Understanding the occupational socialization of tennis coaches: Using a grounded theory approach to explore reasons for entering the coaching profession

Charles Provencio

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Understanding the occupational socialization of tennis coaches: Using a grounded theory approach to explore reasons for entering the coaching profession

by

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M.S., Sport and Recreation Studies, South Dakota State University, 2016

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Abstract

Sport coaches are among the most critical employees in the sport industry and regularly practice sport management activities including facilitating participation, managing athlete, organizing events, and promoting products and services. Interestingly, little is known about why individuals choose to pursue a career as a sports coach and how they might be acculturated into their profession. The general purpose of this study was to build on these works and to continue exploring the theorized elements of the process of acculturation within occupational socialization. To accomplish this, the specific purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of coaches that contributed to their acculturation.

Occupational socialization theory describes acculturation as the process as including initial attraction and personal attributes (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991), the apprenticeship of observation (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Lawson, 1983), and resource assessment (Lortie, 1975; Sage, 1989) as key elements leading to the formation of a subjective warrant and a decision to advance into formal training for the profession. The effects of acculturation permeate other forms of occupational socialization (Richards et al., 2014) and coach education research has demonstrated that coaches are largely resistant to university and theory-based training.
This study utilized a grounded theory approach to explore the process of eight new coaches in the sport of tennis. This sample included six male and two female participants who began coaching in various settings (clubs, colleges, and high schools) in the United States. Constant comparison was used throughout the data collection and analysis process to confirm reemerging themes and identify new areas of interest (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Results, discussion, and conclusions are discussed herein.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Every year millions of high school students graduate in the United States and enter the workforce or college programs to pursue their career goals (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In 2019, 66.2% of high school graduates ages 16-24 went on to enroll in college courses and 76% of college graduates between the ages of 20 and 29 gained employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). College enrollment dropped to 62.7% and employment among college graduates dropped to 67.3% during 2020 due largely to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

The career choices that individuals make are complex, reflecting the beliefs, values, social pressures, and other factors that individuals carry as they search for and enter their career paths (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014; Sage, 1989). Many students who choose to pursue physical education and/or coaching make these decisions well before entering college programs (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991; Sage, 1989). The decision to become a coach, however, has been under-researched and leaves several unanswered questions about those who enter the profession and why they choose it.

The need to understand why new recruits choose to enter the profession is dire and this process begins with understanding who will ultimately enter the profession and what factors play a role in influencing this decision (Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983a; Sage, 1989; Templin et al., 1982). Using occupational socialization theory as a foundation, this study sought to broaden the sport management discipline’s understanding of the acculturation process of new coaches. Occupational socialization theory describes a process through which individuals assess, choose, and ultimately take on a role within a professional field (Bauer et al., 2007; Pitney, 2002; Pitney
et al., 2002; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014; Saks et al., 2007). Acculturation is viewed as the informal information gathering process that potential new recruits conduct to better understand what the job entails prior to committing to any formal education or training (Curtner-Smith, 2009; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Lawson, 1983b; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b). For those interested in coaching, there is little information beyond their personal assessments of the profession and their views of professionals (Coakley, 1978; Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2003; Sage, 1989). The choice to enter the profession may be wildly unfounded and lead to professional socialization through suboptimal means, such as experiential learning and anecdotal evidence (Cushion et al., 2003; Duffy et al., 2011; Jacobs et al., 2016; Lawson, 1983b). As Sage (1989) puts it “There were hundreds of occupations from which they could choose, but from all of these choices they become coaches. Why?” (p. 85). The findings presented in this research regarding which factors play a role in this process for coaches will help mentors, educational organizations, and sport governing bodies to better facilitate new coach preparation and transition into the field. This is of particular interest for sport managers, as coaches are critical in the development of athletes, facilitate sporting events, and interact with consumers as the organizational figurehead on a consistent basis in both recreational and professional settings.

Chirkov (2009) describes existing acculturation research in the psychology field as falling under one of two paradigms: the deductive-nomological or interpretivist perspective. Deductive-nomological studies seek to identify universal truths about the acculturation process for the purpose of predicting potential outcomes in future acculturation experiences of individuals or groups (Carnap, 1966; Chirkov, 2009; Cook, 1985; Nagel, 1961). This paradigm utilizes a positivist lens, where the true nature of the social phenomena exists in some
discoverable form beyond the human representation of the event and the researcher attempts to uncover the essence of the construct (Carnap, 1966; Chirkov, 2009; Cook, 1985; Nagel, 1961). Thus, this universal perspective on acculturation seeks to identify the universal laws of acculturation that transcend all possible situational or individual differences (Berry & Sam, 1997; Chirkov, 2009).

The interpretivist perspective argues that social phenomena and human behavior are not predicted through identification of universal laws, but rather are impacted by intense socio-cultural influence (Chirkov, 2009; D'Andrade, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1983; Schwandt, 2000). Thus, social scientists seek to understand individual and group actions through the meaning actors assign to the behavior (Chirkov, 2009; D'Andrade, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1983; Schwandt, 2000; Tappan, 1997). The meaning of an action could, therefore, be intersubjective, deriving meaning through interpersonal interpretation and negotiation of normative rules and social practices, or subjective, where the actor alone assigns meaning (Hollis, 2002). The interpretation of the phenomenon is therefore influenced by the context (i.e., place and time) and individual attributes of the subject or other involved parties (Gergen, 1973). Chirkov (2009) argues that this means that the deductive-nomological search for truth is not useful, as the context and individual differences will result in unique interpretations of phenomenon. The interpretivist view lends itself to the belief that culture is socially constructed, making the culture itself dependent on the participants to both assign and enforce the shared meaning of actions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schwandt, 2015; Searle, 1995; Shwedder, 1995).

Acculturation research may be conducted with either epistemological view depending on the purpose of the research (Chirkov, 2009). Curtner-Smith (2017) notes that while most acculturation literature is interpretivist in nature, both types are present in the physical education
literature. The construct of acculturation is still relatively underdeveloped compared with the other two forms described in occupational socialization theory; thus, an interpretivist approach has been used by researchers to help to further develop our understanding of what subcomponents are present within the acculturation process (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017a).

**Statement of purpose**

The general purpose of this study was to build on these works and to continue exploring the theorized elements of the process of acculturation. To accomplish this, the specific purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of coaches that contributed to their acculturation. The work on acculturation in physical education and teacher preparation programs has led researchers to some commonly accepted factors, but no research to date has examined the assessment of resources, including attractor and facilitator resources proposed by Lortie (1975). Further development of this theoretical model will help illuminate the acculturation process of potential recruits to the coaching profession prior to occupational entry, critical to understanding the appeal of coaching in a largely informalized professional field (Taylor & Garrat, 2010).

**Research Questions**

The researcher developed a series of research questions based on the literature (see Chapter 2) toward fulfilling the purpose of this study. These questions were based on the pre-existing literature of the acculturation process derived from the work of Lortie (1975) and subsequent authors in teacher education, physical education teacher education, and coaching. This research utilized a grounded theory approach, primarily based on Strauss and Corbin’s
(1990) verification techniques, to better understand the relevant themes and relationships toward a theory of acculturation for sport coaches. The guiding research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of personal attributes on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ2: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of their apprenticeship of observation on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ3: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of resources on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ3.1: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of attractor resources on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ3.2: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of facilitator resources on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ4: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of subjective warrant on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ4.1: How do the individual’s self-assessment of their ability to fulfill the requirements influence their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?
RQ4.2: How do the individual’s assessment of what the role of “sport coach” is influence their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

**Positionality Statement**

Research is an inherently biased process in which every decision and action is influenced by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). These biases are evident when choosing a methodological approach and its underlying epistemological foundations, deciding about the project parameters (i.e., sampling, what questions to ask or omit, etc.), and even in the initial selection of research topics (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Qualitative research is most concerned with reducing (and ideally, altogether removing) bias during the analytic processes in research, allowing the research to “…objectively study the subjective states of their subjects” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 37).

This research emerged from a desire to better understand the motivations and background influences that lead individuals into the profession of coaching. A lifelong career as a coach has informed this interest, both from the personal experience of entering and remaining in the coaching profession for over fifteen years and from the managerial perspective of recruiting new coaches who thrived, struggled, enjoyed, or lost interest in the profession. While these experiences have had an influence on the structuring of the research project, informed the lines of inquiry into and selection of relevant research, and aided in the selection of epistemological and methodological underpinnings, they have also led the researcher to seek knowledge that benefits the new coach (as well as other stakeholders) by empowering them. Allowing the subjects of this research to have their voices heard in the world of academia gives them some power to inform future studies and theorizing on them and their peers. Thus, this study
acknowledges the presence of bias throughout the research process while making efforts to reduce personal influence over the data provided by participants.

**Definitions**

P.E.T.E. – physical education teacher education; the academic track for educating recruits who are pursuing teaching careers in physical education in school settings.

Sport coach – professionals who facilitate learning sport for students in school, recreation, club, or professional settings.

Attractor Resources – resources that draw new recruits toward a potential career path; these include interpersonal benefits, societal service, sport continuation, time compatibility, and material benefits (Lortie, 1975).

Facilitator Resources – resources that aid in transitioning a new recruit into a profession, either via positive or negative experiences or persons; these include decision range, visibility, gender norms, and special facilitators (Lortie, 1975).

Subjective Warrant – an individual’s views about the requirements of a profession and their views about their own ability to meet those requirements.

Athlete Identity – A strongly held affective state in which the individual prioritizes their athletic persona over other parts of their identity (e.g., familial identity, racial identity, occupational identity, sexual identity, etc.).

**Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

This chapter begins with an overview of the state of the coaching industry and coaching as a profession. Next is a summary of the theoretical framework of occupational socialization theory that guides this research. Finally, the chapter moves to a specific focus on the acculturation process of physical education teacher education students, many of whom take on a
coaching orientation. Sport coaches should be particularly interesting to sport managers (Gammelsæter, 2021), as they are the front-line employees who drive sport participation, facilitate sporting events, and act as the face of the sport organization.

**Coaches and coaching**

At a broad level, a profession is defined by its knowledge and skill requirements, along with specific attributes and values (Burbules & Densmore, 1991; Cruess et al., 2004; Duffy et al., 2011; Lindop, 1982; Taylor & Garrat, 2010; Williams, 1998). Burbules & Densmore (1991), Cruess et al. (2004), and Williams (1998) also contend that a formal and well maintained certification process and professional code of conduct are requirements for a professional field. Other crucial elements include exclusivity and a monopoly on providing service (Duffy et al., 2011; Edwards, 2006; Kennedy, 1993; Lindop, 1982; Sommerlad, 2002, 2009), role specific salary structure (Lindop, 1982; Sockett, 1985; Wilensky, 1964), and legal and social recognition (Lindop, 1982; Sockett, 1985; Taylor & Garrat, 2010; Wilensky, 1964).

Sport coaching is still a highly informal professional field (Duffy et al., 2011) and has been primarily filled by part-time and volunteer staff (Demers et al., 2006; Taylor & Garrat, 2010). The attempt to formalize the sport coaching profession is relatively new and, in Europe and Canada, has ties to governmental regulation and oversight (Demers et al., 2006; Taylor & Garrat, 2010). The implementation of “best practices” and policies supports national and societal interests (Taylor & Garrat, 2010). Improved performance coaching toward competitive outcomes (such as increased Olympic medal wins) and ensuring safety and/or program quality in recreational sport programs, to name a few, have helped to propel the coaching profession into the center of discussion among sport regulators (Taylor & Garrat, 2010). Such a shift from a largely volunteer and part-time driven career into a more exclusive and full-time oriented
profession is viewed as a way of encouraging long-term commitment to these values among a group of skilled, sport coaching professionals (Demers et al., 2006; Sakires et al., 2009; Taylor & Garrat, 2010). In the U.S., sport coaching is even less formalized, with only a handful of non-profit organizations setting out any sort of coaching guidelines. These organizations, which include the NCAA and the USOC, tend to be far more focused on athlete development than coach development. This leaves a gap in the chain of sport delivery, where coaches are expected to produce championships and victories while ignoring other important coaching competencies, like grassroots development, motivation, and sport continuation.

Coaching, as a profession, is somewhat difficult to describe as it includes a diverse set of functions and professional features (Dick, 2011; Duffy et al., 2011; Sage, 1989; Taylor & Garrat, 2010). It has often been measured against other professional fields in an attempt to better understand the unique qualities and requirements of the job (Taylor & Garrat, 2010), but these comparisons to other fields (such as teaching and law) have left some questions about the legitimacy of coaching as a true profession (Duffy et al., 2011). For example, professional exclusivity is maintained in part by the suspension or expulsion of members by professional governing bodies (Barker, 2010; Duffy et al., 2011); however, no such authority is found in either U.S. law or coaching organization policies beyond suspending organizational membership (Duffy et al., 2011). While an organization may invalidate a coach’s certification, the individual is often still able to proceed as a coach, unlike formalized penalties in other professions (e.g., disbarring a lawyer).

Similarly, the skill and knowledge based requirements of coaches are notably varied across the profession, with many coaches gaining employment based on past sport participation and performance (Taylor & Garrat, 2010). Abraham and Collins (1998) voiced this concern for
inconsistent coaching knowledge and skill sets and point out that systematic application of theory and scientifically supported approaches to coaching technique are rare among sport coaches, especially outside of the university setting. In formalized professions, however, proof of knowledge generally takes the form of a university education (and often an advanced degree), supervised training, and approved professional development and continuing education (Duffy et al., 2011; Williams, 1998). In the coaching profession, researchers often find students in related university programs like physical education teacher education or sport management, but coaches may be in alternative and unrelated fields if they even choose to pursue a college education at all (Duffy et al., 2011). Having experience playing, ideally at the varsity collegiate or professional level, is often the only prerequisite for employment, especially among coaches with volunteer or part-time employment status and coaches often feel the coaching education programs are inferior in the face of experience (Jacobs et al., 2016).

Defining the “Sport Coach”. The role of “sport coach” is vague in and of itself, making the profession even harder to grasp (Duffy et al., 2011; Taylor & Garrat, 2010). Due to the lack of consistent (or any), clear parameters for what a coach does, the sport industry is able to perpetually offer poor professional definitions that leave the role unclear and makes training and preparation difficult (Hylton & Hartley, 2012). Jacobs et al. (2016) point out that varied expectations and requirements in the coaching education arena indicate that a good coach is a “…fluid and ambiguous concept” (p. 412). This is further complicated by the non-traditional pathways of coach development, which include volunteering, early and late starters, and varied degrees of professional requirements across sport settings and national boundaries (Demers et al., 2006; Duffy et al., 2011). This ambiguity likely contributes to a confusing and inaccurate assessment of what to expect in a sport coaching role, which has the potential to lead to high
Role theory may offer some insight into the social construction of the sport coach position. Role theory is a field of scientific inquiry that deals with human behaviors that occur within certain contexts and/or processes and looks at how roles are “…described, explained, predicted, studied, accounted for, learned rationalized, perceived, and created” (Biddle, 1979, p. 4). Role theory is often used to study social positions, which describes the shared features or behaviors associated with a role across a recognizable group of people, such as coaches (Biddle, 1979). Jones et al. (2002), citing Callero’s (1994) work on role as a cultural construct, views the role of a coach as performative, meaning they alter their behaviors to gain social acceptance from those who assess their performance (such as athletes, parents, and peers). This allows the coach to adjust to social expectations by performing the socially expected functions of their role, in turn giving them the ability to influence others and retain agency (Callero, 1994; Jones et al., 2002; Sage, 1989). Jones et al. (2002) notes that role theories often view the unique personal qualities of the subject as irrelevant in the face of role-specific requirements, leading to role conflict and ultimately ignoring the creative and inventive skills that coaches use in practice. The balancing of structural requirements of coaches (e.g., tenants of a coach certification organization), individual values, and social forces makes the role of coach into a complex social negotiation (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2002; Sage, 1989). Athletes, for example, judge the competency of their coaches, which in turn impacts their performance and behaviors (Horn, 2002; Myers et al., 2006) as well as their trust in the coach (Kao et al., 2017). These judgments are based in part on the technical and game-strategy skill of coaches, but also include dimensions
of motivation and character-building competency (Horn, 2002; Kao et al., 2017; Myers et al., 2006).

