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# A Case Study of the Coaching Philosophy of a Men's NCAA Distance Running Coach: To what extent is it Humanistic?

Seth Jenny

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**A CASE STUDY OF THE COACHING PHILOSOPHY OF  
A MEN'S NCAA DISTANCE RUNNING COACH:  
TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT HUMANISTIC?**

**by**

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**  
**Physical Education, Sport, & Exercise Science**

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**May, 2013**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beautiful wife Angie, who deserves more credit for this accomplishment than me. Without her support, achieving this goal would not have been possible. Also, to my two boys, Miles and Calvin. I will always treasure the memories of them rushing to the front door yelling, “Daddy!” upon my arrival each day after working on this project. Finally, to my parents, Drs. Frederick and Geraldine Jenny. Thank you for your never ending encouragement. Now there are four doctors in the family!

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**ABSTRACT**

A coaching philosophy is a set of basic principles or values framework that guide a coach in decision-making and behavior (Hogg, 1995). Opposite of a dictatorial philosophy, the humanistic coaching philosophy as an athlete-centered, collaborative, and non-manipulative process between athlete and coach, taking into account individual athlete differences and abilities, with the hopes of eventually developing an emancipated, self-regulated, adaptable, and self-confident athlete (Lyle, 1999). The goal of this case study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men's NCAA distance running coach and describe to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach are humanistic.

Through coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session observations, and artifact collection, this research explored whether coaching practice was congruent with the stated coaching philosophy and triangulated the qualitative data in regards to the extent in

which it did or did not parallel the humanistic coaching philosophy. Three major themes emerged: 1) coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships, 2) coach/athlete decision-making, and 3) the coach's definition of success. The findings of this study indicated that the coach's stated philosophy and methods were humanistic in regards to having close interpersonal coach/athlete relationships, open communication, collaborative decision-making with athletes, and an athlete-centered process-oriented definition of success, but were not humanistic in relation to communicating more with the best (i.e., top eight) runners on the team and employing dictatorial methods in planning interval and tempo workouts independent from athletes. Major implications from these findings include that in areas where coaches are authoritative, athletes may not develop feelings of competence which could impact athletes' abilities to self-regulate independently from the coach. Moreover, coaches should make a concerted effort to build interpersonal relationships and communicate more with athletes new to their program, particularly freshmen and athletes making the leap from high school to college athletics.



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

“A set of basic principles that guide a coach’s behavior in practical situations” (pp. 12.3-12.4) is known as a coaching philosophy (Hogg, 1995). A coaching philosophy is not the offensive or defensive strategies which the coach ascribes to during competition. How athletes are treated, a coach’s leadership style, and the intricacies of the coach-athlete relationship more closely resemble a coaching philosophy. Principles, values, and beliefs of the coach underpin a coaching philosophy (Hogg, 1995). Having a well-developed coaching philosophy provides program direction, guides in decision-making, reduces chances of surrendering to external pressures, and increases the likelihood of success (Martens, 2012).

Coaching philosophies are formed over many years and in many different ways, starting with personal experiences as an athlete (Wootten, 2003). Hogg (1995) recommends a three-step approach to developing a coaching philosophy: 1) create opportunities for a greater self-awareness as a coach and person, 2) determine a coaching ideology, and 3) be actively prepared to test out the philosophy. Self-reflection is a necessary part of developing a coaching philosophy. Motivations to coach must be examined by the coach to determine the overarching aims of the program. Investigating one’s values framework will help solidify a coaching philosophy that will purposefully direct consistent coaching practice and behavior (Lyle, 2002).

Coaching philosophies range from autocratic/authoritarian to democratic/humanistic. All coaches fit somewhere on the continuum between authoritarian and democratic (Mundra, 1980). This study explores men’s collegiate distance running coaching through the lens of the humanistic coaching philosophy.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Humanism takes its roots from humanistic psychology. The emergence of humanistic psychology was spurred most by the works of Abraham Maslow (1954) and Carl Rogers (1951). The basis of the humanistic philosophy is surrounded by Rogers' (1980) theory that all individuals have an innate self-actualizing tendency to develop their own physical and mental capacities in ways that serve to maintain or enhance themselves to increase autonomy and lessen control of external forces.

Core values which underpin humanism include the importance placed on personal analyses of human experience, the holistic view of human experience (humans are viewed as total functioning beings and not just many isolated elements), the significance of freedom and autonomy, the antireductionist orientation that states experiences are not analyzed into component parts, and the inability to fully define human nature (Hogg, 1995; Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002; Shaffer, 1978). The key to humanistic theory is that the capacity for growth and development is facilitated only in circumstances and opportunities that allow for "active engagement, self-determination and creativity, and in circumstances of improvement, progress and achievement" (Lyle, 2002, p. 178). In essence, the humanistic model forces a reassessment of how humans examine themselves and encourages success measured only against one's own potential. Because the individual is celebrated for what he or she is, it is likely that this will lead to intrinsic motivation and a more satisfied outlook of themselves and the world around them (Cross, 1991).

The humanistic approach to coaching is a person-centered philosophy where the focus is process-oriented and the athlete is empowered to be a more self-actualized individual through autonomy-supportive means. Lyle (1999) describes the humanistic coaching

philosophy as a collaborative and non-manipulative process between athlete and coach, taking into account individual differences and abilities, with the hopes of eventually developing an emancipated, self-regulated, adaptable, and self-confident athlete. A close interpersonal relationship between athlete and coach is stressed in a humanistic philosophy where decisions are shared. The coaching process is a collaborative process, particularly as the athlete gains experience (Hogg, 1995). A humanistic coach encourages athletes to self-regulate, develop an identity, express their opinions, and assist with areas such as setting team rules. Humanistic coaching promotes holistic development through taking an educating, caring, and athlete-welfare approach. Such an approach lessens dependence on the coach while strengthening a facilitating/reinforcing role versus a directive one (Lyle, 1999). In summary, humanistic coaching practice supports an individual athlete's autonomy through a close interpersonal relationship emphasizing open communication, shared goal-setting and program decision making, wherein success is measured against the individual athlete's goal attainment and personal self-actualization.

Within the individual-centered approach of humanism, winning is redefined so that the process is emphasized and achievement of the process goals indicates success or winning. This approach differs from the traditional model where final results indicate success (Danziger, 1982). Goals are set collaboratively with the athlete and are reevaluated regularly to monitor progress and measure success. Reaching each individual athlete's potential and striving for self-actualization are primary aims of the humanistic coach. Coaching in a humanistic fashion can be considered worthwhile because it has the potential to stimulate the necessary qualities of self-determination, self-control, and individuality (Lyle, 2002). While there is currently no empirical evidence to suggest that coaching with a humanistic



philosophy improves athlete performance, considerable evidence exists indicating athletes may prefer being coached within a humanistic paradigm (Cross, 2002; Cuka & Zhurda, 2006; Parker, Czech, Burdette, et al., 2012).

Similarly, many aspects of distance running lend itself to humanistic notions. First, the humanistic tenant of promoting self-analysis and gaining self-understanding is facilitated through the individual sport of distance running. What works for one runner may not work for another (Williamson, 1998). Distance runners and their coaches must become particularly astute to these unique biomechanical, physiological, and psychological differences and promote self-reflection to uncover the most effective individual training methods for each runner.

Additionally, humanistic coaching methods call for attention to each athlete's uniqueness as a performer with specific consideration to the cognitive, physical, and emotional development of the athlete (Whitson, 1980). This aligns with the distance running literature and training theory as a whole that effective coaching must be individualized in all aspects of development (Bompa & Haff, 2009; Daniels, 2005; Noakes, 2003). Arguably, effectively developing a runner in all individualization areas (e.g., training frequency, intensity, type, time, etc.) would be impossible without a close interpersonal relationship between the coach and athlete, which is a facet of humanistic coaching.

Furthermore, self-actualization, an aim of humanism, could be parallel to what distance runners call being "in the zone" or experiencing the "runner's high." Peak performances have been characterized as being "in the zone" when personal trust of performing automatic motor skills, such as that in running, involves letting go of conscious controlling tendencies (often described by runners experiencing a "runner's high" or

“breaking through the wall”), thus allowing the automatic execution of the schema that have been developed through training (Moore & Stevenson, 1991). Humanistic coaching methods may facilitate the likelihood of this result and nurture the idea that distance running may provide an environment more conducive to humanism. In addition, distance running coaches have little or no communication with the athletes during competition, thus requiring the athletes to be self-sufficient in their performance and the decisions involved. Supporting autonomy (one goal of humanism) may enhance performance in this competition environment.

Humanistic rather than authoritarian methods may be more natural for distance running coaches working within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The NCAA (2012) is an association of 1,273 institutions, conferences, organizations, and individuals that organize the athletic programs of many colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. Three of the sports which include distance running events are cross country, indoor track and field (5,000 meter event), and outdoor track and field (5,000 and 10,000 meter events). As the NCAA places an increased emphasis on both athletic and academic excellence, coaches at colleges or universities within this competition structure may be more prone to humanistic methods of holistic development as minimum academic standards are required for student-athlete eligibility.

Tenants of the humanistic coaching philosophy are evident in the literature when some organizations and distance running coaches describe their philosophy. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2006) promotes an “athlete-centered coaching philosophy” in their national standards for sport coaches. Likewise, USA track and field (USATF, 2007), the United States national governing body for the sports of track and

field, cross country running, road running, and race walking, advocates an “athletes first, winning second” philosophy in their coaching education program. Arguably the most successful high school distance running coach, Joe Newton (1998) claims his main role is “developing better humans” (p. 9). Former NCAA cross country and current Olympic coach Joe Vigil (1995) believes that distance running is a form of education, building toward “holistic development” (p. 6) and must be kept in proper perspective within the athlete’s total life. Olympic coach Terrence Mahon supports the humanistic notion of individualization and states: “My philosophy in running starts with the acknowledgement that each athlete comes to practice with an inherent set of gifts or talents...it is my job to make those talents better” (Tanser, 2006). All of these coaches include traces of humanistic themes in their stated philosophies.

Few studies have methodically investigated coaching philosophies, particularly with distance running coaches. Six studies were found which explored coaching philosophies, all with varying populations and methods for data collection. Pratt and Eitzen (1989a) studied differences in coaching philosophies between male coaches of male and female high school basketball teams via questionnaire. McCallister, Blinde, and Weiss (2000) explored the coaching philosophies of youth baseball and softball coaches through interviews of the coaches. Bennie and O’Connor (2010) explored the coaching philosophies of professional Australian cricket and rugby coaches through qualitative interviews of the coaches and their athletes. Collins and colleagues (2011) assessed coaching philosophies of pre-service coaches through the exploration of written coaching philosophy statements by the participants. Camire, Trudel, and Forneris (2012) studied “model” Canadian high school individual and team sport coaches through semi-structured interviews of the coaches and

their athletes. Finally, Miller, Lutz, and Fredenberg (2012) reported “outstanding” high school coaches’ philosophies, views, and practices based on an online survey with open-response options of coaches who coached boys’ and girls’ basketball, football, and girls’ volleyball.

Based on this evidence, self-report techniques were heavily relied upon as the primary sources of data collection in all of these studies. Many authors note that coaching practice may not always correspond to the coach’s stated philosophy (Garringer, 1989; Lyle, 2002; Martens, 2012). To increase the credibility of findings, qualitative methodologists prescribe multiple methods of data collection and analysis (e.g., coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session observations, etc.) known as “triangulation” to increase internal validity (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In the case of these studies, field observations or artifact collection and analysis would have increased the credibility of the findings.

### **Problem Statement**

A gap in the literature exists which methodically explores the philosophies of distance running coaches and the methods in which these philosophies are implemented. While several successful distance running coaches have reported the basic tenants of their approach to coaching (e.g., Guthrie, 2003; Newton, 1998; Vigil, 1995), past studies on coaching philosophies have relied on self-report techniques and none of these studies have included distance running coaches. Furthermore, while literature exists which reports that athletes may prefer being coached through a humanistic philosophy and distance running may be more conducive to a humanistic environment (particularly distance running within the NCAA), no studies have explored distance running coaching philosophies through the theoretical lens of humanism.

## **Research Purpose**

The goal of this case study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men's NCAA distance running coach and describe to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach are humanistic. Through coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session observations, and artifact collection, this research explored whether coaching practice was congruent with the stated coaching philosophy and discusses wider implications a humanistic philosophy may have in coaching environments. Key areas of investigation for humanistic coaching were the extent to which the coach's approach fulfilled an individual, autonomy-supportive, and holistic approach, the coaches' and athletes' definition of success, interpersonal relationships and communication, program planning and decision-making, athlete dependency, view of competition, and the extent to which the coach strove for athlete self-actualization.

## **Guiding Questions**

The research questions that guided this project were:

1. What is the coaching philosophy of the participant men's NCAA distance running coach?
2. To what extent is this coach's stated coaching philosophy humanistic?
3. To what extent are this coach's coaching methods congruent with a humanistic philosophy?

## **Significance of the Study**

This study's findings contribute to the field of sport coaching due to its potential to shed light on what coaching philosophy may be the most effective for men's NCAA distance running through an examination of a successful coach in the discipline. Wootten (2003)

suggests it is worthwhile to study the philosophies and approaches taken by “successful” coaches to assist others in developing an effective coaching philosophy. This study also provides further insight into men’s NCAA distance running and coaching and may assist in helping coaching education programs, coaches, and athletes gain a greater awareness and appreciation of coaching philosophies and styles, all of which could help improve performance. Finally, this study is the first to employ multiple methods of data collection (triangulation) utilizing training session observations and artifact collection in the research of coaching philosophies.

### **Delimitations**

This study’s scope was narrowed in the following ways:

1. The participant coach in this study must have been the current head coach of a NCAA men's distance running team, NCAA men's cross country running, NCAA men’s indoor track and field 5,000 meter, or NCAA men's outdoor track and field 5,000 meter / 10,000 meter.
2. The participant athletes must have been participating on the men's distance running team under the tutelage of the participant coach for at least one season prior to commencing data collection (i.e., exclude first-year freshmen and first-season transfer athletes). This assured that participant athletes were already familiar with the coach and his coaching philosophy and methods prior to the start of the study.
3. All participants were required to be 18 years of age or older.
4. The study was restricted to the west region of the United States.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Coaching Philosophy**

A coaching philosophy is a set of values or basic principles that guide a coach's behavior in practical coaching situations, and human relationships in general (Hogg, 1995). Principles, values, and beliefs of the coach underpin a coaching philosophy (Hogg, 1995). These underpinnings assist in deciding how athletes are treated and the nature of the coach-athlete relationship.

A coaching philosophy is oftentimes confused with a specific sport philosophy or feelings regarding the technical/tactical models of a sport. Beliefs about the strengths or weaknesses of certain types of training, game strategies, or desired qualities of an athlete for a sport closer resemble a coach's knowledge structure, while a coaching philosophy is a more comprehensive set of values which guide how the coach implements the program (Lyle, 2002). Underpinnings of a coaching philosophy may be influenced by society and can be formed through subconscious evolution of an individual or group's values or ideals (Martens, 1987). A coach's past experience and the circumstances surrounding those experiences will also have an effect on one's coaching philosophy, thus at times calling for the need to adapt the philosophy, or parts of it, to fit the circumstances (Hogg, 1995). Although it has been suggested that a coaching philosophy should be flexible, developing, and evolving (Hogg, 1995), having an established coaching philosophy will act as a set of dynamic guidelines to assist in making consistent decisions surrounding coaching (Lyle, 2002). "A well-developed coaching philosophy provides expectations for behaviors that reflect priorities and values of the coach" (NASPE, 2006, p. 7).

### **Need for a coaching philosophy.**

Having an established coaching philosophy can enhance the effectiveness of the program (Martens, 2012). Parsh (2007) states having a well-articulated coaching philosophy clarifies the coach's mind on many aspects of the coaching process, provides expectations for athletes and parents, gives the coaching staff a framework to base coaching decisions, and provides all involved a clearly defined path to follow. Hogg (1995) takes this a step further by asserting that the creation of a sound coaching philosophy will help the coach to make decisions with some degree of certainty and, therefore, will positively impact athlete experiences in the sport.

Martens (1987) lists several repercussions of not having a sound coaching philosophy. He states that a coach without a well-developed philosophy will lack direction, could readily succumb to external pressures, and may display inconsistent behavior, which can create chaotic team conditions and destroy interpersonal relationships. "Having a [coaching] philosophy will remove uncertainty about formulating training rules, style of play, discipline, codes of conduct, competitive outlook, short- and long-term objectives, and many other facets of coaching" (Martens, 1987, p. 4).

A coaching philosophy is expressed through action, not by words. Many authors note that a coach's stated philosophy may not always actually correspond to their coaching practice (Garringer, 1989; Lyle, 2002; Martens, 2012). For example, in a study exploring the coaching philosophies of youth baseball and softball coaches through qualitative interviews of the coaches, it was determined that many of the coaches' espoused values and stated philosophies revealed inconsistencies with their comments regarding actual coaching practice



and behaviors (McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000). Therefore, coaches must be cognizant to practice what they preach in order to alleviate these inconsistencies.

### **Developing a coaching philosophy.**

Numerous authors have proposed guidelines, steps, and suggestions for developing a coaching philosophy. Wootten (2003) notes that coaching philosophies are formed over many years and in many different ways, starting with personal experiences as an athlete. However, it is worthwhile to study the philosophies and approaches taken by “successful” coaches to assist others in developing an effective coaching philosophy (Wooten, 2003).

Garringer (1989) asserts that the first requirement in building a coaching philosophy is to develop some basic tenets that delineate the coach’s approach to the sport and his or her attitudes on aspects of the coaching process (e.g., discipline, dedication, goal setting, etc.). Then the coach must develop these tenets into a coherent plan that can be applied to the daily demands of the program. Horwood (1997a; 1997b) provides a list of areas that the coach should reflect upon when developing a coaching philosophy. These items include the coach’s feelings and behaviors regarding his or her own level of enthusiasm, athlete image, attitude, discipline, rules, and drug use, and the approach to be taken with parents, academics, and the importance of winning. It seems many factors must be considered by the coach when developing a philosophy.

Hogg (1995) encourages self-reflection on one’s personal ideology and recommends a three-step approach to establishing a coaching philosophy: 1) create opportunities for a greater self-awareness as a coach and person 2) determine a coaching ideology, and 3) be actively prepared to test out the philosophy. Similarly, Martens (1987) recommends a two-step approach where the coach first develops greater self-awareness and then determines

coaching goals, which in turn influences the way in which the coach sees his or her own role and subsequently impacts coaching behaviors. Finally, Parsh (2007) ascribes to an eight-step approach to developing a coaching philosophy. He feels that writing down the answers to the following eight questions will assist in organizing a philosophy: “1) What do you want to accomplish?, 2) What are your priorities?, 3) What are the responsibilities [of the coaching staff, athletes, and parents]?, 4) What are your teaching methods?, 5) How do you define success?, 6) How will practices and games be organized?, 7) [What are the] team rules and consequences?, 8) How will you communicate your philosophy?” (pp. 56-57).

There are many aspects one must consider when developing a coaching philosophy. Self-reflection is paramount in the process. However, due to the personal nature of coaching philosophies and the plethora of contexts in which different coaches operate, it may be inappropriate to limit the development of a philosophy to a specific method or model proposed by someone else.

### **History, Roots, and Descriptions of Humanism**

The humanistic (coaching) philosophy developed through its own varied past. Davies (1997) cites the origin of the word ‘humanism’ dates back to the 1850’s where educational reformists, inspired by the romantic hellenism of Winckelmann and Goethe, invented the word to describe their reformed educational ideals: “with a backward glance to the classical *studia humanitatis* or ‘study of humanity’ that was promoted by the *umanisti* or educators of an earlier ‘renaissance’, was *Humanismus*: humanism” (p. 2). From this origin, humanistic philosophy literature became popular in the 1970’s and 80’s.

The word “humanism” has many meanings and is defined in several ways. Smoker (1973) describes humanism as an “attitude of mind that is centered on mankind and human

interests...a desire to think for yourself,... to accept the results of free inquiry,...and to act in accordance with those results, ...in cooperation with others, for the promotion of human happiness” (p. 4). Hellison (1973) feels that humanism means a concern for people above all else, particularly social and emotional welfare. Interestingly, Weinberg, as cited in Hellison (1973), asserts that humanism defies classification. He states:

If we pause to indicate the precise nature of humanism, we will certainly not be performing a humanistic act, for we would be saying that humanism involves some standard prescription for defining itself and the tasks intending to represent it. Because humanism is an experience or perspective on life or education, it must define itself without a standard definition. (p. 3)

The emergence of interest in humanism can be traced to two main disciplines: psychology and education. Humanism’s emergence in the late 1960’s offered a positive view of humanity and opposed trends of devaluing interpersonal relationships involved with the technological and mechanical advances of the era (Shaffer, 1978). Lombardo (1987) states that humanism’s originators aimed to create a practical and positive view of humanity opposed to behaviorism’s and psychoanalysis’ cynical view of humans and their development. Humanism widespread growth first took roots in psychology.

