

Intercollegiate coaches' experiences with elite international athletes in an American sport context

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the knowledge and experiences of intercollegiate soccer coaches who have worked with a large number of international athletes. Six head coaches participated in a semi-structured open-ended personal interview. At the time of data collection, each participant was coaching a women's Division 1 NCAA university soccer team in the United States. Results of the analysis generated knowledge and strategies for coaching culturally diverse athletes and teams. More specifically, all of the coaches appeared to possess a similar level of cultural awareness and understanding which ultimately helped their international athletes' to grow and develop personally, academically, and athletically.

Keywords: Coaching, cultural diversity, team sports

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Introduction

Over 400,000 student-athletes in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) participated in varsity sports (Division I, II, or III) during the 2007-08 season (DeHass, 2009a). Of this number, over 50,000 females competed in Division I (D1) (DeHass, 2009a). Moreover, the 2007-08 NCAA student athlete race/ethnicity report noted that nonresident Alien D1 female student-athletes increased from 2.4% to 6.9% in the last 8 years (DeHass, 2009b), suggesting that recruiting and coaching elite international athletes might be important for building a successful NCAA program.

While athlete cultural diversity appears to be increasing in the NCAA, particularly with D1 female athletes, there is currently a lack of empirical research to match this growth and development in sport. A new and emerging area of study in sport psychology may provide insight on this often overlooked domain. *Cultural sport psychology* is a critical discourse reflecting different beliefs, needs, and aspirations stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, and geography (Schinke, Michel, Danielson, Gauthier, & Pickard, 2005). The majority of research in this domain has focused on applied sport psychology practices (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Kontos & Arguello, 2005; Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002; Martens, Mobley, & Zizzi, 2000; Peters & Williams, 2006). These studies identified a number of key issues for practitioners who were interacting with culturally diverse student-athletes, specifically learning about the cultural background and history of their athletes. Similar results have been found from coaches who worked with culturally diverse athletes (Schinke et al., 2007; Solomon, 1999; Solomon et al., 1996). For example, Schinke and colleagues (2007) found that an ideal working environment emerged when non-Aboriginal coaches actively sought knowledge about their multicultural groups of athletes in order to avoid the problems of cultural insensitivity and prioritizing results over the individual growth of the athlete. Therefore, research from cultural sport psychology may play an important role in helping coaches, athletes, and sport psychology practitioners work more effectively with individuals from different cultures.

Compared to sport, a more developed line of cultural diversity research has emerged in the educational domain. Results found that international university students experienced difficulties adjusting to a new culture and academic system, establishing social networks, as well as language and financial hurdles (e.g., Kuo, 2004; Mori, 2000; Pederson, 1991; Sandhu, 1995). Furthermore, international students were at greater risk of experiencing anxiety, stress, and culture shock (Sandhu, 1995), depressive symptoms (Das, Chow, & Rutherford, 1986), social isolation (Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991; Sandhu, 1995), and homesickness (Parr, Bradley, & Bingi, 1992). Teachers and educational counsellors have used different strategies to become culturally competent and to develop better learning environments for their students (Gay, 2000; Hope-Rowe, 2006;

Lopez-Mulnix & Mulnix, 2006). These included participating in diversity training workshops, learning about the history and culture of their students, and recognizing the different learning strategies of their diverse students. To date, there is little known about how coaches develop similar cultural sensitivity for diverse athletes, and the strategies that they use to foster a competitive and collegial environment for their international athletes. Drawing from a cultural sport psychology perspective, the purpose of the current study was to explore the knowledge and experiences of coaches who have worked with a large number of international athletes. This study is an important foundation to understand the factors that influence coaching strategies on teams with diverse cultural backgrounds.