Collins and Collins (2012) believe that outdoor professionals (e.g., adventure-sports) may exploit the vague and loosely defined term “coach” to their advantage in the marketplace. They specifically divide outdoor professionals into categories of “... ‘adventure-sports coach’, ‘teacher’ and ‘guide’...” where the coaching group is focused on technical skill development, teachers focus on personal development in outdoor settings, and guides lend their experience to consumers. More specifically, a teacher is differentiated from a coach in that teachers are curriculum focused while coaches prioritize individualized student needs (Collins & Collins, 2012). This type of terminology confusion between coach and teacher is further muddled when considering physical education teachers, with many viewing themselves (as well as being viewed by their social networks) as coaches instead of teachers (Curtner-Smith, 2009; O'Connor & Macdonald, 2002; Sage, 1987; Sage, 1989).

Are coaching and P.E. comparable? Researchers have questioned the validity of comparing coaches and physical educators, with some arguing that the two skills are markedly different and others claiming they are essentially the same. Abraham and Collins (1998) state that studying physical education teachers can benefit the research field for coaches, as “…both skills contain very similar elements” (p. 59). Jones et al. (2002) repeatedly compare coaching to teaching when describing the coaching profession as knowledge based, pedagogical, and social in nature. Sage (1989) contends “…teaching and coaching have become two quite distinct social positions…” and that teachers deliver information to students via a stable curriculum while coaches mold athletes into teams for competitive ends (p. 82). Coaches act in a more managerial
capacity, coordinating team activities, and are evaluated based on performance outcomes (Sage, 1989).

The professional emergence of coaching in schools, which begins in the early 20th century and continues through the post-World War II era, coincided with a shift in physical education curriculum from fitness based to sport based programs that further tied physical educators to coaching sport (Sage, 1989). While hundreds of publications on coaching have attempted to offer theoretical and empirical ideas about coaching (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004), there is little consensus regarding the essence of coaching (Cushion, 2007; Cushion & Lyle, 2010; Duffy et al., 2011).

Many researchers have pointed out that P.E.T.E. programs are viewed by coaching oriented students as a gateway to the profession of coaching (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014; Sage, 1987; Sage, 1989; Schempp & Graber, 1992). There may even be a predominant interest in coaching among teacher/coaches, especially males, who are in the field (Sage, 1987; Sage, 1989). This indicates a distinct divide between the perceptions of most researchers, who view coaching and physical education as separate, and potential coaches who view them as similar or pathways between one another.

The physical education literature even goes as far as to link coaching oriented P.E.T.E. students to custodial role orientations in sometimes inseparable ways (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Curtner-Smith, 2009; Richards & Templin, 2011). A custodial role orientation indicates that the individual is not receptive to new ideas or theoretical approaches, but would rather maintain the status quo with a sort of “how I was taught” mentality (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Lawson, 1983b; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). Students who lean toward the coaching end of the spectrum are viewed as particularly resistant to the teachings of P.E.T.E.
programs (Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004). This has led some researchers to caution against allowing coaching oriented students to participate in P.E.T.E. programs, with Curtner-Smith (2009) explicitly suggesting that programs “…reject applicants with hard core custodial coaching orientations” (p. 222), while acknowledging the limitations of the academic climate on this notion.

These divisions between researchers’ and practitioners’ views of physical education and coaching point to a need to better understand the acculturation process and the influential factors within. Understanding the backgrounds and views of incoming P.E.T.E. students may help to better address issues of inaccurate subjective warrants, especially among coaches whose target profession has amorphous parameters to begin with.

**Occupational socialization theory**

This study utilized occupational socialization theory as its theoretical framework. Several fields have dedicated lines of research and theoretical models related to understanding how individuals enter an occupation (Pitney et al., 2002; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). Studies of teacher socialization in the field of education (Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1932; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) and specifically of physical education teachers (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991; Richards, 2015; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014) have used occupational socialization theory to examine how teachers become interested in, train for, and then enter their profession. Health care (including nursing, physical therapy, and athletic training) has used a two-phase model of professional socialization in which researchers examine the individual’s experiences before entering the field and after entering a specific role (Becker et al., 1961; Clark, 1997; Colucciello, 1990; Corb et al., 1987; Glen & Waddington, 1998; Lyons, 1997; Pitney, 2002; Pitney et al., 2002).
Occupational socialization theory (or O.S.T.) is a model used to describe how an individual learns about, trains for, and is ultimately situated into a particular role (Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). This model describes the process in three phases: acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). More recently, researchers have abandoned the term “phases” in favor of “types” or “forms” of socialization in an effort to acknowledge that this process is not necessarily temporally bound (Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b). Rather each form of socialization occurs, sometimes overlapping and/or occurring for multiple pathways (e.g., organizational socialization as a teacher and acculturating as a school coach; (Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b).

**Acculturation**

The first type of socialization in occupational socialization theory is acculturation, in which the individual seeks to understand the viability of the profession and searches for information on entry to the field (Lawson, 1983b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). This type of socialization has been conceptualized as beginning at birth and extending until the individual definitively decides to enroll in a pre-professional program (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Lawson, 1983b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014) and is viewed as the most impactful stage over the course of the occupational socialization process (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). In this stage, the potential recruit is influenced by personal attributes, an apprenticeship of observation, and an assessment of resources.

Personal attributes describe the individual’s background and have been used to describe the initial attraction to the profession (Dodds et al., 1991). Generally, this includes the individual’s demographic profile, socioeconomic status, and sport participation (Chatoups et al.,...
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2007; Dodds et al., 1991). These background profiles have been used to predict role orientations and have been shown to be quite valuable in understanding the initial acculturating forces that potential recruits experience (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Richards & Templin, 2019).

The experiences individuals undergo as students, which Lortie (1975) called the apprenticeship of observation stage, sees the individual imagine themselves in the role of the teacher (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Curtner-Smith, 2017). Lawson (1983b), Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014), and Templin, Woodford, and Mulling (1982) each note that apprenticeship of observation includes a huge amount of time and interaction between the individual and the role model that leads to a powerful impression of the role. This apprenticeship of observation leads to the development of a subjective warrant, which describes the potential newcomer’s beliefs about a profession’s requirements and their self-evaluation of their capacity to fulfill those requirements (Lortie, 1975). Individuals form subjective warrants across several possible career pathways during acculturation (Lawson, 1983b), ultimately deciding which fields they believe they are well suited to enter or avoid (Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; Dodds et al., 1991; Graber, 2001) and where they believe they can have an impact on the profession (Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). The subjective warrant is not guaranteed to produce an accurate assessment of the profession but does lay a foundational set of expectations that underscores their professional socialization and beliefs about the profession (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014).

Lortie (1975) also believed that the acculturation phase required recruitment resources be viewed positively by potential newcomers. Potential entrants into a profession were particularly interested in resources that act as attractors or facilitators (Lortie, 1975). Attractor resources provide the potential entrant with information about the benefits of the profession and can be
related to interpersonal benefits, desire to provide service to society, continuation, time compatibility, and material benefits (Lortie, 1975). Facilitator resources are those that help to advance the potential newcomer into the profession, and include decision range, visibility, gender norms, and special facilitators. Special facilitators include things like the potential entrant’s role models (teachers, coaches, family members, etc.) as well as blocked aspirations (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Dewar, 1989; Lortie, 1975; Templin et al., 1982).

These three components of acculturation ultimately lead the potential recruit to a decision to enroll in formal training (Curtner-Smith, 2017). There may be some indications that role orientations, including coaching versus teaching and custodial vs innovative, develop during this stage (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). There is little debate that the effects of acculturation persist throughout the remainder of the occupational socialization process and that they are more powerful than either professional or organizational socialization tactics (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

**Professional socialization**

Professional socialization is the second type of socialization in O.S.T. and sees the individual take on formal education and/or training (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). For many, this means getting a college education where they are taught the required skills, develop their knowledge base, and learn what faculty view as critical elements of the profession (Lawson, 1983b, 1986; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). This is not a passive process in which the students are filled with the relevant skills and knowledge, but rather is a dialectic negotiation between the new recruits and their instructors (Cushion et al., 2003; Graber, 1989; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014; Schempp & Graber, 1992).
Scholarship on the professional socialization process in physical education has revealed that these preparatory programs are often ineffective at overcoming the role expectations that are developed during acculturation (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Lawson, 1986; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). The tendency to abandon innovative practices when new recruits enter teaching roles may stem from strategic compliance of students in physical education teacher education (or P.E.T.E.) programs (Graber, 1991; Lacey, 1977; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Stroot & Ko, 2006). Strategic compliance (aka “studentship”) is described by Graber (1991) as the behaviors students use to advance through their professional socialization without actually buying into the teachings of their faculty. These may be covert tactics like cheating or taking shortcuts (Schempp & Graber, 1992), but the end goal is for the student to hold on to their own beliefs without hindering their progress through their academic training (Stroot & Williamson, 1993). Resistance to professional socialization programs has typically been overcome through closely supervised field-experience that provides opportunity for innovative practice in progression (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Curtner-Smith, 1997; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009), faculty interaction with students that both confront and reflect on acculturation forces (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Curtner-Smith, 1997, 2001), and the perceived credibility of faculty members (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). This may also be true among prospective coaches, who are often focused on learning through experience and resist coaching education programs and theories (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2002).

Another relevant issue related to the effectiveness of professional socialization is the recruit’s role orientation (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). Students may be teaching or coaching oriented, with those in the coaching orientation often resisting innovative teaching tactics and theories (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Curtner-Smith, 2009; Lawson, 1983b; Richards
Richards and Templin (2011) believed this might be because coaching oriented students saw teaching as a back-up plan or means to access an athletic coaching role. Teaching oriented recruits view teaching as their main focus and were therefore more likely to embrace innovative orientations and methods (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Curtner-Smith et al., 2008).

Organizational socialization

In the final type of socialization in O.S.T. the individual undergoes the process of organizational socialization, in which they assume the role in a specific organizational context (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). Organizational socialization serves the purpose of integrating the newcomer into a specific work setting and organizational culture (Bauer et al., 2007; Lawson, 1989; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014; Saks et al., 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This phase has been of particular interest in the management and organizational behavior literature and has spawned several models describing the organizational socialization process.

One of these models is proposed by Bauer et al. (2007) who describe a three phase process of newcomer adjustment that starts with antecedents of newcomer adjustment, followed by adjustment, and ending with outcomes. The antecedents of newcomer adjustment include both organization driven forces called organizational socialization tactics (Bauer et al., 2007; Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and individual level forces called newcomer information seeking (Bauer et al., 2007; Miller & Jablin, 1991). The seminal work of Van Maanen and Schein (1979) outlines six dimensions of organizational socialization: collective to individual, formal to informal, sequential to random, fixed to variable, serial to disjunctive, and investiture to divestiture. Jones (1986) grouped these six dimensions into content (collective and formal), context (sequential and fixed), and social (serial and investiture) organizational
socialization tactics. Newcomer information seeking, the individual’s pursuit of relevant information about their new role, is described by Miller and Jablin (1991) as including referent, appraisal, and relational information. The antecedents of newcomer adjustment phase should provide the recruit with enough information to move from organizational outsider to insider (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and should help to sustain the organizational culture (Bauer et al., 2007; Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Lawson, 1983a). This can lead to issues of what Lawson (1983a) calls “institutional press” where the organizational socialization process contradicts the professional socialization process by enforcing the status quo instead of fostering the innovative role orientations taught in university programs.

The newcomer adjustment stage sees the recruit gain role clarity, social acceptance, and self-efficacy (Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1981). This phase has been conceptualized in the field of education as taking anywhere from three to five years (Fessler & Christensen, 1992). Lawson (Lawson, 1983b, 1989) believed that this induction process for physical educators began with preservice field experiences during which recruits would have their role expectations challenged. Partial induction during this phase might result in under preparedness for the transition into the role and resistance to the existing organizational culture could further hinder the organizational socialization process (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Richards et al., 2013). Bauer et al. (2007) outline the relationships between socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment, shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1**

Bauer’s (2007) Socialization Tactics and Newcomer Adjustment Model
Role clarity occurs when the individual understands how to complete and prioritize tasks, as well as how to manage their time (Feldman, 1981). This reduction of uncertainty is facilitated by organizational socialization tactics and newcomer information seeking in the early stages of organizational socialization (Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Failure to successfully socialize through these processes is likely to cause role stress to manifest in the recruit (Kahn et al., 1964; Ortvist & Wincent, 2006). Kahn et al. (1964) describe three types of role stress: role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. Kahn et al.’s (1964) theory of role dynamics determined that as employee role stress increased, job satisfaction and performance decreased; however, a meta-analysis by Orqvist and Wincent (2006) showed broader implications had been discovered, indicating that role stress could also initiate burnout (driven by emotional exhaustion, reduced sense of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization), increase propensity to quit, increase tension, and reduce organizational commitment. Sport coaches have shown some resistance to the adverse impact of role stress, maintaining high job satisfaction in spite of experiencing role stress (Provencio et al., 2021). Failure to achieve role clarity is thought to be a product of poorly formed subjective warrants (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Lawson, 1983b, 1986).
Social acceptance is one’s feeling of being liked and accepted by their peers (Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1981). This quality of connection is expanded in the physical education literature to include student-teacher socialization (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Richards et al., 2013; Smyth, 1995; Templin, 1978), school principals (Watkins, 2005), and parents (O'Sullivan, 1989) in addition to peer relationships. While student relationships are viewed as the most valuable (especially compared with principles and parents (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014), teachers who have opportunities to engage with other professionals often felt more empowered in the workplace (Templin et al., 2011). However, induction into the organization’s social network can be challenging, often resulting in feelings of isolation or marginalization if unsuccessful (Armour & Jones, 1998; Hoyle, 1986; Lux & McCullick, 2011; Schempp et al., 1993; Sparks et al., 1993). Gaudreault, Richards, and Woods (2018) studied this phenomenon through the construct of perceived mattering. Gaudreault et al. (2018) found that physical educators viewed social acceptance based on the value of their subject (subject-matters) and their own relationships (teacher-matters), and that the subject was viewed more favorably than teachers themselves. Relationships were key to the teacher-matters dimension (Gaudreault et al., 2018).

Self-efficacy deals with the mastering of tasks that leads to confidence in one’s abilities to fulfill the role (Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1981). For teaching, this dimension has been found to be notably difficult for new recruits to overcome, with the same intense demands being thrust on new teachers and veterans of the profession alike (Johnson, 1990; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stroot & Ko, 2006). In addition to the intense work demands, the recruit’s role orientation may clash with the culture in their new environment which in turn leads to reality shock (Eldar et al., 2003; Rust, 1994; Stroot & Ko, 2006). New teachers have been found to integrate into innovative professional cultures more seamlessly because these environments are generally more
supportive, allow for recruits to utilize familiar instructional strategies, and provide teachers with support (Day et al., 2007; Huberman, 1993; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014).