### **Humanistic psychology.**

Humanistic psychology is focused on the two beliefs that humankind yearns for essential wholeness and strives for unmet potential (Lombardo, 1987). These themes are apparent in Carl Rogers’ (1980) humanistic client-centered therapy, which asserts that humans have an actualizing tendency which is an innate propensity to fully develop oneself in all biological and psychological capacities. Maslow (1954) described the term self-

actualization when he stated that every individual has a hierarchy of needs (e.g. physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, etc.) all building upon each other toward the final need to develop one's full potential to become everything one is capable of becoming (i.e., self-actualization).

Humanistic psychologists study individuals as conscious agents with feelings, ideals and intentions, are concerned with human growth, personal fulfillment and self-actualization and believe these factors are crucial to the understanding of behavior – attempting to investigate human potential rather than to define personality with these characteristics (Poppen, Wandersman, & Wandersman, 1976). Moreover, the psychological needs of love, self-esteem, belonging, self-expression and creativity, often neglected in other domains of psychology are of great importance within the humanistic psychology framework (Lombardo, 1987). Personal relationships are meaningful in humanistic counseling where the client is made to feel safe, confidentiality is maintained, an “unconditional positive regard” is extended to the client, and the goal is to assist in developing “fully functioning persons” (Rogers, 1980). In summary, a humanistic psychologist does not attempt to control, but aims “to understand how determining variables function in order that a [person] might be liberated from their impact” (Jourard as cited in Lombardo, 1987, p. 15) as they pursue their own self-selected ventures.

### **Themes Underpinning Humanism (and Humanistic Coaching)**

It is necessary to understand the concepts involved in humanistic practice to fully grasp the implications for coaching practice. Five themes underpinning humanism, and hence humanistic coaching, are commonly recognized throughout the literature (Cassidy, 2010; Hogg, 1995; Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002; Shaffer, 1978).

### **The importance placed on personal interpretations of human experience.**

Freedom of the individual and respect for other's interpretations of the same experience is central to this principle. Because every individual brings a diverse background and unique perceptual system to each situation, interpretations of experiences are shaped by these and every person has a legitimate right to his or her own distinct feelings, views, interpretations, and perceptions (Lombardo, 1987). The humanist realizes that his or her perception of an event is not the same as everyone else's and that reality is not entirely objective, but personalized by each person involved (Shaffer, 1978).

### **Human experience is viewed holistically.**

Within the humanistic framework, humans are viewed as total functioning beings and not just many isolated elements (Lombardo, 1987). Each individual distinctly possesses individual characteristics (e.g., mind, body, traits), which when added together creates a personal uniqueness and character (Lombardo, 1987). The mind-body dichotomy is rejected as the humanist insists that humans experience activities with the whole being behaving as one (Shaffer, 1978).

### **Freedom and autonomy are central to humanism.**

An essential and defining characteristic of humans is our freedom to make choices and decisions. The humanist promotes freedom of choice, which accentuates individual responsibility for personal decisions and actions (Shaffer, 1978). The humanistic perspective attempts to harmonize a person's sense of autonomy, or self-government (Lombardo, 1987). Hogg (1995) notes that each individual "is an entity with autonomy, choice and self-determination...[and]...can come to self-awareness and self-acceptance...[through] personal decisions" (p. 12.6).

### **Humanism has an antireductionist orientation.**

Just as personal interpretations and individual views are respected and not analyzed and reduced to basic drives, humanism promotes the idea that experiences should not be analyzed into component parts (Lombardo, 1978). Humanists insist on human beings' wholeness and integrity and believe that experiences are individually defined and taken for what they are.

### **Human nature can never fully be defined.**

“If we decide to define human nature by what people actually *do* and actually *are*...the limits of human capacity will never be fully clear” (Shaffer, 1978, p. 10). Because human nature can never fully be defined, it must constantly be pursued – each person striving to know themselves in human beings' endless, but self-disclosing, quest for completeness and realizing unfilled potential (Lombardo, 1987).

These themes have been the driving force behind humanism and the humanistic movement that has influenced society throughout the latter part of the twentieth century. Humanists support taking a holistic antireductionist orientation when analyzing experiences, acknowledge varying personal interpretations of events, are autonomy-supportive, and believe human nature can never be completely defined. All of these themes may be integrated into a humanistic coaching philosophy.

## **Characteristics of Humanistic Coaching**

### **Autocratic vs. humanistic.**

Within the sport and coaching literature, various labels have been given to the two dichotomized philosophies of coaching. As seen in appendix A, these two opposing philosophies have been branded “behavioristic” versus “humanistic” (Anshel, 1978),

authoritarian” versus “democratic” (Mundra, 1980), “win-centered” versus “athlete-centered,” (Martens, 1987), “autocratic” versus “humanistic” (Hogg, 1995), and “autocratic” versus “democratic” (Lyle, 2002). Whichever terms are used, the “humanistic approach” is undoubtedly the democratic, athlete-centered, sharing, caring and interactive model, while the “autocratic approach” is winning-oriented, authoritarian, directing, dictatorial, and coach-centered (Lyle, 2002). Humanistic coaching puts the overall or full potential of all athletes (irrespective of status) at the center of the coaching philosophy (Cross, 2002). Compared with the humanistic coaching approach, which stresses a collaborative relationship between coach and athlete where the athlete does not lose control of the process, the autocratic style is characterized as a dependency culture where practice would include very little athlete self-directed behavior. Within this approach, for example, performance (i.e., winning) rather than personal goals would be stressed, and individuality and creativity from the athlete would not be tolerated (Lyle, 2002).

Lyle (2002) defines the humanistic approach to coaching as “a person-centered philosophy or ideology that emphasizes the empowerment of the individual towards achieving personal goals within a facilitative interpersonal relationship” (p. 174). The humanistic approach to coaching is a person-centered philosophy where the focus is process-oriented and the athlete is empowered to be an individual through autonomy-supportive means. Cross (1991) explains the humanistic coaching process as utilizing collaborative and non-manipulative methods. A humanistic coach might therefore encourage athletes to be somewhat subversive and challenge authority in that the athlete would not simply accept all decisions made by the coach without questioning and comprehending the reasons why. The athlete’s involvement in the coaching process and its related decision-making would assist in

developing what Cross (1991) cites as the ultimate goal of a humanistic coach – “an emancipated, adaptable, and self-confident person” (p. 17). In other words, through the collaborative shared decision-making process, the athlete learns to develop autonomy and efficacy in regards to decisions relating to the performance process and adapts to adversity (e.g., injury, training environment changes, etc.) without being dependent on the coach.

### **Athlete empowerment.**

Within the context of coaching, “empowerment” refers to athletes taking ownership of their own learning and direction (Kidman & Hadfield, 2001). A coach who empowers their athletes facilitates their learning, but does not control it. The approach is based on coaching through questioning, empowering athletes to become involved in the understanding of elements of their sport, enabling informed athlete decisions, and guiding athletes toward self-responsibility. All of these concepts are encapsulated within the humanistic approach to coaching.

### **Success, winning, and competition in an “effective” humanistic coaching model.**

One of the most critical features of humanistic coaching is that the definition of success is not directly related to winning as in the traditional model. Within the individual-centered approach of humanism, winning is redefined so that the process is emphasized and achievement of the process goals indicate success or winning, as opposed to the traditional model where final results indicate success (Danziger, 1982). The word “successful” in the context of coaching is problematic as coaches are most often considered successful by association with successful performers, but this does not automatically mean the coach has been personally effective (Cross, 1999). Lyle (2002) defines effective coaching as a measure of output over input and can only be understood in relation to “external factors” (e.g.,



material context, goals, performer capabilities, etc.). Cross (1999) suggests the labeling of a “successful” coach should relate to how the coaching “process is managed and whether this leads to realization of potential performance” (p. 51) while also considering the specific environment and resources available.

Similar to successful coaching performance, the effective coach is one whose capacity for effective coaching performance has been demonstrated over time and circumstance. Factors affecting effective coaching must be taken into consideration when evaluating a particular coaching philosophy (e.g. humanism). Furthermore, with contextual factors considered (i.e., availability of support, resources, etc.), there are two ways that have been suggested to evaluate successful and effective coaching (Cross, 1999). One way is to measure the “value added” by the coach (i.e. coaching decisions made and strategies used that directly affect performance). The second is to assess athlete goal attainment.

Effective and successful coaching means different things to different people. Effectiveness and/or success may be monitored by many; including the coach, the athlete, the coach’s employer, the athlete’s parents, the governing body, the community, or any other organization. When one considers the many people involved it must be considered who is defining success or the effectiveness of the coach. In line with a humanistic philosophy, Douge and Hastie (1993) suggest coaching effectiveness depends on what the athlete desires to get out of the program. The coach must consider each individual athlete’s goal for success and these goals may not necessarily be related to athletics. The key humanistic goals of elevating self-perception, striving toward self-actualization, gaining self-understanding, and improving interpersonal relations could also be considered objectives for success in a humanistically administered coaching program.

However, humanistic coaching does not negate winning as an important part of the sport process. One of the practical goals of a coach must be winning, but this does not have to be inconsistent with other humanistic goals (Mundra, 1980). Tutko and Richards (1971) echo this humanistic view of success and winning by stating:

The coach is charged with responsibilities beyond those of producing a winning team...This is not to say the *will to win* is not important. It is very much part of the *total* development of the athlete, but of considerably greater importance to the coach...should be the development of the *person*. (pp. 3-4).

Winning is still very much important in humanistic performance coaching, but priorities change within the humanistic model. For example, if an athlete does not win a competition, he or she can still be successful within the humanistic paradigm if he or she performs a personal best or fulfills some other athlete-centered goal within the competition (e.g. running even splits in a race). Nevertheless, some (particularly elite) athletes may have winning as the primary aim, thus qualifying success as winning by these athletes, and the humanistic coach must facilitate this goal.

Finally, within the humanistic paradigm, competition is seen as a vehicle to reach the athlete's full potential. "Competition is understood as a challenge that motivates the individual or team to fulfilling their potential for skillful and meaningful performance" (Danziger, 1982, pp. 122-123). Scores in competition are also meaningful to the humanistic coach because they assist in measuring the quality of the athlete's performance (Sage, 1978). The pursuit of fulfilling athlete potential is paramount to the humanistic coach and competition facilitates this objective.

**Athletes coached through a humanistic philosophy: Coach/athlete relationships, decision-making, and development.**

At the very heart of humanistic coaching is the theme of a strong interpersonal relationship between the athlete and coach. This coach/athlete relationship is characterized by love, respect, and trust in the humanistic model. “Inner motivation is nurtured when the athlete is able to recognise [sic] the caring and concern which is manifested in the coach’s close attention to him” (Whitson, 1980, p. 39). This close personal relationship may allow athletes to be themselves and could allow them to take risks free from fear that failure will lead to marginalisation or rejection. This athlete self-responsibility could nurture a “candid” culture rather than a “blame” culture, where the athlete may not only accept acclaim for success, but also admit responsibility for poor performance (Cross, 1991). As the athlete is nurtured to not be afraid to admit mistakes, it is hoped all involved (principally the athlete) would learn from them.

Decision-making is encouraged to be collaborative and as a partnership between coach and athlete within the humanistic paradigm. Lombardo (1987) states the humanistic coach should provide opportunities for all athletes to make relevant decisions, provide occasions for free expression and input, encourage and support creativity in the performance process, and allow for imaginative thinking in a facilitative and non-threatening environment. Athletes are expected to analyze, reflect, and make crucial decisions (e.g., determining strategies, identifying reasons for performance outcomes, etc.) with the humanistic coach facilitating this through questioning as well as asking for input (Lombardo, 1999).

However, Cross (1990) suggests that only as the athlete becomes more experienced should the coaching decisions (e.g., setting realistic goals and objectives, making training

decisions, etc.) become more collaborative between the coach and athlete. He suggests that this collaborative decision-making is more applicable to senior (i.e., college-age) athletes, as opposed to young and immature age groupers (i.e., elementary and secondary-age), highlighting that elite athletes know themselves much better than the coach. Hogg (1995) mirrors these notions by describing how coaching practice should evolve from a more authoritarian approach with young athletes to a progressive power sharing relationship with older athletes, leading ultimately to independence for the very mature athlete. This incremental “empowerment” of the athlete is shown in appendix B.

### **Humanistic coaching methods and the humanistic coach’s role.**

In order to attain these humanistic goals, the coach must adopt appropriate methods. Cross (1990; 1991) emphasizes that humanistic coaching methods are collaborative and non-manipulative, and therefore encourage athlete independence, autonomy, and self-reliance. Whitson (1980) notes that coaching is a human interpersonal relationship and argues that sport expertise alone is seldom sufficient. He states that a coach, acting as friend and mentor who additionally has human relations skills, is more likely to experience competitive success. This would occur through the coach’s humanistic attention to: 1) the individual’s distinct characteristics as an athlete, 2) the athlete’s mental, emotional, and physical development, and 3) developing a “caring relationship, which becomes the context in which personal risks can be taken and personal growth can occur.” (Whitson, 1980, p. 36). The humanistic coach is seen as fair to all while possessing the ethic of morality encompassing understanding, compassion, respect, and empathy where the welfare of the athlete is supreme (Cross, 1991).

A change in the traditional coach’s role occurs in the humanistic paradigm. The humanistic coach’s role goes far beyond a coach as being merely a trainer or technical

advisor, but would also encompass the roles of friend, supporter, guide, mentor, and facilitator (Cross, 1991). Values are central to the coach within the humanistic process. Humanistic coaches would see their principal roles as being able to “realise [sic] an athlete’s full [athletic] potential but *not* to the exclusion of all else” (Cross, 1990: 17). This role would include nurturing and developing the individual’s potential so that the athlete might grow in all areas of their life toward self-actualization.

### **Athlete preference for humanistic coaching.**

While there is currently no empirical evidence to suggest that coaching with a humanistic philosophy improves athlete performance, considerable evidence exists indicating athletes may prefer being coached within a humanistic paradigm (Cross, 2002). Parker, Czech, Burdette, et al. (2012) interviewed five male and five female youth soccer players regarding their preferred style in which to be coached. Results revealed that these athletes desired a coach who 1) remains calm and does not yell, 2) is caring and encouraging, 3) has knowledge of the sport, and 4) involves the team in decision-making. Concerning theme one, yelling and losing one’s temper are stereotypical characteristics of an autocratic coach; methods these athletes did not like. Additionally, themes two and four concerning the coach being caring, encouraging and involving the team in decision-making are humanistic tenants and provide further support that these athletes might prefer being coached within a humanistic philosophy.

Moreover, Cuka and Zhurda (2006) investigated athlete preference for coaching style through questionnaire with 215 (62 female; 20.99 mean age) “higher level” randomly-selected Albanian team (football, volleyball, basketball) and individual (track and field, gymnastics, boxing, wrestling) club sport athletes. In this study, the democratic (i.e., humanistic) philosophy was defined as an encouraging style that takes into consideration the opinion of all athletes concerning goals, practice methods, and game tactics and strategies.

The autocratic philosophy was described as a style where the coach uses independent decision-making, athlete input is not invited, and coach authority is stressed. Results indicated that the majority (80.9%) of these athletes preferred the democratic coaching philosophy regardless of sport or gender.

Using the Leadership Scale for Sports questionnaire, Hastie (1995) investigated 240 Australian high school *National Volleyball Cup* players' coaching style preference. The findings indicated that these players "preferred coaches who provided high instruction and positive feedback and who were reasonably democratic [(i.e., humanistic)] but certainly not autocratic" (Hastie, 1995, p. 350). In an earlier study, Hastie (1993) also reported 80 Australian high school girl volleyball players showing a preference for democratic coach behavior utilizing the same questionnaire.

Finally, Lindauer (2000) researched the preferred coaching leadership behaviors of 167 NCAA Division III individual (wrestling, men's and women's track and field) and team (men's basketball, baseball, softball) sport athletes from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse using the Modification and Revision of the Leadership Scale for Sport questionnaire. In this study, democratic (i.e., humanistic) coach behavior was defined as allowing "athletes to participate in decisions pertaining to goals, methods, and strategies" (Lindauer, 2000, p. 5) while autocratic behavior was described as the coach making independent decisions while stressing personal authority. Results revealed that both the male and female individual sport athletes preferred more democratic coach behavior compared to team sport athletes with track and field athletes preferring democratic behavior the most. The author speculates that track and field athletes, including distance runners, may prefer greater democratic coach behavior because the sport allows individuals to compete in different events within the same

competition – allowing for frequent input where athletes may want to be more involved in decision-making as success or failure depends mostly on the individual athlete.

**Potential advantages of humanistic coaching.**

Humanistic coaching might have certain advantages over the contrasting traditional autocratic approach where the coach assumes full authoritarian leadership and winning is the sole focus (Cross, 1991; Danziger, 1982; Lyle, 2002). Potential advantages for the humanistic coach are that: 1) athletes will be more responsible for their own destiny, 2) the coach no longer has to be the sole source of direction, knowledge, and wisdom, 3) the coach will be treated and evaluated humanistically, 4) an open rather than blame culture will predominate, and 5) the importance on winning as the only thing should cease to be preeminent (Cross, 2002). Likewise, possible advantages for athletes being coached within a humanistic framework are that: 1) athletes are encouraged to realize their full potential, 2) athletes may be more independent, self-reliant, and will have more control, 3) personal goals will take priority, which may not include winning, 4) athletes will be given responsibility for both success and failure, 5) athletes will operate in a candid culture where mistakes are out in the open, 6) creativity and imagination (e.g., flair, innovation, etc.) will be valued, and 7) athletes will be supported “from the cradle to the grave” throughout their ups and downs (Cross, 2002).

Additionally, De Souza and Oslin (2008) report four major benefits to a player-centered approach to coaching – a philosophy which parallels humanism which they define as “a coaching style whereby the coach supports player autonomy by implementing various strategies intended to enhance each player’s decision-making ability during game play, as well as outside of game play” (p. 24). They report that taking this approach: 1) increases

player engagement through being involved in decision-making, which provides them ownership, 2) increases communication between the athlete and the coach and teammates, 3) increases feelings of competence by having control of their learning, and 4) increases motivation through increased feelings of competence. However, despite many perceived positives, the humanistic coaching philosophy is not without its problems.

**Potential problems within a humanistic coaching philosophy.**

First, humanistic methods may be more attuned to individual sport coaching, rather than team sport coaching. Some athletes may be more motivated within an autocratic style and a team sport coach may have trouble being humanistic toward some athletes and autocratic to others. Some athletes prefer a directing approach and some sports (e.g., martial arts) lend itself to a coach-led approach (Lyle, 2002). Furthermore, if an athlete's individual goals are not consistent with the team's, conflict may arise. Many team sports, for example, require a degree of common direction for necessity and effectiveness (Lyle, 2002). Rarely is the goal of a team sport humanistic in nature, particularly not at the youth level.

In addition, demand on interpersonal relationships may be another potential issue within the humanistic framework as a coach may find it difficult to create a close personal relationship with each athlete on a team of many. Humanistic coaching might therefore only be effective when coaching one athlete as it may prove extremely time-consuming.

A problem may also exist when the priorities and goals of the sport organization or society are different from that of the athlete. For example, if the athlete is learning/mastery-oriented and the organization is performance/outcome-oriented a conflict of interest may occur. The humanistic coach's job may be on the line in some sporting settings if outcome success is not attained.



Finally, humanistic coaching within the United States school-sports model may prove to be another problem. Lyle (1999) notes that the goals of the humanistic coach – long-term whole-person development – may not come to fruition for many years. The four-year cycles of the United States high school and college sports models typically call for short-term success and development with different coaches across an athlete’s career. Some coaches may not feel motivated to “put in the effort” of whole-person development if they know they will only coach the athlete for a short time. The European club sports system may be more conducive to the humanistic philosophy as the athlete and coach may stay together from youth to the professional ranks.

**Contextual considerations for humanistic coaching in youth and elite sport.**

“There is little doubt that the humanistic approach to sports coaching has become the prevailing ideology in youth sport” (Lyle, 2002, p. 175). The literature concerning coaching children and young performers highlight concerns related to winning in the same way as the humanistic philosophy (e.g., Balyi & Hamilton, 2001; Greene & Pate, 2004). For example, Petlichkoff (1995) stated that striving to win (e.g. the process), rather than the game outcome, should be emphasized and if winning is kept in perspective, coaches will make decisions in the best interest of the developing athlete.