In order to identify the knowledge and strategies that coaches use to develop and coach their international athletes, it is important to understand what knowledge they possess. With Côté et al.'s (1995) Coaching Model (CM), a theoretical framework exists that allows for connections to be established between the accumulated knowledge on how and why coaches think and function. The CM implies that coaches construct a mental model of their athletes' and teams' potentials, and that this process, in turn, is influenced by three peripheral components: the *coach's personal characteristics*, the *athlete's personal characteristics*, and the *contextual factors* (Côté et al., 1995). The CM suggests that the characteristics of the coach need to be considered, as well as the characteristics of the athlete and the different contextual factors that are present, such as whether the athlete is on a scholarship or needs financial assistance. These factors influence the primary components, namely, how they organize their season (*organization*), how they prepare their practices (*training*), and ultimately how they coach and the team competes during competition (*competition*). The CM proposes that coaching success is related to various interpersonal, cognitive, and operational aspects of coaching knowledge and behavior. In our case, the CM allows information to emerge on how coaches accomplished their tasks of directing and leading their international students to the highest levels of performance both inside and outside of sport, from a cultural sport psychology perspective.

Framed within the CM, the purpose of the current study was to explore the knowledge and experiences of NCAA D1 intercollegiate soccer coaches pertaining to working with international athletes. To date, the majority of sport psychology studies investigating the effect of cultural diversity in sport have occurred from the perspective of athletes or sport psychology consultants, as opposed to coaches (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Jowett & Frost, 2007; Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002; Martens et al., 2000). This study has the potential to advance elite sport by providing an understanding of how culturally diverse teams are managed by coaches. This, in turn, may lead to the development of more effective and equitable strategies and interventions for coaching culturally diverse intercollegiate athletes and teams.

Method

Participants

In a process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), six soccer coaches (five male and one female) from the NCAA D1 level of competition participated in this study. An initial potential sample was identified through personal coaching connections and an internet search of coaches located in a similar geographical region of the United States. From this larger group, participants were identified for this study if they were: (i) currently coaching intercollegiate D1 women's soccer in the Eastern United States (for practical reasons, so the researchers could travel a reasonable distance for the interviews); (ii) coaches of a minimum of two international athletes per season for the last five years, or at least ten international student athletes in their careers; (iii) university-level coaches for at least five years; (iv) born in North America or had been living in North America for more than ten years; (v) recommended by peers in the coaching community as a leader in their field. A summary of the participants' background and experience is found in Table 1. Overall, our criteria are in agreement with Côté, Young, North, and Duffy's (2007) definition of an expert coach. According to these researchers, coaching is more than win-loss records and the achievements and accomplishments (trophies) of their individual athletes. It involves how coaches employ their knowledge and interact with their athletes in various sport contexts. It is important to note that Table 1 cannot fully capture all of the elements noted in this definition. For example, C2 received unanimous support from peers for inclusion in this study, despite a modest career win/loss record. C2's ability to attract 50 international athletes in only 9 years of coaching is likely a testament to positive interactions with international athletes over the years.

Table 1. Background and Accomplishments of Each Coach

Coach	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Native country	England	USA	USA	USA	Canada	Ireland
Highest Level of Soccer Competition as an Athlete	Semi-Professional	USA College	Semi-Professional	Semi-Professional	Semi-Professional	Semi-Professional
Years of DI Coaching	6	9	7	8	11	10
# of International (non North American born) Athletes Coached	12	50	30	13	13	30
Range of DI Winning %	55-59	45-49	70-74	70-74	50-54	60-64

Instrument and Procedure

Following approval from the university behavioral ethics board, the purposefully selected participants were contacted through e-mail and/or phone calls as prospective participants for the current study. When coaches agreed to participate in the study, information and consent forms were emailed to them. It was emphasized that participation was voluntary and participants were not being remunerated. A mutually agreed upon date and time was set for the interview.

Semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted by the first author to better understand the participants' experiences working with international athletes. Each interview lasted between 75 and 90 minutes and occurred in the city where the participant was currently coaching. Each coach was asked to specifically respond to the questions while considering their international athletes. Following the introductory questions that served to inquire about the coaches' background and experiences in sport, the main interview questions were guided by the CM (Côté et al., 1995). Specifically, the first set of main questions and probes addressed the peripheral components of the model, including the coaches' characteristics (e.g., perceptions, beliefs, personal experiences), the coaches' perceptions of the international athletes' personal characteristics (e.g., their stage of learning, personal abilities, and additional characteristics that were unique to being international athletes), and contextual factors that are perceived to influence the coaching dynamic in an international perspective (e.g., athletes' transition to the team, family matters, and team-related factors such as win-loss record). The second set of main questions addressed the coach's mental model of the international athlete's potential through the organization (e.g., the knowledge that the coaches used to establish effective conditions for training and competition, to assist international athletes with personal concerns, and to foster collaboration and interaction among athletes, families, and staff), training (e.g., the coach's strategies used to foster international athlete development during practices), and competition (e.g., the role of international athletes during competitions). The third part of the interview guide consisted of a summary question that tied together key points (e.g., "What are the key elements for coaching elite female international soccer players?"), and the final question gave the participants the opportunity to add any additional information. At the beginning of each interview, the coaches were informed that their responses were to focus on coaching International athletes.

