

Understanding the Commonality of Roster Turnover on NCAA Men's Basketball Teams

Catherine Mitchell and Darren Hill

Richard M. Southall (Advisor)

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Amid the controversy generated by the recent hiring of University of Kentucky basketball coach John Calipari, media accounts of his revoking player “scholarships” or encouraging some players to transfer arose (Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, 2009). However, there has been little investigation of the extent to which such systemic organizational occurs (Covell, Walker, Sociliano, & Hess, 2003). Such environmental change in college sport is consistent with contingency theory (Slack, 1997), in which a change in environment (i.e. new coach) results in a change in an organization's structure (i.e. player roster). As coaches remain at a university, they build their system and the program's culture becomes “strong” (i.e. intensely held and widely shared) (Robbins, 2000). This cultural strength should result in less roster turnover at schools with long-term coaches.

Utilizing this theoretical framework, this study examined roster turnover of a sample ($N = 95$) National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division-I men's basketball teams. Consistent with contingency and organizational culture theories, it was hypothesized there will be a relationship between coaching tenure and roster turnover. Roster turnover was calculated by determining the percentage of players who were unaccounted for (e.g. did not graduate, complete their eligibility, or declare for the NBA draft). The tenure of the current coach at each school was also gathered. Chi square analysis was performed to determine the extent of the relationship between coaching tenure and roster turnover. Study results confirmed coaching tenure was related to roster turnover. Rosters of “new coaches” (one year or less) experienced significantly greater roster turnover than rosters of coaches who had been at a university for five or more years. This study offers evidence that John Calipari's roster turnover was not an anomaly, but indicative of coaching behavior predicted by contingency theory.