On the other hand, Lyle (2002) presents two points relevant to implementing a humanistic philosophy in elite sport. First, the reward structure for both coach and athlete that emphasizes outcome success is nurtured by commercialism at the elite level of sport – a lack of concern for ethical standards and conduct through an instrumental approach to achievement and morality. This results in coaching practice being performance-oriented, valuing competition success more than the concern for the individual (although perhaps not

at the expense of the athlete's welfare). Second, engagement in the "fast track" of elite sport is seen to require an almost total commitment by the athlete, working to the disadvantage of many other aspects of the athlete's life. The supreme goal of elite sport is winning – in opposition of the humanistic paradigm.

In spite of this, as has been outlined throughout the literature review, humanistic coaching appears to have many advantages at all levels. However, given the nature of this research, it is appropriate to discuss humanistic advantages in relation to distance running.

### **Humanism in Distance Running**

Broad (1980) argues that running is a "proving ground for humanistic values" (p. 283). He suggests that running fulfills predatory aspects of human character and the basic human need to be productive. Likewise, McDougall (2009), in his book which assisted in spawning the barefoot running movement, writes:

You ran to eat and to avoid being eaten; you ran to find a mate and impress her, and with her you ran off to start a new life together. You had to love running, or you wouldn't live to love anything else... We were born to run; we were born *because* we run. (p. 93).

It seems historically distance running was valued because it was vital; it was the way humans survived and thrived and spread across the planet. Although it could be argued that this is relevant only at the participation level, Broad (1980) believes that today running provides a humanistic "opportunity to participate in a productive process free of the restrictions and expectations we encounter in most of our productive relations" (p. 286). He continues by stating that running a marathon (26.2 miles) is a standard of the physical dimension of culture and a testimony to the potential of both body and soul. This statement correlates to the

humanistic principle that human experience is viewed holistically and activities are experienced with the whole being behaving as one. When contemporary marathoners use the term “dying” (also known as “hitting the wall”) “they are usually referring to a profound state of exhaustion, but they know they have been to the threshold of some other world” (Broad, 1980, p. 288). This attempt to reach the threshold of ability is encompassed within the humanistic philosophy as this individual tested their limits in the continuous quest to fulfill their potential.

### **Humanistic notions in distance running.**

While no other reference was found that directly correlated humanism to running, the literature provided themes and notions in distance running that could be considered to fit within the humanistic paradigm. To bring these previously mentioned humanistic ideas and objectives closer to the realm of distance running, a number of particularly relevant humanistic principles corresponding to distance running will now be discussed.

### ***Self-analysis and gaining self-understanding.***

As already highlighted, one key goal of humanism is gaining self-understanding through introspection of an individual’s physical abilities, needs and interests which are then integrated into a meaningful lifestyle (Hellison, 1973). As an athlete in an individual sport, a distance runner (and his or her coach) must become particularly astute to these individual differences, especially in the physical realm. Daniels (2005) has stated that each runner may respond differently to the same type of training. Distance runners are all individuals, all unique, all with individual biomechanical, physiological, and psychological differences. The individual biomechanical differences range from overall running form to personal foot strike

patterns, thus requiring specific training shoes that will cater for any pronation or supination (Williamson, 1998).

George Sheehan (1978), a cardiologist and prominent running philosopher, called distance running training “an experiment of one” highlighting that individual athletes learn from personal experience and every athlete responds to training in a different way. Individual training responses in the physiological domain primarily involves athlete specific recovery rate differences in the athlete’s cardiovascular, metabolic, and musculoskeletal systems affecting the athlete’s maximal aerobic capacity, lactate threshold, and exercise economy (Hoffman, 2002). Psychological differences in athletes relate to self-efficacy, motivation, anxiety, stress management, and attentional control (Huber, 2013).

Individual runner differences are paramount in the areas of psychological and physiological responses to training. Because of high volumes of training characteristic of distance running, mixed with high intensity interval training, 90% of all distance runners are on the same training program – “overtraining” (Daniels, 2005). Close monitoring of individual physiological responses to training (e.g. heart rate, oxygen uptake, blood lactate responses, etc.) assist in predicting drop-offs in performance or the onset of overtraining (Hoffman, 2002). Furthermore, individual psychological monitoring can help alleviate psychological burnout – athletes tempted to leave the sport due to lack of improvement and/or motivation (Huber, 2013).

Self-understanding is facilitated through introspection and self-analysis of these individual physically and psychologically responses to training. Throughout the distance running literature, self-monitoring by runners, through maintaining a training diary, is recommended (e.g., Noakes, 2003; Williamson, 1998). This entails keeping a daily record of

such things as heart rate, weight fluctuations, sleep data, training information (i.e., workout details, training objectives, etc.) and life goals – anything the distance runner feels relevant. Especially applicable to humanism’s theme of the importance being placed on personal interpretations of human experience, personal perceptions of workouts are encouraged to be recorded as well. If a problem does develop, the distance runner (and coach) is then able to look back in the diary to ascertain any pattern that may have led to the problem. The whole process of maintaining and analyzing a training diary is all encompassing within the process of gaining self-understanding and self-control.

One of the principle tenets of humanism is the emphasis on humans perpetually striving to know, to understand, to become fully aware of and conscious of themselves (Lombardo, 1978). The distance running coach must become fully attuned to these individual athlete factors as well and, as a humanist, facilitate every runner in this never-ending self-analysis process of gaining self-understanding.

***Individualizing training and interpersonal relationships.***

Humanistic coaching methods argue for attention to each athlete’s uniqueness as a performer with specific consideration to the cognitive, physical, and emotional development of the athlete (Whitson, 1980). This aligns with the distance running literature and training theory as a whole that effective coaching must be individualized in all aspects of development (Bompa & Haff, 2009; Daniels, 2005; Newton, 1998). Areas that need individualization include cardiovascular, strength, and flexibility training, mental preparation, sport medicine, nutrition, practice organization and management, and competition planning (Lyle, 2002). Most specific to distance running, running training volume, intensity, and recovery must be highly individualized to effectively meet the needs

of each runner (Daniels, 2005). Arguably, effectively developing an athlete in all individualization areas would be impossible without a close interpersonal relationship between the coach and athlete. The athlete, in turn, would disclose personal details that may affect the athlete's development or responses to training. These details may be factors within the physical, cognitive, or emotional realm that a non-humanistic coach might overlook for effective program planning for that athlete. Furthermore, within the humanistic paradigm, human experience is viewed holistically as individuals are viewed as total functioning beings and not just many isolated elements (Lombardo, 1978). A humanistic distance running coach must look at each athlete holistically and all elements of program planning, implementation, feedback, and evaluation must be highly individualized to effectively meet the entire needs of every individual runner.

***Self-actualization, peak performance, “in the zone,” and the “runner’s high.”***

One of the key goals of humanism is striving for self-actualization through physical development, creative self-expression and the emotions associated with total involvement in an activity (Hellison, 1973). This self-actualization process involves the individual becoming more complete by realizing their unfilled athletic and life potential. The periodization literature speaks of segmenting training to attain peak performance at the desired timing of a key competition (Bompa & Haff, 2009). This peak performance is characterized as being “in the zone” when personal trust of performing automatic motor skills, such as that in running, involves letting go of conscious controlling tendencies (often described by runners experiencing a “runner’s high” or “breaking through the wall”), thus allowing the automatic execution of the schema that have been developed through training (Moore & Stevenson, 1991). In his autobiography, *Four-minute Mile*, Roger Bannister

(1955) describes a training session leading up to his historic race that could be described as a holistic peak experience:

...my body became a unity in motion much greater than the sum of its component parts. I never thought of length of stride or style, or even my judgment of pace. All this had become automatically ingrained...There was more enjoyment in my running than ever before...It was as if all my muscles were a part of a perfectly tuned machine. (p. 184).

Humanistic distance running coaches must have empathy for what running means to their individual athletes as well as differences in interpretations of peak experiences. A peak experience could range across different athletes from winning an Olympic gold medal to running a personal best time. Or it could simply be experiencing a surreal training experience. For example, 1500 meter Olympic champion Herb Elliot (as cited in Egger, 1981) described what might be characterized as a peak experience or what running means to him:

There are times when I run that the run is magic. The combination of dappled sunlight, yellow wattle, crisp air caressing my skin, the intimacy of contact between my foot and earth, the birds, the dew and more push all blackness out of me, leaving warm gold. Now I know why! I'm high! (p. 111).

In distance running, attaining a peak "in the zone" experience is a goal in much the same way that self-actualization fits the humanistic paradigm. Lombardo (1978) noted that within the humanistic perspective, all that an individual is and all that he or she can become is at the focus. Striving for self-actualization and realizing unfilled potential is at the very heart of improving as a distance runner.

### *Distance running – an environment more conducive to humanism?*

Lyle (2002) suggests that “coaching contexts in which coaches deal with individual sports, in which athletes’ optimum performance occurs in adulthood, and in which performers are traditionally well educated, may be more conducive to the humanistic approach” (p. 184). While it has not been proven that distance runners are ordinarily well educated, distance running is an individual sport where optimum performances do occur in adulthood. In 2003, Sterken reported that the top performance of both men and women from 5,000 meters to the marathon were within the ages of 27 to 30 years.

De Souza and Oslin (2008) have also highlighted that during some competitions, coaches have little or no communication with athletes, thus requiring the athletes to be self-sufficient in their performance and the decisions involved. This environment of minimal coach communication during competition is certainly the case in distance running and empowering these athletes in the process of decision-making within the humanistic framework may assist the runners in making informed judgments in the middle of races to facilitate strategy and enhance performance.

#### **Tenants of humanism in self-reported distance running coaching philosophies.**

Themes of the humanistic coaching philosophy are apparent when many distance running coaches self-reported their own philosophies. Franz Stampfl, coach to the first sub-four minute miler Roger Bannister, was quoted as saying: “[a distance running coach] may know all there is to know about tactics, technique, and training, but if he cannot win the confidence and comradeship of his pupils, he will never be a good coach” (Noakes, 2003, p. 318). Bill Bowerman, former NCAA Division I cross country and track coach at the University of Oregon and coach to 16 sub-four minute milers, stated, “a teacher is never too



smart to learn from his pupils. But while runners differ, basic principles never change. So it's a matter of fitting your current practices to fit the event and the individual" (Will-Weber, 2001, p. 60).

More recent distance running coaches have also described philosophies with humanistic tenants. Jim Nichols, cross country coach at NCAA Division III Ithaca College and former coach to the United States World Cross Country junior and senior teams, describes his methods as taking "care of the athletes" (Ebbets, 2009, p. 6009) through communicating with them every day and summarizes his philosophy with a question for his athletes: "If you are not trying to be your best as a student, as a person, as an athlete why are you here?" (Ebbets, 2009, p. 6009). Bob Larsen, four-time NCAA Division I cross country and track coach at UCLA and coach to 2004 Olympic marathon silver medalist Mebrahtom Keflezighi, simply states his coaching philosophy is to "help each individual to grow in every aspect of their life" (Ebbets, 2009, p. 6010).

Terrence Mahon (2008), coach of 2004 Olympic marathon bronze medalist Deena Kastor, espouses that if coaches get to know their athletes better training will be more effective. Mahon (2008) believes coaches should coach based upon individual athlete personality traits and states: "learning about what makes an athlete 'tick' helps the coach to understand why they run, what they are looking to get out of it, what their goals are and will be, and how they look at success & failure in their sport" (p. 1). Beth Alford-Sullivan (2012), head cross country coach at NCAA Division I Penn State, espouses to "emotional coaching" of athletes and promotes the following: "make each person important; be fair; be consistent; get [athlete] input – input is ownership; build trust with a daily connection" (p. 2). Scottish junior Olympic distance running coach and past Olympic 10,000 meter runner,

Martin Hyman (2001) believes “the coach should aim to give the athlete the knowledge and technique in a way that will *em-power* [sic] *the athlete* to become responsible for his or her own programme [sic]” (p. 2). All of these coaches include humanistic tenants in their stated philosophies.

### **Men’s NCAA Distance Running**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2012) is an association of 1,273 institutions, conferences, organizations, and individuals that organizes the athletic programs of many colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. There are three divisions within the NCAA: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I is comprised of the largest colleges and universities while Division II and Division III are comprised of medium-sized and smaller colleges and universities, respectively. The three NCAA sports that include distance running events are cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field. While the NCAA organizes both men’s and women’s sports, this study focusses on men’s distance running.

#### **Definition of “distance running” in this study.**

The term “distance running” in this study refers to the following men’s NCAA sports and events: cross country running (where competitions are held between 8,000 to 10,000 meter distances), indoor track and field (5,000 meter event), and outdoor track and field (5,000 and 10,000 meter events).

#### **Men’s NCAA distance running competition structures.**

Divisions I, II, and III each have their own national championship in each sport of men’s cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field. Each NCAA division is made up of several conferences. Cross country, indoor and outdoor track and

field teams compete in their respective conference championships. All member institutions are invited. Results from these conference championships often simply confer a sense of pride for the participating teams as the results have no effect on which teams qualify for the NCAA regional or national championships.

***Men's NCAA cross country.***

In NCAA cross country, all member institutions are invited to their respective regional championships. NCAA regional championships are separated by division (I, II, and III). There are nine regions in Division I and eight in both Divisions II and III. The regional championships are qualifying meets for the NCAA national championships. NCAA cross country runners must qualify for the national championships. 31 teams plus 38 individuals, 24 teams plus 16 individuals, and 32 teams plus 56 individuals qualify for the NCAA Division I, II, and III national cross country championships, respectively.

***Men's NCAA indoor and outdoor track and field.***

NCAA indoor and outdoor track and field sports do not host regional championships. Distance runners qualify for the national championships in their respective NCAA division through running a qualifying time set forth by the NCAA during the designated season. At both indoor and outdoor track and field nationals, individual athlete performances earn points for their institution and the team with the most points wins the NCAA team championship.

***NCAA eligibility.***

The NCAA has distinct standards in the three separate divisions which determine whether an individual is eligible for continued participation. Incoming student-athletes in all divisions must meet the following requirements to participate within the NCAA: graduate from high school, complete a minimum amount of core academic courses with a minimum

grade-point average (GPA) across these courses, attain a qualifying score on the SAT or ACT entrance exams, and meet amateurism criteria (NCAA, 2012). Then, to remain eligible, student-athletes must continue to meet minimum academic requirements according to their NCAA division (NCAA, 2012). NCAA Division I student-athletes must meet certain benchmarks toward degree completion and as a team pass Academic Progress Rate (APR) standards. NCAA Division II student-athletes must pass minimum hours of degree credit with certain requirements on their cumulative GPA to remain eligible. NCAA Division III has no national standards for remaining eligible, but each institution is tasked to set forth academic standing and progress toward degree completion standards for their student-athletes. “The NCAA pledges to help student-athletes achieve their academic goals as well as their athletics goals” (NCAA, 2012).

Due to the academic push within the NCAA, distance running coaches operating within the NCAA may be even more prone to humanistic methods. These coaches may display humanist methods regarding holistic development through supporting athletic and academic development of their athletes. However, the coach’s motivation to support holistic development in this setting would be influenced by meeting student-athlete NCAA eligibility requirements. Nonetheless, the NCAA distance running environment may be more attuned to humanism as it forces the coach to also pay attention to academic achievement outside of sport.

### **Coaching Philosophy Studies**

Few studies have empirically investigated coaching philosophies, particularly with distance running coaches. The limited number of studies that were found explored coaching philosophies with varying populations and methods for data collection. Pratt and Eitzen

(1989a) studied differences in coaching philosophies between male coaches of male and female high school basketball teams via questionnaire. 511 randomly-selected coaches responded. Results indicated that while the coaches' philosophies were similar, where there were statistically significant differences, the male coaches of male teams reported to be more autocratic and demanding on those items. The authors suggested reasons for this might include: 1) the process of cultural traditions and socialization could have affected these coaches to want to build "boys into leaders and competitors" (Pratt & Eitzen, 1989a, p. 158), 2) male teams might experience a greater societal pressure to win over female teams lending itself to adopting more autocratic methods, and 3) male coaches of male teams tend to have participated in the sport as an athlete and this past experience may have exposed these coaches to traditional, autocratic methods making it more likely that those coaches use similar methods.

Apparently using the same sample, Pratt and Eitzen (1989b) also compared coaching style to effectiveness, defined as the winning percentage of each coach. It was determined that an authoritative and rigorous style with a low tolerance for insubordination was no more effective than a democratic style for coaching the high school boys' basketball players in this sample. "Rigor" was defined as how much the coaches demanded from their athletes – not a definitive characteristic of authoritarianism or humanism. More "rigorous" coaches were deemed more effective in coaching the girls' high school basketball teams according to results.

Collins, Barber, Moore, and Laws (2011) assessed coaching philosophies of pre-service coaches through the exploration of written coaching philosophy statements by the participants. Statements of 35 pre-service coaches were qualitatively analyzed prior to a 15-

week coaching education course. The purpose of the study was not to determine each pre-service coach's coaching philosophy, but to explore what components were commonly listed in each philosophy. Findings revealed that these pre-service coaches listed priorities relating to coaching behavior (i.e., coach created climate, equitable treatment of athletes), defining success, athlete and personal development, behavioral expectations, the role of fun, life lessons learned through sport, and the coach-athlete relationship.

Miller, Lutz, and Fredenberg (2012) reported on “outstanding” high school coaches' philosophies, views, and practices based on an online survey with open-response options of 48 coaches who coached boys' and girls' basketball, football, and girls' volleyball. The open-response questions did not attempt to discover their entire philosophy, but rather focused on their strategies to manage athlete behavior, minimize parent-coach conflict, establish routines, and handle “ethical” dilemmas. Results indicated that the majority of these coaches had clear expectations and stressed effective communication, consistency, and character. This suggests that these coaches had clear coaching philosophies, but it is undetermined as to what these philosophies were or how these philosophies were put into practice.

Bennie and O'Connor (2010) explored the coaching philosophies of professional Australian cricket and rugby coaches through qualitative interviews of the coaches and their athletes. Findings indicated that these coaches revealed elements of a humanistic philosophy through reporting a focus on learning and assisting players on and off the field, opposite of a “win-at-all-costs” approach.

Lastly, two studies looked at coaching philosophies through the lens of coaching and transferring life skills in youth sport. Camire, Trudel, and Forneris (2012) studied nine “model” Canadian high school individual and team sport coaches through semi-structured

interviews of the coaches and 16 of their athletes (with an average age of 16 years). Findings demonstrated that these coaches had well-established philosophies which were athlete-centered and supported using sport as a tool for holistic development – in line with the humanistic philosophy. McCallister, Blinde, and Weiss (2000) explored the coaching philosophies of 22 youth baseball and softball coaches through qualitative interviews of the coaches. The focus of the study was to determine the values and life skills that the coaches deemed important, the manner in which the coaches claimed to teach these outcomes, and the degree to which the coaches could explain how they implemented these philosophies. It was determined that while many of the coaches' had good intentions, the espoused values and stated philosophies revealed inconsistencies with their comments regarding actual coaching practice and behaviors. This corresponds to the notion that coaching practice may not always correspond to the coach's stated philosophy (Garringer, 1989; Lyle, 2002; Martens, 2012).

It is evident that self-report techniques were heavily relied upon as the primary sources of data collection in all of these studies and none of these studies included distance running coaches. To increase the credibility of findings, qualitative methodologists prescribe multiple methods of data collection and analysis (e.g., coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session observations, etc.) known as “triangulation” to increase internal validity (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In the case of these studies, field observations or artifact collection and analysis would have increased the credibility of the findings.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that the traditional practice of autocratic coaching highly contrasts with the humanistic coach's role, philosophy, and practice. Humanistic coaching is best summarized as an athlete-centered, collaborative process. The literature examined highlights the

extensive connotations a humanistic paradigm holds for both the coach and athlete and implications of humanistic coaching in differing contexts while specifically providing parallels of humanism to distance running. A gap in the literature exists which methodically explores the philosophies of distance running coaches and the methods in which these philosophies are implemented. Further, while literature exists which reports that athletes may prefer being coached humanistically and distance running (and in particular distance running within the NCAA) may be more conducive to a humanistic environment, no studies have explored distance running coaching philosophies through the theoretical lens of humanism.

The goal of this case study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men's NCAA distance running coach and describe to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach are humanistic. Given a review of coaching philosophy, humanism, humanistic coaching, humanism and distance running and a brief review of contextual considerations involved with coaching humanistically, this information can then be distilled to answer the research questions specific to this study. Key areas of investigation for humanistic coaching were the extent to which the coach's approach fulfilled an individual, autonomy-supportive, and holistic approach, the coaches' and athletes' definition of success, interpersonal relationships and communication, program planning and decision-making, athlete dependency, view of competition, and the extent to which the coach aimed for athlete self-actualization.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The aim of this study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men's NCAA distance running coach and uncover to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach were humanistic.