Data Analysis

The first author transcribed each interview verbatim and content analysis was used to explore the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To begin, the analysis was inductive while the lead author initially read each interview and identified meaning units (cf Tesch, 1990). Sensitizing concepts served as a starting point for organizing meaning units. Specifically, meaning units were

identified inductively based on the author's knowledge of cultural sport psychology, coaching science, and the CM, as well as personal experience as a female NCAA D1 soccer athlete. Once each transcript had been reviewed for an initial identification of meaning units, a second reading and coding of each transcript was done, creating themes. During a third review of each transcript, the themes were deductively grouped into higher-order categories based on the CM. Our goal was to explore the aspects of the CM within an international athlete context. According to Gilgun (2010), this approach is used when researchers begin with a theory and are trying to test the theory or better understand the theory in a qualitative lens. All data were examined until saturation of information was obtained and no new pieces of information emerged (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993).

A number of techniques were used to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Sparkes, 1998). The lead researcher is a former NCAA D1 soccer scholarship athlete, a current university soccer assistant coach, and a competitive soccer player. Due to these experiences, the research team was cautious to limit researcher bias during interviews and data analysis. Asking predetermined questions and probes decreased the probability of leading participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). During data analysis, the lead researcher was cautious to avoid prejudgment as a result of previous experience with the issues discussed during the interviews and the experiences of the coaches in the sample were represented by quotes to eliminate bias in interpretation. As well, peer review was used in this study and took place between the lead researcher, the research supervisor, and a second researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, the lead researcher and supervisor met to discuss the coding scheme. The supervisor read through the codes, a definition of the codes, and representing sample quotes. If there was disagreement in the coding and labeling of categories, the lead researcher and supervisor discussed options and made modifications, as necessary, until they reached consensus. The same process was then conducted between the lead researcher and a second researcher.

Furthermore, the researcher was trained in the methods of qualitative research. Two pilot interviews were conducted to develop the researcher's interview skills and to validate the effectiveness of the interview guide (Maxwell, 1996). The pilot interviews were conducted under the supervision and evaluation of an experienced interviewer, who provided feedback regarding interview technique and the interview guide. Also, member checks were conducted at several stages in the research process. The first occurred at the end of the interview where each participant was given the opportunity to add or alter any comments from the interview. The second took place when the participant received a full verbatim transcript, and had the opportunity to eliminate, add, or clarify any comments made during the interview. The final check consisted of sending the participants a summary of the results generated from the participant's interviews. At this point, the participant was asked to question, critique, and provide

comments on the findings. The feedback that was received was in support of the final coding paradigm and no new information was added as a result of the member-checking.

Results

A total of 179 pages of text and approximately eight hours of interview material were analyzed. The results are organized into seven categories to illustrate coaches' knowledge and experiences with respect to coaching international athletes. Table 2 lists the categories and the themes within each of them. Quotes from each of the coaches are used to illustrate their thoughts and opinions. To maintain anonymity, coaches are identified by a unique number (C1 to C6) throughout the results.

