such as scholarships available and time devoted to coaching dictated the style of leadership utilized by each coach. These results suggest that evaluation of a coach should encompass a great understanding of the situation at hand.

While wins and losses seem to take the top news stories, coaches have varying opinions about what is important. Joe Newton, the great high school cross country coach at York High School in Elmhurst, Illinois is one such coach. In Newton's book about coaching, he states," It's not just about winning... It's about being part of a tradition where discipline, effort, skill, and teamwork are of the utmost importance" (Newton, 1998).

Collegiate Basketball

Men's and women's basketball are extremely popular in the world of sports. Competitors range in age from the very young to the elderly. There are numerous leagues and levels of competition which include recreational leagues, professional leagues, and everything in between. Towards the top of the competition, although amateur, lies college basketball. Collegiate basketball coaches, such as Pat Summit and Mike Krzyzewski, have become some of the most recognized icons of leadership today. When examining the coaching profession, especially within the sport of basketball, the majority of the focus remains at the collegiate level where various studies have been conducted in an attempt to advance the profession.

In a study conducted by Newell (2004), "successful" coaching is examined through a qualitative interview process of one "successful" head college basketball coach. It was discovered that work ethic and superior communication skills, as well as building relationships with players, have been the keys to success at the collegiate level for this particular coach.

Research by Pizzi (2002) compares coaching leadership styles with win/loss percentages. In this study, there was no significant correlation between win/loss percentages and leadership styles, nor was there a significant correlation between leadership styles and

years of coaching experience. This information was collected from Division III college basketball programs in the New England area and was evaluated for differences among male and female coaches as well. Pizzi's study showed significantly greater positive feedback behavior and training and instruction behavior among female coaches in comparison to their male counterparts. So in general, Pizzi found that male and female coaches are different primarily in terms of communication styles; however, no specific behaviors were linked to successful seasons.

Wrisberg (1988) conducted a study which looked at perceived personal qualities of 198 male and female college basketball coaches at various levels. Findings showed similar results at the Division I level, but slight differences at the Division II, III, or NAIA levels. This study also suggests that with few exceptions, it is safe to assume that all collegiate basketball coaches are similar, despite working at different levels of the profession.

Women's Athletics

While some studies look for consistent behaviors among coaches, a few coaching studies have conducted comparisons in strategies between coaches that work in different sports, with males or females, teams or individuals, and at different levels of sport. The most compelling of such studies have focused on the differences seen in men's and women's athletics as far as coaching is concerned.

Coffman's (1999) study indicated that there were more similarities than differences between male and female coaches' behaviors, as well as coaches from different sports. When looking at athlete preferences, this study indicated the most satisfaction exists in female athletes with female coaches. Eagly and Karau (1991) suggest that this phenomenon may exist due to the fact that males tend to be more task-oriented while women are more relationship-oriented. They claim that due to sex roles induced by society, "men specialize more than women in behaviors strictly oriented to their group's task and women specialize more than men in socially facilitative behaviors" (Eagly & Karau, 1991, p. 685) Because females tend to focus more on the relationship aspect of working with others and generally prefer relationship driven leadership, sex roles alone may explain the fact that more satisfaction exists with female athletes and female coaches than with any other coach-athlete combination (Coffman, 1999).

Gabriel and Brooks (1986) discovered that among women's collegiate tennis coaches, there was no significant difference in coaches' leadership styles when comparing coaches at different levels – NAIA and NJCAA. Regardless of the methods employed, in various circumstances, all coaches' behaviors were consistent across different levels of sport, but were tailored to female athletes.

Women's Collegiate Basketball

While a decent amount of research has been done on leadership in general, the studies that focus on coaching women's collegiate basketball are few and far between at this

time. Working with a women's basketball team presents unique challenges that warrant special attention beyond simply leading a group. It involves working with a group of young women and assistant coaches in a physical and intensely competitive environment.

Examining the expectations of coaches, Chase, Lirgg, and Feltz (1997) looked for a correlation between women's college basketball coaches' team efficacy and team performance. They found that efficacy significantly predicted free throw percentage as well as the number of turnovers committed in a game. This study went on to explain that methods used to improve coaches' team efficacy could actually help to improve team performance. In other words, a coach's confidence in his/her team affects how the team performs. This relationship between confidence and performance is similar to the "Pygmalion Effect" in which high leader expectations and standards generally lead to improved performance. In a study that examined industry, sales, and military organizations, the Pygmalion effect asserted by leaders, influenced subordinate self-efficacy, performance expectations, motivation, effort, and performance (Eden, 1992). Here we see an overlap in the effects of a particular leadership strategy within the fields of athletics, business, and the military.

Following the literature, it would be safe for one to state that while studying coaching it is necessary to be specific about the job. One must address with whom, where, how, when, and why the coaching is taking place.

