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Coaches Use of Affinity-Seeking Strategies And The Affect on Player's Satisfaction

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the relationship between coaches and their players. More specifically, how coaches use affinity-seeking strategies and how it affects players satisfaction. This study not only examined which strategies coaches, use but the frequency in which they used these strategies. This study revealed that coaches use of a broad number of affinity-seeking strategies was positively correlated with player satisfaction. Assume control, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism, and trustworthiness were all strategies found to be positively correlated with players' satisfaction. Conversely, present interesting self, inclusion of others, self-inclusion, and reward association were behaviors not present and may not be appropriate in a coaching context.

There has been little research devoted to examining the use of affinity-seeking strategies in the relationship between coaches and players. Conversely, the relationship between subordinates and superiors has been the focus of many scholars in the last few decades. Furthermore, much research has focused on the relationship between teachers and students, bosses and superiors, and parents and children. This research highlights many important aspects of affinity-seeking behaviors and the role that it plays in various situations. Having said that, there is a need to further study and examine the bond that coaches have with their players. The relationship between coaches and players is vital because organized sports teams are popular. Most universities, high schools, junior highs, and middle schools offer a variety of sports teams to their students. Furthermore, organized sports teams are not only found in schools, but in virtually all towns and cities across the United States. The sports industry is a growing and profitable market. In this industry, the role of a coach is vital. If a coach is getting paid, it is especially important that their player's perceive them as likable. A coach is the leader, teacher, and the organizer behind everything that goes into a team. Players and parents look to the coach for guidance, advice, affirmation, and direction. Their satisfaction is vital in these relationships. It would be reasonable to think that in order for players to be satisfied, it is imperative that a coach is perceived as likable.

Literature Review

In order to examine the relationship between a coach's use of affinity-seeking strategies and the affect or lack of affect player's satisfaction, the review of literature included definitions of affinity-seeking behavior, affinity-seeking behavior in superior and subordinate relationships, and finally a look at affinity-seeking behaviors in teacher-student relationships.

Affinity-seeking

Bell and Daly's research on affinity seeking is instrumental and lays the foundation for many later studies. They define affinity seeking as "the process by which individuals attempt to get other people to like and to feel positive towards them" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p.111). They contend that people use a considerable amount of energy in an effort to get others to like and feel positive about them. Producing liking is an important function of communication and is imperative to a person's sense of worth and value. The concept of affinity seeking is an important aspect of interpersonal communication and has been the focus of many scholars. However, Bell and Daly were the first scholars to systematically examine how people get others to like them, what techniques were used, and which of these techniques were found to be successful. They identified 25 such strategies that people generally use during conversation to accomplish this liking. Their research suggests that people who were thought to use many of these affinity-seeking strategies were judged as likable, socially successful, and overall satisfied with their lives. The 25 strategies that they discovered include: altruism, assume control, assume equality, comfortable self, concede control, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism, elicit other's disclosure, facilitate enjoyment, inclusion of others, influence perceptions of closeness, listening, nonverbal immediacy, openness, optimism, personal autonomy, physical attractiveness, present interesting self, reward association, self-concept confirmation, self-inclusion, sensitivity, similarity, supportiveness, and trustworthiness (p. 96). But not all of these affinity-seeking strategies are used in all situations. Certain situational features as well as a communicator's predispositions influence both the number of strategies used and the variety of strategies used (Tolhuizen, 1989).

Relationship status and closeness has been found to be one of the predispositions that have an affect on the variety of affinity seeking strategies people use. This can be seen when comparing

the different affinity seeking strategies used by fully developed friends and the strategies used with members in new acquaintances or those in deteriorating relationships. According to Tolhuizen (1989), people in fully developed friendships were found to use affinity-seeking strategies more often. Furthermore, members in a fully developed friendship reported using a greater variety of affinity seeking strategies compared to those in new acquaintances or deteriorating friendships. In addition to a greater variety of affinity seeking strategies used, members in a fully developed relationship were found to have a unique and personal style in their relationship. These relational factors determine not only how many affinity-seeking behaviors were used but also the variety of behaviors that were used.

Research has also shown that people can self-report their affinity-seeking skills (Bell, Tremblay, & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987). This means that people are aware of their ability to produce liking and therefore can report strategies they used to produce this liking. This ability to implement and self-report on affinity-seeking skills can be defined as affinity-seeking competence (Bell, Tremblay, & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987). A person's affinity-seeking competence is also strongly related with certain strategies, specifically self-disclosure, used in an interpersonal interaction (Rubin & Rubin 1992). Rubin and Rubin (1992) investigated the relationship between self-disclosure and affinity-seeking competence. They discovered that people who see themselves as being able make other people like them tend to disclose more good and positive things about themselves (p.125). Furthermore, research shows that people with high affinity-seeking competence use more breadth and depth in their affinity-seeking behavior (p. 125).