Table 2. Cultural Coaching Experience Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes
Athlete development	Holistic development
Organization	Equity and fairness Team cohesion Cultural awareness
Training	Style of play Learning experiences
Competition	Athlete talent
Coach's personal characteristics	Personal social skills Communication Cultural knowledge Respect Continuous learning
Athlete personal characteristics	Needs and adaptation Leadership qualities Work ethic
Contextual Factors	Coaching women NCAA division I college

Athlete Development

All coaches described a desire to provide unique opportunities for their international athletes and to help them develop as players, as well as in their academics and communities. The coaches placed emphasis on their role in helping their international athletes realize the importance

of good academic grades as well as being good players on the field:

When an athlete comes to my university, I have to find the way to help her to be a better player and get her to finish her degree...you recognize there is so much more than soccer; soccer and education come together, and there is a way to get soccer results as well as provide a unique educational opportunity: (C4)

Ten years from now we will remember meanings we have created in their life, not their success rates or team rankings. Don't get me wrong though, I think there is a way to get these results and to provide a unique life opportunity for these kids. (C4)

This goal of developing international athletes holistically is echoed by Coach 3, who was discussing the differences between North American and European soccer: "I kind of look at them [European teams] and say 'well if I can get a team with international players like them, then that will be pretty successful...good soccer players, good students, good people, nice personality, good in the community.'" This coach goes on to describe the essence of what intercollegiate soccer coaches think about when recruiting international athletes and is best summarized in the following quote:

I will tell you that I think every coach wants international players. Every single one of them would want one or a few international players, because they see the value in terms of results and they say, 'these international players helped this team be very successful', whatever team it was. For me, it is a big mistake if you only look at it from that perspective. If you want the results, go and get the international kids; they will help you win games, but understand they are people 1000 miles away from home. When you are bringing an international player you have to be prepared to accommodate some of these things that you don't have to do with a traditional college kid. (C3)

In sum, all of the coaches in our sample felt that they reached this goal of fostering international athlete development athletically, academically, and personally.

Organization

Information emerged pertaining to ways that coaches planned and structured aspects of their season with respect to their international athletes. The themes contained in this category were *equity and fairness, team cohesion, and cultural awareness*.

All coaches noted that they had to be particularly cognizant of being fair and giving all players the same opportunities. While this was important for all teams, regardless of international athlete status, they felt they were more aware of issues pertaining to equity and fairness when international athletes were on the team. As a result, the coaches felt that issues of fairness required more effort on their behalf – almost as a way of negating pre-conceived stereotypes:

Ideally, I try to treat everyone the same regardless of their nationalities. However, in college there's a perception that the foreigners are treated better, especially from the American kids. There is a perception that they get more attention from the coach. So you always try to negate this perception for the betterment of the team. (C1)

I think the rest of the team needs to know that they are being held to the same standards...if they [the international athletes] show up 10 minutes late, they don't get treated any differently...you must hold them to the same standard as everybody else. (C6)

The importance of building team cohesion was significant to international athletes' integration as well as overall team performance and satisfaction. Coaches were particularly aware that international athletes needed to be integrated into the team, and they purposefully designed and used specific team building activities to enhance team cohesion: "It is creating that culture that we are more than just a soccer team. We are one in many ways; our bond is not just soccer." (C6) Stressing the importance of integration, in particular for female international athletes, Coach 3 suggested that unsuccessful cohesion may influence the international athlete's performance: "You can get the best player in the world but if they are not happy, particularly on the female side of the game, their performance may not be as good as if they were in their country."

As an additional mechanism for integrating international players, the coaches created opportunities for international and domestic players to share their cultural experiences. They stressed the importance of understanding cultural differences both for themselves and for the other players. This view is illustrated by Coach 5:

I try to be open to having internationals bring up different views and perspectives. I try not to say 'I know you are from [country], but you are in America now, and this is how it is'. I try to enjoy their perspectives and tell them 'I can learn from you, so tell me what you did over in [country], and we can use it.'

In summary, the coaches were aware of the importance of helping international athletes feel accepted and comfortable "...they need to feel that this is a home for them away from their home" (C2).

Training

This category included information on training athletes and acquiring knowledge to lead effective practices, with themes of *style of play and learning experiences*.

Coaches discussed purposely looking for players that fit their coaching style: Without being aware of it, you are recruiting players that fit your own coaching philosophies. For instance, I tend to have ultra-competitive internationals, which is very similar to the way

that I am. (C4)

Our style of play is passive in the sense that we like to keep the ball. I think our international players enjoy that more than our domestic players. We like to keep the ball, and that's often the way they grew up playing. When our international players come in, for the most part, the game is very technical, they can pass, keep the ball. That's how we like to play; they enjoy that in a way. Then, our American players buy into it as well. (C6)

Coaches also mentioned acquiring knowledge from their international athletes to diversify their own training techniques: "I always ask them if they have done other activities that they feel they can be included in our training, just to enhance our bag of tricks." (C4)

In summary, the coaches were aware of the need to tailor the style of play to challenge international athletes. They also encouraged adapting and implementing training techniques from their international athletes.