Recognizing that women's collegiate basketball creates its own unique challenges for coaches, Tsutsumi (2000) conducted a study which investigated players' and coaches' perceptions about the leadership styles of "successful" head women's collegiate basketball coaches. This study showed that training and instruction along with positive feedback were *used* most by "successful" coaches and players *perceived* that these methods were used most by head coaches. There was a significant correlation between players' *perceptions* and their *preferences*; however, there was no correlation between players' *perceived* and coaches' *utilized*, or the players' *preferred* and coaches' *utilized* leadership styles. Results indicated that players and coaches maintain different perceptions about utilized leadership styles, but similar preferences for specific coaching behaviors. While their perceptions are different, when looking at "successful" coaching, coaches and players tended to agree on the most prevalent behaviors. In conclusion, the behavior survey which was employed in this study found positive feedback and training and instruction to be the most "successful" strategies. Tsutsumi's study recognized the importance of multiple perspectives and was an attempt to describe those behaviors most often used by the coaches considered to be "successful" in their work. Essentially, this research attempted to quantify various behaviors exhibited by coaches whose win/loss records met specific criteria.

Summary

Overall, the findings of the previous studies suggest a few common ideas. First of all, there is some difference in the preferences of female and male athletes with regard to

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coaching behaviors. This revelation confirms that certain coaches may or may not relate to and work well with athletes of a particular gender, based on the coaching strategies employed and the style of communication most often utilized. Additional studies suggest that female and male coaches appear to stress only slightly different coaching behaviors, mostly due to differences in communication styles. We find that coaching is coaching whether completed by a male or female coach, but not as much can be said about communicating with others. And finally, players' and coaches' perceptions are different when quantifying coaching behaviors; however, their preferences appear to be similar when investigating the leadership styles that make coaching "successful." Athletes and coaches identify behaviors differently, but they hold similar ideals regarding the behaviors of "successful" coaches.

While no research has been able to determine a perfect equation for "successful" coaching as of yet, the existing research makes a valiant effort. Like so many aspects of life that cannot be broken down into a science, coaching has proven itself to be as complicated as the individuals involved. As evidenced, researchers have yet to determine which particular behaviors lead to success. With such an incredible number of variables affecting a win/loss record, it seems logical to conclude that there is no secret recipe for success. As long-time, successful coach Jim Calhoun explains, "As to what makes a coach successful, I confess that I've never discovered any mysterious secrets for building great basketball teams. There are no magical formulas that, if found, will lead to market dominance, a corner office, great wealth, or, in my case, an NCAA championship" (Calhoun, 2007, p. 19).

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This research examined the key skills and characteristics possessed by head collegiate women's basketball coaches as determined by head coaches, assistant coaches, and players. The goal was to determine what, if any, consistencies exist among head coaches', assistant coaches', and players' opinions about the most important skills and/or characteristics one must possess as a head collegiate women's basketball coach. As opposed to looking for a *recipe* of successful coaching behaviors, this study attempted to uncover a *list of ingredients*. Information collected in this study may be used to give direction to coaches' education programs and clinics as well as to assist current and prospective college basketball coaches in their future endeavors. Additional qualitative information was collected to determine how head coaches, assistant coaches, and players define success within their respective programs.

Population and Sample

The population included varsity women's basketball coaches and players from colleges or universities in Montana, Washington, and Oregon. Twelve schools were selected by convenient sampling from NCAA Divisions I, II, and III, NAIA, and Junior Colleges/Communities Colleges. Each division or level was represented by at least two

schools. It was anticipated that each school would average two assistant coaches and 12

players in the women's basketball program. Consequently, surveys were distributed to

12 head coaches and approximately 24 assistant coaches and 144 players, totaling 180

potential participants. Nine of the 12 teams who received surveys returned completed

packets. The remaining three teams' surveys were not returned and consequently, were

not included in the study; however, the initial data analysis was based on the qualitative

interviews conducted with all 12 head coaches. This study was approved by the

University of Montana Institutional Review Board.

Research Design

Study #1   The first study was conducted to validate the instrument to be used

in the subsequent survey research. Head collegiate women's basketball were identified

and sampled. Qualitative phone interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted with the

head coaches of each program to determine opinions about which skills and/or

characteristics are most important for someone to possess as a head collegiate women's

basketball coach. Additional demographic information was collected about each coach

including win/loss record, years of experience as a head collegiate women's basketball

coach, and level at which he/she currently coaches. Qualitative data collected through

the interviews was analyzed for common themes through a simple tallying of responses

by the researcher. There were five skills and/or characteristics that were identified by at

least half of the head coaches. Due to the consistency of the responses, a quantitative

ranking survey of the top five most commonly mentioned skills and/or characteristics was constructed for use in the second part of the study.