Affinity-seeking in superior-subordinate relationships

Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis (1986) discovered that when superiors lack in their affinity seeking behaviors, there is an increase in subordinate's communication apprehension. Conversely, when a superior engages in multiple affinity-seeking behaviors with subordinates, the subordinate is found to be more at ease. Hence, when a superior uses a greater amount of affinity-seeking behaviors, subordinates have less apprehension. Furthermore, communication apprehension of subordinates correlates with subordinate's satisfaction. These results show that supervisors who use affinity-seeking behaviors more frequently are more likely to reduce their subordinate's apprehension and thus increase their satisfaction (p.52). The affinity-seeking behaviors that were found to be most likely to be associated with reducing apprehension include: assume equality, elicit other's disclosure, listening, sensitivity, and trustworthiness (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1996, p. 53).

Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis (1986) further investigated the relationship between superiors and subordinates in their study on affinity-seeking and subordinate satisfaction. Assume equality; comfortable self; conversational rule-keeping; elicit other's disclosures; listening; nonverbal immediacy; optimism; self-concept confirmation; sensitivity; supportiveness; and trustworthiness were all found to be strategies that were positively correlated to subordinate satisfaction (p. 188). However, not all affinity-seeking strategies were found to have a positive correlation with satisfaction. Dynamism; personal autonomy; altruism; concede control; influence perceptions of closeness; reward association; self-inclusion; and similarity were all strategies that were found to be unrelated to satisfaction (p. 189). Interestingly, assume control and present interesting self actually correlated with lower subordinate satisfaction when overused (p. 189).

Teacher & student use of affinity seeking behaviors

The majority of research on affinity seeking has been devoted to examining the

relationship between students and teachers. Frymier (1994) validated the use of affinity-seeking typology in the instructional context (p. 100). Since affinity-seeking behaviors are used to produce liking, it is natural that the teachers that use these behaviors will be perceived likeable (Myers, 1995).

Frymier (1994) found that,

“the affinity-seeking strategies most predictive of liking in classrooms were: assume equality-teacher presents self as an equal and does not appear superior or snobbish; dynamism-teachers presents self as dynamic, active, and enthusiastic; and facilitate enjoyment-teacher develops a classroom environment that is enjoyable and where learning is both interesting and entertaining; comfortable self-the teacher acts comfortable with her/himself, is at ease and relaxed and ignores distractions; concede control-the teacher allows students to control the relationship and situation, for example letting a student to control a conversation; conversational rule-keeping-teacher follows the cultural norms for socializing, is polite, and demonstrates interest in what students say; elicit other’s disclosure- teacher inquires about students’ interests and opinions and provides positive reinforcement for responses; nonverbal immediacy- the teacher signals interest and liking through various nonverbal cues, for example eye contact, smiling, forward leans, and frequent head nods; and optimism-teacher presents a positive outlook, is pleasant to be around, and is not critical of self or others. (p. 102).”

According to Frymier, the affinity-seeking behaviors mentioned above are the most appropriate and useful in a classroom setting (p.102).

It has been shown that liking is not the only result of teachers use of affinity-seeking strategies. Myers (1995), explored the use of teachers affinity-seeking strategies and how it was related to the student’s perception of classroom climate. It was discovered that 19 out of 25 strategies were correlated with creating a favorable classroom climate. These results show that there is a significant relationship these two variables and that classroom climate is perceived to be more favorable when teachers engage in affinity-seeking behaviors (Myers, 1995). This research reveals that the use of affinity seeking is not only beneficial to the instructor, but also the environment of the students.

A teacher’s use of affinity seeking has also been discovered to strongly correlate with credibility and character (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). Frymier & Thompson (1992) define character as how much a person is liked, admired, and respected. Credibility was measured using McCroskey and Young’s (1981) source credibility scale which is made up of 12, 7 bipolar adjectives. “The two-dimensional scale measures competence (intelligent/unintelligent, untrained/trained, expert/inexpert, uninformed/informed, competent/incompetent, stupid/bright) and character (virtuous/sinful, dishonest/honest, unselfish/selfish, sympathetic/unsympathetic, high character, low character, untrustworthy, trustworthy) (Frymier & Thompson, 1992, p. 392).” Their research showed that a teacher who uses affinity-seeking strategies is likely to be perceived as having good character. Furthermore, teachers who use affinity-seeking strategies are more likely to be perceived as credible. This correlation was discovered to be not as strong as the correlation between affinity-seeking use and perception of teacher’s character. Frymier and Thompson (1992) contend that this is a predictable result because a teacher can be seen as having good character but at the same time be seen as not being knowledgeable. Some affinity-seeking behaviors that were related to character but not credibility include influence perceptions of closeness, self- concept confirmation, assume equality, concede control, and supportiveness (Frymier & Thompson, 1992, p. 397).