Successful newcomer adjustment leads to outcomes including job satisfaction, improved performance, reduced turnover intention, strengthened organizational commitment, and stronger intentions to remain (Bauer et al., 2007). Turnover is of particular interest in physical education where between thirty-five and fifty percent of new recruits leave the profession within their first five years (Ingersoll, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

**Professional socialization model**

Pitney (2002; 2002) describes the model of professional socialization as a two part system including anticipatory and organizational phases. The anticipatory phase deals with how the individual learns and prepares for a role prior to entering a specific work setting (Pitney, 2002; Pitney et al., 2002). The organizational socialization phase describes what happens after the individual has entered a specific work context (Pitney, 2002; Pitney et al., 2002). Essentially, the professional socialization model combines O.S.T.’s acculturation and professional socialization forms into the single anticipatory stage, reflecting the possibility that acculturation forces are still at work during professional socialization. This model is worth briefly mentioning, as it is emerging in the physical education literature.

**A proposed nomological network of acculturation**

Acculturation is a social process by which an individual negotiates their position within a new cultural context (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke et al., 2015). Chirkov (2009) views acculturation as an ongoing process that is intentional and helps the individual to make meaning of the new social world. Using Lortie’s (1975) conception of occupational socialization theory of teachers, Lawson (1983b) applies the term in a physical education context to describe the individual’s
experiences with the profession that lead them into career training (i.e., developing interest in a teaching career). Occupational socialization theory states that these pervasive cultural influences experienced by the individual begin at birth and extend up until the individual enrolls in a teacher education program (Lawson, 1983b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014); however, more recently researchers have conceptualized acculturation as a type of socialization that may occur several times as an individual develops their perspectives on other career pathways (Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b), which is more consistent with Chirkov’s (2009) perspective.

The construct of acculturation described by Lortie (1975) includes several factors that the factors and relationships of those factors within a theorized representation of the construct of interest (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Mao, 2020). These “interlocking systems of laws,” according to Cronbach and Meehl (1955), must have at least some observable properties and tends to grow and develop over time. The nomological network also allows researchers to validate the construct through empirical research and observation (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Mao, 2020). This allows latent variables, such as acculturation, to be studied using the observable variables within the construct (Mao, 2020; Schumacker & Lomax, 2016). The following conceptualization of the nomological network of acculturation, based on the literature, has been constructed by the researcher and is represented in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2**

Lortie’s Model of Acculturation
Empirical research on acculturation has established initial attraction, apprenticeship of observation, and the subjective warrant within the physical education literature (Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b); however, the resource assessment (both of attractor and facilitator resources) has gotten little attention at this point, despite being recognized as important (Dodds et al., 1991). Researchers in the physical education field have utilized the questionnaire developed by Dodds et al. (1991) to explore the background profiles of P.E.T.E. enrollees, including personal attributes, primary sport participation, and significant others (Chatoups et al., 2007). These dimensions fit within the current conception of acculturation in many ways but leave some un-filled gaps. Dodds et al.’s (1991) cross-sectional study and the replication by Chatoups et al. (2007) are the only attempts at quantitative examination that the researcher as found. The primary purpose of this study is to build on these works and to continue exploring some of the theoretical gaps.

**Initial attraction**

Many (if not all) children are posed some variation of this question at some point in their youth: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Over the course of one’s childhood,
individuals examine professionals across diverse settings and start to identify areas that interest us for one reason or another (Borow, 1966; Burlingame, 1972; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Earls, 1981; Lawson, 1983b). Lawson’s (1983b) conception of acculturation suggests that individuals were likely forming beliefs about several professions simultaneously and would rule out options based on their experiences over time. In order to survive this initial attraction phase, potential recruits to physical education were viewed as having a love of sport, parental support, sibling and peer support, a desire to work with children, and the support of other environmental factors (Chatoups et al., 2007; Curtner-Smith, 2001; Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983b).

Dodds et al. (1991) studied personal attributes, participation in sport, and significant others among American P.E.T.E. students (N = 1131). Chatoups et al. (2007) conducted a similar study of Greek P.E.T.E. students (N = 564). Most P.E.T.E. students came from families where parents did not have college educations (57.3% of fathers and 70.5% of mothers did not have college degrees) and were ranked in either the low or middle tiers of the Duncan Socioeconomic Index, indicating lower “…prestige, income level, and educational requirements” (Chatoups et al., 2007, p. 32) for their occupations. The middle to low S.E.S. of P.E.T.E. students’ families is consistent with findings of previous research, such as Dodds et al. (1991), and reflects Lortie’s (1975) view that the teaching profession may be appealing because it provides some upwards social mobility.

Chatoups et al. (2007) also found that 60.3% of participants had competed in organized sports during high school and 35.5% participated in recreational sport. Somewhat surprisingly, participants did not report particularly high levels of parent sport participation, with 33.2% of fathers participating and only 11.3% of mothers participating (Chatoups et al., 2007). About 50% of participants reported having siblings that participated in physical activity (Chatoups et al.,
2007). Dodds et al. (1991) found similar high-school sport participation numbers with 96% of respondents participating in school-sponsored sports and 97% participating in recreational or leisure sport activities regularly. Dodds et al. (1991) also reported parental sport involvement with 45% of fathers and 29% of mothers actively participating in sport. Here, sibling participation was notably higher than in the Greek sample, with 80% of siblings participating in as many as three sports (Dodds et al., 1991).

In addition to this tendency to participate actively in sport, participants rated their coaches as the most influential significant other in their career choice (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991). Dodds et al. (1991) also found that P.E. teacher/coach (a teacher who also coaches a sport program) and P.E. teacher were the next most influential significant others, followed by parents, peers, other school personnel and siblings being least influential. Chatoups et al. (2007) conversely found that P.E. teachers were rated lower than parents, peers, and siblings and only out-ranked the “other school personnel” group. This may be a contributing factor to the notable number of PETE students who have coaching orientations.

Chatoups et al. (2007) also produced interesting findings about the timing and strength of the decision to pursue a career in P.E., with 69% of participants making the choice at 17 years old or younger. Contrasted with the firmness of the decision of only 40.1% compared to 59.9% of participants being prepared to pursue alternative career options. 62.5% of the respondents were confident that they would stay in a sport-related occupation for five years (33.4% were uncertain and only 4.1% planned to change occupation in the first five years), but this drops substantially to only 43.6% when extended out to ten years (53% are uncertain and 3.4% planned to change occupation within ten years).
The research on personal attributes and background profiles of potential recruits led to the first research question:

RQ1: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of personal attributes on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

Understanding these qualities among recruits to the coaching profession helps to create a profile and identify the qualities of recruits to the coaching profession.

Apprenticeship of observation

Both critical to a clear view of a profession and the source of many misconceptions about a role, the apprenticeship of observation is conducted by potential recruits as they view professionals in action from the perspective of participant (Chatoups et al., 2007; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Cushion et al., 2003; Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014; Templin et al., 1982). This stage helps the potential recruit to confirm whether or not the elements of initial attraction are present in the professional setting, which may include school or other youth sport programming and is transmitted by parents, coaches, and other socializing agents (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983b; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Other socializing factors may also be present in this stage, such as societal values (Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975).

This part of the acculturation process had not been thoroughly studied in the physical education or sport management literature, but teacher education provides some insight into how it is viewed in the classroom (Gray, 2020; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Three key themes have been identified as components in the apprenticeship of observation: demeanor, environment, and pedagogy (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Demeanor describes the teacher’s classroom persona,
including descriptive traits like how motivational, negligent, supportive, or disciplinarian the teacher is toward students (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). The environment describes the classroom atmosphere, with positive elements like cooperative student learning and negative elements including restriction of student freedoms (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Pedagogy refers to the style and content of lessons, ranging from multimodal teaching to directionless teaching (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Generally, teachers have demonstrated some reliance on their past experiences as students to inform their own practices as teachers (Gray, 2020; Lortie, 1975); however, in the field of education, researchers have found support for teachers overcoming the influence of the apprenticeship of observation if they viewed their experiences in the classroom negatively (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006).

For coaches, these elements may map quite well onto their professional assessments. Coaches were particularly interesting in the pedagogical category, as many are situational in their pedagogical approach. This conception of the apprenticeship of observation leads to the following research question:

RQ2: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of their apprenticeship of observation on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

While the teacher education, particularly P.E.T.E., literature largely cautions against the accuracy of the professional assessment during this stage (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Gray, 2020; Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975), the coaching literature has advocated that the apprenticeship of observation is “…an unusually good opportunity to learn about coaching…” (Cushion et al., 2003, p. 217). Coakley (1978) and Cushion (2001) both support the perspective that athletes get a fairly accurate view of what a coach does through their prolonged observation which extends
beyond their time as athletes and into the early years of coaching. New and assistant level coaches may also be exercising a form of apprenticeship (Cushion et al., 2003; Sage, 1989), although no demonstration of skill or time commitment is formally required of them to advance their occupational standing.

Chatoups et al. (2007) found that coaches were the most influential among Greek P.E.T.E. students and that P.E. teachers were near the bottom of the list of influential role models. This may be related to the P.E.T.E. students’ role orientations, influencing more coaching orientations that seek jobs in sport. Other studies have found that P.E. teacher and coach were both influential figures (Dodds et al., 1991; Hutchinson & Buschner, 1996; Templin et al., 1982) and that coaching was of less importance to graduate P.E.T.E. students (O'Bryant et al., 2000).

**The assessment of recruitment resources.** An individual does not choose their professional pathway based exclusively on their personal attributes and the apprenticeship of observation. The resources that an individual views as available to them within a career path are an important consideration that the individual uses to eliminate alternatives (Lortie, 1975). Lortie (1975) identifies five attractor resources (interpersonal benefits, societal service, continuation, material benefits, and time compatibility) and four facilitator resources (decision range, visibility, gender norms, and special facilitators) that teachers investigate when deciding whether to enter the profession. These factors guided the third research question and posed two additional sub-questions. The third research question is as follows:

RQ3: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of resources on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?
**Attractor resources.** Attractor resources are, broadly, the “...comparative benefits (and costs) proferred would-be entrants...” (Lortie, 1975, p. 26). This type of resource is divided into interpersonal benefits, societal service, continuation, material benefits, and time compatibility which can be compared across competing alternatives by the potential recruit. The interpersonal benefit dimension deals with one’s desire to work with others (Lortie, 1975). Among school teachers, this may be specific to children (Lortie, 1975), but coaches work with a broad range of ages and backgrounds. The social interactions that coaches have with athletes, peers, parents or caretakers, administrators, and a plethora of other people make the job particularly interpersonal in nature. This means that while some select into a career pathway to fulfill a desire for interpersonal relationships in the workplace, others may select out to avoid such demanding social requirements.

Societal service is another important dimension within the attractor resource umbrella. Teachers are viewed as filling a valuable, culturally significant, and morally upstanding professional role in society and the individuals who take an interest in the profession find this appealing (Lortie, 1975). This appeal is even more pronounced among those working with younger children (Lortie, 1975). This dimension may indicate a desire to uphold existing morals or value systems as well (Lortie, 1975). Individuals may view the societal service element as important if they have a desire to challenge the status quo as well, so self-selection out of the profession in this realm deals with one’s perceived inability to foster change or a diminished sense of importance on the part of teachers in providing societal value. Sage (1987) found that this dimension tends to favor coaches, who feel that their public role as a coach is viewed more favorably than their teaching role where their successes and failures go unseen. This is further
reinforced with social interactions in which the teacher/coach is typically referred to as “coach” (Sage, 1989).

Continuation among teachers is a type of attachment to the school setting that manifests as a desire to remain in the environment (Lortie, 1975). Teachers may have liked school as children or enjoy a content area that is not readily marketable in other fields, such as language or history (Lortie, 1975). Lortie even specifically mentions athletics, saying a teacher may “…be interested in athletics but not have the ability needed for a professional career in sports” (1975, p. 29). This view is supported throughout the coaching and physical education literature, as both professional groups (and combined teacher/coaches) have high rates of sport participation (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983b; Sage, 1987; Sage, 1989).

Continuation is also a noteworthy topic for those selecting out of a field, with those who desire change being likely to seek out a new environment (Lortie, 1975).

Material benefits cannot be ignored by any aspiring professional, but teachers are notably hesitant to discuss the importance of benefits including pay, job security, and public recognition (Lortie, 1975). The societal pressures that reinforce this taboo have not silenced teachers participating in academic studies, with job security and pay (especially among women, who see a smaller pay gap than they might in other fields) being top priorities (Lortie, 1975). Of course, teachers are widely viewed as under-paid and over-worked, so many opt for other career paths that can be more profitable.

Time compatibility is an area where teaching gains some advantages over other career pathways, with students perceiving substantial vacations in the summer, frequent holidays, weekends off, and a workday that ends in the afternoon (Lortie, 1975). Of course, veterans of the profession can attest to the reality that teaching requires much longer work-days and the holidays
and vacations that teachers are allotted often turn into opportunities to get ahead for the coming weeks, catch up on grading or lesson planning, and even staff or professional development trainings. Teachers do, however, note that the schedule of a teacher is more amenable to having a family life (Lortie, 1975). The schedule coincides with the school schedule of children and allows teachers (particularly, Lortie notes, among women) to fulfill household responsibilities.

Attractor resource elements identified by Lortie (1975) guided the first sub-question for research question three:

RQ3.1: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of attractor resources on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

**Facilitator resources.** Facilitator resources deal with the manner in which the individual views entry into the field (Lortie, 1975). Facilitator resources are divided into the decision range, visibility, gender norms, and special facilitators. Lortie (1975) believed that facilitator resources carried special weight in the occupational socialization process, as the difficulty of entry influenced the size of the pool of available candidates.

The decision range deals with how early in one’s life they decide to pursue a particular career path (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991; Lortie, 1975). The narrow decision range in some career pathways creates extreme challenges. Those where a very early decision must be made (i.e., professional sport or musician) or where only a late decision is possible (Lortie, 1975). Dodds et al. (1991) found that among P.E.T.E. students, about half (46.3%) were early deciders and only 37.5% were later deciders (early being those who chose careers in P.E. before turning 18 years old and late deciders including those who decided after turning 18). Chatoups et al (2007) found a much higher percent of early deciders (69%) among their sample. Both
researchers note that this indicates a very wide decision range for P.E. teachers, but there remain some questions about coaches, in particular, how many opted into the profession after eliminating alternative sport options (such as being a professional player). This may supported by Dodd’s (1991) and Chatoups’ (2007) findings that just over half of P.E.T.E. students listed alternative occupational options, but the specific alternatives were not provided.

Visibility is closely related to the decision range and the apprenticeship of observation, describing how prominently and at what point the career pathway becomes known by potential entrants (Lortie, 1975). A career may be highly visible, like teaching or coaching, when the individual is exposed to it early and often. Teaching is among the earliest and most frequent exposures outside the home, giving it a tremendous advantage over other professions that may not ever be seen outside of a relative (Lortie, 1975). High degrees of youth sport participation among P.E.T.E. students indicates earlier exposure to physical education and coaching as professions (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991), and the influence of P.E. teachers (Dodds et al., 1991) and coaches (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991) in career decision seems to indicate this provides some advantage.

Lortie (1975) indicated that gender norms were a type of special facilitator among teachers and describes the alternative career paths of men and women as substantially different. In a series of studies (which Lortie refers to as “the Five Towns study”) conducted by the National Education Association (1963, 1967, 1972), male teachers explored alternative jobs in business while women were interested in “…semiprofessions (nursing, library work, and social work), office positions and the performing arts” (Lortie, 1975, p. 34). This may reflect gender norms of that era, but both Dodds et al. (1991) and Chatoups et al. (2007) saw balanced gender representation in their samples (Chatoups et al. actually had more females than males). This may
indicate shifting gender norms, rather than a contradiction of the status quo, as sport has benefitted from broader reach across gender norms, supported by Title IX and other gender equity programs, as well as shifting cultural norms in the U.S.