Study #2   Surveys were distributed to head coaches and their respective assistant coaches and team members to evaluate the importance of the previously extracted skills and/or characteristics from qualitative interviews with head coaches. The five skills and/or characteristics to be ranked were: building relationships with athletes; organizational skills; knowledge of the game; effective communication with athletes, staff members, the community, and any party with a vested interest in the team; and recruiting. Participants were given the opportunity to list any skills and/or characteristics that they felt were important enough to be included in the previous list of the most important skills and/or characteristics. Participants were also asked to define success within their programs (see Appendices B.1, B.2, and B.3). A cover letter to head coaches with specific instructions accompanied the surveys (see Appendix C). Information collected from the surveys was analyzed for consistencies and inconsistencies through descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed for common themes.

Statistical Procedure

Responses were evaluated through descriptive statistics within and between each group of participants – head coaches, assistant coaches, and players. To assist in determining the most favored skills and/or characteristics, points were assigned to each response in order to achieve an overall "score" for each skill and/or characteristic. Each ranking of one was assigned five points, each two was assigned four points, each three was assigned

three points, and so on (reference Appendices B.1, B.2, and B.3). These weighted scores gave a single point value to each skill and/or characteristic with which it was possible to make comparisons to other skills and/or characteristics. Calculations of scores and frequencies of responses were completed in each group separately as well as within the entire population. Common themes were extracted from the qualitative responses about additional skills and/or characteristics and the subjects' definitions of success. Responses to incorrectly completed survey questions were not tallied in the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Results of the interviews and surveys conducted in this study will be reported as they relate to the Pertinent Questions posed in Chapter One (see p. 2-3).

1. What do head collegiate women's basketball coaches feel are the most important skills and/or characteristics for someone to possess in their position?

Interview results were based on the information provided by 12 head coaches from Montana, Oregon, and Washington at the NCAA Division I, II, and III, NAIA, and Junior College/Community College levels. Coaches were males and females with college coaching experience ranging from four to 31 years. Win/loss percentages ranged from 20% to 79%.

In qualitative phone interviews, coaches were asked to list those skills and/or characteristics that they feel are most important for someone to possess as a head collegiate women's basketball coach. Following the interviews, data was analyzed for common themes. Table 1 shows the frequency of the most common responses provided by coaches.

Table 1. Skills and characteristics identified as important in qualitative phone interviews.

Skill/Characteristic	Number of coaches in agreement
Communication	8
Knowledge of the game	8
Relationship building	8
Recruiting	7
Organizational skills	6
Passion	5
Leadership	4
Teaching	4

The top five skills and/or characteristics were selected for use in the quantitative ranking survey. Because head coaches are most familiar with the position, their opinions were used to validate the instrument employed in the second part of this research. At least 50% of the subjects interviewed felt that communication, knowledge of the game, relationship building, recruiting, and organization were the most important areas for one to be proficient as a head collegiate women's basketball coach. In the survey, subjects were asked to rank these top five skills and/or characteristics.

Survey results were based on the responses of nine of the original 12 head coaches, 14 assistant coaches, and 88 players, totaling 111 participants. Of the nine teams participating in the survey, two compete at the NCAA Division I level, one at the NCAA Division II level, four at the NCAA Division III level, one at the NAIA Division I level, and one at the Junior College/Community College level. Data was calculated for head coaches, assistant coaches, players, and all respondents combined. The frequency of responses was evaluated at each ranking and will be illustrated in Tables 2-5.

To determine which skills and/or characteristics were generally favored over others, values were assigned to each ranking and totaled for each skill and/or characteristic. Assigning point values to each ranking allowed for weighting the importance of each skill and/or characteristic as well as for comparisons of the weighted responses of all participants and groups of participants. Points were assigned as follows: a ranking of one was assigned five points, a ranking of two was assigned four points, a ranking of three was assigned three points, a ranking of four was assigned two points, and a ranking of five was assigned one point. For head coaches, for example, because there were nine respondents, each skill could earn a weighted score between nine and 45 points. Figures 1-4 will depict the points earned based on the ranking responses of each skill and/or characteristic.

2. How do head collegiate coaches rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches previously identified by head coaches?

Of the nine head coaches that completed the survey, four ranked recruiting as the number one skill and five of them ranked building relationships as number two. Six of the nine chose to put organization in last place. When rankings were assigned weighted scores, recruiting and relationship building both earned 32 points, while knowledge of the game came in third with 29 points, communication scored 24, and organization earned 18 points. By assigning points to each ranking, it was much easier to examine each population's responses as a whole. Although only one head coach felt that relationship

building skills should be considered the top priority, enough coaches put it in second place to create a tie between relationship building and recruiting in the weighted responses. Table 2 depicts the frequencies of each skill and/or characteristic afforded each ranking.