Corham, Kelley, and McCroskey (1989) studied not only what affinity-seeking behaviors teachers use to get their student to like them, but also the strategies they use for their students to like the subject matter they are teaching. They found that the personal affinity-seeking behaviors used greatly differed from the subject affinity seeking behaviors used. In addition, teachers were found to use a broader range of affinity seeking behaviors when trying to produce personal liking. Teachers were found to use 18 strategies when attempting to get their students to like them; compared to 14 strategies that were used when attempting to produce liking for the subject matter. These results suggest that teachers recognize the difference between producing affinity for subject matter and producing affinity for themselves as teachers. Furthermore, Corham, Kelley, and McCroskey (1989) contend that the results of the particular study imply that teachers are much more comfortable producing affinity for themselves than they are producing affinity for the subject they are teaching.

Myers (2003) found that verbal aggression and affinity seeking are negatively related. This discovery is understandable because, by nature, these two variables are contradictory. Verbal aggression creates feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, and inadequacy. Conversely, affinity seeking has been discovered to produce liking, learning, and motivation. Teachers who were found to use verbal aggression in the classroom were lacking in affinity seeking behavior. Likewise, teachers who used a wide range of breath and depth in their affinity seeking were found to be lacking in their use of verbal aggression.

To this point, most of the studies conducted on teacher and student's use of affinity-seeking strategies have focused on the teachers using these strategies. However, Wazner (1998) conducted a study that looked specifically at how students use affinity-seeking behaviors to influence their teachers. This is an extremely valuable study because it gives insight into the affinity-seeking behaviors of subordinate in an interpersonal interaction. The strategies that students use to generate affinity with their teachers fell primarily under conversational rule keeping. Behaviors that fall under this category include being nice, friendly, polite, and courteous. Students were also found to commonly elicit disclosure and use nonverbal immediacy strategies to produce liking. Students who smile, ask questions, and are friendly report doing this in attempt to get their instructor to like them. In addition to Bell & Daly's (1984) 25 strategies, 4 new strategies emerged in this particular study. Among these new emerging strategies, "requirements" was the strategy found to be the most commonly used by students. "This strategy included such responses such as 'doing homework,' 'attending class,' 'coming to class on time,' and 'handing assignments in on time'" (Wanzer, 1998, p. 380). This research reveals that the students who were fulfilling their duties and meeting requirements were seeking affinity from their teachers. These student's assumptions were that if they did their job, then their teacher would like them.

Summary

Bell and Daly (1984) introduced a 25-strategy typology that lays the foundation for affinity-seeking research. People who are perceived to use many affinity-seeking strategies are judged as likable, socially successful, and overall satisfied with their lives (Bell & Daly, 1984, p.91). Situational features influence both the number of strategies that people employ and also the variety of the strategies they use (Bell & Daly, 1984). Relationship status and closeness is one factor that affects the use of affinity-seeking strategies (Tolhuizen, 1986).

There have been multiple studies conducted on the relationship between superiors and subordinates and the role that affinity seeking plays in this relationship. Subordinate's satisfaction was found to increase when superiors use affinity-seeking strategies (Richmond,

McCroskey, & Davis, 1986). They also discovered that the overuse of certain affinity-seeking behaviors by superiors can be correlated with dissatisfaction among subordinates. Furthermore, superiors who lack in their affinity-seeking behaviors were found to increase the communication apprehension of their subordinates (Richmond, McCroskey & Davis, 1986).

Bell and Daly's 25-strategy typology was validated in instructional contexts (Frymier, 1994). Having stated that, affinity-seeking behaviors are correlated with teacher's credibility and character (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). Research reveals that teachers use of affinity-seeking behaviors to not only produce personal liking, but also subject matter liking (Corham, Kelley, & McCroskey, 1989). Verbal aggression is negatively correlated with affinity-seeking behaviors (Myers, 2003).