#### **Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry**

Naturalistic descriptive research methodology was utilized in this study. Qualitative research tells a rich, thick, and descriptive detailed story from the viewpoint of the participants. A qualitative approach should be utilized when the nature of the research problem requires intricate details of phenomena that are too hard to convey with quantitative methods (Roberts, 2010). The exploratory nature of the topic of a personal coaching philosophy necessitated a qualitative approach in order for the researcher to be able to build a complex and holistic picture through analyzing words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducting the study in a natural setting. Lyle (2002) calls for a need to investigate the practices of successful coaches and states "more naturalistic, field-based studies are required" (p. 303). The exploration of an in-depth analysis of the coach and athletes in a natural setting in this study lent itself to qualitative inquiry methods.

#### **Type of Design and Pilot Study**

The qualitative approach utilized in this research was case study. A case study is "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). This case study explored a men's distance running coaching philosophy within the bounded system of the NCAA.

Yin (2009) provides five reasons one might conduct a single-case design. The rationale for applying a single-case design with the present study was that this case was both a unique and representative case. In this study, the participant coach was unique in the sense that he was a “successful” coach, yet coached within a representative men’s NCAA distance running environment. The intent was to capture the circumstances or conditions of a typical situation with the lessons learned assumed to be revealing about the experiences of the person or organization (Yin, 2009). More information on the participant coach and his qualification as “successful” is provided in the selection of participants section below.

In addition, a pilot study was conducted to strengthen the credibility of the qualitative process of the study. A pilot study provides a trial run for the researcher to help reveal whether the study and its methods seem plausible, and in this case, determine if questions in the qualitative interviews are appropriate and not confusing (Cozby, 2009). Likewise, participant athlete sampling and observation techniques were also piloted and strengthened.

### **Researcher’s Role**

In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Biases must be identified and monitored by the researcher to reduce the likelihood that they may shape collection and interpretation of data (Merriam, 2009). For this reason it is imperative to provide a description of the researcher’s relationship to the phenomenon being studied.

The motivation for this research stemmed from the researcher’s interest and current and past personal experiences in distance running. The researcher has been a competitive distance runner since 1993 and has been coached by four different distance running coaches. During this time the researcher competed within the United States high school and NCAA

Divisions II and III, Ireland's University, and Scotland's club and University competition structures. The events competed within these structures encompassed cross country, track, road and hill running over distances 800 meters to the marathon (26.2 miles). This diverse background has allowed the researcher to be exposed to different coaching philosophies and methods and has spurred the motivation to explore these differences. It is the researcher's personal preference to be coached within a humanistic, democratic, and collaboratively administered program.

Dependent on perspective, the researcher could be viewed as an "insider" or "outsider" in relation to this research topic. Ways in which the researcher could be considered an "insider" includes the fact that he was training and participating at a competitive level in regional distance running races at the time of the study, he formerly competed as a NCAA Divisions II and III distance runner, and he previously coached high school and NCAA Division III distance runners. On the other hand, the researcher was an "outsider" in the sense that he competed and coached within a different division of the NCAA and in the northeast region of the United States. This research was conducted in the west region of the United States with a NCAA Division I university. The researcher had to become familiar with varying regional team rivalries, competitions, and athletic conferences because this study was conducted in a different region and NCAA division.

In this study the researcher took on the role of "observer as participant" as he participated in some of the training sessions with the team, but the participation was unquestionably secondary to the role of data gatherer and researcher (Merriam, 2009). As was the case with the pilot study, the observer as participant role enabled the researcher to become closer to the athletes and assisted them in feeling more comfortable to open up more

throughout the study (i.e., the athletes let their guard down and relate to the researcher as a fellow distance runner).

Most importantly, the researcher made a conscious effort to display reflexivity throughout the study and was aware of the biases, values, and experiences he brought to the research and kept an open mind during all data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007). The researcher attempted to enter the study without any preconceived notions about the coach's philosophy or methods – a concept called bracketing or epoche in which the researcher refrains from judgment and sets aside past experiences as much as possible to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). Keeping a researcher's journal while conducting the study assisted the researcher in keeping personal biases at bay.

### **Selection of Participants**

There were six primary participants in this study – one coach and five athletes. Selection of the participant coach included purposeful criterion sampling methods. Non-probability purposeful sampling was employed to be sure the participant coach met the desired criteria of the study to inform the guiding research questions and central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The participant coach in this study was the current head coach of an NCAA men's distance running team – NCAA men's cross country running, NCAA men's indoor track and field 5,000 meter, and NCAA men's outdoor track and field 5,000 meter / 10,000 meter – and was considered successful. “Successful” in this study equated to the coach having distance running athletes and teams qualify for the NCAA national championships.

The coach in this study has led 15 teams (9 men's, 6 women's) to the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships between 1998 and 2011 with all but 2 squads earning top-25

finishes. Furthermore, the coach has previously been bestowed as the NCAA Division I “Coach of the Year” by his peers and has coached 17 men’s and women’s distance running NCAA Division I All-Americans as of spring 2012. The participant coach’s background information and characteristics can be seen in appendix C. The university where the coach currently works is in the west region of the United States but will not be named to provide anonymity to the coach. The consent form and the coach letter of consent can be found in appendix D and E, respectively.

Selection criteria of the participant athletes included that they must have been participating on the men’s distance running team under the tutelage of the participant coach for at least one season prior to commencing data collection (i.e., exclude first-year freshmen and first-season transfer athletes). This assured that participant athletes were already familiar with the coach and his coaching philosophy, style, and methods prior to the start of the study. In addition, all participants were 18 years of age or older.

Random purposeful sampling methods of five athletes occurred within the case. Random sampling adds credibility to the sample and removes selection bias (Creswell, 2007). Humanistic coaching philosophy prescribes an incremental empowerment of the athlete based upon athlete age and, more importantly, experience level of the athlete (Hogg, 1995). Knowing this, it was important to interview athletes with varying degrees of experience with the coach. The following procedures were used to randomly select the athletes across varying experience levels with the coach.

At the start of a men’s cross country team practice session the principal investigator gave a five minute presentation using the recruitment script found in appendix F. The script describes the study and provides an explanation of what the interview participants would be

asked to do, including the risks and benefits involved with participation. Consent forms (see appendix D) were provided to those interested in participating. The principal investigator was also available to answer further questions throughout the practice session. The prospective eligible athletes then had the opportunity to take the consent form with them after this initial presentation and did not have to make a decision until the next day. This allowed the prospective eligible athletes sufficient opportunity and time to consider whether or not to participate and to ask questions. The athletes to be interviewed in the study were randomly selected using the following procedures.

Four boxes were available throughout the practice session after the presentation and in the morning of the next day's practice session for eligible athletes interested in participating. Interested athletes privately wrote their name on a small slip of paper and placed it in one of the sealed boxes with a lid corresponding to their category at any time at their discretion. Those athletes who had been coached by the participant coach one season (i.e., "Freshmen") put their names in the so-marked box and one was randomly selected to participate at the start of the next day of practice. This process repeated for interested athletes being coached by the participant coach for two seasons (i.e., "Sophomores") and three seasons (i.e., "Juniors"). Finally, two interested athletes with four seasons (i.e., "Seniors") with the participant coach were randomly selected as they had the most experience with the coach. As stated previously, this process assured five athletes were randomly selected across different levels of experience with the coach.

After random selection of the five athletes, all slips of paper were immediately destroyed and the athletes were randomly assigned codes (e.g., Athlete 1, Athlete 2, etc.).

After this, there was no link to any athlete's identity as no identifiers were collected.

Participant athletes' background information can be found in appendix I.

### **Data Collection**

The sources of data collection in this study included coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session field observations, and artifacts. Merriam (2009) recommends continuing to collect data until a saturation point is reached where regularities emerge and any new information attained is far removed from the guiding research questions. Field observation data collection occurred from November 2, 2012 until the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships held on November 17, 2012 – approximately two weeks. Specific data collection procedures are described below.

#### **Coach and athlete interviews.**

Two semi-structured interviews of the coach were conducted across the peaking (i.e., championship) phase of training. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Underpinned by the literature review, the goal of semi-structured interviews is to explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words (Esterberg, 2002). Similarly, one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes each with five different athletes occurred to determine if the coach's philosophy and methods were congruent with the coach's stated philosophy and methods. The coach and athlete interview schedules can be found in appendix G and H, respectively.

Interviews took place in a closed meeting room privately with the researcher. Audio recordings are the standard method of capturing interview data (Creswell, 2007). An Olympus digital voice recorder model VN-8100PC (Olympus Imaging America Inc., Center Valley, PA) with a noise-canceling microphone was used as the main method of data

collection for all of the qualitative interviews. Given the length of the interviews, it was necessary to use an audio recorder to ensure accuracy of recording for later analysis. The principal investigator gained consent from the participants for its use verbally and placed it in a discrete location within the interview venue for recording. Informed consent of the coach and participating athletes was obtained prior to data collection. This was done verbally only because no identifiers were being collected and a signed consent form would have been the only link to the participants' identities.

### **Observations.**

The researcher spent approximately two weeks observing a successful men's NCAA distance running (cross country) team located in the west region of the United States during their peaking (i.e., championship) training cycle. Eight overt naturalistic field observations across this one phase of training occurred. The researcher employed Thomas and Nelson's (2001) narrative method of recording and describing the coach/athlete interactions and observations as they occurred in note form with a pad of paper and pencil and later type the notes within 24 hours to improve recollection. The observations primarily included descriptions of training events, quotes by the coach and athletes, training techniques employed, interactions of the coach and athletes, and general impressions perceived by the researcher. As described previously, the researcher occasionally took the "observer as participant" role as he participated in some of the training sessions which typically do not have much coach/athlete interaction during the workout (i.e., easy and long runs). No names were collected or included in the field observation notes.

### **Artifacts.**



Artifacts were also collected and used to help determine the coach's coaching philosophy. Creswell (2007) describes artifacts as what people make and use. In this study, artifacts including the team handbook (including the coach-directed team's "philosophy, priorities, and policies") and training session planning schedules sent via email to the athletes were used.

### **Data Management and Analysis**

The collected data was then transcribed verbatim. Privacy of participants was made through the covert coding of names (e.g., "Athlete 1", etc.). The researcher used the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software *Atlas.ti version 7.0* (Scientific Software Development, Gmbh, Germany) to assist in organizing and categorizing the data. However, while the qualitative data analysis software did not analyze the data for the researcher (Merriam, 2009), Saldaña (2009) notes that it is an indispensable tool for studies with multiple participant interviews and field note observations.

After the data was imported into *Atlas.ti*, coding occurred with the software. "Qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity – a pattern – they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 8). These developing categories which emerge across the codes are called themes.

The qualitative data analysis strategy used included open coding, axial coding, and then selective coding as prescribed by Creswell (2007). First, the qualitative data was analyzed through open coding where the data was coded for its primary categories and themes. Next, axial coding commenced where major open coding categories were identified as the core phenomenon and then the data was re-analyzed around these core phenomenon.

Finally, selective coding transpired where findings were generated through the interrelationships of the major coded categories or themes.

### **Trustworthiness of Data**

To assist with internal validity, triangulation was employed. In the multi-methods approach of triangulation, the use of more than one source of data, such as interviews and observation, provides a greater likelihood a researcher's conclusions are valid (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). Data triangulated included the coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session observations, and artifacts collected.

Furthermore, randomly selecting the athletes further assisted in the validity and reliability within the study (Cozby, 2009). Using random selection methods gives every eligible consenting athlete equal chance to be selected. If the coach had nominated athletes to participate he may have only chosen the athletes he had the best relationship with, thus potentially skewing the responses. A randomized process improved the likelihood to represent a more holistic point of view of the entire team of athletes.

Finally, an external audit transpired with a content matter expert in the field of humanism and coaching philosophies. Audits by a content matter expert, having no connection to the study, assists in increasing validity as they assess whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data (Creswell, 2007). In addition to the external audit, the credibility of this study was also improved because the researcher has studied under a seminal author of humanistic coaching, Neville Cross, during his master of science in performance coaching degree completion at the University of Edinburgh.

### **Limitations**

Problems can arise if individuals put ideas into practice without sufficient knowledge of the potential limits on the applicability of a particular study's conclusions. For this reason, weaknesses or limitations on the interpretations of the study's findings and its methodology are highlighted in topical areas below.

**Research methodology limitations.**

The research could have been strengthened through a more extensive triangulation of methods by including a larger sample of coaches and athletes and determining if the sample size selected was indicative of the larger population of men's NCAA distance running coaches. Interviews of other stakeholders such as assistant coaches, athletic directors or other support personnel could also strengthen the results. Also, this study only included eight training session observations for the coach. An extended observation period over several phases of training (e.g., pre-competition, competition, peaking) or for the entire duration of a season could have further strengthened the triangulation of results so that the coach could have been observed in several different coach-related situations.

**Researcher limitations.**

While the researcher was aware of epoche and reflexivity, the researcher still could have brought unknown bias to the research as a distance runner and former NCAA distance running coach. Furthermore, while it could be seen as a strength to be an outsider to the west region, this could also be seen as a limitation as the researcher has to familiarize himself with the NCAA Division I and west region running structure throughout the research.

**Distance running event selection and applicability.**

The fact that the term "distance running" was broadened to include cross country and indoor and outdoor track running across distances from 5,000 to 10,000 meters is a further

limitation of the study. While a coaching philosophy should not change, implications and applications of strategies and coaching methods for different running event distances and changing terrain may change across events. This limitation questions the applicability and generalizability of the results across all running events included in the study. Furthermore, while a coaching philosophy may transcend physical environments, generalizability to other coaches and specific coaching environments must be heeded with caution. In the pilot study coach's own words: "I also know that what I do here is probably not replicable in somebody else's environment. I have this high altitude environment. We do our own system."

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings and Analysis of Themes**

The aim of this case study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men's NCAA distance running coach and describe to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach are humanistic. Utilizing coach interviews, athlete interviews, training session observations, and collected artifacts, this study was guided by the following research questions: 1) What is the coaching philosophy of the participant men's NCAA distance running coach?, 2) To what extent is this coach's stated coaching philosophy humanistic?, and 3) To what extent are this coach's coaching methods congruent with a humanistic philosophy?

Three prominent re-occurring themes emerged from the data. These themes included coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships, coach/athlete decision-making, and the coach's definition of success. Collected supporting qualitative data will be provided for each theme which will then be analyzed in regards to the extent in which it does or does not parallel the humanistic coaching philosophy. In this analysis of themes the pseudonym "Coach" will be used for the participant coach as well as "Athlete" (with an assigned code – e.g., Athlete 1, Athlete 2, etc.) for the participant athletes.

#### **Theme 1: Coach/Athlete Interpersonal Communication and Relationships**

At the very heart of humanistic coaching is the focus of a strong communicative interpersonal relationship between the athlete and coach. Within the humanistic paradigm athletes are encouraged to self-regulate and make decisions collaboratively with the coach (Lyle, 2002). In order for decisions to be made collaboratively, the coach and athlete must have open communication characteristic of a close interpersonal relationship. These open

lines of communication facilitate a collaborative process to athletic development, what Cross (1991) cites as a key humanistic coaching method. A close interpersonal relationship between athlete and coach is stressed in a humanistic philosophy where decisions are shared. Coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships emerged as an area that seemed to illustrate the extent to which the coach was humanistic. Sub-themes evident in the data relating to coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships arose in the following areas: coach's accessibility for communication, the view of the coach/athlete interpersonal relationship, communication with "new" runners to the program, communication with top runners and runners with more experience, and communication at training sessions.

#### **Coach accessibility for communication.**

First, all of the participant athletes felt Coach was easily accessible for communication. Aside from face-to-face verbal interactions, the primary modes of communication included telephone calls and texting between Coach and his athletes. Athlete 1 stated, "I can call him essentially whenever...or text him and he's usually accessible. I haven't ever encountered not being able to talk to him when I needed to." Athlete 2 concurred by stating, "Unless he's in a meeting, he'll always answer the phone to you, whether it's about running or not." In line with humanistic ideals, coach appeared to support open lines of communication with his athletes, even regarding potential other non-running holistic concerns.

#### **View of coach/athlete interpersonal relationship.**

This open communication between the athletes and Coach may have facilitated the positive view of their interpersonal relationships. The humanistic coach's role goes beyond

the professional role of a coach, but also takes on such parts as friend, supporter, guide, mentor, and facilitator (Cross, 1991). When Coach was asked how he would label the relationship between himself and his athletes, Coach responded, “I’d say more friend/father, not professional. More mentor-ish.” Many of the athletes concurred with Coach’s statement. Athlete 5 labeled it a friend/father relationship when he said:

It’s kind of a friend, but then it kind of crosses into where he’s kind of that father.

Like he’s somebody I look up to a lot...At the same time I can joke around with him and we talk about things that we’re into.

Likewise, Athlete 1 labeled the relationship as friendly, but also noted that Coach provides him desired autonomy – a humanistic ideal. He stated, “I definitely see him as my superior...but he’s...down on the friendly level. I still feel that...he’s my coach...but he treats me like I’m a grown man – that I can handle responsibilities, which I think is nice.” A father-figure relationship was evident with two of the athletes whose parents did not live within the United States. Athlete 2 said, “He’s like my dad away from England. Like, if I was to get arrested I’d ring him...I can argue with him, but five minutes later...we’ll both just have forgotten about it. I’m pretty close to [Coach].” Athlete 3 compartmentalized the relationship by noting that Coach is a father-figure, friend, and mentor:

My parents live in a different country so I can’t always speak with [them]. I had to put new tires on my car and I phoned [Coach] and I said, ‘Where should I go?’ And in that sense he is almost like a father-figure...[Coach] listens to a lot of the same music we listen to...It’s kind of fun to just joke around with [Coach] as a friend for sure. And then you learn that he’s a mentor in the running aspect. He teaches you so much.

These athlete comments relating to friend, father, and mentor also resembles a holistic concern for the athletes beyond typical coach responsibilities (e.g., training planning, program management, etc.), in line with a humanistic coach's caring and person-centered athlete-welfare approach (Lyle, 1999). Support for these types of coach/athlete relationships was also evident in the training session observations.

**Less communication with “new” runners to the program.**

The majority of the athletes felt Coach did not communicate enough with freshmen or first-year transfer distance runners for various reasons. This was provided by several participant athletes as a common dislike or improvement needed for Coach. Athlete 5 mentioned as an improvement for Coach to “talk to the freshman a little more.” Describing how Coach would typically interact with a “new” runner, Athlete 2 stated, “He would...not give you as much attention as you wanted.” It appeared these athletes felt an interpersonal relationship between Coach and “new” athletes to the program was lacking. However, some of the athletes felt that it was the job of the assistant coach to interact more with these “new” runners. For example, Athlete 5 stated:

As a freshman [Coach] didn't talk to us as much...but I think that's also why [the assistant coach] is there, too. I mean, she really tries to focus on the people that aren't getting as much attention. Because I think that's definitely pretty hard because he's got to kind of pay attention to the guys who are in that top seven.

On the other hand, the performance level of the “new” athlete (i.e., how “good” the runner is) and whether the athlete initiates the communication also appeared to impact how open the communication was between Coach and his athletes. “[Coach] spends more time with the faster guys, whereas he gives a lot of the work with some of the slower guys to [the



assistant coach],” stated Athlete 1. Athlete 3 said, “I think freshman year...he loses some potentially good runners based on the fact that...you have to build a relationship with him. [Coach] doesn't build a relationship with you. Freshman year, unless you're running really well, you don't exist in his eyes.” Likewise, Athlete 2, who finished third for the team at nationals, noted:

I think there's a point where you [have] to prove yourself. That you actually want it – that you want to be a good runner – and that you're going to put as much time in it as he is. So as a new runner, it's pretty much you just have to show up to practice.

[Coach] will still talk to you, like, he'll advise you on what to do. If you ever needed a meeting with him, or want to talk to him about something, his door is always open.

But, someone like me he'll text, like, three times a day to see how I am.

Athletes felt this may be a problem as freshmen may want more attention and could be intimidated by the NCAA Division I coach stature. “Some of the freshmen may feel like they're maybe intimidated to go and speak with [Coach],” noted Athlete 3. Athlete 5 addressed this when he stated:

As a freshman you're kind of nervous. It's like a head [NCAA Division I] coach...I think that's one of the hardest things for a freshmen coming into the program...they probably feel a little left out...In a high school environment...if you're the top in your high school the high school coach is usually going to love you...It's going to be every moment.