Competition

Information in this category focused on athlete talent and dealt with aspects of international athletes on game-day. Coaches recognized that international athletes were skillful and that they made a difference in the teams' success during competitions:

Most of my foreign kids are very skillful. The more gifted ones tend to be more adept to scoring... they have a different mentality in front of the goal. Throughout my coaching career I have asked foreigners to take corner kicks or take free kicks. Technically, they can place the ball where they want it... their success rate with set pieces is high and with the goal scoring aspect, I think that most of the time that is how we win games... (C1)

The coaches also understood that there was a direct correlation between how the international players prepared for competition and how they performed on game-day:

Our international athletes are talented. They understand the importance of getting a good night's sleep before a game, eating well, and taking care of their body after the game. These are things that our internationals have learned from older players at home. It makes them better players and they transfer that to our team and it helps us win games. (C6)

In the end, when it came to game-day, the coaches put the best players' on the field regardless of their origin:

You always want to reward the best performers and that is what the internationals understand. Playing time – I put the best 11 on the field regardless if she is black or white, yellow or green, Irish or Swedish – I put on the best 11. If they have a problem with that they know where my office is located and we can discuss why I do things that way. (C1)
I tell all the kids that your playing time will be based on your performance and how you do. If

you are playing well, then you will play. If you are not playing well, then you will sit. (C3)

To conclude, the competition element of working with international athletes was focused on how skilled and talented the internationals were as athletes and how they prepared themselves for competition on game-day.

Coach Characteristics

This category involved the coach's background, philosophy, beliefs, and personal life that influenced coaching international athletes. The themes contained in this category were *personal social skills, communication, respect, cultural knowledge, and continuous learning*.

The coaches felt that their personal social skills were important to the ultimate goal of developing international athletes. All of the coaches felt they were outgoing and social, which ultimately helped them develop positive relationships with their international athletes. Unique to the international athlete context, social skills helped the coaches develop their own international network, that in turn enabled them to continuously recruit athletes: "If you take care of people or do the right things, they may get you the next recruit. They could put the good word in for you." (C6)

As part of their social skills, coaches were focused on developing close relationships with their international athletes and expressing compassion for them:

When the internationals come over, they don't have the support network that the Americans kids have. They don't have a parent that can come and take them out to eat if they are a little bit home sick. I try to be that person and this relationship starts from the day I pick them up at the airport. They feel comfortable with me and they know I will be there for them. (C2)

Keep up with what they are doing, because their feelings are rockier, they have less people to talk to; more people are intimidated to talk with them. You are continually telling them that you are going to be there for them, share your opinion and solutions with them. They still have to take their own path; you can't force them to follow your advice and you can't take it personally if they don't. (C5)

Furthermore, all six coaches described their relationship with international athletes as parental: "I think it is a parental thing. It is the same way as if you were talking to your mom and dad." (C6)

I see things from a parent perspective too; you can give a hug and say everything is going to be okay but you can't always change the situation. It seems like the internationals expect you to relate to them as an equal, talk to them more as a person, while the Americans expect that you are going to talk down to them. (C5)

Similarly, many of the coaches reported treating international athletes like their own

children: “It is almost like you want your children to look at you in that same way.” (C4)

“While they are here they can find a father, an advisor, and more than just a coach.” (C2)

Building relationships with their athletes was accomplished by using effective communication skills: “Communication is the most important one. You need to give them[international athletes] feedback on a consistent basis and frequently, both on and off the field.”(C1). Furthermore, communication was important to foster mutual respect.