Data Collection Methodology

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the relationship between coaches and their players. More specifically, the role of affinity-seeking behaviors employed by coaches and the affect or lack of affect it has on player's satisfaction. As stated prior, affinity seeking is "the process by which individuals attempt to get other people to like and to feel positive towards them" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p.111). This process, in many different contexts, has been the focus of many scholars. This study explored how coaches use different strategies to motivate or satisfy their players. Affinity-seeking has been correlated with a number of different variables and outcomes. In this study, satisfaction was the outcome examined. The methods used to collect data for this study are discussed in the sections below.

Coaches Use of Affinity-Seeking Strategies

This research examined which affinity-seeking strategies coaches use and how frequently they use these strategies. In order to accomplish this, a survey was distributed and completed by 84- college athletes from a small private university in the northeast. This school competes at the division III level. The players included in this study were between the ages of 18 and 25. There were 6 coaches in this study, 5 male coaches and 1 female coach. These coaches are all paid a salary by the university. The players evaluated their coach in order to discover how often the coach used these affinity-seeking behaviors.

The measuring instrument replicates the instrument that McCroskey and McCroskey (1986) used, which is based on Bell and Daly's (1984) 25-item affinity-seeking strategies instrument. Subjects were not given the labels for these strategies. Instead, respondents were given a survey with questions that corresponded with the descriptions of the 25-strategies reported by Bell and Daly (1984). These descriptions were written in the form of a question and were rewritten to fit the context of a coach-player relationship.

Players were asked to read each of the questions and then (1) indicate by circling YES or NO whether you have observed your coach using this strategy, and (2) indicate how often they had observed the coach using the same strategy. Subject's responded to a 4-point Likert-type scale (from rarely to very often).

Players who had not seen their coaches use a particular strategy were given a zero for the second response (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986, p. 159).

The descriptions of affinity-seeking behaviors supplied in this survey provided players with a list of the behaviors that their coach may or may not use to produce liking. Players can easily read these questions and after some thought, should be able to determine whether their coach has used these behaviors in an interaction with them or their teammate. After confirming and denying whether their coach had used these strategies, players were then asked to report how often, if ever, coaches used a particular strategy.

Player Satisfaction

The second objective of this study was to discover how the player's satisfaction with the coach was affected by the coach's use of the affinity seeking behaviors. After players completed the questionnaire, they were asked to rate how satisfied they were playing for that team from very satisfied (1) to very dissatisfied (5).

Results

The survey used in this study was distributed and completed by 84 college athletes. These athletes attend a small private school in the northeast and they compete at the division III level. This survey was completed by six sports teams: women's volleyball, women's field hockey, women's soccer, men's soccer, men's basketball, and men's lacrosse. All respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25. Of the 84 athletes surveyed, 44 were male and 40 female. Twelve women volleyball players, 20 women's field hockey players, 6 women's soccer players, 23 men's soccer players, 13 lacrosse players, and 6 men's basketball players. All of these teams, excluding women's field hockey, have a male coach.

A survey was distributed and completed by these athletes during the first ten minutes of one of their practices. Women's volleyball, field hockey, soccer, and men's soccer, were all in their traditional seasons when these surveys were distributed. The men's lacrosse and basketball teams completed these surveys in an off-season practice. Because of this, freshman lacrosse and basketball players were excluded from filling out the survey due to the fact that their season had not yet begun and they do not know their coach well enough to make an informed statement about their coaches affinity-seeking behaviors.

All respondents rated assume control as a strategy commonly used by their coach. Assume control means "the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself as a person who has control over whatever is going on" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96). Women's volleyball (WVB) team was at 2.9 for assume control. Women's field hockey (WFH), rated assume control as 3.0. Men's soccer (MSOC) and Men's lacrosse (MLAX) also averaged 3.0. Men's Basketball (MBB) and women's soccer (WSOC), both averaged 3.6 for assume control.

All of the respondents also rated conversational rule-keeping as a strategy frequently used by their coaches. Conversational rule-keeping is defined as "the affinity-seeker adheres closely to cultural rules for polite, cooperative interaction with the target" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96). WVB, WFH, MLAX, and MBB all averaged 3.0. MSOC rated conversation rule-keeping 2.9 and WSOC 3.1.

Dynamism was a third strategy that all athletes responded that their coaches use frequently. Dynamism is when "the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself as an active enthusiastic person" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96). WVB was the lowest averaging team at 2.4. All of the men's teams, MSOC, MLAX and MBB, rated dynamism as 3.1. Both WFH and WSOC responded a 3.2 average.

Trustworthiness was found to be the most commonly used strategy by every coach. MSOC rated their coach the lowest with an average of 3.0. WVB, MLAX, MBB, and WSOC all responded an average of 3.1 for trustworthiness. WFH reported their coach the highest with an average of 3.3. Trustworthiness is when "the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself to the target as an honest, reliable person" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96).