It is likely that distance runners competing within the NCAA Division I competition structure were top athletes from their high school and were given increased attention and communication with their high school coach. Not receiving much attention from their new

NCAA Division I collegiate coach could be a drastic change for freshmen and, as noted previously by Athlete 3, could result in negative consequences such as some freshmen quitting the team.

Moreover, it emerged that the amount of communication from Coach depended on whether the athlete took the initiative to communicate with Coach first. Coach addressed this when he said:

There's a definite portion of the team that gets the short end of the stick. But they're also typically not very proactive...So I think texting, calls at night at home...I think that the athlete has to realize that there's 104 people [on the men's and women's track and cross country teams] so they've got to be proactive.

As previously mentioned, this may be an issue for "new" runners to the program who could feel intimidated to initiate communication with Coach. Coach commented, "I see a difference between freshmen/sophomores and juniors/seniors. I think they gain more self-confidence and willingness to talk the older [they] get. Where the younger [they] are the less likely [they] are to talk to authority...or perceived authority." If Coach perceives this, it is undetermined why he would not initiate more communication with freshmen. Moreover, Athlete 2 said, "I'm not sure how much he speaks to the freshman, like the ones that aren't as good. I know if you're not that good he doesn't speak to you much...If they go and speak to him he will speak to them." In summary, it appeared that the amount of communication by Coach depended on how "good" the freshman was and whether communication was initiated by the athlete.

**More communication with top runners and runners with more experience.**

It was also perceived by these athletes that the top runners, no matter whether they were “new” or not, received more attention and communication with Coach. However, the data gathered was in drastic contrast to what Coach stated. Coach said,

The irony of that is that we probably spend 75% of our time with the least production possible, which people would never believe...Maybe they're more needy...Maybe we assume that the top 25% doesn't need the help, but I can unequivocally say that we spend most of our time with kids that don't produce...It's not real smart, but it's our fault for not cutting people.

Athlete 4, who was the least accomplished cross country runner of the participant athletes, stated:

When it comes to communicating with the top tier athletes I believe [Coach] spends a little more time with them...I know he's in contact with a lot of the [top] guys on the team on a daily basis, but I rarely talk to him myself through texts and stuff like that. Several of the top participant athletes mentioned how Coach would send them personal text messages or call them after certain workouts to check on them. Athlete 2, who finished in the top seven on the cross country team the entire season, stated Coach will text him three times a day to check on him. He continued by saying, “[Coach's] classic text is just one word and it's: ‘update.’ And you'll just text back, like, ‘Yeah. Good.’ And then, like, six hours later you'll get [another text]: ‘update.’” Moreover, Athlete 3, who placed as high as second for the team during the cross country season, noted:

Freshman year I didn't like [Coach] at all...Junior year I'm really liking him. He'll text me after a workout and say, ‘Well done. How do you feel?’ or ‘Take it easy today’...something that I didn't have a year or two ago. So he's warming up to me.

Athlete 1, who was a freshman and finished second for the team at the NCAA national cross country championships, echoed this sentiment by stating:

I never had a schedule this season. I kind of just called or texted [Coach] each day and he gave me my run and so on...I know that with some of the other freshmen he had [the assistant coach] do a schedule for them.

It appeared that the line where communication decreased was after the eighth runner. In cross country, eight runners typically make the “travel squad” as seven runners compete and one runner travels as an alternate. Coach stated,

The other night...I made a specific effort. I’m calling all 16 kids just for multiple reasons. If I call one and they’re sitting next to the other and I don’t call the other, then all hell breaks loose. So I made a specific effort to call or leave a message for all 16 of them...the [top] eight women and eight men.

Although Coach displayed a concern to communicate with the top eight cross country runners, an equal concern was not expressed for the rest of the team. While humanistic theory does not advocate that fair methods equate with equal attention for all team members, humanistic coaching methods would entail a level of attention to match that desired by each athlete (Cross, 1991). Realistically, however, time constraints on the coach may not allow this to happen. Coach’s cross country team handbook addressed why the treatment of all athletes is not always equal:

Each member of the program will be treated fairly. Individuals will NOT be treated equally as our sport makes determinations based on performance. Some individuals, based on performance, travel more and receive more equipment. However, everyone can be assured of fair treatment.

Several of the athletes described how communication is more open and comfortable with Coach with the senior athletes – oftentimes also representing the top runners. Athlete 3 described the transition of relationship with Coach across a runner’s collegiate career by stating, “I think it becomes a seniority thing unless you’re running really well your freshman year. You have to break [Coach] – peel him back in layers. And your senior year you’ve gotten to the core.” Describing the relationship between Coach and the senior runners, freshman Athlete 1 stated, “He’s very open with them.” Athlete 2 commented that Coach would interact with seniors “like a friend...because he’ll know [them] as much as you can really know someone. Because [they would have] spent pretty much every day of five years with him.” Regarding how Coach would interact with senior runners, senior Athletes 4 and 5 each stated, “Probably more in a friendly way...so he’s very open and just really like himself” and “I think he’s just much more comfortable... – both sides are much more comfortable,” respectively. It appears that as an athlete moves through the program communication and the coach/athlete relationship improves and becomes more open and relaxed.

#### **Little coach/athlete communication at training sessions.**

It was evident in the training session observations that there was very little Coach/athlete interaction at training sessions. Communication was minimal between Coach and his athletes. Many of the typical coach responsibilities (e.g., explaining the workouts, timing interval splits at the track, riding a bike alongside the runners during tempo workouts to evaluate form or pace, etc.) were delegated to other assistant or volunteer coaches. While Coach seemed to bring a light jovial mood to training sessions through singing or joking with athletes, he provided minimal feedback to them. Coach stated, “I’m not a big feedback guy

unless they make dumb racing errors...[like] leading a race or leading the peloton chase group in cross country.” This little feedback and communication during training session observations could have been due to these observations taking place during the peaking phase of the season nearer the championship races. Coach may naturally reduce communication and feedback with athletes during this time as he may feel they “know what to do” by this point in the season and what needs to be said has already been said. The minimal communication during training sessions could also be characteristic of Coach’s style as he may want his athletes to self-regulate, signifying humanistic autonomy-supportive coaching methods where the athletes make more decisions themselves. Finally, Coach may not communicate much with his athletes during training sessions because of the plethora of responsibilities he has as a head men’s and women’s cross country and track and field coach as he was seen on his telephone many times during training sessions.

However, Coach did display concern for all athletes at training sessions, focusing on monitoring each runner’s responses to training and recovery. For example, as the men’s team was approaching the end of their out-and-back eight mile tempo run, Coach asked if everyone was there (i.e., all still in the pack), which appeared to show concern for all members of the team. Furthermore, Coach explained his technique for his teams running well at the end of the season through the following story:

[A coach from another university] sent me an email and said, ‘Can we talk sometime before December because your teams always run well at the end and my teams beat you early and we never run well at the end. So do you mind talking?’ ...I don't think we do anything special....I'll tell him, ‘We go by what we feel,’ which he is not going to like because he’s a physiologist... You know, you get to see if [Athlete 5] has

bags underneath his eyes. Has he been up studying all night?

It appears Coach's style is more reserved in regards to interacting with his athletes at training as he takes more of a supervisory role. This technique also displays a somewhat humanistic and holistic concern for the individual athlete as Coach seems to monitor each member of the team (although this may only occur with the top runners). However, reduced communication between Coach and athlete at training sessions could also have negative consequences, particularly with the less-experienced runners. For example, Athlete 5 noted that "some of the younger guys...probably...have no clue what [certain paces are] supposed to feel like or what a tempo is supposed to feel like." He continued by stating Coach communicates with the better athletes more despite that they are "the ones that are actually [more] comfortable [talking to] him." Particularly with less-experienced runners, athletes may want more guidance and feedback on their training (e.g., regarding form, pace, recovery, etc.) to improve and humanistic methods would certainly provide this desired coach/athlete communication.

## **Theme 2: Coach/Athlete Decision-making**

Within the humanistic paradigm athletes are encouraged to make decisions collaboratively with the coach as the coach facilitates athlete self-regulation (Lombardo, 1987). Decision-making within the coaching process is shared incrementally with the athlete as he or she gains experience so that the athlete eventually achieves a sense of control (Hogg, 1995). Utilizing a shared decision-making philosophy between athlete and coach, it is hoped that the athlete develops self-efficacy and autonomy in relation to the performance process and is able to adapt to adversity (e.g., injury, training environment changes, etc.) without being dependent on the coach. The athlete's involvement in the coaching process and its

related decision-making would assist in developing what Cross (1991) cites as the ultimate goal of a humanistic coach – “an emancipated, adaptable, and self-confident person” (p. 17). In this study, coach/athlete decision-making sub-themes emerged in the following areas: whether coach permitted opportunities for athlete free expression, the goal setting process, the process of planning the training program, general program decision-making, athlete autonomy, athlete dependency on the coach, and perceptions of who was in control of the process of athletic development.

### **Opportunities for athlete free expression.**

Closely related to coach/athlete communication, the humanistic coach must provide athletes opportunities for free expression so that decisions may be made with athlete input. The athlete must feel comfortable to speak their ideas and opinions within the humanistic framework to encourage collaborative decision-making. For the most part, the athletes felt Coach allowed them to comfortably express their opinions relating to coaching decisions. For example, Athlete 3 said he felt comfortable questioning a decision by Coach and stated, “I feel like I can go and talk to [Coach] and say... ‘I think the team is tired’ or ‘I think the team doesn’t need this’ or ‘the team needs to do this’ and I think he’ll take that into consideration.” Likewise, Athlete 4 mentioned, “I feel comfortable talking to [Coach] about anything and I’m not afraid to approach him.” Moreover, Athlete 1, a freshman, noted, “I can’t say, ‘I want this’ or ‘I want that’ and get it just like that, but I feel like at least I can give some kind of input or...speak my mind.” Overall, it appeared the athletes felt comfortable expressing their opinions to Coach and were provided opportunities to do so.

Athlete 5, a senior, felt that the more time he spent with Coach the less he questioned Coach’s decisions due to a development of trust with Coach. He explained:



When I was younger...I questioned [Coach] probably a little bit more. But now...I don't question [him] at all...If you want to really run well under your coach you have to kind of be trusting him...I think that's a big [facet of the] coach/athlete relationship that you need.

Similarly, Athlete 2 stated, "I never used to see eye-to-eye with him...,[but] ever since I just stopped arguing with him and just did whatever [Coach] told me to [do] I've become a better athlete." While it appeared Athletes 5 and 2 still felt comfortable expressing their opinions, they also sensed that a level of complete trust with Coach was necessary to perform well. In this instance, the humanistic coach may explain to the athletes the reasoning behind the coaching decisions to still involve the athletes in the coaching process and possibly reduce dependency on the coach.

### **The goal setting process.**

Within the humanistic framework individual athlete and team goals should be created collaboratively with the coach. Feelings of athlete ownership of the program are facilitated through involving athletes in this process. It emerged from the data that individual athlete and team goals were created in a humanistic fashion.

Coach explained the process for setting individual athlete goals entails "meeting with them [individually]." Several of the athletes explained these one-on-one meetings occur before the cross country and indoor track seasons where athlete goals are discussed relating to the upcoming season with input from both parties. In addition, a collaborative goal setting session also occurs with the team prior to the cross country season. Athlete 3 discussed the process:

We had a team cross country camp before the first race. [Coach] sat us down and

said, 'What do you guys want to do?' And so we each had a note card and we each wrote our individual goals...And [then] he said, 'Well now we're going to set the team goals.'...The older guys...kind of stood up and said..., 'This is what we've done. This is what we should do.' And then...there's the one freshman who says, 'Oh, we're going to win nationals,' but altogether I think the team decided on some pretty good goals.

Furthermore in line with humanistic values, Athlete 5 noted that at this goal setting session "a lot of us didn't [write] just running goals...I had school stuff in there and [Coach] was asking, 'What would be the hardest goal?'" In addition to facilitating the collaborative and athlete-centered goal setting sessions, Coach displays a concern for holistic development of his athletes in line with the humanistic philosophy.

### **The process of planning the training program.**

A humanistic method of program planning would be individualized and collaborative between the athlete and coach allowing for athlete input in the process. When asked whether training is planned independently or with input from athletes, Coach stated, "In cross [country], there's not a lot of input [from athletes] until the end. Because in the beginning I know certain things are going to lead to certain things." Coach further expressed an authoritative stance regarding tempo workouts, calling them "the bread and butter of our life," and said, "[The athletes] can have an opinion about the ten mile tempo and they can voice their displeasure, but it will not change...I know if you can run 52:30 and talk, you're going to run well."

Athletes described the training planning process as somewhat collaborative. Training planning primarily surrounded the individual athlete's daily and weekly running miles across the season. Athlete 3 described the collaborative process of planning his training by saying:

I sat down with [the assistant coach] and I saw [Coach] in passing...I said I wanted to run this many miles for this week, 'What you think?' And she said, 'It's a little high. Bring it on a little lower.' So as far as the overall mileage goes they're not going to force you to run 90 miles if you're not feeling well. So they have a very loose plan of what they want you to run. So I'm going to be building based on what they told me to do. But as far as your daily mileage goes, it's kind of up in the air. I mean, they would like you obviously not to...take three days off and try to get the rest of your week's mileage in four days. But they try to get you to have...a medium long run, a long run, two workouts and then just moderate runs the rest of the week.

Similarly, Athlete 4 discussed his level of involvement in training planning by stating:

At the meeting [the assistant coach] asks me if I have any questions about [the plan] or if I'm comfortable with it. And we'll go over that and if I don't feel comfortable with it, like [if] I don't have a day off for four weeks,...she [may say], 'If you ever need a day off during the week, take it. Let me know and document it on your log.'

It surfaced that this type of "mileage training plan" was created for primarily less experienced (i.e., freshmen) runners and for those who desired a plan. For many of these athletes the training plan was presented to them and then they were provided an opportunity to provide feedback to the coaches on the plan. Athlete 4 went on to say, "I mean it's not like I can completely change [the plan], but if I have concerns I'm allowed to voice them."

These athlete assertions relating to planned mileage for primarily easy and long run workouts

were supported during training session observations as the athletes would congregate and Coach would simply say, “All right. Let’s go guys!” And the team would begin their run without Coach notifying them how far to run.

***Athlete input, individualization, and autonomy regarding weekly training mileage.***

It emerged that, particularly with more experienced athletes, Coach provided autonomy regarding how many miles to run each week and let the athlete decide how best to attain that mileage across each week. This humanistic process also allowed for individualization for each athlete so that they could do what they perceived as what was best for them. Athlete 2 stated:

Mileage is more up to you with [Coach]. He wants you to do as many miles as you can. So if you can only handle 70 miles a week without getting injured, he wants you to do 70 miles a week. He doesn’t want you doing 50 [miles] because you’re scared of being on the red line. But if you can do a 100 mile a week he’s never going to stop you. He’ll say, ‘If you can do 100 miles a week, week-in and week-out, good.’

Athlete 5 commented on Coach’s athlete-centered stance regarding weekly training mileage when he said, “Generally [Coach gives us flexibility in] the miles we run per week...[Coach] knows some of the guys don’t respond well to the higher mileages, and he doesn't really try to force that upon them.” Athlete 3 stated he ran about 70 miles per week his freshman year, 80 miles per week his sophomore year, and 90 miles per week his junior year and felt this progression was designed in collaboration with Coach and himself. Athlete 3 further explained:

The [interval and tempo] workouts are very structured and...we can’t really play around with those too much. But as far as your mileage goes, [Coach] is willing to

talk to you about your mileage. But otherwise you're on your own. He doesn't tell you, 'Today you need to run this much,' which...takes a little stress off of the athlete as far as feeling the need to run a 100 mile week...or feeling they're being pushed to run low mileage where...that's not how their body works.

This individualization of weekly training volume may facilitate individual athlete performance as each athlete would be doing what they perceive is best for them.

***No athlete input when planning interval and tempo workouts.***

However, it emerged that while collaborative coach/athlete training planning primarily concerned individualized weekly mileage goals, all athletes stated that “hard” interval or tempo workouts were not planned collaboratively and specifics of these workouts were not known in advance by the athletes. Weekly training times and locations were emailed out by the assistant coach for the upcoming week typically on Monday afternoons across the season. The athletes simply knew the routine that an interval workout would occur approximately every Tuesday and tempo workouts every Friday (on weeks without a weekend race). Weekly mileage goals should then be attained after adjusting to what mileage was achieved during these more intense workouts.

Coach stated the athletes “typically will have an idea” of the specifics of interval and tempo workouts due to the repetition of the training schedule. For example, Coach said, “They know that on Fridays, if we're not racing, it's going to be a [tempo] 10 miler.” Athlete 2 discussed this non-collaboration of “hard” workouts when he commented, “A lot of [Coach's] workouts are quite repetitive but they're just the ones he's been doing for years and he's quite hard to deviate.” “We were programmed to know that Friday's a tempo day and Tuesday's a workout day – a track workout,” stated Athlete 3. Moreover, at all interval

and training session observations the athletes did not know the workout in advance when asked by the researcher. This indicated no athlete involvement in planning these more intense training sessions.

Athlete 2 cited a lack of communication regarding track interval workouts as an area where Coach should improve. He stated some athletes may “think their training is just being free-styled, like you just show up to the track...Just show up when he tells you and he just knows what you’re doing type-thing.” In other words, athletes may feel training is made up on the spot by Coach because the athletes are not informed of the “hard” workouts in advance. This may affect the level of trust they have in Coach’s training plan, possibly affecting their mental states heading into races. However, Athlete 3 thought not knowing the “hard” workouts in advance may be beneficial. He said:

I don’t stress about workouts, but I think there’s a lot of people who think ‘this is a really hard workout’ and they’ll not get any sleep the night before...So I think if you stress about it too much then you’re not going to do so well and that’s why [Coach doesn’t] make [it] so apparent what the workout is going to be.

It appears there are pros and cons to not knowing the entire training plan in advance. However, in this case study, the athletes were not given the choice to be privy to this information, thus yielding this part of the coaching process not humanistic.

***More input from athletes regarding training at the end of the season.***

It emerged that Coach was more willing to accept athlete input regarding training toward the end of the season. This primarily surrounded modifications to track interval workouts. Coach stated, “Only towards the end [of the season], if they don’t like what’s going on – if they are like, ‘Oh boy, I don’t know about this,’ then that’s when we tweak.” It

appeared Coach was dictatorial in regards to “hard” workout training (i.e., interval and tempo) up until the peaking/championship phase of the season whereupon his methods then became more collaborative. Coach was more willing to accept input from athletes during this phase of the training cycle where the conference, regional, and national championship meets occur. While the humanistic coach would collaborate with athletes across all phases of training, Coach may allow for more athlete input nearer the end of the season to take special care of the mental and physical states of his athletes to try and do what is best for them leading into the most important races of the season.

While Coach stated he primarily dictates training early in the season, he explained how he operates through more shared power and negotiation toward the end of the season through adjusting interval workouts late in the season from athlete feedback. Coach stated:

I’d be willing to bend on changing an interval-type workout at some level – the type of interval doesn’t matter as long as the volume is there. And if [the athletes] want it to be a shorter interval, I’m going to kill the rest to make it 30 seconds so that I can get what I want.

For example, Coach might change a planned workout of six 800 meter repeats with 60 seconds rest between each to twelve 400 meter repeats with 20 seconds rest. The total volume of “hard” running is 4800 meters (a little under three miles) for both workouts, but the recoveries are drastically different for each. Athlete 5 supported Coach’s assertions when he stated, “Sometimes...[Coach] will...give us two workouts and say, ‘Well what would you guys like today?’ And that’s not super often, but occasionally...It’s definitely more toward the end of the season – even if it’s just a pre-race workout.” Coach explained his reasoning for allowing more athlete input on interval training toward the end of the season by saying,

“At that time of year the whole goal is not to fuck them up. You know, overrun. Do something too much because we’re not getting any better.” In other words, Coach’s prime concern at the end of the season is preventing injury and staying sharp as enhancing fitness is not a prime concern at this point in the season.

**General program decision-making.**

Coach stated the framework which directs his decision-making in NCAA cross country coaching is guided by the following:

How do you get to the end goal, not getting injured, not getting sick? The season’s about...89 days...So if you miss two weeks in there you’re screwed. So that’s how my decision-making is made. Is there a physiological formula in my world?

Absolutely not.

It appears the health of the athletes is of utmost importance to Coach as he tends to aspire to deal more with of the art of coaching and not the science of it. While Coach said he typically does not involve the athletes in general program decisions, evidence surfaced that Coach did in fact allow for athlete input for several different types of decisions in line with the humanistic value of collaborative decision-making.