Developing respect appeared particularly easy for the three international coaches, who felt they understood the implications of living in a foreign country as a result of their own personal histories:

Right away, I felt more connected to them having been a foreign student-athlete myself. When I spoke to them about the experience of coming to college, I felt I was speaking to somebody who was in my shoes. (C5)

My first international was an English girl from my home town. In that situation, there was lots of affinities between us, we came from the same town, came from the same areas, there was a comfort level there. (C1)

While nationality seemed to benefit the development of a positive relationship with international athletes, domestic coaches’ own experiences as athletes and their playing experiences helped them develop a cultural understanding and appeared to be an influential factor in their coaching evolution:

I played in a [Country in Europe] league. There were an awful lot of players from a lot of diversities and different backgrounds. Being from a small place, it was interesting for me to feel the passion within different ethnicities; it was really eye-opening, and seeing the fun and the excitement that they had for the game was exciting for me. (C3)

13 nationalities were represented on the team; it was an amazing experience. I had basically lived my whole life in the USA and getting exposed to different styles of play, personalities, and cultural aspects really opened my eyes about living in a foreign country. (C4)

Although both domestic and international coaches reported international athletic playing experiences, these appeared particularly meaningful for domestic coaches in terms of cultural knowledge development. Along with international athletic experiences, coaches agreed that their expertise in coaching international athletes evolved over time and through accumulated experiences. All of the coaches described their cultural coaching experience as a progressive learning process:

Obviously I didn’t realize how much I had to learn, I thought I knew it all, I thought I could handle it all. I quickly learned that I needed to relate to a lot of different people, different people that are not like me. (C5)

In sum, the make-up of these coaches’ involved caring for the well-being and personal growth

and development of their athletes in all facets of their lives.

Athletes' Personal Characteristics

This category contained information associated with international athletes' learning attributes and personal characteristics. The information in this category was coded into three themes of needs and adaptation, *leadership qualities*, and *work ethic*.

As noted by many coaches, cultural diversity helped both the domestic and international athletes: "the domestic kids learn a little more about the international games and the international kids learn a little more about what it means to live in the US." (C4) However, they also mentioned a level of adaptation that was specific to the needs of international athletes and their developmental process:

I think what they need at first is to get comfortable with their surroundings. For instance, they need to learn being a roommate, a teammate, to interact with their professors, their academic advisor, their trainer, their strength and conditioning coach, and so on; if they become comfortable with those people then the transition becomes much easier. Fitting into the American culture, in my mind, that's way down the road; fitting into their daily basis culture where they are momentarily living, that's the most important part. (C3)

They have a better tactical and technical background; however the internationals are figuring it out every day as they go. They have to learn a new system; not so much a soccer system, but a new way of life. Nowhere in Europe do they play 2 games in a week and train every day; it is considered insane. Here, they train like maniacs, and they are expected to pass these fitness tests in 4 days. They have never been exposed to that; and all this happens at once. They are on the road and all they are doing is playing soccer, eating, and doing schoolwork. The knowledge and advantage that they have almost isn't as great as that of the Americans, because Americans know exactly what they are getting themselves into. (C5)

International athletes were described as possessing great leadership qualities by all six coaches. In fact, all coaches saw leadership potential in their international athletes: "I lean toward them for leadership because I happen to know that it might be there." (C5)

She was one of my first recruits and she changed the atmosphere on the team by leading by example, being more dedicated, a bit more of a professional attitude to winning and to practicing, preparing. In that sense, she kind of changed the culture of our team... they are mature in respect to preparation, dedication, and in all of that professional attitude related to soccer and academics. (C1)

Coaches noted how the international athletes' work ethics were advantageous to the team: My internationals love coming to practice and they love playing. They are coming with passion...they love the game, they don't complain about practice, they see the bigger picture, they see why we are doing fitness on Tuesday, they might not like it but they are not complaining about it, maybe because they are seeing the bigger picture or they are appreciative of getting a scholarship, and they know they shouldn't complain. (C2)

To conclude, the coaches' understood how the make-up of their athletes' influenced their interactions with their teammates, as well as the athletes' roles on their teams.

Contextual Factors

This category pertained to developing international athletes within an American college system. In this study, two prevailing contextual themes emerged: *coaching women* and *NCAA division I college*.