The rest of the strategies are ones in which all the athletes responded that their coaches use infrequently. The first of these strategies is to concede control. Concede control is when "the affinity-seeker allows the target to assume control over relational activities" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96). WVB reported a 1.5 average for this strategy. WFH averaged a 1.7. MSOC and

MLAX responded 2.0. WSOC and MBB averaged 2.1.

Inclusion of others is when “the affinity-seeker includes the target in the affinity-seekers social group” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). WVB scored their coach the lowest with a 0.6 average. WFH responded a 0.7. MSOC 1.0. MLAX 1.1, WSOC and MBB 1.2.

Present interesting self was also a strategy that was reported low by a majority of the teams, WVB especially. Present interesting self is when “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself to the target as someone who would be interesting to know” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). WVB responded a 1.6 to present interesting self. WFH reported 2.1 and MSOC 2.3. MLAX and WSOC averaged 2.3, MBB averaged 2.4.

All respondents rated reward association as low. Award association is “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself in such a way that the target perceives the affinity-seeker can reward the target for associating with him or her” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). WVB scored 0.8 and WFH averaged a 0.9. MSOC averaged a 1.3. MLAX and WSOC both scored 1.4. MBB averaged a 1.5 for reward association.

Self-inclusion is when “the affinity-seeker arranges the environment so as to come into frequent contact with the target” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). All teams rated self-inclusion low. WVB and WFH scored below 1, 0.8 and 0.7. MSOC averaged 1.2. MLAX, MBB, and WSOC recorded an average of 1.4.

The frequencies of strategy use was also added up and then averaged in order to determine the frequency in which coaches use all of these strategies. WVB reported the lowest average, 2.3. MSOC and WFH both recorded an average of 2.4. MLAX and WSOC scored 2.5 and MBB reported the highest average with 2.6.

As stated prior, the second portion of this survey attempted to explore how satisfied players are. Across the board, respondents rated their satisfaction as high. According to WVB, MBB, and MLAX reported a 2.5 satisfaction average. MSOC recorded an average of 2.4. WSOC reported 2.3 and WFH was the highest with an average of 2.2.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between coaches and their players, and the coach’s use of affinity-seeking strategies. This study explored both the breadth and depth of coaches affinity-seeking behaviors. This study not only examined which strategies coaches, use but the frequency in which they used these strategies. Also examined was the degree to which players are satisfied as a member of their particular team. The objective of this study was to explore how often coaches used these affinity-seeking strategies and see if it has any affect on a player’s satisfaction. There has been a long-standing debate about whether or not a coach needs to be likable in order to be a good coach. This research investigated that question.

Conclusions

Athletes who participated in this study were found to be extremely satisfied members of their team. It can therefore be assumed that a coach’s use of affinity-seeking strategies has a role in determining the satisfaction of his or her players. Based on the results found in study, the following section will assert claim about the correlation between coaches use of affinity-seeking strategies and players satisfaction.

Multiple studies have explored the use of affinity-seeking strategies by superiors and how it related to their subordinate’s satisfaction. Tolhuizen (1989), found that certain situational features influence both the number of strategies used and the variety of strategies used. Also, there were many strategies that were found to be unrelated and negatively correlated with

satisfaction (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis 1986. This current study supports those findings. There are some affinity-seeking strategies that all athletes reported their coaches used rarely. Concede control, inclusion of others, present interesting self, reward association, and self-inclusion were strategies which were found to be negatively correlated with player satisfaction.

Concede control is when “the affinity-seeker allows the target to assume control over relational activities” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96). Inclusion of others is when “the affinity-seeker includes the target in the affinity-seekers social group” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). . Present interesting self is when “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself to the target as someone who would be interesting to know” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). Reward association is “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself in such a way that the target perceives the affinity-seeker can reward the target for associating with him or her” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). Self-inclusion is when “the affinity-seeker arranges the environment so as to come into frequent contact with the target” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97).

Coaches did not use the affinity seeking strategies concede control or reward association. These strategies do not fit in the context of a coach and player relationship and so, it is logical that this would be a behavior that players reported their coaches rarely using. Coaches are required to fulfill their role as coach and in order to do this; there are certain behavioral rules that apply to their relationship with their players. In this relationship, the coach is the superior, and therefore, he or she has the task of teaching, leading, and acting as an authority figure over the players. It is sensible that a coach would not allow their player to assume control over relational activities.

