

## The Development, Articulation, and Implementation of a Coaching Vision of Multiple Championship–Winning University Ice Hockey Coaches

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The purpose of this study was to explore the development, articulation, and implementation of a coaching vision and how this created and sustained a culture of excellence. Six multiple championship—winning men's university ice hockey head coaches were interviewed. Their combined experience consisted of 20 national titles and over 4,100 wins at the university level. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results indicated that these coaches established a vision that could be separated into three phases: development, articulation, and implementation. Notably, development included the life experiences, personal characteristics, and habits that assisted the development of the coaches' vision, including apprenticing as an assistant coach. Articulation and implementation involved clearly communicating their vision to athletes, coaches, and personnel who then enacted the vision. Overall, these findings contribute to a better understanding of how championship-winning coaches organize, teach, and articulate their goals through their coaching vision.

Keywords: culture, excellence, leadership

Elite head ice hockey coaching positions in North America are highly sought after and limited. For example, there are only 176 head coaching positions in the highest levels of professional, major junior, and college men's ice hockey in North America. While it can be argued that attaining a head coaching position at any of these four levels defines success, a coach can further distinguish himself as an exceptional member of this elite group by winning a championship, and even more so, by winning multiple championships. Consequently, some researchers have begun to study the knowledge and strategies used by coaches who have had attained success with their athletes and teams on the field of play by winning numerous championships (Bespomoshchnov & Caron, 2017; Donoso-Morales, Bloom, & Caron, 2017; Elberse & Dye, 2012; Gavazzi, 2015; Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014; Vallée & Bloom, 2005, 2016; Yukelson & Rose, 2014). These highly successful coaches, known in the literature as serial winning coaches (SWC), have been defined as "coaches who have, repeatedly and over a sustained period of time, coached teams and athletes to gold medals at the highest level of competition such as the Olympic Games, the World Championships, or major professional leagues" (Mallett & Lara-Bercial, 2016, p. 294). This definition contains the element of winning championships, which differentiates it from Côté and Gilbert's (2009) definition of coaching effectiveness that mentioned winning in the professional context, while placing a greater emphasis on coaches developing athletes' confidence, competence, connection, and character. To date, researchers in this emerging domain have revealed some commonalities among the knowledge and behaviors of SWC; however, further investigation is required to study some of the specific areas of research that differentiate this group of coaches from their peers.

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The label SWC originated from a pair of studies in which 17 of the world's most successful coaches of individual and team sports from 10 countries were interviewed (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016; Mallett & Lara-Bercial, 2016). Among the findings, these coaches were characterized by a common set of personal characteristics, which included an exceptional work ethic, strong communication skills, a quest for continuous improvement, and effective leadership behaviors that inspired their athletes. Furthermore, researchers examining the intrapersonal characteristics and traits of SWC have identified an obsessive passion for coaching success, in-depth personal reflection, high emotional intelligence, and a quest for continuous improvement (e.g., Donoso-Morales et al., 2017; Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016; Vallée & Bloom, 2005, 2016). Looking at passion more closely, Lara-Bercial and Mallett (2016) developed the term "driven benevolence" to describe the single-minded pursuit of excellence of SWC. This driven benevolence was rooted in a coach's personal philosophy and included a dual responsibility pertaining to the coach to develop himself/herself as well as his/her athletes (e.g., Vallée & Bloom, 2016). In addition, the act of guided and nonguided self-reflection has been consistently observed in studies on championship-winning university coaches and SWC in all phases of their job (e.g., Mallett & Coulter, 2016; Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016; Vallée & Bloom, 2005, 2016; Voight & Carroll, 2006). This was evident both on the field of play and during their personal time when coaches introspectively reflected on their actions and behaviors (e.g., Gallimore & Tharp, 2004; Mallett & Lara-Bercial, 2016; Wang & Straub, 2012). This act of nonguided self-reflection facilitated the development of self-awareness and self-study, which contributed to their advanced levels of knowledge (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016). Altogether, the personal and intrapersonal characteristics of SWC were embodied in a coaching vision that reflected their quest for continuous improvement.

Coaching vision has been defined as a standard of excellence that the coach upholds throughout all aspects of a program by