Special facilitators included blocked aspirations (“life contingency” and lack of alternatives) and role model influence (Lortie, 1975). Blocked aspirations could be particularly powerful among coaches, as those who were aspiring to be professional players may have been early deciders who eliminated other potential pathways, only to find themselves unable to break through in the professional player pathway. College athletes in particular have strong connections to sport that may influence their decision to continue their involvement through secondary sport roles like coaching (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991). Life contingency is also a factor among athletes, as setbacks (such as an injury) may eliminate other sport opportunities that force them to enter coaching. Additionally, the significant time investment during youth and college sport may make athletes feel as though coaching is the best alternative as they have often sacrificed other work opportunities in order to pursue sport (Provencio, 2016).

Lortie’s (1975) work on facilitator resources informed the second sub-question for research question three:

RQ3.2: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of facilitator resources on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

**Formation of a subjective warrant.** Lortie (1975) describes the subjective warrant as a process of self-selection into (or out of) a professional pathway. It includes both an evaluation of the requirements of a particular profession and a self-assessment of the individual’s ability to fulfill those requirements (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975). Lawson (1983b)
argues that the subjective warrant is of particular interest, as those who self-select into the profession are rarely equipped with an accurate self-evaluation or evaluation of the profession (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Curtner-Smith, 2009; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009), which are often more like stereotypes of the role than an actual understanding. For example, Lawson (1983b) states that even after spending countless hours in school settings, a potential recruit may not have any experience with what goes on behind the scenes (i.e., lesson planning, professional development, etc.) and will believe in physical educators “…as representing body, rather than mind” (p. 6). Coaching literature has also called attention to this phenomenon (Abraham & Collins, 1998), although they have not specifically called this impression and self-evaluation the subjective warrant.

The subjective warrant may have more influence over decision making than factual knowledge, as the subjective warrant is based on beliefs founded in personal experience (Ennis, 1994). These beliefs may be used as a substitute for knowledge when they are reinforced or supported over time (Ennis, 1994; Pajares, 1992). Furthermore, once formed and confirmed, beliefs may be held even when confronted with knowledge and/or research that contradicts them (Abraham & Collins, 1998; Ennis, 1994; Lawson, 1983b). Ultimately, the subjective warrant is used by the potential recruit to make a decision to enter into formal training for a career pathway (Curtner-Smith, 2017). This research informed the fourth research question, as well as two sub-questions:

RQ4: How do coaches and potential entrants to the coaching profession describe the influence of subjective warrant on their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?
RQ4.1: How do the individual’s self-assessment of their ability to fulfill the requirements influence their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

RQ4.2: How do the individual’s assessment of what the role of “sport coach” is influence their decision to enroll in professional socialization programs toward a career in coaching?

**Grounded theory method**

The proposed nomological network of acculturation has yet to be captured comprehensively, with studies typically focusing on one dimension of the construct at a time. To further explore the acculturation process among coaches and to better understand the current theoretical underpinnings of the construct, this study utilized a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is one of several qualitative research traditions that is naturalistic (takes place in real-world settings), uses descriptive data (as opposed to numeric), is process driven (not outcome focused), inductive (let the data emerge), and seek meaning instead of “truth” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Locke, 2002). Qualitative methods can, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue, shed light on parts of the world, transform those worlds, and seek the meaning of phenomenon that participants in the world assign to them. Qualitative research offers an epistemological assumption that knowledge is derived from the subjective experiences of individuals and groups of people, encouraging researchers to get as close to the people of interest as possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Grounded theory emerged from sociological research traditions of the 1960’s in the Chicago school, which were focused on development of theory rather than empirical research (Locke, 2002). Theory, as described by Strauss (1995), is a type of explanation that includes
concepts (or constructs) which are linked systematically. These constructs and the relationships
between them are also testable, although they are influenced by the researchers and subjects alike
(Strauss, 1995).

As Glaser and Strauss (1967) state in the preface to *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*,
the divide between theoretical and empirical research in sociology had become a concern. Rather
than construct dissociated theory through logics, Glaser and Strauss (1967) believed that
observational data would provide more meaningful theories that could be applied to everyday
life (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Locke, 2002). This research method has since been lauded as a
revelation in qualitative practice (Walker & Myrick, 2006).

Grounded theory is traditionally aimed at inductive development of a theory (Glaser &
Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2002). Inductive theory construction utilizes observations and analysis of
those observations toward development of theoretical explanations of phenomenon, as opposed
to deductive theory construction that begins with a question about a specific relationship between
variables (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is hotly debated in
literature (Sato, 2019; Walker & Myrick, 2006), as the divergent techniques of Glaser (1978,
1992) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) have created a bifurcated method (Walker & Myrick,
2006).

Glaser’s (1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) school of thought focuses on the inductive
nature of grounded theory’s original design. This branch of grounded theory argues that theory is
drawn from the study of a particular phenomenon and has not been determined a priori (Glaser &
Strauss, 1967). The development of theories in this tradition is fluid, often changing through the
course of the research as new themes or relationships emerge in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018;
Glaser, 1992). Further, a theory may be substantive or formal (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999;
Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A substantive theory is relevant to participants or others who are concerned with the phenomenon and may be altered (Glaser, 1978). A formal theory has been developed more thoroughly and meets certain criterion, namely fit, relevance, and easy modification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Researchers in this tradition may utilize an orienting theoretical perspective to guide the researcher’s focus but it should not place boundaries on the collection or analysis of data (Locke, 2002). Orienting theories, such as symbolic interactionism, should be broad and help situate the researcher in a social world, rather than explicitly refer to the conditions of interest for the study (Locke, 2002).

While some qualitative purists describe this inductive process as only taking place after data is collected and analyzed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glaser, 1992), Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; 1990) argue that the method can also be used for deduction and verification. Existing theoretical frameworks can be expanded upon or refined, generally when the existing theory is substantive (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This does not preclude the researcher from exploring new constructs revealed in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). When verifying theories through the grounded theory approach, processes for coding and analysis are prescribed more closely than the open-ended method of constant comparison used in an inductive process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Locke, 2002; Sato, 2019).

In addition to Glaser and Strauss’ two perspectives, Charmaz (2006, 2014) developed a constructivist grounded theory perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Charmaz (2006) argues that the theories generated by research, while grounded in participant provided data, is a representation (or construction) of reality and not reality itself. Grounded theory combines Glaser’s positivist view that theory is discoverable through rigorous and well-structured research and Strauss’s pragmatic approach of allowing researchers freedom and flexibility in
understanding the ever changing and abstract human processes of interest (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, Charmaz (2006) advocates that grounded theory techniques should be utilized as tools to be wielded by the researcher, rather than set recipes for executing research.

The aforementioned constructs were used to inform the development of a set of questions toward the study of this model of acculturation. The next chapter discusses the research methodology including participants and sampling, question development, data collection, and the data analysis plan.

**Chapter 3 - Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview of the research process utilized in this work. The chapter begins with a discussion on participants and the criteria used for participant selection. Next, the researcher discusses the data collection methods including question development and interview protocols. Finally, a data analysis plan is outlined.

**Participants**

This study utilized a sample that drew on coaches who were in the first five years of their coaching careers. These coaches are presumed to be close enough to their acculturation process to have vivid memories about what motivated them to enter the profession.

**Sampling Technique.** Probability sampling is viewed by many researchers as the ideal technique for maximizing generalizability (Dillman et al., 2014; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008) and reducing sampling biases (Berg & Latin, 2008; Osborne, 2011). Qualitative researchers do not place the same value on generalizability of findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Rather, these approaches are focused on transferability, which Bogdan and Biklen (2007) characterize as “…not [concerned] with the question of whether their findings are generalizable, but rather with the question of to which other settings and subjects they are generalizable” (p. 36). Grounded
theory in particular bases it’s sampling techniques on the underlying theoretical premise (Locke, 2002). Thus, selection criteria are set based on the potential theory of interest, where inductive processes may alter the sampling criterion during the research process (Locke, 2002).

One such technique is purposive sampling in which the researcher specifically selects study participants based on pre-determined criteria (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). This technique is noteworthy due to its ease, speed, and purpose driven focus for analytic induction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). One type of purposive sampling is theoretical sampling, which sets the selection criteria based on the theoretical underpinnings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Theoretical sampling is a staple of grounded theory research (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009) and yields the optimum chance for discovering meaningful data (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009; Glaser, 1978). Sampling, thus, is used both to help in saturating existing data points and exploring new pathways revealed during constant comparison (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling ends when new leads cease to emerge from new data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Since the population of interest is clearly defined as individuals who were acculturating into coaching, purposive sampling (specifically, theoretical sampling) was appropriate to access these individuals. The researcher attempted to minimize coverage error by drawing from several candidates representing different coaching interests (i.e., sport settings) to include a diverse group of participants. Further, new participants were recruited based on the emergence of new category leads that helped further expand the theoretical boundaries of the research.
Participant consent and ethical considerations

Participants were recruited through personal communications via email, word of mouth, and social media. Ultimately this study included eight participants (n = 8) who took part in interviews. The participants selected pseudonyms to protect their identities and some descriptive data is not presented (such as age and hometown) to further ensure they would not be tied to their responses. These participants came from diverse backgrounds, summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>National Origin</th>
<th>Coaching Context</th>
<th>Sports Coached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Country Club</td>
<td>Tennis; Pickleball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Country Club; College</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Athletic Club</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Athletic Club</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis; Soccer;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christiano</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>Track and Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Athletic Club</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Country Club; High School</td>
<td>Tennis; Pickleball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Athletic Club</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grounded theory approach and methodological implications.

Grounded theory may utilize several qualitative research techniques for data gathering, including interviews, observations, document analysis, and more (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007;
Locke, 2002). Having multiple data sources, referred to as triangulation of data, is viewed as lending trustworthiness to the researcher’s findings (Flick, 2014). Triangulation may be achieved in several ways, such as utilizing multiple techniques (e.g., observations, interviews, and document analysis), using one technique with varied data sources (e.g., interviewing three different members of a social group), or other combinations of data gathering techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Choosing a diverse group of participants helps to achieve triangulation and provides data that captures multiple viewpoints on the process (Locke, 2002).

In this section, the researcher will cover data collection technique (interviews), analysis plan, and other methodological concerns.

**Interviewing and interview protocols**

In this study, interviews were the primary method for data collection (See the Appendix for the Interview Script). Interviews are purposeful conversations between two or more individuals in which one, namely the researcher, attempts to gain insight or information from the other (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The descriptive data that researchers gather in interviews helps shed light on the views of participants on the processes, social worlds, or other areas of interest (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews are most effective when the researcher is able to establish some rapport and gain the trust of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Whyte, 1984). This is often achieved by initiating conversation with “…small talk…” to help establish shared interests, although researchers may forego some of this if they have a pre-existing relationship with the individual of interest (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). Once the researcher has established rapport with the participants, the interview can begin. Interviews were conducted over the online conferencing platform called Zoom, which allowed the researcher to record the conversations. In the first element of the formal interview, the researcher provided participants with the purpose of
the interviews and provided an opportunity for questions about the procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Interviews range from open ended, also called guided conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), to structured (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The degree to which an interview is structured impacts the data collected, with a more rigidly structured interview likely to produce more consistent responses and an open-ended structure allowing the respondent to focus on their own construction of the phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Since the constructs within the acculturation stage of O.S.T. have already been defined in the literature, the researcher employed a set of questions that were designed to elicit answers about the relevant elements, while still allowing the participant to further expand on important elements or yet to be identified components.

Once the interviews had been conducted and recorded, the interviewer transcribed the data. Transcription is a process by which the researcher creates a written account of a social interaction (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011). The transcription process is intended to reflect the data as observed, but is prone to researcher bias (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011; Bucholtz, 2000). Transcription may be interpretive (what is transcribed) and/or representational (how things are transcribed), reflecting theoretical expectations, cultural and societal norms, and even power dynamics (Bucholtz, 2000). Text alone is not always able to capture the meaning provided by a participant and the researcher, or even the reader, may apply their own context, syntax, or biases on what has been transcribed (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011; Bucholtz, 2000). Bezemer and Mavers (2011) call this transduction, or the assignment of meaning to a transcription. To better capture the intended meaning of participants, member checking was utilized as well. In this process, participants were provided with a copy of their transcribed interview and were able to review or
edit the transcript to improve their meaning and clarity. Once the transcript had been member checked, the researcher could begin the data analysis process.

**Data analysis**

**Coding.** Once the transcripts had been generated, the coding process begun. In grounded theory, coding includes three steps: open coding (aka initial coding), a more structured coding system (axial, theoretical, or focused depending on which grounded theory method is selected), and selective coding (Flick, 2018). This research utilized Corbin and Strauss’s (2015) approach, meaning that the structured coding system was axial coding (Flick, 2018).

The researcher started with the process of open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser, 1978; Saldaña, 2021; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). When open coding, the researcher first breaks the transcribed texts into discrete data fragments for interpretation (Locke, 2002; Saldaña, 2021). These fragments vary in length, but Glaser (1978) and Locke (2002) advocated for approximately sentence-long pieces unless otherwise justifiably appropriate to convey the intended meaning. These data fragments are then classified into homogenous groups using sensitizing concepts, which are broad groupings of constructs which help the researcher understand the process (Flick, 2018).

Other researchers call this technique naming and comparing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Flick, 2018; Locke, 2002). The researcher uses coding (aka naming) to label data fragments with their interpretation of how the data reflect the phenomenon of interest (Locke, 2002; Saldaña, 2021). Coding should not focus too narrowly on small elements of the data and a single piece of data may reflect multiple constructs, thus gaining multiple codes (Locke, 2002; Turner, 1981). Comparing sees the researcher looking for differences and similarities between data fragments, leading to the development of categories and directs the data fragments toward shared meanings.
called categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Locke, 2002). When sufficient data has been
collected to support the formation of a category, the researcher should extrapolate a formal
definition to explain the meaning of the category (Locke, 2002; Turner, 1981). Due to the pre-
existing conceptual elements established in the literature, there were several anticipated
categories and codes which the researcher expected to find within the data. These are identified
in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Anticipated categories and codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Category</th>
<th>Anticipated Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Attributes/ Initial Attraction</td>
<td>Demographic Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love of Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship of Observation</td>
<td>Demeanor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Assessment</td>
<td>Interpersonal Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractor Resources</td>
<td>Societal Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport Continuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time Compatibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator Resources</td>
<td>Decision Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Facilitators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective Warrant</th>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corbin and Strauss (2015) refer to these existing theoretical constructs as imported concepts, cautioning that the data must come first and the researcher should be open to excluding or adding to them in the final theoretical model. The researcher should also be cognizant of possible alternative explanations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This may require a re-working of the theorized model, including the addition and/or removal of constructs or a complete reorganizing of its components (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Next, the researcher conducted axial coding to establish categories discovered in the open coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Flick, 2018). This strategy sees the formation of a coding paradigm model of the phenomenon, in which related codes are linked, forming an axis (Boeije, 2010; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Flick, 2018). The linked concepts are connected in this process into categories that describe groups of related codes, with categories that are related to the research questions generally taking precedent over unrelated ideas that may emerge more serendipitously (Charmaz, 2014; Flick, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). More concisely, Boeije (2010) states that axial coding is a process by which the researcher determines which codes are most relevant to explain the causal nature of a process. The researcher will remove
redundant codes and prioritize those which are most powerfully supported in the data (Boeije, 2010; Saldaña, 2021).

During axial coding, the researcher developed analytic memos that define the boundaries of codes and categories using empirical criteria, clearly define the categories, describe the connections between codes, and defend their significance in the overall analysis (Glaser, 2014). Boeije (2010) advocates for four elements of process that explain a grounded theory: contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences (or outcomes). Successful axial coding should lead to data saturation (Saldaña, 2021).