Present interesting self, self-inclusion, and inclusion are very relational affinity-seeking behaviors. This study revealed that the coaches who were examined did not use affinity-seeking behaviors: inclusion of others, self-inclusion, and present interesting self. These findings are surprising. A coach can be simply a coach in the most practical of senses. However, they can also be someone who is a leader, teacher, mentor, and even a friend. Coaches are in a unique positions to not only give their players instruction about a sport but they can act as a role model for their players and offer guidance in their lives. One would think that this would especially be the case at a religiously affiliated University such as the one examined in this study. However in order for a coach to mentor their player, he or she must first establish a deep and trusting relationship. Coaches would be required to present themselves in a way where players could get to know them on a personal level. This study showed that coaches did not present themselves in a way to attempt to establish this type of relationship.

There has been much research devoted to teacher’s use of affinity seeking with their students. Frymier (1994), validated the use of affinity-seeking typology in the instructional context (p. 100). Since affinity-seeking behaviors are used to produce liking, it is natural that the teachers that use these behaviors will be perceived as likeable (Myers, 1995). Affinity-seeking has also been found to be positively correlated with student’s perception of classroom climate (Myers, 1995), credibility, and character (Frymier & Thompson, 1992).

This particular study examined coach’s use of affinity seeking and how it relates to player’s satisfaction. More specifically, this study examined the frequency in which coaches use these strategies. The players who were examined in this study all reported their coaches frequently using assume control, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism, and trustworthiness strategies. Assume control is when “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself as a person who has control over whatever is going on” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). Conversational rule-keeping is defined as “the affinity-seeker adheres closely to cultural rules for polite, cooperative

interaction with the target” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96). Dynamism is when “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself as an active enthusiastic person” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 97). Lastly, trustworthiness is when “the affinity-seeker presents himself or herself to the target as an honest, reliable person” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 96).

According to the results of this study, it can be assumed that these are affinity-seeking strategies that are appropriate and necessary to use in a relationship between a coach and player. It can be assumed that these are strategies positively correlated with player satisfaction. It appears evident that all coaches put forth effort in presenting themselves as a person who is polite, enthusiastic and in control over whatever they are doing. Above all, all players reported their coaches presenting themselves as being trustworthy, honest and reliable. These seem to be appropriate behaviors for coaches to use and they are well accepted by players.

The combined frequency of these coaches using affinity-seeking strategies was also calculated. As stated in the prior chapter, the teams ranged from a 2.3 (WVB) to a 2.6 (MBB) average. These averages fall between occasional to frequent use. This suggests that coaches in this study average the occasional to frequent use of all Bell and Daly’s 25-strategy typology. These findings suggest that the coaches in this study employ not just a few selected affinity-seeking strategies, but a broad number of strategies frequently. These findings would imply that coaches find it appropriate to use an extensive number of strategies but not necessarily overuse them. As shown previously, there are some strategies in which these coaches use very often. Conversely, there are strategies that these coaches use rarely. However, the overwhelming trend is that coaches use multiple strategies at a moderate level. It can be assumed that the breadth of coach’s affinity-seeking behaviors is correlated with player satisfaction. It can also be assumed that the frequency in which coaches use these strategies is also important.

Recommendations

The results of this study illustrate many different findings regarding how coaches interact with their players. They show which affinity-seeking strategies coaches use and the frequency in which they use these strategies. These findings may serve as a guideline for how coaches should present themselves to their players. From the information gathered in this study, there are several recommendations which coaches may find helpful in their future interactions with their team.

First, it has been shown that there are certain affinity-seeking strategies that are not appropriate in the context of a coach and player relationship. Among these strategies are concede control and reward association. Each coach who was examined in this study was found to rarely use these strategies. These strategies conflict with what it means to be a coach and certain roles that a coach must fulfill. Therefore, it can be assumed that these are behaviors that are not appropriate for coaches to use with their team.

Inclusion of others, present interesting self, and self-inclusion were also strategies that were found to not be used because they are related to the coach’s relationship with players off the field. Many coaches feel, including the coaches in this study, may feel that their primary role as a coach pertains to things on the field and in the sport. It is then sensible that these coaches should not focus on using behaviors that would enhance the relationships with their players off the field.

However, there are many different types of coaches with different types of goals. For some, a strong relationship with their players off the field may be a goal that is beneficial in pursuing. Therefore, some coaches may be intentional about how they interact and attempt to gain this relationship with their players. For these certain coaches, it may be wise to use such strategies as inclusion of others, present interesting self, and self-inclusion.