Table 2. Frequency of nine head coaches' choices.

Ranking chosen	Relationships	Organization	Knowledge of the game	Communication	Recruiting
1	1	2	1	1	4
2	5	0	3	1	0
3	1	0	3	3	2
4	2	1	1	2	3
5	0	6	1	2	0

Figure 1 illustrates the weighted responses of head coaches as points were assigned to each ranking and totaled for each of the five skills and/or characteristics. Assigned values can be seen above each bar in the bar graph.

Figure 1. Weighted responses of nine head coaches.
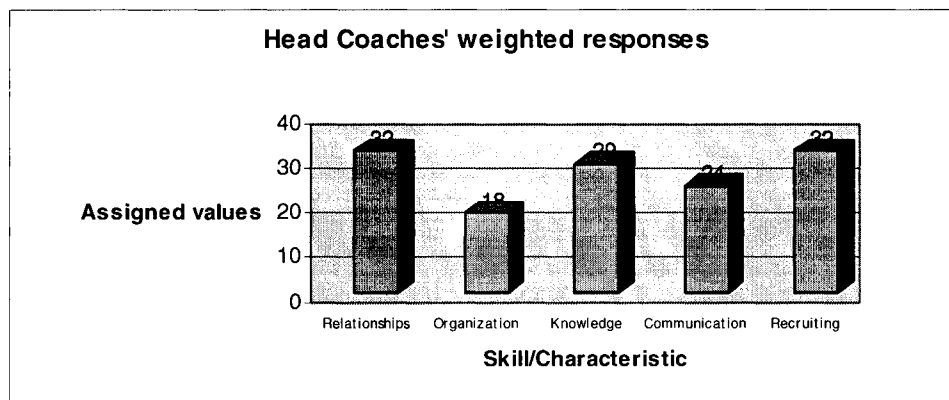
3. How do assistant collegiate coaches rank, in order of importance, the top five

skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as

identified by head coaches?

Of the 14 assistant coaches who completed the surveys, 12 of them selected knowledge

of the game as either the most important or second most important skill for a head coach

to possess. Seven of the assistant coaches put recruiting in third place and eight ranked

organization as the least important. After assigning values to each ranking, knowledge of

the game earned a weighted score of 60, recruiting garnered 47 points, relationship

building and communication both scored 37, and organization earned 29 points. Table 3

depicts the frequencies of each skill and/or characteristic afforded each ranking.

Table 3. Frequency of 14 assistant coaches' choices.

Ranking chosen	Relationships	Organization	Knowledge of the game	Communication	Recruiting
1	1	2	7	2	2
2	2	1	5	3	3
3	4	1	1	1	7
4	5	2	1	4	2
5	2	8	0	4	0

Figure 2 illustrates the weighted responses of assistant coaches as points were assigned to

each ranking and totaled for each of the five skills and/or characteristics. Assigned

values can be seen above each bar in the bar graph.

Figure 2. Weighted responses of 14 assistant coaches.
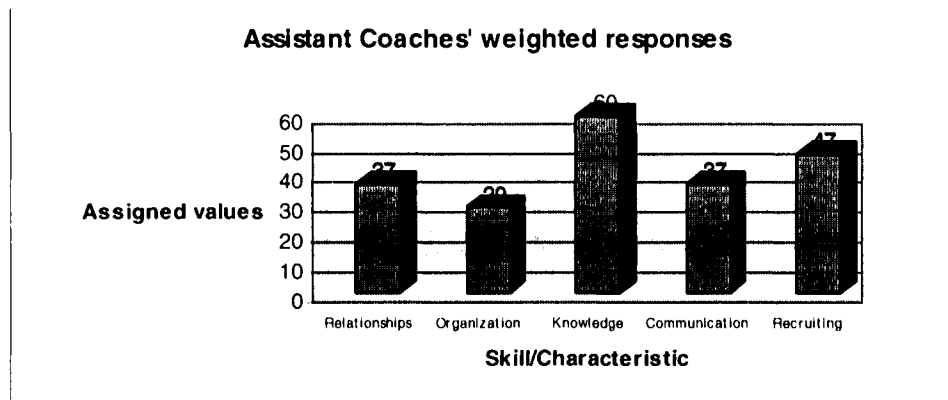
Assistant Coaches' weighted responses

4. How do collegiate players rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or

characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as identified by

head coaches?

There were 88 players who completed surveys. Over half of the respondents chose

knowledge of the game as the most important part of being a head coach. In fact, 74 of

the 88 players who took the survey chose knowledge of the game as either their first or

second choice. The other top ranking skill, according to players, is communication which

earned 53 votes as number one or number two. Organization was given last place by 37

subjects. When points were assigned to the rankings amongst players' choices,

knowledge of the game scored 375, communication scored 317, relationship building

earned 259, recruiting was given 193, and organization scored 176 points. Table 4

depicts the frequencies of each skill and/or characteristic afforded each ranking.