All of the male coaches in the study (n=5) had experience in coaching men, but described the development of their main coaching strategies through their leadership roles with women athletes. In turn, their current status as women soccer coaches was an important factor that may have influenced the coaching process:

Women's soccer is one of the best in the world in the US. They won the gold medal in the Olympics and according to their ranking they are one of the best teams in the world. Even though they come from an environment where soccer is more valued in their country, soccer for women is definitely at the worldwide level. (C4)

All coaches discussed the importance of effectively interacting with female athletes: "Imminently the most important thing is communication; female athletes want to be communicated with all the time; they want to know where they stand and how they are valued." (C5) Communication was different when coaching women in terms of the frequency of feedback and the emotions:

Somebody said, coaching men you are coaching an attitude and coaching women you coach an emotion...I think female athletes take more of their personal life on the soccer field. It is a matter of recognizing that and adjusting accordingly. (C1)

The six intercollegiate coaches were aware that education was also an important aspect of an international athletes' development. To give them a positive educational experience, coaches needed to understand the extra administrative aspects involved with international athletes, including the NCAA procedures such as athletic scholarship and eligibility. Coaches were aware of athletes' unfamiliarity with the American academic and athletic system, based on NCAA rules and regulations. "It is not because the kid wants it that we can give it to them. The NCAA is clear in what we can and can't provide with them." (C3) The coaches understood their roles, and made sure they kept up with any changes in the governing body:

Administratively, you need to do your homework, working with the background of the internationals. There is a lot more work that goes into bringing international players than

bringing Americans; you have to be familiar with the American setting but also with the international setting and way of doing things to recruit them. (C2)

Discussion

While it is reasonable to suggest that cultural diversity has played a key role in shaping the character and sporting culture of North American society (Coakley & Donnelly, 2009), the paucity of cultural sport psychology literature is both surprising and disconcerting. Currently, the NCAA has more international student-athletes than ever before (<http://www.ncaa.org/>), suggesting there is a demand for fair and equitable coaching strategies to manage culturally diverse athletes. The current study provides some initial information on this topic. Despite the idiosyncratic nature of each coach's career progression as well as their differing nationalities, many common themes and categories were identified within the CM. Most notably, coaches seemed to have accumulated a similar level of cultural awareness which ultimately helped their international athletes' to grow and develop personally, academically, and athletically.

The current findings demonstrated that the coaches in our sample espoused the importance of advancing their players individual (holistic) growth, in addition to their athletic attributes. This mirrored previous research from expert coaches (e.g., Côté et al., 1995; Jowett, 2003; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Summitt & Jenkins, 1998; Walton, 1992; Wooden, 1988; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). In the current study, the holistic development of athletes was enhanced by building a positive coach/international athlete relationship. All six coaches described their relationships with international athletes as "parental." Arguably, this philosophy facilitated the level of trust and respect they displayed for one another. There are only a few empirical examples in the literature that provide examples of the care and compassion that coaches feel for their athletes (e.g., Bloom, 1996; Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998; Vallée & Bloom, 2005). There appears to be more non empirical examples, such as the one by Pat Summitt, arguably the most widely-recognized women's basketball coach in North America. Her athlete-centered approach to coaching can be seen in the following quote: "I was learning that a coach is far more than a strategist or a disciplinarian. You are a particular form of crisis counselor and interim substitute parent" (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998, p. 68). Drawing from previous research and personal reflections in the field, the current findings extend the role of the coach to one of a parent when recruiting and coaching international athletes. The coach feels responsible for the international athletes both in their personal and athletic lives and takes on a responsibility that has no defined borders. They are present 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and take on this challenge with every international athlete that is recruited.

The coaches in our study also made a concerted effort to learn about their athletes' cultural background and practices. Similar results emerged from Schinke et al.'s (2007) examination of elite Canadian Aboriginal athletes and their non Aboriginal coaches. One of the most effective ways for non Aboriginal coaches to communicate with their Aboriginal athletes involved their ability to empathize, demonstrate compassion, and show knowledge of the culture/community. This finding is in agreement with research from the multicultural education literature (e.g., Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Mori, 2000; Rehm & Allison, 2006) where it was reported that teachers adapted to and learned about the special needs of their multicultural students. In addition, the teachers realized that their international university students were likely to have difficulties establishing social networks, adjusting to a new culture and academic system, as well as language hurdles (e.g., Kuo, 2004; Mori, 2000; Pederson, 1991; Sandhu, 1995). The coaches in our study also adapted to the special needs of their international athletes because they understood that being away from home meant they were susceptible to homesickness and other cultural adjustment issues. The adaptation of the coaches to meet the needs of their athletes has previously appeared in the literature (e.g., Côté et al., 1995; Giacobbi, Roper, Whitney, & Butryn, 2002; Saury & Durand, 1998). The current results extend previous research because it reveals some of the proactive strategies employed by coaches to prevent these issues, including the use of team building activities, having an open-door policy, and carefully monitoring their athletes' academic progress, to name some examples. This is also another example of the holistic development of their athletes outside of sport.