As mentioned previously, it is surprising that the coaches in this study were found to not use these three strategies. This study was conducted at a religiously affiliated school. It would make sense that a coach at a school such as this would be very intentional about creating and maintaining a strong, personal relationship with his or her players. This would allow them to be a mentor, set a good example, and present themselves as a strong Christian role model with high integrity and strong morals. Since coaches in this study were found to not present themselves in a way in which they would get to know their players on a personal level, they miss out on an opportunity to fulfill this mentoring role.

There were certain strategies found to be used by all coaches in this study. These strategies included assume control, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism, and trustworthiness. Each of these strategies are appropriate in a coach and player relationship and therefore should be used by all coaches. Concede control is a strategy that suggests that a coach is in control over whatever situation he or she is in. It is important for players to perceive their coach as someone who is in control over various tasks and situation. It is also important that a coach presents himself or herself as someone who is active and enthusiastic. Furthermore, a coach should adhere to certain conversational and cultural rules. Lastly and possibly most important, a coach should present himself or herself as someone who is trustworthy, reliable, and honest. A coach is a teacher and a leader. College coaches spend a considerable amount of time interacting with their team and therefore, it is vital that they are found by their players to be trusted and reliable.

Lastly, it is recommended that coaches engage in a number of different strategies aside from the ones highlighted above. Of Bell and Daly's 25-strategy typology, there are several strategies that are appropriate and necessary for coaches to employ in their interaction and relationship with their players. It is important for coaches to use a broad number of these behaviors. However, the results of this study show that it is not necessary to overuse all of these strategies. A moderate use of a broad number of strategies is sufficient and recommended for coaches.

Future Research

There are many valuable results that have been found and discussed in this study. This study explores how coaches interact with their players and how they employ affinity-seeking strategies. The results of this study can be used in a very tangible way to help improve the way in which coaches interact and present themselves to their team. Having said that, there are still many different aspects of a coach and player relationship that are yet to be explored. Moreover, a coach's use of affinity-seeking strategy is a subject that has not yet been thoroughly investigated and therefore leaves room for future research. This study, while valuable, merely scratches the surface.

It would be valuable to conduct a similar study on varying competitive levels. There are millions of people who play sports all over the world. Each and every one of these athletes varies in their abilities and the level in which they compete. Likewise, coaches vary depending on the level they coach at. It would be interesting to explore how a coach's use of affinity-seeking behavior varies accordingly. These studies could examine children, high school, division I, and professional coaches and how they differ in their use of affinity-seeking strategies.

It would also be valuable to explore how other aspects of a coach determine how well their players like them. These other aspects may include things such as power, knowledge of the sport, personalities, and various other factors that effect a player's perception of their coach. This study has shown that affinity-seeking strategies has a significant role in a coach and player

relationship but it is predictable that it is not the only factor that player's judge their coach by.

It would also be interesting to study the difference between coaches who are paid and those who are volunteers and how this impacts their use of affinity-seeking behaviors. While the majority of coaches at a number of different competitive levels are paid, one could examine their salary differences and how this affects how they interact with their players.

Lastly, it would be valuable to explore which of Bell and Daly's 25 affinity-strategies are most important to players when evaluating their coach. Which strategies players wish their coaches used more often and what strategies they feel their coaches overuse. This study focuses on which strategies coach's use and the frequency in which they use these strategies. It would be valuable to have more feedback from players on how they feel about their coach's use of these behaviors and how they might adjust their behaviors to increase their satisfaction.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between coaches and their players. More specifically, how coach's use of affinity-seeking behaviors affects player's satisfaction. This study explored both the breadth and depth of coaches affinity-seeking behaviors. This study not only examined which strategies coaches, use but the frequency in which they use these strategies. This thesis also examined the degree to which players are satisfied as a member of their particular team.

This study revealed that coach's use of a broad number of affinity-seeking strategies is positively correlated with player satisfaction. Assume control, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism, and trustworthiness were all strategies found to be positively correlated with players satisfaction. Conversely, present interesting self, inclusion of others, self-inclusion, and reward association were all behaviors found to be negatively correlated with player satisfaction.