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Table 4. Frequency of 88 players' choices.

Ranking chosen	Relationships	Organization	Knowledge of the game	Communication	Recruiting
1	11	2	47	25	3
2	17	6	27	28	10
3	30	19	8	16	15
4	16	24	2	13	33
5	14	37	4	6	27

Figure 3 illustrates the weighted responses of players as points were assigned to each ranking and totaled for each of the five skills and/or characteristics. Assigned values can be seen above each bar in the bar graph.

Figure 3. Weighted responses of 88 players.

5. How do head coaches, assistant coaches, and players combined rank, in order of importance, the top five skills and/or characteristics of head collegiate women's basketball coaches as identified by head coaches?
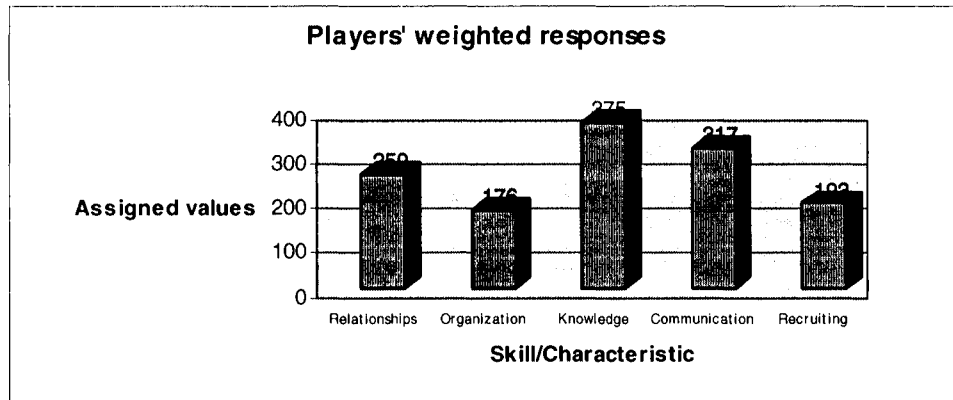
When head coaches, assistant coaches, and players were combined, due to different

numbers of subjects within each population, results were calculated and favor those

opinions of the assistant coaches and players over the opinions of head coaches. While

head coaches only constitute nine votes within the survey results, assistant coaches'

opinions were provided 14 times, and players' opinions dominated the combined results

with 88 subjects participating. Because of the different sized populations, results of the

entire group combined can be misleading. As is shown in the frequency chart, 55

subjects chose knowledge of the game as the top priority and 35 more put it in second

place. Communication earned 70 votes in the top three places and organization received

51 last place votes. Assigned values represent these choices and the uneven populations

in the study. All of the skills and/or characteristics' assigned values are in the same order

when examining the entire group as they are in the players group alone. Knowledge of

the game received 464 points, followed by communication's 378 points, relationship

building was given 328, recruiting earned 272, and organization scored 223 points. Table

5 depicts the frequencies of each skill and/or characteristic afforded each ranking.

Table 5. Frequency of 111 participants' responses.

Ranking chosen	Relationships	Organization	Knowledge of the game	Communication	Recruiting
1	13	6	55	28	9
2	24	7	35	32	13
3	35	20	12	20	24
4	23	27	4	19	38
5	16	51	5	12	27

Figure 4 illustrates the weighted responses of all respondents combined as points were

assigned to each ranking and totaled for each of the five skills and/or characteristics.

Assigned values can be seen above each bar in the bar graph.

Figure 4. Weighted responses of 111 participants combined.
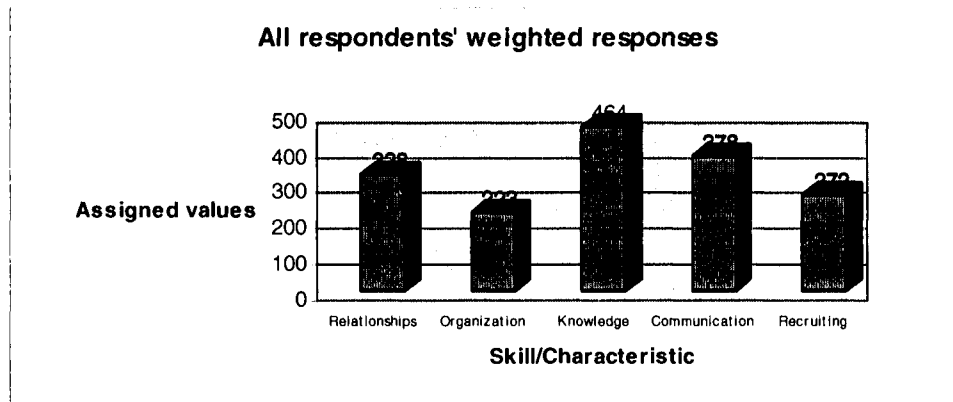
All respondents' weighted responses

6. What additional skills and/or characteristics do head coaches, assistant coaches,

    and players feel are necessary when comprising a list of the most important skills

    and/or characteristics for someone to possess as a head collegiate women's

    basketball coach?