Finally, selective coding further abstracted the axial coding process by comparing categories to focus on core concepts (Flick, 2018). At this stage, the categories should tell the story of the process with substantive clarity, with a central phenomenon revealing causal patterns (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Flick, 2018). This series of codes, categories, and the causal patterns is then synthesized by the researcher into a grounded theory of the phenomenon.

**Thematic Analysis.** Data from the eight participants was analyzed using open and axial coding, resulting in twenty-one categories and sub-categories. These categories and sub-categories were then grouped into themes. The researcher analyzed the data and found a thematic structure based on the participant’s responses that is discussed in the following chapter.

**Chapter 4 – Findings**

The general purpose of this study was to build on the existing acculturation work within O.S.T. and to explore the theorized elements of the process of acculturation. To accomplish this, the specific purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of coaches and potential coaches contributing to their acculturation experiences. The acculturation experiences of the participants revealed several factors and processes that help shed
light on the importance of acculturation within occupational research, particularly among coaches. Four overarching themes: connection and relatedness with others, dominance of self and personal lived experience, reasons for choosing coaching, and views of the coaching career. The themes and subthemes are shown in the table below.

Table 3

*Thematic Structure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Categories (sub-categories)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection and Relatedness with Others</td>
<td>Enjoyment of Social Context of Work, Sacrificing Relationships, Influential Figures (Significant Influence of Family and Coaches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance of Self and Personal Lived Experience</td>
<td>Personal Experience of Learning and Number of Years of Experience, Self-Image (View of Themselves as High Performers), Desire to Impart to Others, Cultural Norms of Coaching (Gender as a Significant Influence; Race, Ethnicity, and National Origin and Cultural Acceptance; Breaking into the Culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Choosing Coaching</td>
<td>Contingency (Career Duration and Contingency), Material Resources, Autonomy and Schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connection and Relatedness with Others

The first and most dominant theme to develop from the data was the importance of connecting with and relating to others. The coaches in this study expressed the importance of their relationships in their profession, including their internal and external relationships. This was crucial throughout their socialization process as the participants described how enjoyable the social context of their work was, their willingness to sacrifice or put off personal relationships outside of work, and the influence of family, friends, and coaches in their lives.

Enjoyment of Social Context of Work

Coaching is an inherently social job and the participants described this favorably within the workplace. Relationships were among the priorities identified by participants when describing their coaching jobs. Participants described their relationships inside and outside of their role as coaches. Internal relationships (those shared with athletes, peers, and mentors) were described as positive influences. Kate stated, “I do think that, as a tennis coach, you enjoy the job not only because you like the tennis, but because of the people that you have around.” As Rafael put it,

I think getting to meet a lot of different people is something that I really enjoy. I mean…there's not many other jobs that my friends do or anything else that they have so much interaction with people…you can go a day where you have five or six hours in a row where you're speaking to six different people about six different things…I think it's something that's fascinating and awesome.
Grace valued personal relationships with her athletes, stating that if she had to leave the profession “…what I would miss is probably the interactions with people…I think I would miss that more than actually tennis itself.” Roger described facilitating relationships saying,

Seeing new people meet each other and develop a different type of relationship on their own. You have some older people that come out the drills and then all of a sudden you see them playing doubles together. I think it's nice and you can connect people and you can connect to them as well…that's really (I think) motivating…

External relationships were described as either supportive of the individual’s role as coach or were considered worth sacrificing. Generally, supportive relationships reinforced the coach’s connection with sport. José describes the support saying,

Four days a week I am leaving my house before the sun rises and I'm getting home after the sunset. My wife still recognizes me every now and then when I come home… she was very supportive of me doin’ this...

Grace discussed the difficulty establishing relationships outside of work saying, “if you have a social life, or you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, or a family, and things like that, then I actually would think yeah: there would be a lot of sacrifices you would have to make.” John echoed this issue of work-life balance, stating “You really gotta manage your time and scheduling and be very well organized. Because if you're not, very easily you'll be stuck there all day and have like no social life.”

**Sacrificing Relationships**

While relationships in the workplace were viewed as a positive element of the profession, participants were generally willing to sacrifice their relationships outside the coach-athlete realm. Rafael described transitioning this element of his relationships with past teammates saying,
When I started as the volunteer assistant, there was guys on the team I was teammates with. And so we had a relationship that was very, like, buddy-buddy. You know? They were my teammates, they were my friends, we lived together. I lived with a couple of the guys. And then the first thing that I, kind of, established with myself was that I wanted to do this properly and I wanted them to view me as their coach. And I didn't want them to view me as the old roommate, or the guy that used to live with them, or the guy that used to, you know, be downstairs in his underwear or whatever… went from being their friend to being somebody that almost didn’t want to know a thing about them, other than what you're doing in tennis and what you're doing in school. And then after that, go away from me. I almost didn't want to talk to them.

This is particularly noteworthy when describing romantic relationships and difficulty with maintaining friendships outside the workplace. Family relationships were difficult to maintain as well. Christiano described the conflict that coaching created with his family. He said, But then it really got difficult, like once I got married, once I moved to [Metropolis], because now it's time away from my family, you know? Me and my wife here for such a long time, and then the baby came, you know, and there's days that I didn't see my daughter awake, you know? And like that took a toll for sure.

Participants generally connected these challenges to the intense and variable schedule of coaches. John put describes this saying, I work on Saturdays, you know? Sometimes Fridays and I can't go on a trip. I have to plan it and sacrifice that time, you know? To go out on…that time off with them. And so social life- I guess my personal social life is sacrificed a lot, you know? Not just my
personal time, but like just being with friends. And they got to the point where they don't
even hit me up no more, you know? Like, they're like ‘oh, he's too busy,’ you know?
Kate further elaborates on this challenge, specifically the difficulty with maintaining social
relationships via travel. She said,
I have a lot of friends that play tournaments and I enjoy seeing them and stuff. But I work
on Sundays, so I can’t go do that. Birthdays! I can’t go back [home] because with this job
if I take days off, I need to find somebody to take my lessons. So, even if it's four days,
it's still a lot of hours for whoever needs to cover me.

Influence of Family and Coaches

The influence of others was described by coaches as being important in forming their
athlete identities and ultimately choosing to become coaches. Family was especially important
for the introduction to athletics and facilitation of athletic development. Rafael described his
entire family playing tennis, saying, “My mom played, my dad played, my granddad played, my
sister plays, so it's just been- I've always been around tennis.” Grace connected to sport through
her father, saying,
My dad started picking up tennis. There was a private coach there, so he hired the private
coach and then he was taking lessons. And then I- naturally he was like, ‘I do it, so you
do it.’ So, I started taking lessons and I just fell in love with it.
Tyson’s family were also deeply involved in sport. He stated,
My dad played soccer, my mom played tennis, and then my oldest sister was a gymnast.
My other brother; he was a footballer and cricketer. And then my youngest brother; he
hated sports. And then my youngest sister; she played tennis and she was actually offered
a full ride to [Caldeum University] when she was sixteen…so my whole family's been involved in sport at some point.

Parents were the most significant family members in this regard. Many participants had parents who participated in sport, modeling behavior and supporting the participant’s choice to compete. Christiano recalled his dad’s playing recreational soccer, saying, “our dad was a big soccer guy. He was the one that was playing, you know, Sunday league. And we would go as kids and watch him play.” Friends could also play a role. John recalled being pressured by a friend to try out tennis. He explained,

The funny thing about when I picked up the game of tennis a buddy of mine named [Pietro] dragged me out there…he was trying to convince me for about five days and on the fifth day he's like ‘you know? Just go once.’ He's like ‘you got to go once and if you don't like it, I won't bother you again.’ And I was like ‘okay, sounds good.’

Many participants also noted their parents were both supportive of their choice to become coaches and acted as safety nets in the event that the profession doesn’t work out in the long run. Kate described her parent’s views on her coaching job saying, “They are supportive because, of course, if I’m happy, then they're happy…my mom…was like ‘you have a lot of experience with tennis. So, this is probably a good starting of your career. You can always change.’” Roger felt comfortable taking on a coaching job because of his parental safety net, saying, “The ability to take a little more risk right now and know that I still have some support from family and parents if something does go wrong.”

Coaches obviously played a strong role in athletic development, but also directly and indirectly influence the choice to become a coach. The direct influence frequently manifests as an invitation to the profession, in which the coach offers the athlete opportunities to help with
camp or other coaching options. John describes the conversation in which his coach asked him to help with camp, recalling his coaches words and saying, “he's like, ‘I really think you're a good fit for it.’” Christiano was invited via a spontaneous phone call from his former high school soccer coach, saying, “he was asking me about if I wanted to coach at the high school I work at.” After a season as an assistant, the same coach invited him back. He explained,

The next year, after the J.V. coach had stepped down, he had asked me if I wanted to step into the J.V. role now and have my own team. And that was like, ‘you know what?

[inhales] Alright, I’ll do it if you think I’m able to do it.’

José was invited by the teaching pro at a club where he was playing. He described the conversation saying, “[Fred Masters] asked me to help out. [So, I said] like, ‘Yeah sure, no problem. What do you want me to do?’

The coach also indirectly influences the individual through their coach-athlete relationship, which the participants mostly describe very favorably. John described the continued influence saying “I have my coach that I still talk to…and I work with him personally, too. He's one of my big mentors as a coach, on and off the court.” John, who now works for his former coach, described the influence of his coach in his new role by saying

[Tom is] literally helping me every step of the way. Like, [Tom] is like ‘I want you to be successful and I’m gonna do whatever it takes to help you be successful.’ And so, that made me feel more comfortable.

Grace felt the impact of her coaches as well, describing her youth sport coaches as facilitating her athlete identity. She states “my first two coaches. So, the first one in [Hobbiton] and the second one who ‘re-found’ my passion for tennis and made me think like, ‘oh, actually I could probably compete.’”
Dominance of Self and Personal Lived Experience

The second theme to develop from the data was the reliance the coaches placed on their own personal experiences and perspectives over professional development and coach education experiences. Coaches in this study expressed how their decision making was driven by their personal experiences as opposed to evidence, research on coaching, or coach education they had received. Specifically, athletic self-perception was a particularly strong influence on how the individuals viewed their coaching capabilities, coaching education resources, and career options. As John put it “I learned off of my experiences, and through those experiences and the struggles of getting my butt handed to [me] like 99% of the time, really helped me out.”

Personal Experience of Learning and Number of Years of Experience

The participants came from widely different backgrounds yet shared several commonalities regarding their learning experiences. As athletes, they made heavy investment in sport that they could later draw on as they developed views about coaching education programs (which were generally viewed negatively by participants). As José said “…you know what to do…it’s just remembering, you know…drawing it out.”

When preparing to enter the profession, most participants described certification programs as obstacles or insignificant, preferring to draw on their own experiences as athletes to inform their coaching practices. Tyson stated, “In terms of coaching [certifications] (like, U.S.T.A. or anything like that): No, not really…I don't feel like it's gonna add anything necessarily to me that I can't find on my own.” Grace, while recognizing some good elements of certification programs, stated that the content in the programs wasn’t great. She said, “I wouldn't say all of the information could apply to real life- or maybe 80% of the things probably don't…I
definitely don't think a lot of them actually applies in real life.” Kate described her preparation for her coaching job by saying,

But I didn't have much training, I just watched a lot [of] other people…I kind of developed my own method a lot related to my personality, so…I didn't really prepare myself for anything. Yeah, I just, kind of, walked into it and just tried to do [it] my way.

Some coaches even drew on educational resources like Google, YouTube, or informal peer observation rather than relying on formal coaching programs. John primarily used his mentor and co-worker, as well as YouTube videos. He said,

So, I use [Tom], YouTube videos (only certain ones, though), they- I, like I said, I spent a lot of hours in video tapes watching a lot of pro players hit the ball, and then other instructors and how they explain it in a way. Because there's like there's millions of videos out there.

Several participants also described learning on the job as a common practice in the field. Grace described this experience saying, “…he just threw me into the classes and [would] be like ‘okay, bye!’ [laughs] And I was like ‘okay, what am I supposed to do?’” Tyson had a similar experience explaining “I was kind of just thrown in the deep end and figured it out as I went.”

**Self-Image**

Participants had mixed self-evaluations but the commonalities of athlete identity, personality and self-doubt, and intersectionality of life and work values emerged. Athlete identities were prevalent, with all the participants reminiscing about their past athletic careers. Grace described her insecurities as a part of her personality, saying “I’m an introvert and I actually don't like talking to people. So, that's another thing: in tennis coaching, you have to
actually present something in front of ten adults who probably are judging you [laughs].” Kate felt that her athlete identity was an important tool in recruiting athlete clients stating,

I played Wimbledon Juniors…we went to this, like, national tournament in the middle of Sweden in the winter…I went to Miami for the Orange Bowl when I was thirteen…a couple of years ago, when I was in college, we went to play at the Australian Open as a team. So, pretty good memories overall. …it’s good advertising because when you talk big names, people- I mean, sometimes you can be the best coach, but when you talk big names, that’s when you get more people.

These positive athlete experiences may connect with their positive views of the profession and desire to stay connected to the familiar culture of sport. Rafael believed his experiences as a college team captain were directly translated to his personal skill set saying,

When I was a team captain, I felt like [leadership] was my main responsibility. As the assistant coach, I feel like that was a big responsibility of mine as well. And so, I think that that’s a skill of mine. I think I can bring people together pretty nicely. And I can think…I think I can make them, kind of, strive towards a common goal.

Several participants also described themselves as feeling unprepared for coaching. Rafael described how prepared he felt as a coach and connected it to his existing social relationships stating,

I did feel unprepared. I've never done…that much coaching and I felt as though I was…diving straight into somewhere where the people knew me, too. The coaches knew me, the players knew me, and so they knew maybe a little bit about those insecurities of mine. And yeah, I felt like, you know, they were going to have their opinions already of
me and so…I felt a little bit unprepared, but threw myself in both feet first anyway and worked out fine.

**View Themselves as High Performers.** Some participants described themselves as high performers, particularly within their athletic careers. This perspective informs participant views on preferences (who and how to coach), coach education (particularly certification), and success with their job searches. Tyson, for instance, described himself saying,

Even though I won’t say my experience with pickleball is as vast as some of the others that are involved. But through my observation of their coaching, I would say, I have a greater coaching philosophy and have a better understanding of coaching with new people.

He follows this up by describing his frustrations with beginner athletes and grass-root types of programming by saying “I prefer to work with more high-performance people that have that sort of same drive that I have. Just because I feel like it's a little easier to relate to them.”

**Desire to Impart to Others**

Participants described their desire to pass on knowledge, experience, and personal values as well as a desire to share their love of sport with athletes and their community. Christiano stated that it was, “an opportunity of coaching and helping our youth.” Their experiences as athletes informs what content and experiences they prioritize. Rafael described this saying,

Being able to use my past experiences to help a lot of younger guys that were coming through on the team that I could kind of see you were having so many similar experiences to me and trying to find a way to encourage them to do less of the mistakes that I had made, I think is what that job is all about: getting them to…getting them to a place where, almost like, they get to a position that I got to, but quicker than I got there.
Family and coach influences determined their value sets as coaches. Christiano recalled a piece of advice from his coach, saying “…a little advice my coach gave me when I started as head coach. Your team is…a reflection of you.” Transferring these views to athletes was important. Kate tries to share her views on competition, saying

To me, personally, the competitive and fun part [go] together. So, for me, competitive: it's fun. That's what I’m trying to share with the people that I teach. That competitive doesn't mean nervous, competitive means fun. Which is very hard for some people to understand.

**Cultural Norms of Coaching**

Cultural elements of the coaching environment were difficult for many of the participants to discuss. Often, they were incapable of identifying anything beyond work ethic. Roger struggled in this way, stating

Cultural norms of being a coach…. that’s a good question! I don't know, it's- the one thing that I think is hard for a lot of people is to realize that you're working for somebody, no matter what. Like, if it's a lesson or it's drills, they're paying you to like help them out, you know what I mean? So, I think a lot of people, the…the norm from the member, from the student is that you're going to do what I want.