***On-the-spot training decisions based upon athlete input.***

First, it emerged that Coach allowed for athlete input and flexibility regarding practice-day decisions if the athlete was injured, excessively fatigued, or desired more recovery. Oftentimes, decisions were based upon athlete’s physical and verbal responses to interval workouts during the practice session. Regarding interval workouts, Athlete 4 stated:

[Coach] establishes what we do, but at the same time he’s flexible and he listens to what we have to say about it...If he sees that we’re struggling with a workout...he’ll



just cut you off right there and say, ‘...We’re not going to push you. We’re not going to hurt you. You’re not having a good day. We’ll just cut it right there.’...I think it’s collaborative between [Coach], [the assistant coach], and the athlete.

At several of the training session observations Coach displayed this flexibility based upon athlete input. At one moderate run practice session, in particular, five of the top runners did not show. Coach said those athletes sent him text messages about feeling tired and wanted to rest and sleep in. Coach said these runners would run on their own later that day. This flexibility demonstrated a willingness by Coach to permit athlete input into the coaching process and do what they felt was best for them. Athlete 2 noted, “If you would show up to practice and you’re like, ‘I’m not feeling it today,’ [Coach] is pretty genius at realizing when someone’s too tired to do a workout and he’ll have no problem with just moving it to the next day.” Athlete 2 went on to say Coach’s “acknowledgement of body management for the athlete” is one of his greatest attributes. Athlete 2 provided an example of this collaboration involving Coach at a training session which occurred in a prior season with an athlete who at the time had already won the NCAA Division I outdoor track 1500 meters and two other athletes. Athlete 2 said:

They got warmed up. They did strides. Got their spikes on...They had their toes on the line for the first rep and [the NCAA 1500 meter champion] was just like, ‘I don’t want to do this today.’ And [Coach] just said, ‘All right, everyone come back tomorrow.’...Maybe he just looked at the other two and was, like, ‘Yeah they don’t want to do this either.’...It’s not...whether that was the right call or not, [but]...the fact that he was willing to the point that they were already about to start their rep...that he’d rather them just go for a run and look after their bodies if they were

not quite feeling it that day. I think that just shows how [Coach] will stick to the plan in the point that he'll bring them back the next day – because they've still got to do the work. It's not like he just went, 'Oh, I just don't want to do the workout today.' He'll still make them do the work, but at a time where it's better for their bodies – their body will gain as much from the workout as much as possible.

Moreover, Athlete 1 explained Coach provides him workout options based upon how he is feeling. “[Coach] will say, ... ‘Do this, but if you are feeling tired today, do this instead,’” stated Athlete 1. Finally, Athlete 5 noted, “I just feel like [Coach] is a very understanding guy...If you say you're not feeling good one day he's not going to try to wreck you and push you through...And I think he's very understanding of even personal stuff too.” It appears Coach collaborates with athletes concerning how they are feeling and how their bodies are responding to the training (i.e., their recovery rates) or other life stressors and adjusts training on the spot if need be. This displays a holistic concern for the athlete as well.

#### **Athlete autonomy.**

At the heart of the humanistic philosophy is the notion that individuals have an internal drive to self-actualize and increase autonomy while minimizing the control of external forces (Rogers, 1980). It emerged that Coach provided his athletes with autonomy and opportunities for independent decision-making in several areas of the coaching process. This allows for athletes to self-regulate, individualize, and make decisions in respect to what they perceive as being best for them.

First, it was evident in all of the training session observations that Coach provided autonomy in regards to individual athlete warm-up and cool-down routines. The men's team athletes performed dynamic stretching and warm-up exercises independently and on their

own with no direction from any coach. At all training session observations it appeared that all athletes knew what to do and had a special dynamic routine for themselves. After training sessions some athletes performed static stretching while others did not. While athletes were directed to perform easy running before interval and tempo workouts, all other aspects of the warm-up and cool-down routines seemed athlete self-directed.

Next, resistance training sessions (i.e., circuits of bodyweight “core” exercises such as push-ups and sit-ups) were observed to be autonomous at training session observations. Athletes were directed to perform core for a set amount of time (i.e., 10 minutes), but the sessions were done in an unregimented fashion where athletes performed “core” exercises in small groups with only the assistant coach nearby supervising. Athlete 4 stated, “In the beginning of the season [the resistance training] is very consistent as a team..., but as the season winds down towards the bigger races we kind of dwindle as a team and usually we’re doing it on our own.” It seems that as the season nears its end Coach permits more athlete autonomy regarding resistance training and it becomes less coach-led.

When to run was another area in which Coach occasionally allowed for athlete autonomy. While the NCAA requires at least one day per week in which coaches may not meet with their teams (e.g., Mondays in this case), Coach sometimes allowed for an “own your own” day beyond this requirement in which the athletes were allowed to do an “easy” run workout at their leisure. This was particularly evident the last three weeks of the season as seen in training schedule emails sent to the team from the assistant coach. Furthermore, the research observed that the traveling team athletes were provided the option to run before departing for or after arriving at the competition venues for the regional and national

championship meets. This type of individualization may improve physical and mental states of the athletes as they do what they feel are best for them.

Finally, the athletes were provided autonomy in deciding whether to initiate contact with university athletic support personnel such as the athletic trainer, sport psychologist, or physician. Coach's cross country team handbook included an "injury prevention / rehabilitation" section and it stated the following:

Training at a high level puts everyone at a certain risk of injury. There are some simple things you need to take responsibility for if you wish to train and compete at this level with a low incidence of injury... You need to take care of your body and report to the training room on a daily basis for rehab/treatment.

The statement clearly puts responsibility on the athlete and encourages autonomous proactive decision-making behavior regarding seeing ancillary university support medical staff.

Athlete 5 stated, "Like the trainer and the sports psychologist, you can just sign up directly to meet them...even the doctor is like that too." This autonomous behavior was evident at training session observations where athletes were seen approaching athletic trainers on their own, oftentimes asking them to "work" on their back, for example. Athlete 4 described how he is autonomous and proactive with injury prevention and how communication is made regarding his treatment to Coach:

I go see [the trainer] on my own...I go pretty much every day just for maintenance and to roll myself out. I'll put a golf ball...on my arch and stuff and just stretch on the power plates and take an ice bath. So general stuff like that, I don't tell [the assistant coach] or [Coach]...But if I'm struggling with pain I'll tell them before I go and then usually [the trainer] will talk to [my coaches] after...That way [the trainer]

communicates with the coaches to let them know what's going on with each athlete.

However, if an athlete wanted to see the massage therapist, which only the cross country and track team athletes has access to, appointments were required to be made through Coach. Coach explained this:

It's just massage therapy that would go through [the track and cross country coaching staff]...I think the reason [the medical staff doesn't] have anything to do with it is they don't want all 480 [university] athletes to want massage. So that's why the massage therapist sets up right [in the track office].

It seems with all other ancillary support personnel the athletes can make autonomous decisions whether to seek treatment or not further facilitating self-regulated behavior consistent with humanistic coaching methods.

Several of the athletes perceived positives to being provided autonomy in the program which aligned with the humanistic philosophy. Athlete 5 stated what he felt were Coach's principles and values which underpin the coaching program by noting:

I think...[Coach] is trying to get people...[to] learn how to train by themselves. I think he really wants us to understand that part of it – like where he doesn't need to be on us all the time...There are people that he kind of rides too...some younger guys...I think he just kind of wants us to...[realize that] you have to work at everything in your life and I think that [Coach is]...just trying to build us in that way. Because, obviously, not everyone is going to be professional runners and I think he wants us to grow up a little bit.

It seemed Athlete 5 was referring to Coach facilitating a holistic development as people, not just athletes. Furthermore, it seems Coach may be more authoritative with younger and less

experienced athletes in line with Hogg's (1995) notion that as athletes gain experience more decisions are provided to the athlete within the humanistic paradigm. Athlete 1 referred to a positive result of being provided autonomy in attaining his weekly mileage without a strict schedule to follow by noting:

I had a schedule before [attending this university] that I kind of followed strictly. I think it's nice though that because I was kind of maybe following [it] too strictly, not listening enough to my body maybe, which I think it's a bit nice when you don't have a schedule...[where you can] change this or that depending on how you feel.

Similarly, Athlete 4 said he can adjust his training based upon how he feels and use his own judgment regarding making same-day decisions for daily running mileage:

Based on how you feel you can kind of make a judgment yourself...Because everybody's going to be different...We all know what we're responsible for and if we're not feeling good and we cut it short we'll tell [the coaches] and they're generally pretty understanding.

Athlete 5 described Coach's methods by noting how he provides athletes freedom and autonomy and allows them to discover their personal limits as a runner. He stated:

I would say democratic fits [Coach] pretty well...He'll give you as much freedom as you want, but...he'll give you enough rope to hang yourself...He lets you play around with your training a lot...He's not going to be riding you about how much you're running every week. He's going to make sure you're running obviously, but I think he also gives you enough freedom sometimes where you're going to have to play with your own body and maybe burn out. But, I think that's part of his coaching philosophy. I think he wants people to see that...you've kind of got to find what

works for you.

Athlete 2 noted that Coach's methods have encouraged his feelings of the importance of self-regulation and autonomous decision-making without the coach being present and its results on athletic performance:

[Coach] has made me realize that being an athlete is a lifestyle. It's not something that a regular guy can just live the regular guy lifestyle and then show up to practice when told to and do it...Practice starts at 10 PM the night before when you're in bed and everybody else is out partying or whatever. So [Coach] made me realize that.

While there were perceived positives relating to providing athletes with autonomy in making program decisions, potential drawbacks were also evident. This particularly surrounded Coach providing athletes autonomy in how best to attain their goal mileage for the week. Athlete 2 felt Coach takes a reactive stance regarding athlete weekly mileage when he stated, "[Coach] will expect you to do mileage and he'll never talk to you about it unless something starts to go wrong" (i.e., "you're not doing as good as you should be").

Athlete 5 noted:

[Coach] struggles with some of the younger guys...I think because he gives them a lot of freedom and they kind of abuse it. They don't train...They'll show up to practice, but running 45 minutes every day...you're not going to be beating a lot [other teams]. I mean some of these guys that are running 120 miles a week in other [NCAA Division I] programs.

Regarding athlete behavior, Athlete 1 stated, "[Coach] doesn't try to parent you a lot unless you really need it." It was observed at training session observations the issue of not dictating daily mileage became apparent with one particular athlete. This athlete was a junior and was

on the cusp of making the traveling varsity squad all season. At one training session Coach pulled this “up and coming” athlete aside and told him that if he would follow the mantra of “work hard. Run every day,” he could be great. Coach later snidely joked with this athlete that he needed to run more frequently to improve, even on Mondays when the team does not meet for official practice.

Then, at the last track workout before the national championship meet, the non-traveling team members performed a one mile time trial. One of the athletes said the time trial was performed to check the fitness of these athletes and to make sure those athletes were taking their runs seriously. This “up and coming” athlete won the mile time trial in 4:16. Afterward, Coach pulled him aside and told him he better be running more than five days a week. It appeared Coach was suspicious that this athlete was slacking on his training outside of official practice sessions. Coach was also seen speaking to other men’s team athletes and asked them about this athletes training. Coach then told the athlete, “If I find out you are only running five days per week you won’t travel with the team.” These occurrences displayed that providing some athletes with “too much” autonomy could be detrimental to performance if these athletes do not make the decision to do the training on their own.

#### **Athlete dependency on the coach.**

The humanistic philosophy supports athlete self-directed behavior so that dependency on the coach is minimized (Lyle, 2002). As mentioned previously, the prime aim of the humanistic coach is to develop a liberated and self-efficacious individual who can make informed and independent decisions (Cross, 1991). In response to whether Coach thought his athletes were dependent on him in any way, he said, “I hope not because you’ve got to be



internally motivated to be good.” However, Coach continued by stating that he did not feel his athletes could effectively write their own training schedules:

I think what they would do is they would bounce between systems too much if they wrote their own training and not stick with one [training] philosophy. Because I believe if you’re going to [follow] the Bob Schul philosophy and never run over 500 meters, then you never run over frickin’ 500 meters. You do 20 x 400 and 60 x 150 and all that stuff. You don’t bounce between systems. So I think what [the athletes] would pick is the easy stuff as a whole if they wrote their own training.

Athlete 4, a senior, echoed these sentiments when he said,

To a certain extent when it comes to workouts I feel dependent on [Coach] to put me in the right workout at the right time. But training-wise I’m pretty independent with that just based on how my body is feeling or how my mileage has been going from week to week...I’d be pretty confident [writing my own training schedule] if it was only a couple of weeks. If it was over the entire summer I could probably do it, but it probably wouldn’t be as effective as something from [Coach].

Overall, the majority of the athletes did not feel dependent on Coach regarding writing their own training schedules, particularly regarding scheduling weekly mileage amounts. Athlete 3 stated:

I write my own schedule now as far as which days I run what mileage...As far as my weekly mileage goes, [Coach] will tell me ballpark figure 80 to 85, 70 to 75 miles-type of thing. So I would feel very comfortable writing my own workouts and stuff.

While it appeared that the athletes did not feel dependent on Coach to plan and implement their weekly mileage, many felt a need to be given the more intense interval and tempo-style

workouts from him. This corresponds to other collected data in which Coach provides autonomy to athletes in scheduling their weekly mileage, but does not involve his athletes in “harder workout” (i.e., interval and tempo) training program planning. Moreover, the athletes may have felt less dependent on Coach if he explained the reasons and rationale to the athletes for these types of workouts, but no such explanations were observed at training sessions by the researcher.

### **Perceptions of who is in control of the process of athletic development.**

If the humanistic methods of shared decision-making are employed, an athlete should feel empowered and responsible for his or her own development. Depending on the stage of the athlete, a collaborative control between coach and athlete may also be evident. However, control of the process of athletic development should never be perceived as the sole responsibility of the coach within the humanistic paradigm. It emerged from the data that all of the athletes perceived shared or all control of the process of athletic development.

Athletes 1, 2, and 5 all felt in sole control of the process of their own athletic development. Athlete 2 noted, “It’s my decision whether I’m going to stay in bed that morning or I’m [going to] go out and do [the training].” Likewise, Athlete 5 stated, “I just think it’s all up to how bad the individual wants it.” Athlete 1 explained his response by stating,

[Coach] is just there to put you in the right direction both mentally and with... training...What’s most important is that you yourself believe in it and that you dedicate to it and I think that it’s hard for [Coach] to make you believe in it then make you be dedicated. That’s all up to you essentially.

Athletes 3 and 4 felt the control of the process of athletic development was shared between themselves and Coach. Athlete 3 stated, "I write my own [weekly mileage] schedule now. [Coach] kind of persuades us and tells us, 'You shouldn't be doing this. You should do this.' So it's a bit of a combined effort." Similarly, Athlete 4 said, "I believe it's 50-50. [Coach] is in control just because he's the one that tells me what to do, but I'm the one in control at the same time because I choose whether or not to do it."

Finally, parallel to humanistic ideals, Coach stated, "I think for the most part the kid is in control based on lifestyle of the college student." Coach appeared to feel that the individual athlete must make independent decisions outside of training sessions which may determine whether the athlete will achieve their potential. All responses hinted at the individual motivation of the athlete and control of decisions whether or not to do the training were the ultimate determinants of individual athletic development and Coach was viewed more as a facilitator in line with the humanistic philosophy.

### **Theme 3: Coach's Definition of Success**

One of the most critical features of humanism is that the definition of success is not directly related to winning as in the traditional model. Within the individual-centered approach of humanism, winning is redefined so that the process is emphasized and achievement of the individual athlete process goals indicate success or winning, as opposed to the traditional model where final results indicate success (Danziger, 1982). While the will to win may be important within the humanistic model, development of the person as they strive toward their potential and self-actualization must be seen as paramount (Tutko & Richards, 1971). The primary topics in which the coach's definition of success were

revealed included Coach's ambitions as a coach and primary goal for the program, Coach's definition of success for individual athletes and the team, and Coach's view on winning.

**Coach's ambitions as a coach and primary goal for the program.**

Coach appeared to have both outcome and process aims for his program. On one hand, when asked what was the main goal of his program, Coach said, "To win a national championship." On the other hand, when asked what his ambitions are as a coach, Coach responded, "Just give kids every opportunity to be successful in the classroom and on the track, whatever they deem successful." Clearly, while his stated goal of his program was outcome-oriented, his ambition as a coach was process-oriented in line with the humanistic ideals of holistic development of the person.

Moreover, Coach stated outcome measures regarding team goals, but hinted at striving toward individual athlete process goals to achieve those outcomes. He stated:

It's the same team goal every year....Win the conference championship, be in position to make the national championship, and get as high as you can...[at the cross [country] regional [championships]...That's just the philosophy, that's the goal...It's up on our wall. Why else do we do it? It's that journey to get to that point.

It's not, win a national championship; what have you done today to try to get there?

The majority of athlete's perceived Coach's goals or ambitions for the program as outcome-oriented. Athlete 4 stated, "Every year we all have the common goal of a conference team championship when it comes to cross [country] or...track. Ultimately, eventually it'll be a national championship." Likewise, Athlete 5 perceived that Coach's goals and ambitions were "to get men's and women's podium [team finishes at] NCAA cross country – top four." It appears Coach may have a conflicting philosophy regarding his goals and ambitions. He

continues to list outcome measures as the aim of the program, but also mentions humanistic process-oriented aims to try and attain those outcome measures.

Finally, Coach provided an outcome-oriented definition of success for himself as a coach when he said, “I don't know because I don't think we've been successful. [Success] for me personally [is] winning [at] whatever we do. But that's contradictory to what I said earlier. But me, personally, I'm hypercompetitive.” Coach admits he is conflicted regarding ultimately aiming for outcome-oriented winning measures as a coach, but also feels the process of athlete's striving for those measures is important. Ultimately, it is apparent this area of Coach's coaching philosophy is not well defined.

#### **Coach's definition of success for the individual athlete.**

Overall, Coach's definition of success for individual athletes would be considered humanistic. “Being able to look yourself in the mirror and say you did everything you could” was how Coach described success for individual athletes. Attempting to fulfill one's potential while not focusing solely on the result of the competition would certainly be considered humanistic.

In addition, the majority of the athletes cited definitions which would fall within the humanistic framework regarding what they thought Coach's definition of success was for them personally. Athlete 2 felt Coach's definition of success for him was “to run as fast as I can, but to have done everything I can towards it...– to make the sacrifices. Athlete 4 perceived Coach's definition of success for him was to “train hard, stay healthy, [and] compete well.” Notice winning was not a part of this definition. Moreover, Athlete 5 thought success for his teammates and himself, according to Coach, was “Giving it the best we have [and] living a lifestyle that's conducive of that. I think [Coach] definitely wants us

to grow up as people through the program too.” These three definitions of success are all process-oriented, de-emphasize winning, and focus on the holistic development of the individual as they reach toward achieving their potential. Athlete 3 explained what he felt Coach’s definition of success was for him with the following:

I had a friend who...came here and he said, ‘[Coach] I don’t know if I want to run. And [Coach] said, ‘Well why run then? If it doesn't make you happy then why do it?’ So [Coach] realizes that there’s more to life than running...He knows winning isn’t everything...Even if you’re running super well, if you’re unhappy there are other things...[Coach] doesn’t push running down our throats unless you ask for it.

It appears happiness of the athlete is how Coach defines success according to Athlete 3. In line with the humanistic paradigm, happiness could correlate to having the individual athlete achieve their own personal goals and ambitions with performance outcomes being tertiary.

**Coach’s definition of success for the team.**

Paralleling his definition of success for the individual athlete, Coach stated his definition of success for the team was, “Them being able to look themselves in the mirror and say I did everything I could.” Again, this is an individualized holistic look at success which could be perceived as striving toward self-actualization – a humanistic ideal.

Additionally, the majority of the athletes believed Coach’s definition of success for the team related to tenants which fall within the humanistic philosophy. Athlete 2 stated:

[Coach] just wants everyone to be running or jumping or vaulting or throwing as far or as best as they can...so that they are happy with it...No matter where you’re ranked in the nation as long as that was the best you could do he’d be happy for you.

Athlete 4 echoed a similar definition relating to striving toward potential when he said he

said:

[Coach] just wants us to go out there and compete hard. We're not going to win everything...and we're not going to be the best every single meet...I think he understands that and he just wants us to...put all our effort out there and leave everything out there that we can.

Athlete 5 felt Coach's definition of success for the team related to interpersonal relationships and "having a cohesive team." He noted:

Yesterday [Coach] was saying how we had a really successful season. And in a lot of ways we did...We were also way closer than we've ever been...In that way that's a huge success...And I think that sets up for a whole other year. So I think [Coach] has probably more than one definition of success, but that's one of them. And then, obviously, going out and running the best you can, especially at the big meets.