The qualitative data collected from surveys regarding other important skills and/or

characteristics was analyzed for consistent themes and the results are shown in Appendix

D. When asked about the skills and/or characteristics that the respondents felt should

have been mentioned in the ranking section, the most common responses in order of most

frequent to less frequent were: hard work and dedication, sense of humor or charisma,

honesty, coaching experience, ability to motivate, and heart or passion for the game.

29

There were 35 skills and/or characteristics mentioned, ranging from vision for the program to building relationships with the community to understanding psychology. While a handful of these additional skills and/or characteristics were mentioned more than others, none of them were mentioned frequently enough to conclude that the list of skills and/or characteristics utilized in the ranking surveys was insufficient. All of the skills and/or characteristics chosen for the survey were mentioned by at least 50% of the head coaches; however, on the surveys, the most popular response was provided only 6% of the time.

7. How do head coaches, assistant coaches, and players define "success" in collegiate women's basketball programs?

Finally, qualitative information was collected through the surveys about how respondents define success within their respective programs (see Appendix E). There were 31 responses provided indicating that the definition of success may be difficult to determine as well as being unique to each individual. In order of most commonly mentioned, the following themes were extracted as popular potential definitions or markers for success within individual programs: wins/losses, teamwork or unity, improvement as a group, achieving potential or goals, work ethic and effort, personal growth of individual players, mutual respect between team members, desire to win and/or compete, and having fun. While wins/losses was the top choice amongst survey respondents for defining success (44 respondents), it narrowly edged out teamwork or unity (41 respondents) and improvement as a group (40 respondents) for the top spot in the qualitative analysis. As

seen, the majority of these markers are subjective measures, which in themselves may vary greatly from one team and/or individual to the next.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

As the previous charts and graphs display, there were some interesting differences and similarities within and between the different groups of participants. Head coaches generally chose recruiting and relationship building to be the top priorities with knowledge of the game not far behind, while assistant coaches and players chose knowledge of the game as what they see being most important. All of the groups placed organization last in the rankings. As Schwarzkopf (2005) explains, competence and concern for others are two of the main keys for leadership in the military. These traits mirror the knowledge of the game chosen by assistant coaches and players as well as the relationship building favored by head coaches.

Although the results are skewed in favor of assistant coaches' and players' opinions due to an imbalanced population, it is worth looking at the combined scores of all respondents. When all participants were combined, knowledge of the game earned the top ranking, followed respectively by communication, relationship building, recruiting, and organization. Subjects' responses were similar to the list provided by Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) in which functional knowledge and communication were listed as two of the top priorities in leadership development in business. From the results, it is fair to say that while assistant coaches and players look to head coaches for knowledge of the game first and foremost, head coaches place a slightly higher value on their recruiting and relationship building skills. Possibly due to the fact that the subject under

investigation is women's collegiate basketball, relationship building is identified as one of the key skills. This is supported by studies such as Eagly and Karau's (1991) and Coffman's (1999) which indicate that females place more emphasis on relationships than on other aspects of the task at hand. Due to different sample sizes from each population, the combined opinions of all respondents are weighted more heavily in favor of players' and assistant coaches' opinions.

The resulting qualitative data indicates that the skills and/or characteristics ranked in the surveys sufficiently cover what most individuals consider to be most important, due to the fact that there was no obvious additional favorite. The long and diverse list of additional skills and/or characteristics mirrors information provided by the Foundation of Coaching's (2007) list of disciplines which contribute to coaching. With so many influences, logically, there were 40 skills and/or characteristics recommended of head coaches by head coaches, assistant coaches, and players throughout the research (see Appendix D). One such characteristic that was listed was confidence exuded by head coaches in themselves and their teams. According to Chase, Lirgg, and Feltz (1997), this confidence could theoretically lead to improved team performance and hence, would be an extremely important facet of coaching.

Additional conclusions drawn from the qualitative questions included in the surveys lead one to believe that success *is* defined by wins and losses, but by many other measures as well. Finishing just behind wins/losses are teamwork or unity and improvement as a group. It is clear that when attempting to define success in collegiate women's

basketball, according to players and coaches, numerous aspects of a team's performance must be taken into consideration in addition to the team's record. This is in accordance with Martin's (1985) study of soccer coaches in which results indicated that coach evaluations must be tailored to individual situations. Variables such as scholarship availability can have an enormous effect on a team's win/loss record and may not be a reflection of the quality of coaching employed. Different teams define success differently as well as individuals representing each team. Just as Calhoun (2007) and Schwarzkopf (2005) both express, to say that success is defined solely by wins/losses is to simplify an art into a science.

