CHALLENGING COACHING ORTHODOXY: A SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Pan Pacific Conference of Medicine and Science in Sport
Honolulu, Hawaii 20th February, 2013

OUTLINE

1. Clarifying a key coaching issue
2. A brief overview of Self-determination theory
3. Two contrasting interpersonal styles in coaching (SDT) and their consequences
4. Problematizing the shift from a Controlling to an Autonomy-supportive interpersonal style
5. Informing practice and future research

HOW DO COACHES GET THE BEST FROM ATHETES?

Paradox – coaches seek players who are creative, autonomous, independent, and responsive BUT typically coaches use a controlling interpersonal style.

Typically, coaches attempt to control as many variables as possible including the players’ thoughts, feelings and behaviours to achieve high performance outcomes.
TWO CONTRASTING INTERPERSONAL (MOTIVATION) COACHING STYLES

- Coaches who support athletes’ autonomy (facilitative/collaborative);
- Coaches who use a controlling interpersonal style (directive and autocratic).

What are the consequences of the two contrasting styles?

The lens of Self-determination theory (SDT)

Motivation is the “tendency to strive for success, persist in the face of failure, and experience pride in accomplishments”

(Gill, 1986)

WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO? SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

People’s inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs are the basis for their self-motivation and personality development.
INTERNAL MOTIVATION & PERSONAL GROWTH

• Perception of autonomy
• Perception of competence
• Perception of belonging

Psychological need satisfaction fosters internal motivation & leads to psychological growth, integrity & well-being.

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

(T寝室 & Ryan, 1985, 2002)

Tendency for inherent growth tendencies cannot be taken-for-granted
- Forces that support + hinder

SDT not concerned with causes of motivation but the social-contextual conditions that facilitate/undermine various forms of motivation and impact development.

(SDT) MOTIVATION SEQUENCE

(Vallerand, 1997)

Social Factors
   Coach Behaviours

Psych Mediators
   • Autonomy
   • Competence
   • Belonging

Motivation
   • External
   • Internal

Outcomes
   • Cognitions
   • Affect
   • Behaviours
COMPARE TWO CONTRASTING INTERPERSONAL (MOTIVATION) COACHING STYLES and THEIR CONSEQUENCES

• A controlling interpersonal style is typically directive and autocratic

• An autonomy-supportive interpersonal style is typically facilitative and collaborative

CONTROLLING ENVIRONMENTS

Often environments are NOT conducive to promoting self-motivation

• Pressures to think, feel or behave a certain way, ignoring the players' needs, thoughts and feelings
  • Autocratic Interpersonal style
  • Expected rewards
  • Imposed goals
  • Deadlines
  • Threats of punishment
  • Surveillance
  • Evaluation
  • Competition

(Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Hendelrong et al., 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Vallerand & Losier, 1999)

COACHES’ CONTROLLING STYLE

Coaches tend to rely on a more controlling interpersonal style (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003)

• Tangible rewards
• Controlling feedback
• Excessive personal control
• Intimidation behaviours
• Promoting ego-involvement
• Conditional regard

Bartholomew et al. (2009)
CONTROLLING INTERPERSONAL STYLE

I increased my controlling feedback ("... come on "you should be able to beat him easier than that, you just have to keep practicing..."), ego-involving & controlling statements ("... if you want to be the best you have to use this move, all the great players have a jab step...") and controlling instructions ("...you are one of the best players in the state and you can't set screens? Or use your team mates? Work it out...") (Byrne & Mallett, 2010)

CONTROLLING COACHING: CONSEQUENCES

AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE STYLE

- Choice & participation in decision-making
- Rationale for tasks
- Opportunities for initiative and independent work
- Taking players’ perspective into account & acknowledging their thoughts & feelings
- Competence feedback that does not control or direct behaviour
- Non-controlling language
- Focus on process rather than outcome

(Deci et al., 1994; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Mallett, 2005; Reeve & Jang, 2006)
**SDT RESEARCH IN SPORT**

**Positive Benefits of Autonomy-supportive Coaching Behaviours:**
- Pelletier et al. (1995; 2001); Beauchamp et al., (1996); Sarrazin et al. (2002); Gagné et al. (2003); Reinboth et al. (2004); Amiot et al. (2004); Hollembeak & Amorose (2005); Mallett (2005); Amorose et al. (2007); Conroy & Coatsworth (2009); Balaguer et al. (2012).