**Gender as a Significant Influence.** Gender was a particularly important factor to the female participants, though many felt that things were better now than in the past. Grace described this saying,

Obviously, with the last few years…there's a collective awareness of all the things that [are] happening in the world and women empowerment and things like that. So, I think being women in the industry right now isn't so bad anymore.
They felt that athlete-discrimination was a serious hurdle. Grace described this problem stating,

Somebody would come in and request a ‘guy's coach,’ you know. And okay, so, is there a good reason there or...I mean I don't know...And (me personally) I found that...guys don't usually do coaching with female coaches unless they actually, you know- this female coach is like well-known and then...she basically proved that she's good enough.

Kate shared similar concerns recalling,

I remember trying to book some lessons, and some people be like, ‘I only want to male pro.’ Or you have a group of four ladies, they want to take a lesson and they're like ‘who is the cutest boy pro that you have?’ That's pretty bad.

They did note that their coaching peers and management seemed supportive. Kate defended her peers saying “…but the pros don't! Like, pros are happy to work with girls. Male pros. It’s the client!” This is an intriguing insight, as the male coaches largely used gendered terminology to describe coaches (coach = “he”) and were surprised by the idea that gender discrimination might occur at all. José stated, “I would say I have not noticed it…it is predominantly men, I will say that.”

**Race, Ethnicity, and National Origin and Cultural Acceptance.** Race, ethnicity, and national origin was a space where participants described two different possible pathways. In the first, minority status led the coaches to feeling like outsiders in their environments. Grace described her outsider status saying,

I think when I first started it was very challenging. …being a girl as well…and Asian, you know, it just…it was different. And I think: yes. I think that definitely played a big part in me not wanting to coach as well.
The second pathway saw race, ethnicity, and national origin as things to be leveraged. This manifested in credibility between those with similar background, common ground with well-traveled athletes, or opportunities to connect via language. John described one instance where his ethnic background and language were an advantage. He explains,

Hispanics love it when you talk to them in Spanish. For instance, I was doing an interclub for the [community tennis association]. I was teaching. And right away, this lady named [Josefina], I heard her accent, and I knew…her first language was not English, and I spoke to her in Spanish and she's like, “oh, my gosh! You speak Spanish!” And right away, like, rapport was built. She totally had trust in me, she came to me for everything.

**Breaking Into the Culture**

Many of the participants noted that breaking into an existing culture (either club, school, or broader community) was a major obstacle. Most coaches cope with this challenge by staying close to home. Roger described having to persist through this challenge saying, “I know when I took the spot there's some pushback from some.” John described the perceived importance of having college playing experience. He explained,

I didn't play [at] a great [NCAA] D-III or D-I, especially D-I- like, if you have D-I background and a huge tournament background nationally that carries a lot of credibility. That can carry you anywhere, like that is so helpful.

I played community college tennis, a couple pre-qualifiers, a couple men's open tournaments out of town…but, like, you know, I've only won two men's open tournaments in L.A. It's one of those things where I got lucky that I was in [Papersville] and a lot of people know me, and they'd watched me. I was really welcome. But if I were to go anywhere else? Forget about it, it's gonna be tough.
For those who were already away from home, leveraging their network, playing experience, or garnering organizational support were key in overcoming the barriers to acceptance. Some participants explicitly describe the organizational leadership as setting the tone for them becoming insiders. Kate felt well supported by a former manager saying,

I felt like when I was working in [Worksville], the clients were more open to try different pros. Like, just…playing tennis was good for them, you know? And as soon as I started my job in [Worksville], the fact that they advertised me (like, the club where I worked at, they advertised and they posted my bio and all these kind of things) the members were coming to me and being like ‘Oh, I heard you're new? Can we have a lesson?’

**Reasons for Choosing Coaching**

The third theme saw coaches describing their resource related reasons for choosing a career in coaching. Participants describe the attractiveness of the coaching career via contingency, resources, and autonomy and schedule. All three sub-categories contain positive and negative elements.

**Contingency**

Participants had strong athletic identities and felt comfortable in the sport environment. Some describe a love affair with sport, others are competition addicted, and some felt that their investment in sport was too great to abandon. Rafael described this feeling by saying,

When you feel that the time is, kind of, slipping away from you and you're going to graduate…graduate you start to go ‘what am I going to do? Well, I love this so much and look how easy it could be for me to transition into it.’

Some participants just didn’t care for the environment of other jobs. Roger said, “…when I realized I didn't want to sit in an office anymore and that being outside and coaching was an
actual possibility, that's when I decided ‘Okay, let's see where we can take this.’” In addition, some participants seemed to have inaccurate views of other professions. Grace said,

It's not like you can go into the office, do nothing, and get paid (like people on salary).

The more you work, the more you get paid. You know, I think a lot of people who are on salary would kind of depend on the fact that you don't have to work as hard. You can just half-ass the job and get paid.

Sport investment was another driving factor, particularly among those who were unable to pursue sport beyond college or high school. Rafael described this saying,

I feel hugely grateful for tennis and I feel that me being a tennis coach and me being a college tennis coach or being a club coach, that is still making it. That is still being… being a pro. That’s still, like, I have skills that- because of how hard I worked as a kid, that I have a job that not everyone can do.

…I want to be involved in it. I don't exactly know in what capacity that is yet. I think for the majority of my life I see myself being involved in tennis. I mean I actually love it to pieces and it’s such a huge part of me.

For some, the coaching pathway opened after sustaining injuries that prevented them from continuing to play. Coaching allowed those participants to stay in the comfortable environment of sport. Kate stated, “When I was eighteen, I got injured. And that's when I realized that I wanted to pursue studying a little bit more, and maybe started coaching, rather than playing.”

For others, blocked professional aspirations led them to coaching. Rafael recalled being rejected for a job explaining,
I applied for a job back home that was something to do with digital marketing for the Commonwealth Games and I relied heavily on my sporting background for the application and cover letter. And I got a big, fat “no” … for lack of marketing background.

Kate had another job lined up, but COVID blocked the opportunity. She explained, “Well, at first I never thought about coaching. Never. My plan before COVID actually was…I got a job offer with [a sport agency company] as a sports agent. And then, with COVID happening, they stopped hiring internationally.”

*Career duration and contingency.* Career duration also has a strong connection with this dimension, as the participants had a wide variety of plans for their coaching. Some described themselves as life-long coaches. As Tyson said, “I love being around sport! And coaching keeps me around sport. I really don't see a part of my life that sport is not involved.”

Others saw coaching as a short-term option. Some viewed coaching as a stepping stone to other careers (department directors, mental performance coaches, or other sport-related professions). Tyson described the hope that coaching would lead to a better opportunity. He stated,

Now my main focus is sports psychology and working with athletes in that regard. It was not so much actually to be a tennis coach, or a football coach, or whatever sport it might be. It was more to be a sport psych or mental performance coach for athletes. And I always wanted to do that at the collegiate level. And I saw being a head coach in high school would be a great steppingstone or opportunity to help me move along that process.
Some participants felt that the burden on their relationships would ultimately lead them to quit. As Christiano said, “I think, when it comes to coaching like a team (like, a school team and stuff), I might not do it for very long because I want to focus on my daughter, you know?”

**Material Resources**

Participants generally described resources in terms of financial incentives and benefits. Club coaches viewed financial benefits favorably. Roger described feeling like coaching was viable claiming,

I started doing the whole lesson thing and realizing like, ‘hey, you can make pretty good money doing this.’ And then obviously the roles expand as you get older and get in a better position. It just made me realize that ‘okay this is actually something you could do as a career if you want to put the work into it.’

José took a role as a coach while doing another job and started to feel like coaching was more viable than his full-time position. He said, “I mean, my part time checks there are almost as much as my full-time checks at [Food Corp].”

School coaches noted that their compensation was not good (especially considering the amount of work they were doing). Christiano had concerns about the limited pay as a high school coach saying, “I felt we could have been compensated for more. And that went more into when once I had a family, you know? Once I got married [and] had my daughter.” Rafael compared the two sectors of coaching saying,

the money is completely different. I think the, you know, the money for example that I-maybe I'm making now just teaching lessons is...more than it was when I was the assistant coach here. And they are very different jobs, but they both require a lot of...hard work, I think. Very different types of hard work but I think the money you can make
teaching lesson is far greater than the money that you can make (at least initially) as a young college coach or as a young head coach. I think you maybe you start to see more fruits of your labor as a head coach rather than as an assistant coach. I think the salaries can go up significantly. Me, as an assistant coach, I felt like I was putting a lot of hard work in…many different areas, and being compensated less than I am now just to go and teach.

The payment structure for club coaches was based on the number of productive hours (i.e., on-court time), so connections between schedule, work-life balance, and size of client base were critical in determining financial viability. Roger, when deciding whether to take a promotion at a new club, worried about retaining clients. He stated, “the biggest priority at the time when I took this job was making sure I had enough clients willing to follow.”

This generally led coaches to be willing to go beyond their duties to appease athletes (and athlete parents) in order to maintain stable financial relationships. John described some of the extra work he put into making a camp work. He explained the challenges saying,

I did the Christmas Camp and oh my gosh! Managing it, doing the phone calls, and the worst part about it: it was rainy the majority of the time. And so, I had to go out two hours earlier to squeegee the courts, just for to rain again, you know? And then I’m very stressed out, calling, text messaging all the parents like, ‘Oh, we’re good’ and then ‘Oh, we're not good.’

…it was tough. I was surprised [that] I still made pretty good money for like- out of the eight days that the camp was going like, maybe half the days…I got away with it. No joke, I legit thought I wasn't gonna make any money, cause I still gotta pay another guy who was going to help me coach. I was like ‘Oh, my gosh! I gotta pay this guy like $300.
I don’t know if I even made that!” So I got lucky. I got super lucky that I made enough money to pay a couple of bills.

In addition, taking on extra hours translates directly to more income, supporting coaches willingness to sacrifice external relationships. José described this saying,

I would say in the summertime when all the kids are out, you're not going to be going on vacation with your family. There’s too much opportunity there to make money. Yeah, but seems like, from my understanding, in those three months of the year you're probably earning half your income.

Other resources were viewed as insufficient. Health benefits were particularly important, with most participants pointing out the connection between the physically demanding job, grueling schedule, and likelihood of on-the-job injury. Kate described this frustration saying,

When I had good benefits, I wasn't paid great. Now, where I am right now, I have better pay but I don't have any benefit. Which I think it's ridiculous…because you work in a job that physically tires up your body. And the fact that you don't have benefits, I don't think is fair

José was hesitant to commit full-time to coaching because of the lack of health benefits. He said,

I am bringing all of [our household income] in, my wife does not work…I know those who coach for a living…have spouses who have a job where they get the health insurance from. I do not. My wife's not able to work with her condition. So…that’s the big thing for me. And honestly, if things were great and she had a job and she can work, I probably [coach full-time] already.

Grace connected the lack of health coverage with her ability to work as well. She explained,
We don't have a support...to take care of our body. Because, you know, if we don't have the body, you can't do that. And that comes with money and financial support that we don't have that. I actually got two injuries in the same time span a couple of weeks ago, where I got something on my right arm (which is what I use to feed the ball). And then I got some shell cuts on my leg...so I couldn’t walk. So, it was just, you know, like, ‘okay, well, what am I supposed to do to make money!?"

**Autonomy and Schedule**

Participants loved having freedom to do their job how they wanted. Roger described this saying, “because of this role you get to make your own schedule pretty much, so if I didn't want to do those late-night lessons that would be up to me.” José elaborated more stating,

You can write your own schedule, you know? If I want to take a day off, I want to go travel, go out of town for a few days with my wife, or whatever, I don't have to get permission from a supervisor. I can just reschedule lessons and drills and stuff. Or have someone cover me.

Tyson echoed this sentiment saying,

I think if anything, it gives me a little bit more freedom. Just because I get to pick my hours. I get to decide when and where I'm gonna be on court and how long I’m gonna be on court. And so, I definitely feel like it opens me up. It gives me a lot of freedom, as opposed to a nine-to-five.

Schedule was a more complex dimension, with daily, weekly, seasonal, and vacation elements described by the participants. Most noted that vacation times and holidays were their busiest times, so they did not have opportunities to take breaks. Roger explained,
Now, especially doing it full time and trying to make it a something where you're happy with the pay you’re getting…I haven't taken a summer vacation in a while, that's for sure! Or just, any vacation for that matter. But it's just part of the thing, like, it benefits your pockets to not take a vacation, right?

Seasonal schedules were also difficult, with weather conditions impacting the number of hours they could spend on court (rain, wind, and snow could drastically hurt their income).

Grace, who coaches in the southern hemisphere, explained,

Summer, which is between December and January (because our seasons are opposite). I will just have two months off. And then, during the winter (which is between June and August/September), we are very slow. I mean, if I could get fifteen to twenty hours a week in, I'll be lucky! Lots of kids would do other sports and parents don't have time and weather is pretty crappy (windy and raining).

The weekly schedule was also a challenge, with most weekends and weeknights being dedicated to coaching while ‘normal working hours’ were down time. Daily schedules reflected this problem of a morning clinic or two, a break, and then afternoon until late night. Connecting daily and weekly schedules, Grace said,

You work 7:00 A.M. sometimes to 8:00 P.M. …If I don't have private lessons or (like today, you know)- if I don't have private lessons, I’ll be free. But most days after school 3:30 [P.M.] would just go straight through until 8:30 [P.M.]. And, you know, that sucks [chuckles] because it's like the time people hang out! But for me…it sucks a little bit, but at the same time it works for my schedule more…I'm single, so I don't really have kids or anybody to entertain at night. And so, I'm OK being free in the morning, but the
flexibility can really be quite challenging and annoying because you can't plan anything in advance.

John also felt the daily schedule was grueling, explaining,

It's all over the place to be honest with you. I would say I got mornings available to practice [and] do stuff. But the moment it's 12:00 P.M., boom! Busy. I won't be home literally sometimes till 11:00 P.M. And so, sometimes I skip meals, you know? Because I'm making either a phone call, handling other situations in the club- you know?

Others felt that their schedules had a serious and adverse impact on their work-life balance, including issues scheduling other activities and appointments. Kate described this type of issue and how it was connected with the nature of the job. She explained,

During the summer, I thought I was gonna quit. I worked seventy hours a week with half of a day off. Monday afternoon. I hated it… and now they call me anytime they need me. I have one day off (that sometimes it's not a day off). Maybe I teach 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning, and then 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. So, the schedule that I have right now is definitely not great…The other day I had to [re]schedule my contact appointment because they called me for a lesson. So, I was without contacts for two days.

Views of the Coaching Career

In the final theme, coaches described their views of the profession in terms of the nature of “coach” and the coaching profession more broadly. Additionally, this section saw coaches describing their pedagogical views, or how they coach, as well as their career pathways and perceptions about how others could advance in their careers.
Defining Coaching

Participants formed definitions of “coach.” Most recognized the diversity of the term, particularly based on setting (school vs club) and athlete (skill, age, and culture). Rafael pointed out this problem saying, “I think they're both drastically different, which is funny because you label both of them as a tennis coach.”

Many used the term “mentor” to describe the career. Other descriptions included role model, teacher, leader, and guide. Roger said, “I would just say a coach is like a mentor or a leader...also another word would be teacher.” Christiano stated, “I think bottom line...they’re the mentor...you're the role model.” José connected the role to parent expectations, saying, A role model. Mentor. Someone who's gotta set the example. Lead by example. Even though these kids (assuming kids), they're not yours but they're coming to you. Their parents are trusting you to guide them in the right way. So mentor/role model. Those are the two big words I- titles I think of.