Overall, the results of this study conclude that to be successful in women's basketball is not only to win games, but to complete various other feats as well. While it would be extremely convenient to determine a formula based on the skills and/or characteristics required by coaches in order to be successful, head coaches, assistant coaches, and players have only come so far to agree upon a list of those skills and/or characteristics. Just as Pizzi (2002) discovered, no particular coaching behaviors correlate with wins or losses.

Based on the results of this study, relationship building, organizational skills, knowledge of the game, communication skills, and recruiting are the most important skills and/or characteristics for someone to possess as a head collegiate women's basketball coach. These results are supported by the case study conducted by Newell (2004) which revealed communication skills and building relationships with players as two of the keys

to success in collegiate basketball coaching. While the aforementioned list appears to mirror some of the lists provided in current literature regarding leadership in general, we see that a few of the necessary tools are more specific to women's college basketball coaching.

In conclusion, success is defined in various ways and the skills required to take on the job of a collegiate women's basketball coach are weighted differently by all individuals involved. The five skills and/or characteristics that were provided in the ranking survey complete a list of the most important aspects of coaching collegiate women's basketball, although at this time, in no particular order.

The information gathered in this study may serve as a potential guide for aspiring coaches as well as the individuals who organize coaches' clinics and education programs. Understanding that a recipe for "success" is unknown for numerous reasons, the results of this study provide a key starting point for those coaches wishing to advance in the field.

Implications for Further Research

Conducting this study concerning only head collegiate women's basketball coaches in Montana, Washington, and Oregon opens countless doors to further research in the coaching field. While a sample size of 111 is sufficient, it would be beneficial to have a balance between the number of head coaches, assistant coaches, and players in the study. An equally divided sample would allow for more and stronger statistical analyses when

making comparisons between groups and evaluating the population as a whole. In addition, larger sample sizes would allow for reasonable use of demographic information to create and compare different groups of participants. Similar comparisons could be made if subsequent studies were to include male athletes, different sports, various geographical areas of the nation and the world, different levels of competition, various phases in the competitive season, and individual versus team sports.

Appendix A

Head Coach Interview Protocol

Coach:

School:

Phone:

Level:

Number of assistant coaches:

Number of players:

Years of experience as a head collegiate women's basketball coach including this year:

Overall win/loss record as a head collegiate women's basketball coach:

What do you feel are the most important skills and/or characteristics for someone to

possess as a head collegiate women's basketball coach?

Appendix B.1

HEAD COACH SURVEY

I am conducting a graduate research project at the University of Montana about coaching collegiate women's basketball and would appreciate the contribution of your opinion to my project. Participation is voluntary and the results of this survey will be completely anonymous and confidential.

Athletic division:

_____ NCAA Division I   _____ NAIA

_____ NCAA Division II   _____ Junior/Community College

_____ NCAA Division III

Total number of years coaching women's basketball at the collegiate level including this year: __

Total number of years playing basketball at the collegiate level: __

Please **rank** the following skills or characteristics of a head coach in their **order of importance** from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the most important skill or characteristic a coach should have, 5 being the least important skill or characteristic a coach should have, etc.). **EACH RANKING SHOULD BE USED ONLY ONCE:**

_____ Building relationships with athletes

_____ Organizational skills

_____ Knowledge of the game

_____ Effective communication with athletes, staff members, the community, and any party with a vested interest in the team

_____ Recruiting

Please list any skills and/or characteristics not noted in the above list that you feel should be listed (use back of sheet if necessary):

_____

_____

How would you define success in your program (use back of sheet if necessary)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please feel free to contact me should you have additional questions or concerns.

Thank you for your time and assistance, it is very much appreciated.

Cara Cocchiarella

c/o Dr. Charles Palmer

Health and Human Performance

University of Montana

Missoula, MT 59812-4536

Appendix B.2

ASSISTANT COACH SURVEY

I am conducting a graduate research project at the University of Montana about coaching collegiate women's basketball and would appreciate the contribution of your opinion to my project. Participation is voluntary and the results of this survey will be completely anonymous and confidential.