Over time, coaches agreed that the international athletes' familiarity with the North American culture positively impacted their performance and integration on the team. This finding is in accordance with the applied sport psychology literature (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002; Martens et al., 2000; Peters & Williams, 2006) identifying the individual adaptation level as an important factor contributing to the athletes' well-being. More precisely, when coaches perceived that the international athletes culturally adapted, they realized the timing was appropriate to fully develop their capacity and skills, including developing leadership. According to Kontos et al., it is important to know and understand the athlete's acculturation level to facilitate positive outcomes. In fact, most coaches in the current study relied on international athletes to be leaders on their teams.

This study had three domestic and three international coaches. The current results found many similarities between the international and domestic coaches in all parts of their job. The only difference was how the domestic coaches acquired their cultural coaching knowledge. It appears that a great deal of their knowledge originated from their personal athletic experiences as elite soccer players (e.g., Cregan et al., 2007; Mallett & Côté, 2006; Salmela, 1994). For example, Salmela suggested that expert coaches drew upon their expert athletic experiences to

help develop their coaching knowledge, philosophy, and beliefs. Thus, despite sharing the same knowledge and strategies for working with international athletes, it appeared that domestic coaches acquired their cultural coaching knowledge through personal playing experiences. Nonetheless, exploring differences in coaching knowledge between foreign-born and domestic coaches was not a central focus of the current study. Our findings highlight some possible differences that could be explored in future research.

In sum, the current study provides an outline of how some intercollegiate coaches were able to acquire the necessary cultural coaching knowledge that enabled them to develop female international soccer players who played in the NCCA D1. Given the reality that very few countries offer cultural coaching education, the results of the current study may inform guidelines and educational directives of the International Council for Coach Education (ICCE; <http://www.icce.ws/>), which oversees the provision of formal coach training and education throughout the world. As well, the results may be used by the NCAA to enhance their programs aimed at encouraging diversity and inclusion and one that embraces the skills and talents of all student-athletes, coaches, administrators, and officials (<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal>). Finally, the current results may be used to enhance researchers' understanding of how cultural diversity interacts with the coaching process. As mentioned previously, little to no empirical research has been conducted in cultural sport psychology, especially at the coaching level and with a conceptual framework to guide the study. The current study provides an initial template to understand this overlooked aspect of cultural coaching development and can be used to provide a fuller outline of how coaches develop and acquire cultural coaching knowledge and competence.

There are a number of recommendations for future research. Based on our findings, it might be interesting to investigate whether coaches who have worked with a large number of international athletes have grown and changed their coaching practices based on these interactions. Although this study has provided considerable information regarding the American cultural perspective, a similar framework could be tested with other environmental contexts, such as Australia or France. Furthermore, the purpose of the current study was to explore cultural coaching science within the CM. Future research would benefit from taking constructivist approaches to better understand the experiences of coaches who work with international athletes. In this way, the primary elements of the CM could be explored in more detail to garner an understanding of the experiences both from the perspectives of the coaches and their international athletes. Additionally, future research could identify how coaches tackle specific cultural issues, such as language barrier and homesickness. Finally, an intriguing avenue for future research would be to examine the intersect of gender and sex of the coach and their players when coaching international athletes.

In conclusion, although little literature has addressed cultural issues in sports, many of the

findings that emerged were similar to those highlighted in previous studies in both the fields of cultural sport psychology and education. More specifically, the current results indicate that implementing cultural awareness strategies allowed international athletes to grow and develop both athletically and personally, and pave the way for more research into the growing discipline of cultural sport psychology.

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