Similarly, Athlete 3 stated that at a team meeting after the NCAA national cross country championships (where neither team placed in the top 5) Coach said:

'This is the happiest I've ever been with any team. The girls are getting along really well. The guys...had a little bit of an off day, but...are a phenomenal group and nobody's competing [against each other]. People are running together, training together, and no one's competing to beat someone on the team. They're not competing for spots [on our team]. They're competing against another team.' So he was really happy with that...The vibe was just amazing. [Coach] was all smiles and it's a rare occasion when you see [Coach] that happy.

All of these descriptions de-emphasized winning and focused on athletes striving toward potential or having improved interpersonal relationships parallel to humanistic ideals.

### **Coach's view on winning.**

When asked which description best describes you and why: “winning is the only thing” or “winning is not everything,” Coach responded:

Winning is not everything. I think it's the process to get there. I think it's growing as an individual...Because when you look at 330 [NCAA Division I] schools, winning is tough. So I think at some level...I don't want to say unrealistic. Next year's team I think can win a national championship.

Again, Coach appears to mix process and outcome measures with his definitions and descriptions of success. In the humanistic model, the definition of success is not directly related to winning. Moreover, the majority of athletes believed “winning is not everything” with Coach. Athlete 4 said,

[Coach] enjoys winning, don't get me wrong, but...Like at conference indoor [track] last year, we didn't win and we had a chance to. And after the race [Coach] had nothing but positive stuff to tell us...Like, we hit everything we needed to. We just came up a little short.

Mirroring Coach's response, Athlete 1 stated:

I know that [Coach] talks a lot about just being able to push it to your limits. To see how good we can be...It's kind of hard saying winning is everything, especially in the NCAA where winning is super hard...I think [Coach] somehow defines winning also as being able to be as good as we are.

Both Athletes 4 and 1 felt it was more important to Coach to run and compete to their potential as opposed to focusing on performance outcomes. Finally, Athlete 2 said,

I think winning is not everything. I think if you can win, then that is everything. But



that's because you can. But if you can just run 14:20 [for 5k] and that's the best that you can do, then he'll be over the moon with you doing the best that you can do.

Like, if [former university athlete] came in second at NCAA's in the [1500 meters] the second year when he was expected to win, that would've been a disaster. But, if I [qualify for] the NCAA's [track championships] this year...and then I got All-American, he would be, like, 'this is a lot further than we've ever been before.'

Athlete 2 may have found that blend of outcome success with humanistic ideals as he felt that, according to Coach, if the athlete has the potential to win, then winning is everything.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

#### Conclusions

The goal of this case study was to explore the coaching philosophy and methods of a successful men's NCAA distance running coach and describe to what extent the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of the coach are humanistic. Themes that emerged regarding defining the participant coach's coaching philosophy included coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships, coach/athlete decision-making, and the coach's definition of success. Conclusions regarding each theme are provided below.

#### **Theme 1: Coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships.**

First, it emerged that the coach was humanistic in regards to being accessible to all athletes for communication. Moreover, regarding the view of the coach/athlete interpersonal relationship, the coach was perceived by his athletes as being a friend, father-figure and/or mentor, all in line with humanistic ideals. However, the greatest deviation from the humanistic coaching philosophy concerning coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships was that the coach appeared to communicate more with the best (i.e., top eight) runners on his team and did not initiate much communication with freshmen and transfer athletes new to his program who were not performing in that top eight.

#### **Theme 2: Coach/athlete decision-making.**

The participant coach appeared to be humanistic in several areas regarding coach/athlete decision-making. First, all athletes felt they were provided opportunities to express their opinions to the coach regarding any coaching decision. Next, the goal setting process was athlete-centered and collaborative between athlete and coach. Furthermore, the

process of planning weekly running mileage was collaborative, individualized, and provided autonomy to individual athletes on how best to attain these mileage aims. Moreover, the coach allowed for athlete input regarding on-the-spot training decisions if the athlete was injured, excessively fatigued, or desired more recovery, particularly regarding interval workouts nearer the end of the season as championship races approached. Autonomy in decisions regarding warm-up and cool-down routines and whether to contact ancillary university support staff (e.g., athletic trainer, sport psychologist, etc.) were also afforded to the athletes by the coach. Finally, all athletes perceived shared or all control of the process of athletic development. In sum, all of these areas relating to coach/athlete decision-making are consistent with the humanistic philosophy.

Conversely, the major area relating to coach/athlete decision-making which did not ascribe to the humanistic philosophy pertained to the coach not involving athletes in planning interval and tempo workouts. The coach was most authoritative in his stance regarding tempo training and no athlete input was allowed in this area. This corresponded to perceptions of dependency on the coach in which the majority of athletes felt dependent on the coach for planning training schedules and effectively implementing interval and tempo workouts into a training plan.

### **Theme 3: The coach's definition of success.**

While the coach appeared to be extrinsically motivated by outcome measures (i.e., winning NCAA national championships) not in concert with the humanistic philosophy, his methods ascribed to the humanistic values of not evaluating success through winning, but rather striving for individual athlete potential, holistic development, and self-actualization. The coach endorsed individual athlete and team definitions of success that were process-

oriented focusing on individuals striving to meet potential. Moreover, winning was not “everything” to the coach as perceived by all of his athletes. For the most part, the coach’s outward methods relating to his definition of success were humanistic.

### **Summary of Conclusions**

The findings of this study indicated that the coach’s stated philosophy and methods were humanistic in regards to having close interpersonal coach/athlete relationships, open communication, collaborative decision-making with athletes, and an athlete-centered process-oriented definition of success, but were not humanistic in relation to communicating more with the best (i.e., top eight) runners on the team and employing dictatorial methods in planning interval and tempo workouts independent from athletes.

### **Implications**

The prime implication of this study’s findings is the potential to shed light on what coaching philosophy and methods may be the most effective for men’s NCAA distance running as a successful coach in the discipline was examined. Studying the philosophies and approaches taken by “successful” coaches assist others in developing effective philosophies (Wootten, 2003). Certainly, however, not all aspects of the participant coach’s philosophy and methods may favorably and effectively generalize to other individual athletes, teams, and settings. Nevertheless, this study provides further insight into men’s NCAA distance running and coaching and may assist in helping coaching education programs, coaches, and athletes gain a greater awareness and appreciation of coaching philosophies and styles, all of which could help improve performance. Moreover, this study was unique because it was the first to employ multiple methods of data collection (triangulation) utilizing training session observations and artifact collection in addition to coach and athlete interviews in the research

of coaching philosophies. Other specific implications of the findings will now be discussed relevant to the three themes that emerged from the study.

**Theme 1: Coach/athlete interpersonal communication and relationships.**

Past research states that having a player-centered, or humanistic, approach to coaching is beneficial because it has the potential to increase communication between the athletes and the coach (De Souza & Oslin, 2008). Furthermore, Miller, Lutz, and Fredenberg (2012) found that in a sample of 48 “outstanding” high school coaches, effective communication was stressed by the majority of these coaches as they described their coaching philosophy and methods. It emerged from this study that the participant men’s NCAA distance running coach did not appear to initiate as much communication as typically desired with freshmen or transfer athletes new to his program who were not performing within the traveling squad (i.e., top eight). Some athletes perceived this as detrimental as athletes may quit the team due to this decreased communication between the coach and athlete. Furthermore, the coach and several athletes felt these “new” athletes may be intimidated to initiate this coach/athlete communication as a close interpersonal relationship with the coach would not have been established yet.

It seems coaches should make a concerted effort to build interpersonal relationships and communicate more with athletes “new” to their program, particularly freshmen and athletes making the leap from high school to college. Hogg (1995) notes that the younger and less experienced athletes should require more support and, thus, communication from the coach. It could be a tough transition for male cross country runners, in particular, as the championship racing distances from high school to NCAA cross country can double from 5 kilometers (approximately three miles) to 10 kilometers (approximately six miles),

respectively. Training distances also increase corresponding to these new racing distances. Moreover, freshmen competing within NCAA Division I, the top and most competitive division, are most likely very accomplished athletes and may have been given increased attention by their high school head coach. Not receiving much attention by their new NCAA Division I head coach may be quite a contrast and could make the transition to collegiate running even more difficult. Many of these “new” athletes may desire more coach feedback and communication and if it is not received could be detrimental to performance or affect their continuance in the sport.

In addition, little coach/athlete communication was observed at training sessions in this study. De Souza and Oslin (2008) have highlighted that in some sport competitions, as in distance running, coaches have little or no communication with athletes, necessitating athletes to be self-sufficient in their performance and the decisions involved. The participant coach could be purposefully mimicking the competition setting for distance running which may increase athlete performance as the athletes practice autonomy and decision-making in training which could carry over to racing performance. Coaches in sports with this type of minimal communicative competition environment may consider this style of coaching during some training sessions, particularly at the end of the season after much feedback has been provided to athletes previously and in sports where technique is not paramount.

Finally, in this study the participant coach stated he spent more time communicating with the athletes that “don’t produce” (i.e., not the top athletes). However, it was perceived by all of the participant athletes that this was not the case. Similarly, in a study of coaching philosophies of youth baseball and softball coaches, McCallister, Blinde, and Weiss (2000) found that while many of the coaches’ had good intentions, the espoused values and stated

philosophies revealed inconsistencies with their comments regarding actual coaching practice and behaviors. This corresponds to other coaching philosophy literature which states that coaching practice may not always correspond to the coach's stated philosophy (Garringer, 1989; Lyle, 2002; Martens, 2012). Results of this study provide additional credence to the notion that what a coach says may not be reflected in actual coaching practice further signifying the importance of triangulation when investigating coaching philosophies.

### **Theme 2: Coach/athlete decision-making.**

A major finding in this study regarding coach/athlete decision-making related to the participant coach not collaboratively planning interval and tempo training sessions with athletes, which appeared to correlate to a perceived athlete dependency on the coach for planning and implementing these types of workouts effectively into a training plan. Based on the findings of this study, it seems that if a coach does not involve athletes in the whole coaching process and its related decision-making, dependency on the coach in areas where coach/athlete collaboration is not performed may be inevitable. One of the major benefits to a player-centered/humanistic approach to coaching, as reported by De Souza and Oslin (2008), is increased feelings of ownership and competence through athlete involvement in decision-making. In areas where coaches are authoritative, athletes may not develop feelings of competence which could impact athletes' abilities to self-regulate independently from the coach.

Additionally, it was found that the participant coach provided athletes complete autonomy in warm-up and cool-down routines. While in some team environments warm-up and cool-down routines may be socialized and ingrained by senior-led drills, it appeared past personal experience for each athlete directed what each individual did all athletes performed

their own routines independently. Due to the team in this study having several international athletes with diverse backgrounds and presumably different ideas on warming up and cooling down, providing autonomy in these areas may have promoted a feeling of comfort and self-confidence as these athletes were allowed to do what felt most effective for them which may reduce anxiety before hard training sessions or races. Coaches implementing this humanistic method should merely be sure these exercises are beneficial and not contraindicated for athlete performance and recovery.

**Theme 3: The coach's definition of success.**

In this study the participant coach was motivated by winning NCAA national championships, but embraced humanistic methods as striving to meet individual athlete potential was the prime aim that defined success for the coach. Bennie and O'Connor (2010) explored the coaching philosophies of professional Australian cricket and rugby coaches and findings indicated that these coaches revealed "elements" of a humanistic philosophy through reporting a focus on learning and assisting players on and off the field, opposite of a "win-at-all-costs" approach. Striving to win is still consistent with humanistic ideals, but total development of the athlete must be prioritized ahead of winning (Tutko & Richards, 1971; Mundra, 1980). This appears to be the performance nature of the NCAA competition structure. To what extent can an NCAA coach in any sport espouse completely humanistic objectives and methods in an environment where winning and losing may cost the coach his or her job? This study's findings suggest that while the NCAA espouses to holistic development of the student-athlete, it is hard to separate athletic outcome measures as at least a portion of the definition of success for coaches working within this setting. While the NCAA Division I is known as being the highest level of competition in collegiate athletics in



the United States, the NCAA Division III slogans read: “Discover / Develop / Dedicate” and “the total student-athlete experience” (NCAA, 2012). It seems that the lower the NCAA Division the more conducive the environment may be to a humanistic coaching philosophy.

Moreover, while not directly discussed in past humanistic coaching literature, evidence surfaced that if an athlete has the potential to win, then winning may be considered a part of success within the humanistic model as it may be deemed the athlete would not be competing up to their potential if they do not win. A participant athlete blended outcome success with humanistic ideals as he noted that, according to the participant coach, if the athlete has the potential to win, then winning is everything. It certainly is hard to separate outcome (i.e., results, winning, etc.) and process (i.e., development) measures of success as society tends to focus on outcome results. Likewise, ambiguous humanistic goals such as improving as a person are more difficult to measure than individual outcome success goals (e.g., taking first place). Until society moves away from being results-oriented, winning still may be at the forefront of many coaches’ and athletic administrator’s definitions of success.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Research often raises more questions than it answers. This study investigated the extent to which the coaching philosophy of a successful men’s NCAA distance running coaches was humanistic. A future study might expand upon the foundations of this single case study, and look at a larger sample of men’s NCAA distance running coaches which may assist in the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, the participant coach in this study coached within the NCAA Division I competition structure. A follow-up study might compare the similarities and differences between the coaching philosophies of men’s distance running coaches across NCAA Divisions I, II, and III, specifically exploring

whether NCAA Division III is more conducive to humanistic coaching methods than NCAA Divisions I and II. Alternatively, a future study could compare men's versus women's coaching philosophies of NCAA distance running coaches.

While the humanistic philosophy de-emphasizes winning and focusses on the process of individual development, a future study might investigate the implications and effectiveness regarding performance outcomes of athletes competing within a humanistic coaching framework under the tutelage of coaches utilizing humanistic coaching methods. In other words, an analysis of how athlete performance may be positively or negatively impacted by humanistic coaching methods might be valuable. Likewise, future research could investigate coach's definitions of success and compare these to performance success.

As different running events have divergent needs and strategies, a future study could narrow the scope of the research. A future study could fully explore the specific implications of humanistic coaching methods in relation to one specific distance running event (e.g., marathon). Additionally, while the focus of this study was the coaching philosophy of NCAA men's distance running coaches, future research could compare and investigate the coaching philosophy of the current world record holder's coach to other coaches at various levels in the same event. Intricacies of the make-up of differing sports teams and how these factors (e.g., team size, age of coach, individual versus team sports, competition levels, etc.) may impact the likelihood that the coach ascribes to a humanistic philosophy might also be worthwhile to investigate. Finally, an additional study may explore to what extent physical education teachers employ humanistic methods in various settings and with differing age groups.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

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Every coach is on the continuum...

<b><u>Authoritarian</u></b>	vs.	<b><u>Humanistic</u></b>
<b>Autocratic</b>		<b>Democratic</b>
<b>Win-centered</b>		<b>Athlete-centered</b>
<b>Coach-led</b>		<b>Athlete-led</b>
<b>Behavioristic</b>		

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*Figure 1.* Labels of the two opposing coaching philosophies (Anshel, 1978; Hogg, 1995; Martens, 1987; Mundra, 1980; Lyle, 2002)

## Appendix B

<b>Autocratic Approach</b>	⇒	<b>Democratic Approach</b>	⇒	<b>Humanistic Approach</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little athlete experience (elementary-age years)</li> <li>• Coach control</li> <li>• Athlete dependence</li> <li>• Focus on learning skills, safety, &amp; routines</li> </ul>	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing athlete (teenage years)</li> <li>• Power sharing</li> <li>• Collaborative decision-making &amp; sense of control</li> <li>• Increased athlete self-regulation</li> </ul>	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced athlete (adult years)</li> <li>• Athlete control</li> <li>• Athlete autonomy with accountability</li> <li>• Athlete empowerment</li> </ul>

*Figure 2.* Changes in the coaching approach across athlete developmental stages. Adapted from “Mental Skills for Swim Coaches,” by J. M. Hogg, 1995, p. 12.9. Copyright 1995 by Sport Excel Publishing Inc.

## Appendix C

### Coach Background Information

<b>Age / Gender</b>	44 / Male
<b>Ethnicity / Nationality</b>	Caucasian / United States
<b>Current Coaching Position(s)</b>	NCAA Division I head men's and women's cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field coach (in 6th year at current university)
<b>Educational Background</b>	Master's Degree
<b>Non-Coaching Working Background</b>	Technical Writer (5 months)
<b>Personal Athletic Background</b>	NCAA Division I middle-distance runner: 4 years track, 2 years cross country (800 meters – 1:50.11 personal best)
<b>Years Coaching Distance Running</b>	20 years
<b>Coaching Background</b>	1 year NCAA Division III head cross country / track & field coach, 1 year NCAA Division I cross country / track & field graduate assistant; 18 years NCAA Division I head men's and women's cross country / track & field coach
<b>Coaching Certifications</b>	None
<b>Primary Events Coached</b>	Cross Country, Track & Field (800m to 10k )
<b>Age Range of Current Men's Cross Country Team</b>	18 to 22 years old
<b>Men's Cross Country Team Size</b>	20
<b>Coaching Accolades</b>	National Men's Cross Country Coach of the Year, 4-time Region and 25-time Conference Men's and Women's Cross Country Coach of the Year, 2-time Men's Conference Indoor Track Coach of the Year. Coached 17 Men's and Women's Distance Running NCAA Division I All-Americans
<b>Standard of Current Athletes</b>	Up to "sub-international" ("European-type championship level"), 4 former athletes turned professional distance runner (2 at current university)

## **Appendix D**

### **Consent Form**

# **The University of New Mexico Consent to Participate in Research**

9/5/2012

## **A Case Study of the Coaching Philosophy of Men's NCAA Distance Running Coaches**

### **Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Seth Jenny, doctoral candidate, who is the principal investigator, and Dr. Glenn Hushman, from the Department of Health, Exercise and Sports Sciences. This research is studying the coaching philosophy of men's NCAA distance running coaches.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are the current head coach of an NCAA men's distance running team (NCAA men's cross country running or NCAA men's track and field 5,000 meter / 10,000 meter) or you are currently participating on the men's distance running team under the tutelage of the participant coach of this study and have done so for at least one season prior to the current season (i.e., exclude first-year freshmen and first-season transfer athletes). This will assure all participant athletes are already familiar with the coach and his coaching philosophy, style, and methods prior to the current season and the start of this study. In total, one coach and five athletes will take part in this case study. All participants must be 18 years of age or older.

This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. If you have any questions, please ask one of the study investigators.

### **What will happen if I decide to participate?**

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

As a head coach, you will be asked two sessions of interview questions to help determine your coaching philosophy, style, and methods. These interviews will be audio-taped so the researcher can later type them out. The interviews should only take about 45 minutes to one hour each. The coach interview questions are attached for your review.

As an athlete, you will be asked one session of interview questions to determine if the coach's philosophy and methods are congruent with the coach's stated philosophy and methods. This interview will be audio-taped so the researcher can later type them out. The

interview should only take about 30 to 45 minutes. The athlete interview questions are also attached for your review.

The principal investigator will also be conducting four field observations of team training sessions. During these, the investigator will be recording and describing the observations as they occur in note form with a pad of paper and pencil and will later type it within 24 hours. The observations will primarily include descriptions of training events, quotes by the coach or athletes, training techniques employed, interactions of the coach and athletes, and general impressions perceived by the researcher. No names will be collected or included in the field observation notes.

When the study concludes, the researcher will analyze the collected data with the intent to explore the coaching philosophy of men's NCAA distance running coaches.

## **How long will I be in this study?**

Participation in this study will take a total up to two hours for the coach and 30 to 45 minutes for an athlete to complete the interview(s). You can discontinue the study at any time.

## **What are the risks or side effects of being in this study?**

There are risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study.

Risks in participation in this research include those associated with a normal sport team coaching setting including discomfort in answering questions regarding coaching methods and the coaching process. Although extremely unlikely, breaches in privacy or confidentiality are a risk and could result in an individual's responses to questions being used for unintended purposes. Athlete interview risk is similar to the risk of completing a confidential end of semester course teaching evaluation on the professor and his or her teaching methods throughout the course.

For more information about risks and side effects, ask the investigator.

## **What are the benefits to being in this study?**

Participant direct benefits include: Assisting in helping the participant coach and athletes gain a greater appreciation of the coach's coaching philosophy and style. Societal benefits include: Shedding light on the issue of what coaching philosophy may be the "most effective" for Men's NCAA distance running (contextual factors considered) by investigating the coaching philosophies of "successful" coaches; Providing further insight into Men's NCAA distance running coaching; Helping any coach (including the researcher) in developing, strengthening and/or defining his or her personal distance running coaching philosophy through examining "successful" coaches in the discipline.