Participants also qualified “coaching” as a profession but had little to offer in terms of justification. Most tied “profession” to a sense of purpose and making a paycheck. Tyson defined a profession saying, To put it simply: something that you can get paid to do to survive. You can live off, make a living off. But I just feel like a profession or something that...serves a purpose, something that contributes to life in some factor. So, whatever! Providing a good or service. And coaching is providing that service
**How to Coach**

Participants drew on past experience, mentorship from peers and past coaches, and emulation as their pedagogical frames of reference. Rafael’s coaches took him on court to give some insight at the end of his college playing career. Rafael recalled,

I'm teaching kids out here right now, and I'm telling them things that I remember them telling me, right? And when I finished up…when I finished up my career [Cleveland] and [Peter] took me out onto the court because they knew that I was going to teaching a bunch of juniors over the next year. So, they took me down to the court and they did an hour and a half with me where they showed drills, they showed me different ways to explain to the kid how to hold the racket, how to make it all simple for them, how to simplify that stuff for them. Stuff that I'm still using today…they were great and I learned a lot from them on the technical aspect of things.

Some talked about emulating the practice format of past coaches but recognized the context specific applicability of this strategy. Christiano took his junior college practice format as an athlete and implemented it with his high school team. He recalled, “I can still remember, like, in the very beginning of the year, like, the hour of conditioning, two hours of tennis. And that's kind of where I started envisioning myself too, when I started coaching.”

Many discussed “fundamentals” with disinterest and preferred to exercise “creativity” in their teaching. Grace described the creativity by comparing it to a verbal tradition and personal growth. She explained,

I think coaching, in a sense, it is- there's written materials everywhere, but I think it's more of this tradition of verbal…advice and wisdom and all these things that you carry
on. And the fascinating thing about the coaching is that you develop as you go, you know? You evolve. Your coaching ability evolves as you evolve.

She also described using creativity to cover for a lack of planning. She explained,

I think it's fascinating how the more you teach, the more you have the ability to just create a drill on the spot. You know, you just- it's like ‘oh, crap I didn't come with a drill!’ But then you just keep going, and then it just comes out.

Other findings in this category included utilizing charisma and personality in place of content. Rafael elaborated on this saying,

I think that you can never go wrong with charisma, as well. Honestly, even if you don't know something about what you've been talking about, or you don't understand one of the ways that they want you to do things, I think if you can throw charisma at it- and I think it's difficult to be able to do that, but you can kind of throw energy at anything I think, at least, people will understand that you're trying to…trying to do things the right way.

High-energy coaching and making athletes feel good was often used by coaches instead of focusing on development. Roger discussed this self-assessment strategy saying, “I just kind of base how the lesson went on how the kids’ attitudes are or the adults attitudes are after the lesson.” By spending time on court having conversations about the client’s interests or conducting informal therapy sessions, the participants felt that they were showing the athletes compassion.

**Career Path**

Variations in career path were based on context (school vs. club) emerged throughout. Coaches believed that the school coach pathway begins with volunteer work in the school setting, followed by advancement to an assistant position, and ultimately a head coaching
position. Christiano described his advancement saying, “the next year, after the J.V. coach had stepped down, he had asked me if I wanted to step into the J.V. role now and have my own team.” Rafael described his thought process saying,

   I need to go and volunteer at really good college tennis school that is really successful, so that I can start…building up my resume. And so, I went, and I contacted a whole bunch of coaches and I spoke on the phone with a whole bunch of coaches and ended up going and being a volunteer assistant at University of [Central U.S.].

Movement between junior varsity and varsity teams was also described in the high school setting. Christiano put is simply, stating “I’ve always wanted to be head coach.”

   Club coaching followed a pathway more closely tied to the invitation into the profession. As José explained,

   I told [Fred] how much fun I had, and he was like ‘Hey, I'll…I'll have you come out and help me do [clinics] and stuff. It's easy.” And so, I…went out there a couple times. He said, ‘I’ll pay you,’ and I said, ‘yeah, sure all right.’ …I'm being asked to do a little bit more at [The Racket Club]. Now I'm starting to see how much you can really make.

This pathway saw internal promotion opportunities in the same vein. José described this saying, “I think I was helping out at [The Racket Club] for a year and a half before [Fred] brough me on as [an] official assistant pro.”

   Some participants thought coaching a high school team or public parks program could help garner that invitation. John recommended this pathway saying, “I would begin high school coaching. I think that's a great way to develop the skills…And then, once you feel more confident in that, start introducing private lessons at a park or something, and get those skill sets.”
Once inside the organization, individuals needed to produce their own client base. Tyson explained, “[I] was just running clinics and doing different things and getting introduced to different people. Started to do privates and build up a little bit of a clientele.”

Participants in club coach roles viewed program director positions (director of tennis or director of racquet sports) as favorable career destinations. Kate said “when I started teaching, I discovered director of operation positions and director of rackets positions. Which…they look really good…it's a great quality of life.” Roger wasn’t aware of these positions prior to becoming a coach, but described his changing views stating,

The one thing that I never realized about a club that- like that I'm at now- is just the other part of the operations that go into it. So…when they hired me, I would have said like “forever,” like, I want to just keep building on this and keep doing it. But now it seems like the stuff that I'm learning, the responsibilities that they're putting my hands, if there's a way to possibly move up at the club and do more of that…doing events and weddings and stuff like that and just the overall budgeting for a club. I never thought I’d know how the kitchen worked, but I'm learning that just because of summer camps and ordering food for the kids and stuff like that so. I think it's opened more ideas that I'd be open to you later on, but still tied around to this type of club environment.

Certification, education, and Career Path. It is particularly noteworthy that coaches (club coaches especially) did not see career value in certification. Roger expressed this view saying,

And then the certifications are just, uh- most places aren’t going to hire you unless you have it, so you kind of need it. Even though- I personally know if I was hiring someone and I thought they were a good fit without the certification, I don't think I'd have a
problem doing it just because I think fit and personalities are a bigger thing than that. Than certification is. He went on to describe certification as “just a piece of paper,” a sentiment echoed by Kate who said, “I mean, I don't even know why I did it. But yeah, I feel like it's good to have it.” Tyson further elaborated,

I'll become a better coach by spending two hours on the court coaching than two hours going through the certification. Just because of my past experiences and what I already understand and what I feel like can bring to the table.

Tyson criticized the P.T.M. university program at his institution, particularly the fact that the students in the program had limited experience on the court. He stated,

They don't necessarily have the highest caliber of tennis players in those programs. So, at [Alcarnus University] there was two kids on the team that were in the P.T.M. program, but the P.T.M. program had, like, forty kids. Thirty-eight of them weren’t college tennis players, so they didn't even get to that level. They were high school at the highest. And therefore, because of that, everything that the professors in that program were feeding them was really all they knew. And because they're not playing, they're not getting different experiences from other players and things like that. I feel like what they're absorbing is very small on the grand scheme of things.

Of course, the participant that was a student in a P.T.M. program praised the educational experience saying,

I think I would say I am very well equipped in terms of tennis coaching. Because, you know, I think a regular recreational coach could go and do the U.S.P.T.A. course or P.T.R., but they didn't have the support like we did as a P.T.M.er, you know? I mean all
P.T.M. programs, I think they’re set up very well in terms of they have the alumni who could support you, the teachers—the professors are great because they’re tennis people…you live and breathe tennis, which is awesome!

**Summary of Findings**

These four themes represent the findings within the context of coach’s acculturative experiences. Connection and relatedness with others described how coaches navigated their internal and external relationships (relative to their coaching role) and the important relationships that impacted their decision to coach. Dominance of self and personal lived experience described how coaches’ experiences, personalities, and the broader cultural norms around sport impacted their choice to enter the profession. Reasons for choosing coaching described the material, social, and environmental resources the coaches saw as important to facilitating their careers. Finally, views of the coaching career defined what coaches viewed the profession as, including their role and the broader nature of coaching as a profession. In the next chapter, these themes will be connected with the current model of acculturation from the physical education literature to determine a theoretical model of the acculturation of coaches.

**Chapter 5 – Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore and build on the existing theoretical framework of acculturation within occupational socialization theory among coaches. Specifically, this study drew on the experiences and perceptions of coaches that contributed to their acculturation process. The data yielded four themes: connection and relatedness with others, dominance of self and personal lived experience, reasons for choosing coaching, and views of the coaching career.

The existing model of acculturation, while still somewhat amorphous, mirrors many of the categories and subcategories discovered in the current research. As noted in the review of
literature, the physical education literature views acculturation as consisting of initial attraction and personal identifiers, apprenticeship of observation, and assessment of resources all leading to the formation of a subjective warrant (Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975; Richards & Gaudreault, 2017b). This leads to a decision to enroll in education toward the career of physical educator, which marks one of the most critical differences between recruits to P.E. teaching and coaching: the temporal nature of acculturation is less prominent (if at all important) among coaches.

Coaches in this study described their acculturation as happening largely after they had already obtained a coaching role. This impacts some of the ordering of elements within the acculturation process. This post-hoc decision range may be due in part to the low barriers to entry, juxtaposed against P.E.’s relatively high barrier of a university education and teaching credential. The late decision will also connect with the invitation into the profession (a key element of the career path sub-category) as well.

In the subsequent sections the researcher will argue that the themes, with some modifications, mirror the elements of acculturation and provide insight into this process for coaches. Insight for practitioners as well as limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

**Initial Attraction and Connecting and Relatedness with Others**

The first research question of this study asked how coaches describe the influence of personal attributes on their acculturation process. As many researchers have stated before, the background experiences of individuals have an impact on their career choices that leads them to selecting their careers (Borow, 1966; Burlingame, 1972; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Earls, 1981; Lawson, 1983b). For coaches, these experiences dealt primarily with social elements of the working environment and their past experiences with family, friends, and coaches. Dodds et al.
(1991) and Chatoups et al. (2007) described physical educators’ as mostly being past sport participants, but among the participants in this study all were highly identified athletes. In support of Dodds et al. (1991), this study also saw substantial parental sport involvement and support for sport participation from parents toward the participants. Also consistent with past research (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991), participants in this study indicated the importance of coaches in their career decisions.

Unique to this study, the working context was also an important element of coaches’ career entry decisions. Coaches described their relationships with athletes as critical to their interest in the profession and valued their coach-athlete relationships over other elements of the profession. This may indicate some element of nostalgia for their own past relationships with coaches, but certainly is only made possible as a factor due to the acculturation process happening while already in the working environment. Participants also echoed the value of social working environments in the way they viewed possible alternative careers, generally indicating that office jobs were not appealing and that they preferred active and social workplaces. Further research should explore the importance of the social nature of coaching on potential recruits’ interest in the profession.

Another interesting finding is the willingness of coaches to sacrifice or neglect their external relationships with friends, romantic partners, or family members to sustain their roles. Again, only made possible by the post-entry decision range, this finding is indicative of the workaholic nature of the coaching profession and sports industry at large (Dixon & Bruening, 2005; Graham & Dixon, 2017; Graham et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2019). While most perspectives thus far have viewed workaholism as a negative behavior that leads to burnout, this data indicates that it may be a desirable industry trait for attracting newcomers. This merits further
research, particularly pertaining to the attractiveness of careers that support workaholic behavior and the willingness to sacrifice relationships for the pursuit of career opportunities.

**Apprenticeship of Observation and the Dominance of Self and Personal Lived Experience**

The second research question deals with how participants describe the influence of their apprenticeship of observation on their career choice. The literature describes the apprenticeship of observation as the process of learning about how a superior’s role is fulfilled through the eyes of a student (Chatoups et al., 2007; Curtner-Smith, 2017; Cushion et al., 2003; Dodds et al., 1991; Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014; Templin et al., 1982). While present within the significant influence of others (seen in the connecting and relatedness with others theme), this informal mentorship is described most vividly through the personal experiences of participants and is reflected in both their self-image and the cultural norms of coaching. Further, the participant’s desire to impart their experiences upon others demonstrates the belief that coaches consider their experiences to have been positive and worthwhile.

Teacher education provides demeanor (the persona of past teachers), environment (the classroom atmosphere), and pedagogy (the style and content of lessons) as the key elements of the apprenticeship of observation (Gray, 2020; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Participants in this study described their experiences learning the sport largely through their attitudes toward coaches and personal experiences with those coaches. Participants described their experiences as athletes with love for their sports. Additionally, coaches played seminal roles in their life narratives. This translated into consistent descriptions of emulating their past coaches’ demeanors. Those participants who described poor experiences with coaches (a rare, but intense, occurrence wherever present) generally followed by severing of the coach-athlete relationship,
wherein the participants pursued new coaches to fill the void. This is consistent with Mewborn and Tyminski’s (2006) research on classroom teachers and may contribute to a more innovative role orientation, although further research is needed.

The environment was generally described through the participants’ views of the cultural norms of coaching. This element has ties to the late decision range of coaches, as well as connections between the perceived sport environment as an athlete and the coaching environment. Sport was so culturally relevant to the participants that it was inseparable from the other elements of their lives. Their athletic identities permeated their views of cultural norms in the workplace (e.g., workaholic tendencies and ability to break through). Participants also viewed their career options as being enabled or inhibited by their playing experience. This is particularly important as the connection between athletic performance and coaching capabilities has not been drawn in past literature. Conflicting views on this issue between the participants also muddle the importance of prior athletic experience and merits further study with some advocating for the importance of athletic experience and others viewing it as a distraction from or false sense of security toward coaching. Issues of gender and race, ethnicity, and national origin were also described by participants who felt that athletes were the primary culprits of discrimination where present. These cultural elements deserve further exploration.

Pedagogy was probably the most important element of this research, with coaches consistently showing disinterest or even disdain toward coach education while relying on their athletic experiences to replicate what they saw as effective coaching. Participants described their own coaches’ methods (albeit with little more detail than practice format or specific instances) and even relied on peers for pedagogical ideas. The way they described running practices was often based in creative problem solving or impromptu lesson planning. While Gray (2020) and
Lortie (1975) acknowledge teachers had some pedagogical reliance based on past classroom experiences as students, this seems to be the primary (and possibly only) source of pedagogical information for coaches. Coaching literature, however, might advocate for this as a favorable element wherein acculturating coaches are learning from experienced experts in the field (Cushion, 2001; Cushion et al., 2003). Further, Sage (1989) described peer learning between assistant coaches and head coaches as commonplace.

**Assessment of Resources and Reasons for Choosing Coaching**

Participant views of resources were similar when compared with Lortie’s (1975) model of acculturation; however, many elements are intertwined in other themes (likely due to the post-hoc acculturation process). Lortie (1975) described attractor resources (interpersonal benefits, societal service, continuation, material benefits, and time compatibility) and facilitator resources (decision range, visibility, gender norms, and special facilitators) among teacher recruits. In this study, the reasons that came up when participants were asked to recall their view of resources prior to entry were contingency, material resources, and autonomy and schedule.

Contingency described the participants feelings that coaching was the only way forward, reflecting a perceived investment in sport that deserved a career payoff and/or limited or undesirable career alternatives leading to a feeling of being trapped in coaching. This is similar to the special facilitator category described by Lortie (1975) and answers the second sub-question of research question three regarding participant views of facilitator resources and the acculturation process. Life contingency and blocked aspirations, what Lortie (1975) called special facilitators, were commonplace among the participants. Injuries, inability to attain work outside of coaching (even within the broader sport industry), and feelings of wasted athletic promise led many of the participants into coaching. Coaching was where the sport investment
paid off for many of the participants and helped them to make their athletic careers more meaningful after playing had ended. While past researchers observed a positive correlation between level of athletic performance and the strength of this connection (Chatoups et al., 2007; Dodds et al., 1991), it seemed pervasive in this sample.