**Athletes with higher levels of SD motivation (autonomy):**
- Perform at a higher level
- Persist longer at tasks
- Use positive coping strategies in stressful situations
- Invest more effort
- Improved well-being

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### AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE: CONSEQUENCES

- **Structure (Assertive Supportive)**
- **Autonomy-Supportive Behaviours**
  - Provide some choice
  - Rationale for tasks
  - Listen & ask
  - Initiative & independence
  - Non-controlling FB
  - Avoid coercion
  - Process not outcome

- **Athlete’s Need Satisfaction**
  - Perceived competence
  - Perceived autonomy
  - Perceived belonging

- **INCREASED INTERNAL MOTIVATION**

- **Coach’s Involvement (Welfare)**

- **POSITIVE OUTCOMES**
  - ↑ performance
  - ↑ enjoyment
  - ↑ persistence
  - ↑ problem-solving
  - ↑ self-esteem
  - ↑ well-being
  - ↓ fear of failure

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### COACHES’ INTERPERSONAL STYLE

Nevertheless, coaches are likely to **differentially engage in both controlling and autonomy-supportive behaviours** (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2001)
- Parental research (e.g., Silk et al., 2003)
- PE research (e.g., Tessier et al., 2008).

Becoming MORE autonomy-supportive...
The utility of SDT as a conceptual framework for designing autonomy-supportive motivational climates to produce optimal performance outcomes in the sport context has been demonstrated (Mallett, 2005).

Coaches tend to rely on a more controlling interpersonal style (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Further, authority figures who engage in controlling behaviors are in many cases perceived to be more effective (see Boggiano, et al., 1993). Consequently, convincing coaches to adopt an autonomy-supportive leadership style might be a difficult task (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007).

Action Research Methodology to change coach behaviour

ANTECEDENTS OF COACHING STYLE

Majeau & Vallerand, 2003
Beliefs about motivation and the salient benefits of rewards and punishment... motivation, interest, and subsequent performance

“I thought using ‘suicide runs’ was teaching the players discipline and motivating them to work harder”

Coaches use control to discipline and reinforce power differential in the coach-athlete relationship

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Structure = Control

“I know that in my first session, I didn’t ask them any questions. I just told them what to do, it was really organised, like, this is what you’re doing - it was about routine. And I know that’s not really right - they’re only doing it because I am telling them, not because they believe in it or want to. But what does it look like if you’re not telling them?”

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“Now I think towards the end of the season, now there’s a lot of time on problem-solving or working it out for themselves but an open game, more games, similar games to game playing, more game-like games to achieve the same desired outcome. And what I noticed, especially at the end, they seemed to enjoy it a lot more. They seemed to enjoy basketball. But even from previous years, they weren’t sick of basketball. They wanted to keep playing it.”
"The big thing that I struggle with is having the Bobby Knights and all these successful coaches, and seeing their method of coaching, which is more controlling behaviours, authoritarian, do it my way sort of thing and then it's like I'm really going against the grain. … It's hard because there's a culture in basketball about running lines and about doing 'suicides' as a consequence for not achieving a target. … working on my coaching this season has really opened up or reiterates the autonomy-supportive environment and how effective it can be. So I'm trying to find ways to really buy into it – I know the autonomy-supportive style works but I'm still trying to find ways to really buy into it."

Occhino & Mallett, in prep

Controlling style => Success

"The culture of basketball; it was the way I've been coached in the past; it was, not the confidence to let go but go against sort of the grain a little bit; and I guess also the pressure of being Director of the programme, being the Director/Coach is about performance and it is to get the successful team, the win/loss ratio. So there's external pressures there and to sort of really let go and to become less controlling was difficult mainly because of my job and my role at the school."

Occhino & Mallett, in prep

Players viewed AS style as being:

"soft coaching"

"... should be coaching girls..."

Differential conceptions of quality coaching.... Courage to change....

Byrne & Mallett, in prep
SUMMARY

- Coaches tend to be more controlling and this is likely leads to negative athlete outcomes – reflects culture
- Understanding coaching behaviour involves complex interactions between the individual and their social context
- Behaviour change is non-linear and problematic
  - Coaches’ awareness and personal orientation
  - Understanding the context and perpetuation of cultural practices
  - Athletes’ motivation, and views on quality coaching
- Challenging all actors’ conceptions of quality coaching

IMPLICATIONS FOR COACHING PRACTICE

- Key stakeholders might reduce the “pressures” they place on coaches to encourage coaches to become more AS (LT vs ST outcomes)
- Increase awareness of Coaches’ interpersonal style and its effect on athletes’ outcomes (learning, development, performance)
- Coaches might gradually introduce some AS behaviours into their coaching practice to affirm/challenge practice and facilitate a smooth transition from one approach to the other

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Engage with the fields of cultural psychology and sociology to examine the culture of coaching to identify the most salient antecedents to challenge take-for-granted assumptions about what is quality coaching to inform future policy and practice
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THANK YOU

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