It is important to consider coaches goals when examining their use of affinity-seeking behaviors. All coaches are different and therefore, behave differently with their players. It can be assumed that coaches at different levels would use affinity-seeking strategies differently. Further research on this subject would determine how age, competitive level, and religious affiliation affect coaches use of affinity-seeking behaviors.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

- 1) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her tries to be of help and assist the player in whatever he/she is currently doing. This can be on or off the field. The coach assists him/her with their ball skills or shooting techniques, helps players to get the needed materials to play and practice, and run errands for the players.
- 2) The coaches attempt to get players to like them by presenting themselves as a leader, a person who has control over his/her team.
- 3) The coach attempts to get a player to like them by presenting himself or herself as an equal of the other person. For example, he/she avoids appearing superior or snobbish, and does not play “one-upmanship” games.
- 4) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her acts comfortable in the setting the two find themselves, comfortable with him/herself and comfortable with the player.
- 5) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her, allows the student to control the relationship and situations surrounding the two. In other words, not acting dominant or taking control in a conversation.
- 6) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her follows closely the team’s cultural rules for how people socialize with others by demonstrating cooperation, friendliness, and politeness. The coach works hard at giving relevant answers to player’s questions, saying the right thing, acting interested and involved in conversation, and adapting his/her messages to the particular player or situation.
- 7) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her presents him/herself as a dynamic, active, and enthusiastic person. For example, he/she varies intonation and other vocal characteristics, and is outgoing and extroverted with the players.
- 8) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her encourages their players to talk by asking questions and reinforcing the student for talking. For example, the teacher inquires about the student’s interests, feelings, opinion, views, and so on. He/she responds as if these are important and interesting, and continues to ask follow up questions of the player.
- 9) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her seeks to make a situation, which they and their player are involved, a very enjoyable experience. The coach does things the players will enjoy, is entertaining, tells jokes and interesting stories, talks about interesting topics, says funny things, and tries to make their interactions conducive to enjoyment.
- 10) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her includes players in his/her social life or group of friends.
- 11) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her engages in behaviors that lead the players to perceive the relationship as being closer and more established than it has actually been. For example, she/he uses nicknames of players, talks about “we”, rather than “I” or “you”. He/she also discusses and prior activities that included the player.
- 12) The coach attempting to get players to like him/her, pays close attention to what the player says, listening very actively. They focus attention to solely on the player, paying strict attention to what is said. Furthermore, the coach demonstrates that he/she listens by being responsive to the player’s ideas, asking for clarification of ambiguities, being open-minded, and remembering things that players say.
- 13) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her signals interest and liking through various nonverbal cues. For example, the coach frequently makes eye contact, stands or sits close to the player, smiles, leans towards the player, and uses frequent head nods.
- 14) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her is open. He/she discloses information about his/her background, interests, and views. He/she may even disclose very personal

information about his/her insecurities, weaknesses, and fears to make the player feel special and trusted.

- 15) The coach attempting to get a player to like her/him presents self as a positive person-an optimist-so that he/she will appear to be a person who is pleasant to be around. He/she acts in a “happy-go-lucky” manner, is cheerful, and looks on the positive side of things. He/she avoids complaining about things, talking about depressing topics, and being critical of self and others.
- 16) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her presents self as an independent, free-thinking person- the kind of person who stands on her/his own, speaks her/his mind regardless of the consequences, refuses to change her/his behavior to meet the expectations of others, and knows where he/she is going in life.
- 17) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her tries to look as attractive as possible in appearance and attire. He/she wears nice clothes, practices good grooming, shows concern for proper hygiene, stands up straight, and monitors appearance.
- 18) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her presents self to be a person who would be interesting to know. For example, he/she highlights past accomplishments and positive qualities, emphasizes things that make him/her especially interesting, expresses unique ideas, and demonstrates intelligence and knowledge. The coach may discretely drop the names of impressive people he/she knows.
- 19) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her presents self as an important figure who can reward the student for associating with him or her. For instance, he/she offers to do favors for the other, and gives the students information that would be valuable. The coach’s basic message to the players is “if you like me, you will gain something.”
- 20) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her demonstrates respect for the player, helps the player feel good about how he/she views her/himself. For example, the coach treats the player like a very important person, compliments the player, says only positive things about the player, and treats the things the player says and does, on and off the field, as being important information.
- 21) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her sets up frequent encounters with the players, attempt to schedule future encounters, try to be physically close to the player, and puts him/herself in a position to be invited to participate in the players social activities.
- 22) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her, acts in a warm, empathic manner towards the student’s problems and anxieties, spends time working at understanding how the student sees her/his life, and accepts what the students says as an honest response.
- 23) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her, tries to make the player feel that the two of them are similar in attitudes, values, interests, preferences, personality, and so on. He/she expresses views that are similar to the views of the player, agrees with some things the player says, and points out the areas that the two have in common.
- 24) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her is supportive of the player and the player’s positions, by being encouraging, agreeable, and reinforcing to the player. The coach also avoids criticizing the player or saying anything that might hurt the player’s feelings, and sides with the player in disagreements he/she has with others.
- 25) The coach attempting to get a player to like him/her presents self as trustworthy and reliable.
- 26) How satisfied are you as a player on your team?