Research question three, part one, deals with the attractor resources coaches view as available in the profession and are described through the material resources and schedule and autonomy among the participants. Material resources were directly in line with Lortie’s (1975) conception of material benefits. Participants described coaching as lucrative and favorable in this regard but recognized the deficient benefits package (particularly a lack of health insurance) that came with coaching. Coaches mostly described their wages as being hourly rates that were related to commissionable hours. They noted that their ability to fill their schedules was critical to success in this area and that they were responsible for the risk associated with their financial viability. Further, they noted that some elements of their finances were out of their control, such as cancelations due to weather conditions, and that their financial success could be easily jeopardized by these types of challenges. Finally, coaches noted that their financial success wasn’t transferable between jobs and that moving to a new role was the equivalent of starting their coaching career over.

Schedule and autonomy were also important to the participants who described their schedules as intense. Working early mornings and late nights, weekends, as well as vacations and accumulating the maximum number of on-the-job hours as possible was critically connected to financial success. Participants generally disliked the intensity of their schedules, but also described enjoying their autonomy. Participants generally felt they had control over their schedules and could take time off when they wanted, giving them a sense of flexibility and
freedom. Lortie (1975) describes this as time compatibility, and notes that the lifestyle preferences of the individual play a role in how this element is viewed.

Several resources from Lortie’s (1975) conception were not explicitly brought up in this part of the discussion with participants. Missing elements included interpersonal benefits, societal service, continuation, decision range, visibility, and gender norms. Interpersonal benefits and societal service were described as part of the connection and relatedness with others theme. These were not viewed as important until after entering the field, hence it’s inclusion in the connection and relatedness with others category (or initial attraction and personal attributes, as Lortie (1975) calls it). Similarly, continuation was described as part of the dominance of self and personal lived experience.

Coaches described their decision range as happening after obtaining or being offered a job (this invitation to the career will be discussed more in the next section), implying low or adverse visibility prior to career entry. Gender norms were not generally discussed except where the coach-athlete relationships were concerned (described in the previous section on cultural norms of coaching). Differences in the resource assessment could be better parsed out with pre-career entrants and will be discussed further in the limitations and future research section.

The Subjective Warrant and Views of the Coaching Career

The final research questions dealt with the subjective warrant, including an assessment of the profession and a self-assessment of one’s ability to fulfill the role (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Lawson, 1983b; Lortie, 1975). This was of particular interest in coaching due to the strength of its influence over career decisions (Ennis, 1994), general inaccuracy (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Curtner-Smith, 2009; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009), and its impact on the formation of educational values (Abraham & Collins, 1998; Ennis, 1994; Lawson, 1983b).
Participants described this subjective warrant through their views of the coaching career, making an effort to define what a coach is and how the profession of coaching can be defined. Participants described coaches primarily as mentors but also used words like guide, teacher, leader, and role model. These reflections generally mirror what participants viewed their own coaches as (an important connection between their personal lived experiences and the formation of their views of the coaching career) and further influenced their ideas about the professional role of coach. While indicating the definition of profession required compensation, they also connected the coaching profession to a sense of purpose and societal value.

Further, coaches described how to do the job. This indicated a connection between their apprenticeship of observation and the way they viewed the technical side of coaching. Most coaches described emulation of their past coaches, strengthening the mentorship bond between coaches and athletes who might acculturate. This merits further research but implies that coach educators may need to consider mentorship programs as critical in molding potential recruits’ impressions of the coaching profession and how to coach.

Finally, participants described the pathway into and through the career. Potential recruits also described the importance of the invitation into the profession from an active coach (or in rare cases another facilitator). This is the point at which coaches describe the initiation of their acculturative process and requires further research to understand why potential coaches often felt they needed to be invited into the profession before considering it a viable option. Participants also described how port coaches follow divergent pathways, depending on school or club contexts. These pathways were characterized by a sort of progression ladder in which new entrants should expect to start at the bottom via volunteer opportunities before advancing to assistant coaching roles (or teaching professionals among club tennis coaches).
Comparison with Lortie’s model of acculturation

The researcher proposed that acculturation, as it is currently described in the physical education literature, would appear as shown in chapter two (see below).

Upon completing data analysis, the researcher found similarities and has constructed the following figure to demonstrate the relationships within the process of acculturation among coaches.
Implications for Practitioners

This research helps to illuminate how and why individuals choose careers as coaches. The importance of social relationships in the workplace, personal experience (particularly influence of family and coaches), reasons for choosing coaching, and the views they form of the profession itself all play roles in the decision. This has implications for those in the field of sport, including athletes and current coaches, sport managers, sport governing bodies, and coach educators. Further, these findings may extend beyond the sport management realm to inform occupational socialization and human resource practices more broadly.

For athletes who may be considering a role in coaching or for coaches currently working with athletes, it is notable that coaches decide very late and often after receiving a job offer (paid or volunteer) on whether coaching could be a career path. Coaches can help to initiate the thought process earlier by discussing their careers with their athletes prior to needing their
immediate help as entry-level coaches. Athletes who are aware of coaching as a career possibility earlier may pay closer attention to how their coaches conduct themselves and their practices, initiating their apprenticeship of observation much earlier.

Sport managers, such as athletic directors or club managers, should also take heed of these findings. Coaches are likely to enter the field only when they are invited by mentors, so hiring practices are likely to be impacted by this challenge. A club may struggle to hire and tennis professionals from outside of their communities without providing material resources that are substantial enough to overcome the coaches’ need for a family and community-based safety-net. The post career entry acculturation implies low commitment from new coaches who are likely still deciding whether the career is for them, so sport managers should make efforts to support and retain coaches. This is consistent with past findings that coaches experience the most role stress and turmoil in the earliest parts of their careers (Provencio et al., 2021).

Sport governing bodies and coach educators can also benefit from and support this process. Initiating coach education opportunities during athletes’ playing careers would likely help the acculturation process by both initiating the process sooner and by allowing S.G.B.s and coach educators to encourage more positive views of formal training. The negative views of coach education were primarily related to the redundancy of content, so adjustments to the curriculum that focus more on the pedagogical deficiencies (made apparent through participants’ poor recollection of practice purpose and format) would also be a benefit to newcomer and potential coaches. Innovative role orientations would also be encouraged through this type of practice, filling a gap found in the P.E. literature and reiterated by the participants in this study (Graber, 1991; Lacey, 1977; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Stroot & Ko, 2006).
Limitations and Future Research

This study was not without limitations. First, the participants had limited sport diversity, with all of them being connected to tennis as their primary sport coaching setting. While this has its benefits (tennis has both a long-standing club culture for coaching and school sport opportunities for coaches), coaches in other sports may have different experiences. Future studies should seek information about how coaches from other sports experience these same phenomena.

Second, this study relied on information given by coaches currently in the profession, rather than those actively involved in acculturation. The physical education literature has called specifically for studies with high school aged participants who are in the process of making career choices (Richards & Gaudreault, 2017a); however, new coaches seem to be an appropriate choice given their post-career entry decision. This unanticipated outcome may be due to the sample itself, but future studies should explore active acculturators (i.e., high school aged students) to determine whether these findings merit additional attention.

Other lines of future research that may emerge from this study are plentiful. They include understanding the value of social relationships to coaches, workaholism, further exploration of the resource assessment component of acculturation, defining of the role of coach and professional standards of coach with more detail, detailing the importance of the invitation to the profession, and a deeper exploration of cultural elements of the coaching profession. Application to other coaching contexts is also pertinent to parse out differences between sports, sport settings, and other factors that might influence this process.

Conclusion

This research provides much needed insight into the acculturation process of coaches. The decision to become a coach is made late or after obtaining a position and is heavily
influenced by the social context of the individual. Their personal experiences (both as an athlete and as a new coach) influence the decision further. Viewing resources like the material benefits and autonomy over their schedule positively, while having limited alternatives, was also important to new coaches. These factors led to the formation of the individuals’ views of the profession, the role, and how they should behave within that role. The findings in this study help add to the growing body of sport management literature related to coaches, as well as providing some potential directions for future researchers. Practitioners may also find this research helpful in the design and implementation of coach education processes and opportunities.
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Appendix: Interview Guide

Introduction (5-10 min): Good morning [afternoon, or evening] and thank you for agreeing to chat with me today! Before we get going, I want to take care of a couple of house-keeping things on my end.

Participant Consent: First, I want to remind you that I am recording this interview so that I can refer to it for transcribing and data collection later. I will be storing the recording on my computer, which is password protected, and I will not be sharing the recordings with anyone. Once I have transcribed our conversation, I’ll be deleting the video and audio recordings. I will also send you a copy of the transcript for you to review. If you think anything in the text should be changed or requires further clarification, you can provide that on the transcript itself to ensure that I am conveying accurate information that reflects your meaning as closely as possible. I will also be de-identifying the transcript so that no one will be able to connect your answers directly to you.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the recording, data collection, or how the data will be stored?

[participant verbal consent and/or questions]

Identity protection: Next, I’d like you to select a fictitious name (or pseudonym) to use for my write up. In research, I want to protect the identity of my interviewees, so once I have your updated transcript and a fake name of your choosing, I’ll be able to publish without you being tied to the responses. What would you like me to call you?

[participant pseudonym selection]

Study Background: Great, thanks [insert pseudonym]! I want to give you a little bit of background on the research project itself. I am exploring the reasons that people decide to become coaches. Career choices are a significant life milestone, and my hope is to help future coaches, administrators, sport governing bodies, and other policy makers to better understand this decision.

As we discuss your experiences, I’d like you to reflect on why you chose to become a coach and how you viewed the profession prior to entry compared with how you view it now.

Do you have any questions about the focus or purpose of this research?

[participant verbal acknowledgement and/or questions]

Interview Process: Great, I think we are just about ready to get started. I’m anticipating this to take about an hour and a half, but it could take more or less time depending on how in-depth you want to get. If you get to a point where you need to stop but have more to say we can always resume our conversation at another time.
My goal is to let you do the talking. I’ll prompt you with a series of questions, which I sent to you prior to our meeting, and I may probe into them a little more if there’s something interesting in a particular area. This research is about understanding your story, so feel free to give as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable with.

If you want to stop at any time, just let me know. We can take breaks if you need to as well, so don’t feel like you’ve gotta be glued to your chair. If you decide you no longer wish to participate for any reason, just let me know and we’ll stop the recording, delete the video and audio recordings, and I can remove you from the study. If you choose not to participate, I will not use any of the information you provided moving forward.

Do you have any questions about the interview process or your voluntary participation and right to stop before we get into it?

[participant verbal acknowledgement and/or questions]

OK, let’s get started!

**Interview questions (1-2 hrs):**

I want to start by asking a few questions about you and your background. Can you start by introducing yourself?

[participant response]

*Potential probes:*
- What is your current education level?
- Where did you grow up?
- Where do you work now?

And can you tell me about your job as a sport coach?

[participant response]

*Potential probes:*
- What sport do you coach?
- How long have you been in this role?
- Who do you report to in your role?
- Does anyone report to you (e.g., assistant coaches)?
- How many athletes do you work with in your role?
- Are you considered full-time, part-time, volunteer, or some other classification?

[participant response]

How did you get involved in sports before your role as a coach?
Potential probes:
- Did anyone in your family play sports?
- Did your friends or neighbors play sports?
- How accessible was your sport to you?
- How old were you when you started to enjoy your sport?
- Was the choice to participate in sport yours or someone else’s?
- Did physical education in school have an impact on your interest in sports?

What was your sport playing environment like growing up?

Potential probes:
- Where did you start playing sports?
- Where did you primarily learn and compete?
- Were there any particularly memorable places in your sport playing experiences?

Who or what got you into coaching to begin with?

Potential probes:
- Did anyone in your family encourage you to become a coach?
- Did any of your peers (e.g., friends, other athletes) encourage you to become a coach?
- Did any of your coaches encourage you to become a coach?
- Did any of your teachers encourage you to become a coach?

How old were you when you realized coaching could be a viable profession?

Potential probes:
- Did you think back then that you would be a coach now?
- When did you realize this is what you wanted to do professionally?
- How long do you intend to follow this career path?

Can you tell me about your coach or coaches?

Potential probes:
- How would you describe your coach’s personality?
- Were there coaches you have positive memories of?
• Were there coaches you have negative memories of?
• How did your coaches impact your view of the training, practice, and competitive environment?
• Do you remember anything about how your coach organized practices?
• Do you model your own coaching after past coaches?
• Do you try compare yourself to your past coaches? If so, are you hoping to surpass them using innovative practices?

What parts of the coaching profession are most appealing and/or valuable to you?

[participant response]

_Potential probes:_
• Do you place a high value on relationships in your profession? If so, which ones (e.g., athletes, parents, peers, etc.)?
• How do you feel your profession contributes to your community or society at large?
• How do you feel about the compensation that sport coaches receive?
• Do you feel you are fairly compensated for your professional contribution? Why or why not?

How does your schedule as a coach fit with other parts of your life?

[participant response]

_Potential probes:_
• Were you expecting to make sacrifices in your life to remain in the profession of coaching?
• Have you put anything off to pursue this career? If so, what life events?
• Do you feel you have a lot of control over your schedule?
• How long do you think you want to remain in your current role?
  - Is there a professional pathway available to you from where you are now or do you think you’ll be looking for a new career path eventually?

Does coaching allow you to stay connected to sport in a meaningful way?

[participant response]

_Potential probes:_
• How important is staying connected to sport?
• If you were not coaching, do you think you would still be able to maintain that connection? How so?
• Have you experienced any sport-related setbacks that made coaching a more suitable way to remain in sport (e.g., injury, performance)?
• Have you experienced any life-related setbacks that made coaching a better career pathway for you (i.e., other careers that didn’t work out or were not accessible)?
Do you feel like coaching is an accepting environment for people who have similar backgrounds to yours? Why?

[participant response]

Potential probes:
- What challenges would people with backgrounds like yours face if they wanted to be coaches?
- What challenges do you think people with different backgrounds than your face?
- Do you think that cultural norms are reinforced in sport, challenged in sport, or some combination? What are some examples you can think of?

What was your experience with preparing for a role as coach like?

[participant response]

Potential probes:
- How did you find information about preparing to become a coach?
- How did you find positions that fit your expertise?
- Are there any other factors you think led you to a career in coaching?

Before you started coaching, did you think you were well prepared for the job?

[participant response]

Potential probes:
- Why?
- Why not?
- Do you still think you were prepared when you started?
- What advice would you give to people who are thinking about becoming a coach?
- Did you feel like you had good resources to help you prepare for coaching? What types of resources did you rely on?

What types of formal training (e.g., college degree program, professional certification, etc.) did you complete before starting your role?

[participant response]

Potential probes:
- Do you think these types of preparatory programs are helpful? Why/ why not?

If you had to define what a coach is, what would you say?

[participant response]
Potential probes:

- What makes a “good coach,” in your view?
- What makes a “bad coach,” in your view?
- Do you feel that coaching is a formal profession or is it something else?
- How have your feelings about what the profession is impacted your views of your job?
  - Is that how you felt before you started practicing the profession?

Closing (5-10 min): OK, that’s all the questions I have right now. Do you have anything else you’d like to add about your career in coaching before we wrap things up?

[participant verbal acknowledgement, additions, and/or questions]

Member checking: Great, I will send you a copy of the interview transcript once I’ve gotten it down and will send them to you to look over. You are welcome to adjust or add to the transcript if you think that your responses need further clarification or explanation. Just send me those changes so I can analyze the interview as you intend it to be read and understood.

If you have any questions about the transcript or interview, feel free to reach out at any time and I’ll be happy to help. Is there anything else before we go?

[participant verbal acknowledgement and/or questions]

Thank you again for participating in this study and sharing your thoughts and experiences!