## **What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?**

The only alternative to participation is not to participate.

## **How will my information be kept confidential?**

We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but we cannot guarantee confidentiality of all study data.

Information contained in your study records is used by study staff and, in some cases it will be shared with the sponsor of the study. The University of New Mexico IRB that oversees human subject research will be permitted to access your records. There may be times when we are required by law to share your information. However, your name will not be used in any published reports about this study.

Privacy of participants will be made through the covert coding of names (e.g., "Athlete 1", "Coach", etc.) so that your name will not be on any material. All study materials will contain these codes and not the participant's real name. This coded information will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the principal investigator's locked office. Furthermore, to protect the identity of the coach and athletes the NCAA institution will not be named and will only be referred to as a NCAA men's distance running team located in the west region of the United States.

## **What are the costs of taking part in this study?**

There are no costs to being in this study.

## **Will I be paid for taking part in this study?**

You will not receive compensation for taking part in this study.

## **Can I stop being in the study once I begin?**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point during this study. There are no consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study and data collected up to the point of withdrawal may be used. You may be removed from the study if you discontinue your involvement in the men's NCAA distance running team.



## **Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, Seth Jenny, or his/her associates will be glad to answer them at (505) 277-5151. If you need to contact someone after business hours or on weekends, please call (xxx) xxx-xxxx and ask for Seth Jenny. If you would like to speak with someone other than the research team in regards to any complaints you have about the study, you may call the UNM IRB at (505) 272-1129.

## **Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research subject?**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may call the UNM IRB at (505) 272-1129. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human subjects. For more information, you may also access the IRB website at <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/index.shtml>.

## **How do I provide consent to participate?**

Your verbal consent will be used only because the researchers are not collecting any identifiers and this would be the only link to your identity. This will be done directly prior to any interviews.

**Appendix E**  
**Coach Letter of Consent**



September 18, 2012

TO: Seth Jenny, University of New Mexico Doctoral Candidate and  
Principal Investigator

FROM: [Coach Name], Head Men's Cross Country and Track & Field Coach,  
[College/University Name]

SUBJECT: Data Gathering with [College/University Name] Men's Cross Country and  
Track & Field Distance Runners

As head men's cross country and track & field coach at [College/University Name], I give you permission to collect study data during the 2012 men's cross country season and the 2013 indoor and outdoor track & field seasons. I understand this data includes audio-recorded interviews with me, audio-recorded interviews with men's distance running team athletes (18 years of age and older only) who have provided informed consent, and observations of team training sessions.

Sincerely,

[Coach Name]  
Head Men's Cross Country and  
Track & Field Coach  
[College/University Name]

## **Appendix F**

### **Recruitment Script**

Good morning. Thank you Coach for allowing me to be here! My name is Seth Jenny and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Mexico. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in Physical Education, Sports & Exercise Science. During my undergraduate degree I was a NCAA D-II track and cross country distance runner at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. I am here this morning to tell you about a research opportunity.

The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore the coaching philosophy of “successful” Men’s NCAA distance running coaches and examine the stated coaching philosophy and coaching methods of these coaches.

This study involves interviews with your coach and one interview with five different team athletes to determine if your coach’s philosophy and methods are congruent with your coach’s stated philosophy and methods. In addition, I will be performing field observations of training sessions for about two weeks. No names will be collected or included in the field observation notes. All of this data will be used to help determine your coach’s coaching philosophy and style.

If you agree to participate, you will partake in an audio-recorded interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes outside of training sessions at your convenience. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Your privacy will be maintained through the covert coding of your name (e.g., "Athlete 1", etc.) and your real name will never be recorded.

Direct benefits of your participation include assisting in helping you and your coach gain a greater appreciation of your coach’s coaching philosophy and style. Broader benefits include providing further insight into Men’s NCAA distance running coaching and assisting in investigating what is the "most effective" coaching philosophy for Men’s NCAA distance running.

Risks in participation in this research include those associated with a normal sport team coaching setting including discomfort in answering questions regarding coaching methods and the coaching process. Athlete interview risk is no greater than the risk of completing a confidential end of semester course teaching evaluation on a professor and his or her teaching methods throughout the course. Every effort will be made to reduce these risks.

Participant athletes for interviews must be 18 years of age or older, currently participating on the men's distance running team, and must have competed under your current head coach for at least one season prior to now (i.e., first-year freshmen and first-season transfer athletes are excluded).

I will provide anyone interested with a copy of the consent form for this study now. Tomorrow those eligible athletes interested in participating will gather and will write their name on a small slip of paper. Those athletes with one previous season with the coach (i.e.,

"Sophomores") will then put their names in the so-marked box and one will be randomly selected to participate. This process will be repeated for interested athletes with two previous seasons with the coach (i.e., "Juniors"), three previous seasons (i.e., "Seniors"), and two athletes will be selected with four previous seasons (i.e., "Red Shirt Seniors"). All slips of paper will immediately be destroyed and the five athletes will be randomly assigned codes (e.g., Athlete 1, Athlete 2, etc.). At this point there is no link to any athlete's identity as no identifiers will be collected. Verbal consent would then be given directly before any interviews. Does anyone have any questions at this time?

I have a few minutes to answer any questions that you might have privately as well. I will also be around for the rest of the day if you would like to speak later. Thank you for your time and consideration.

## Appendix G

### Coach Interview Schedule

#### Coach Interview Introduction

*“Hello! My name is Seth Jenny and I am a doctoral candidate and researcher at the University of New Mexico. I am working on a dissertation project to learn about the coaching philosophy of NCAA men’s distance running coaches. If you agree, you will be asked several questions about your coaching philosophy and coaching methods which will take about one to two hours. We may decide to split this interview into several sessions. First, though, please read through the consent form if you have not already before we begin. Remember, even though you are giving verbal consent now you can withdraw at any time during the study or interview. You will not sign a consent form as this would be the only link to your identity. Do you have any questions about the consent form or about being in this study? Do you give consent to participate in this study?”*

#### Grand Tour Question

- 1) What motivated you to become a coach?

#### Semi-structured Coach Interview Support Sub-questions

##### Coach philosophy.

- 2) *Specifically within the sporting arena, a coaching philosophy is a set of values or basic principles that guide a coach’s behavior in practical coaching situations, and human relationships in general (Hogg, 1995). Coaching philosophies have been described as ranging from autocratic/dictatorial to democratic to humanistic. Describe your own coaching philosophy.*
- 3) What principles, values, and beliefs underpin your coaching philosophy?
- 4) Which description best describes you and why? “Dictates everything in training” or “operates through shared power and negotiation, encouraging independent decision-making?”
- 5) Which descriptions best describe you and why? “Winning is the only thing” or “Winning is not everything?”
- 6) NCAA distance running coaches are tasked with coaching 20+ athletes at the same time. How do you balance care for individual athletes with team performance results?
- 7) Rate your own coaching philosophy on a scale of – 1 (Autocratic/Dictatorship) to 10 (Humanistic/Democratic) – and then describe why you chose that number.

##### Ambitions and goal setting.

- 8) What are your ambitions as a coach?
- 9) What is your process for setting individual athlete goals?
  - 10) Are the individual athletes involved in this? If so, how?
- 11) What is your process for setting team goals?
  - 12) Are any of the athletes involved in this? If so, how?
- 13) What is your awareness of your athlete’s life goals outside of distance running?

**Coaching program.**

- 14) Do you have access and use any of the following support personnel (e.g., athletic trainer, physical therapist, doctor, sport psychologist, strength coach, etc.) and how is contact initiated with this person, you or the athlete?
- 15) How do you see your role regarding academics with your team?
- 16) What is the process of training program planning?
  - 17) Is training individualized? If so, on what basis?
  - 18) Are athletes involved in training program planning? If so, how and which athletes?
- 19) How would you describe your team's training atmosphere?
- 20) What motivation techniques do you use to motivate the team?
- 21) Do you use specific motivation techniques to motivate individual athletes? If so, what?

**Coaching process.**

- 22) Coaching style is defined as "behaviors that characterize coaching practice." How would you describe your coaching style?
  - 23) Do you have the same style for all athletes?
  - 24) Do you have the same style across all phases of training?
- 25) What do you feel your obligations or responsibilities are as a coach to the athletes?
  - 26) Do you feel these go beyond distance running as a mentor or friend?
- 27) What are your assessment procedures of races and training results?
  - 28) Is this done collaboratively with the team or individual athletes?
- 29) What type of feedback do you provide?
  - 30) Is this done with the entire team or with individual athletes?
  - 31) How often do you provide feedback?
  - 32) Is this done with the entire team or with individual athletes?
- 33) How do you teach your athletes to view their competition?
- 34) How did you come up with your personal coaching style?

**Definition of success.**

- 35) In general, what is your definition of success?
  - 36) What is your definition of success for the team?
  - 37) What is your definition of success for the individual athlete?
  - 38) What is your definition of success for you as a coach?
  - 39) What do you think "success" means to your athletics department and academic institution?

**Coach/athlete relationships.**

- 40) How would you describe your relationship with your athletes?
- 41) How would you describe your communication with your athletes?
- 42) Do you allow free expression of your athletes?
  - 43) Is this dependent on the phase of training?
- 44) In general, describe your decision-making process.
  - 45) Do you make decisions collaboratively with your athletes?

- 46) Do you feel your athletes are dependent on you? Why or why not?
- 47) Who is in control of the process of athletic development?
  - 48) If the coach, are you prepared to share control?

**Coach background information.**

- 49) What is your age?
- 50) What is your ethnicity?
- 51) What is your educational background?
  - 52) What is the highest degree you have attained?
  - 53) Do you have any coaching certifications?
- 54) What is your occupational career background beyond coaching?
- 55) What is your personal athletic (distance running?) background?
- 56) What is your coaching background?
  - 57) How many years have you coached?
  - 58) How many years have you held your current coaching position?
  - 59) What primary sports/events do you currently coach?
    - 60) If track and field, what specific events do you coach?
- 61) What is your current men's distance running team size?
  - 62) What is the age range of these athletes?
  - 63) What is the experience level of these athletes?
  - 64) Do you coach any athletes who participate in any other competition structures (USATF club, national, and/or international events)?
  - 65) What level or athletic standard are these athletes?
- 66) What NCAA division do you coach within?

## Appendix H

### Athlete Interview Schedule

#### Athlete Interview Introduction

*“Hello! My name is Seth Jenny and I am a doctoral candidate and researcher at the University of New Mexico. I am working on a dissertation project to learn about the coaching philosophy of NCAA men’s distance running coaches. If you agree, you will be asked several questions about your coaching philosophy and coaching methods which will take about 30 to 45 minutes. First, though, please read through the consent form if you have not already before we begin. Remember, even though you are giving verbal consent now you can withdraw at any time during the study or interview. You will not sign a consent form as this would be the only link to your identity. Do you have any questions about the consent form or about being in this study? Do you give consent to participate in this study?”*

#### Grand Tour Question

- 1) What motivated you to become a distance runner?

#### Semi-structured Athlete Interview Support Sub-questions

##### Coach philosophy.

- 2) *Specifically within the sporting arena, a coaching philosophy is a set of values or basic principles that guide a coach’s behavior in practical coaching situations, and human relationships in general (Hogg, 1995). Coaching philosophies have been described as ranging from autocratic/dictatorial to democratic to humanistic.*  
Describe your coach’s coaching philosophy.
- 3) What principles, values, and beliefs underpin his coaching philosophy?
- 4) Which description best describes your coach and why? “Dictates everything in training” or “operates through shared power and negotiation, encouraging independent decision-making?”
- 5) Which descriptions best describe your coach and why? “Winning is the only thing” or “Winning is not everything?”
- 6) NCAA distance running coaches are tasked with coaching 20+ athletes at the same time. How does your coach balance care for individual athletes with team performance results?
- 7) Rate your coach’s coaching philosophy on a scale of – 1 (Autocratic/Dictatorship) to 10 (Humanistic/Democratic) – and then describe why you chose that number.

##### Coach description.

- 8) Describe the recruitment approach taken by your coach and how you ended up at this institution.
- 9) Describe your earliest interaction with coach. When and where was this? What happened?
- 10) I am a new runner to the school. Describe how coach would interact with me.
- 11) I am in my final year of eligibility running for coach. Describe how coach would interact with me.



- 12) Describe your coach's last team speech. What was it about and what did he say?
- 13) How do you view your relationship with your coach?
- 14) What is your opinion of your coach?
  - 15) How would you describe him?
  - 16) What are the qualities of your coach?
  - 17) What are some dislikes or improvements needed regarding your coach?

**Athlete influences and goal setting.**

- 18) Where does your current coach rank on the list of most influential people on your athletic career and why?
- 19) Describe your individual short-term and long-term athletic goal setting process.
  - 20) What is your coach's awareness of these goals?
  - 21) Does your coach approach you to evaluate and adjust goals mid-season?
  - 22) Does your coach and your training attempt to meet your individual athletic goals?
- 23) What is the process of team goal setting?
- 24) Is your coach aware of your personal goals outside athletics?
  - 25) Does he help you achieve these? If so, how?
- 26) What is your awareness of your coach's athletic goals and ambitions?
- 27) What is your awareness of your coach's personal commitments outside of coaching you?

**Coaching program.**

- 28) How would you describe the structure of your training program?
  - 29) What activities are involved (i.e., resistance training, sport psychology, etc.)?
- 30) What support personnel do you have access to (e.g., athletic trainer, physical therapist, doctor, sport psychologist, strength coach, etc.) and how is contact initiated with each person, you or the coach?
- 31) What is your coach's involvement level regarding academics with your team?
- 32) How is the training program planned?
  - 33) To what level is training individualized?
  - 34) What is your involvement in training program planning?
- 35) Do you have training session or team rules?
  - 36) If so, how are these established?
  - 37) Does your coach have equal consideration of the rules for everyone (i.e., is he fair?)?
- 38) How would you describe the training atmosphere?
- 39) Does the coach spend more time with the better athletes? If so, explain.

**Athlete and coach.**

- 40) How would you describe your ease of access to and comfort level with communicating with your coach?
  - 41) Are you provided opportunities for free expression? If so, how?
  - 42) Do you feel comfortable to question any of your coach's decisions? Explain.
  - 43) Does your coach treat you like an equal adult?
- 44) How are team decisions generally made?
  - 45) Does your coach collaborate with the team for these decisions?

- 46) Does your coach ever make decisions with your input? Explain.
- 47) Do you feel dependent on your coach in any way? If so, explain.
- 48) If your coach went away, would you have the confidence to create your own training schedules? Why or why not?
- 49) Who is in control of the process of your athletic development? Why?

**Definition of success.**

- 50) What is your definition of success for yourself?
- 51) What is your coach's definition of success for the team?
- 52) What is your coach's definition of success for you?

**Athlete background information.**

- 53) What is your age?
- 54) What is your ethnicity?
- 55) What year of college are you in?
- 56) How many seasons of athletic eligibility have you used?
- 57) Have you ever red-shirted a season?
- 58) What NCAA sports do you compete in?
  - 59) If track and field, what are your primary events?
- 60) How long have you been a distance runner?
- 61) What is the highest level of you have competed in as a distance runner (International, Olympic)
- 62) What are your personal best times for:
  - 63) Cross Country?
  - 64) Track?
- 65) Where do you usually finish among your teammates (i.e., what number man on the team are you)?
- 66) What is the length of time you have spent at this academic institution and with the current head coach?
- 67) What is the length of time you have participated in NCAA distance running?
  - 68) Have you competed in any other college divisions? NJCAA? NAIA?

## Appendix I

### Athlete Background Information

<b>Athlete 1</b>	
<b>Age / Gender</b>	20 / Male
<b>Ethnicity / Nationality</b>	Caucasian / Swedish
<b>Years Distance Running</b>	5
<b>Class / NCAA Cross Country Eligibility</b>	Freshman
<b>Years Coached by Current (Participant) Coach</b>	1 (in midst of first year)
<b>Primary NCAA Event(s)</b>	Cross Country, Indoor / Outdoor Track & Field (primary-800m, 1500m; secondary-3k steeple chase, 5k)
<b>NCAA Division I Cross Country Seasons Competed</b>	1
<b>NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	0
<b>NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	0
<b>Personal Best Times</b>	Cross country: 6k (18:50), 8k (24:27), 10k (30:37); Track: 800m (1:49.69), 1500m (3:44.13), 3k steeple chase (9:01)
<b>Additional Running Accolades</b>	European Junior Championships: 14th (1500m, track & field), 56th (cross country)
<b>Finishing Places in Current Season among Teammates on the Cross Country Team</b>	7, 5, 3, 7, 2 (Range: 2-7)

<b>Athlete 2</b>	
<b>Age / Gender</b>	22 / Male
<b>Ethnicity / Nationality</b>	Caucasian / British
<b>Years Distance Running</b>	9
<b>Class / NCAA Cross Country Eligibility</b>	Junior / Red-shirt Sophomore
<b>Years Coached by Current (Participant) Coach</b>	2.5 (started mid-year)
<b>Primary NCAA Event(s)</b>	Cross Country, Indoor / Outdoor Track & Field (800m, 1500m)
<b>NCAA Division I Cross Country Seasons Competed</b>	2 (+1 red-shirt)

<b>NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	2 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	3
<b>Personal Best Times</b>	Cross country: 8k (24:33), 10k (30:57); Track: 800m (1:49.42), 1500m (3:43.9), mile (4:05)
<b>Additional Running Accolades</b>	United Kingdom Olympic Track & Field Trials: 800m (semi-finals qualifier), 1500m; 1st Team All-American Distance Medley Relay
<b>Finishing Places in Current Season among Teammates on the Cross Country Team</b>	4, 7, 7, 5, 3 (Range: 3-7)

<b>Athlete 3</b>	
<b>Age / Gender</b>	20 / Male
<b>Ethnicity / Nationality</b>	Caucasian / Naturalized United States Citizen (from South Africa)
<b>Years Distance Running</b>	6
<b>Class / NCAA Cross Country Eligibility</b>	Junior / Red-shirt Sophomore
<b>Years Coached by Current (Participant) Coach</b>	3
<b>Primary NCAA Event(s)</b>	Cross Country, Indoor / Outdoor Track & Field (5k, 10k)
<b>NCAA Division I Cross Country Seasons Competed</b>	2 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	1 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	1 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>Personal Best Times</b>	Cross country: 8k (25:08), 10k (32:03); Track: 5k (14:47)
<b>Additional Running Accolades</b>	Four-time high school state 800m champion
<b>Finishing Places in Current Season among Teammates on the Cross Country Team</b>	2, 8, 8 (Range: 2-8)

<b>Athlete 4</b>	
<b>Age / Gender</b>	21 / Male

<b>Ethnicity / Nationality</b>	Hispanic / American
<b>Years Distance Running</b>	8
<b>Class / NCAA Cross Country Eligibility</b>	Senior / Red-shirt Junior
<b>Years Coached by Current (Participant) Coach</b>	4
<b>Primary NCAA Event(s)</b>	Cross Country, Indoor / Outdoor Track & Field (primary-800m; secondary-4x400m, 400m, 1500m)
<b>NCAA Division I Cross Country Seasons Competed</b>	3 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	3 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	3 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>Personal Best Times</b>	Cross country: 8k (26:36); Track: 400m (48.07), 800m (1:49.99), 1500m (3:58)
<b>Additional Running Accolades</b>	1st Team All-American Distance Medley Relay
<b>Finishing Places in Current Season among Teammates on the Cross Country Team</b>	Did not compete on traveling squad (approximately 10-12)

<b>Athlete 5</b>	
<b>Age / Gender</b>	22 / Male
<b>Ethnicity / Nationality</b>	Caucasian / American
<b>Years Distance Running</b>	4 (only 1 season of track in high school)
<b>Class / NCAA Cross Country Eligibility</b>	Senior / Red-shirt Junior
<b>Years Coached by Current (Participant) Coach</b>	4
<b>Primary NCAA Event(s)</b>	Cross Country, Indoor / Outdoor Track & Field (primary-5k, 10k; secondary-3k steeple chase)
<b>NCAA Division I Cross Country Seasons Competed</b>	3 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	2 (+1 red-shirt)
<b>NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Seasons Competed</b>	3
<b>Personal Best Times</b>	Cross country: 8k (23:59), 10k (30:47); Track: 3k steeple chase (9:09), 5k (14:03), 10k (29:44)

<b>Additional Running Accolades</b>	All-Region (Cross Country), All-Conference Indoor Track (3k, 5k) & Outdoor Track (10k)
<b>Finishing Places in Current Season among Teammates on the Cross Country Team</b>	1, 3, 1, 5, 3, 6 (Range: 1-6)