Sex:

_____ Male   _____ Female

Athletic division:

_____ NCAA Division I   _____ NAIA
_____ NCAA Division II   _____ Junior/Community College
_____ NCAA Division III

Total number of years coaching women's basketball at the collegiate level including this year:
_____

Total number of years playing basketball at the collegiate level: _____

Please **rank** the following skills or characteristics of a head coach in their **order of importance** from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the most important skill or characteristic a coach should have, 5 being the least important skill or characteristic a coach should have, etc.). **EACH RANKING SHOULD BE USED ONLY ONCE:**

_____ Building relationships with athletes
_____ Organizational skills
_____ Knowledge of the game
_____ Effective communication with athletes, staff members, the community, and any
            party with a vested interest in the team
_____ Recruiting

Please list any skills and/or characteristics not noted in the above list that you feel should be listed (use back of sheet if necessary):

_____

_____

How would you define success in your program (use back of sheet if necessary)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please feel free to contact me should you have additional questions or concerns.
Thank you for your time and assistance, it is very much appreciated.

Cara Cocchiarella
c/o Dr. Charles Palmer
Health and Human Performance
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812-4536

Appendix B.3

PLAYER SURVEY

I am conducting a graduate research project at the University of Montana about coaching collegiate women's basketball and would appreciate the contribution of your opinion to my project. Participation is voluntary and the results of this survey will be completely anonymous and confidential.

Athletic division:

    _____ NCAA Division I   _____ NAIA

    _____ NCAA Division II   _____ Junior/Community College

    _____ NCAA Division III

Total number of years playing basketball at the collegiate level including this year: _____

Please **rank** the following skills or characteristics of a head coach in their **order of importance** from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the most important skill or characteristic a coach should have, 5 being the least important skill or characteristic a coach should have, etc.). **EACH RANKING SHOULD BE USED ONLY ONCE**:

_____ Building relationships with athletes

_____ Organizational skills

_____ Knowledge of the game

_____ Effective communication with athletes, staff members, the community, and any
       party with a vested interest in the team

_____ Recruiting

Please list any skills and/or characteristics not noted in the above list that you feel should be listed (use back of sheet if necessary):

_____

_____

How would you define success in your program (use back of sheet if necessary)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please feel free to contact me should you have additional questions or concerns.
Thank you for your time and assistance, it is very much appreciated.

    Cara Cocchiarella

    c/o Dr. Charles Palmer

    Health and Human Performance

    University of Montana

    Missoula, MT 59812-4536

Appendix C

Survey Administration Instructions

Dear Coach,

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my thesis research. Your time and input are very much appreciated.

Included in this envelope are instructions for administering the survey (below), a blue head coach survey, yellow assistant coach surveys, white player surveys, and a pre-stamped return envelope. If you are missing any of these items or need additional assistance, please contact me at (406) 360-9720.

Survey Instructions:
This survey should take about five minutes to complete and independent responses are appreciated. Please note the different colored and labeled surveys to be given to coaches and players. In addition, please pay close attention to the ranking question. The choices are to be ranked in **order of importance** from 1 to 5. An item will be chosen as number one in order of importance; of the remaining items, another will be chosen as number two; another as number three; and so on. Again, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

If you would like an emailed copy of the results of this study, please send me a note at cara.cocchiarella@umontana.edu. This study should be complete by the end of May.

I would appreciate any additional feedback that you, your staff, or your team members may have for me and again thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Cara Cocchiarella
c/o Dr. Charles Palmer
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Appendix D
Qualitative themes provided through responses to the following survey question
asked of all subjects: "Please list any skills and/or characteristics not noted in the above list
that you feel should be listed."

Additional characteristics not included in ranking	Number of respondents
Accountability	1
Adaptability	4
Coaching experience	6
Concern for players	2
Confidence	3
Dedication/hard work	7
Disciplined	4
Doesn't favor individuals	1
Friendly coaching staff	3
Good listener	3
Heart/passion for the game	5
Honesty	6
Integrity	3
Keeping things in perspective	1
Leadership	3
Leads by example	2
Manages stress	2
Motivational	6
Mutual respect with athletes	2
Patience	1
Playing experience	3
Pride	1
Professionalism	3
Relationships with assistants	1
Relationships with the community	1
Responsible	1
Scouting	1
Sense of humor/charisma	6
Teaching	1
Understands game situations	4
Understands psychology	1
Vision for the future	2

Appendix E
Qualitative themes provided through responses to the following survey question asked of all subjects: "How would you define success in your program?"

Thematic definitions of success	Number of respondents
Attitudes	2
Character	6
Communication	8
Community involvement	6
Conference championship	6
Consistent coaching staff	1
Dedication to the team	3
Desire to win/compete	10
Discipline	3
Earning respect of others	7
Education	6
Effort/work ethic	23
Friendships/relationships	13
Fun	10
Graduation rates	5
Improving as a group	40
Individual growth	20
Learning from losses	5
Local recruiting	1
Mutual respect	10
Positive experience	1
Reaching potential/achieving goals	30
Self-esteem/confidence	4
Sportsmanship	2
Teamwork/unity	41
Wins/losses	44

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