

**Title** – Leading by Example: Nonverbal Leaders in Sports

**Program of Study** – Interdisciplinary Studies

**Presentation Type** – Three Minute Thesis

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**Abstract:** This study contributes to early research surrounding informal roles on sport teams by investigating coaches' perspectives of a single informal role: the nonverbal leader. While significant research has been conducted regarding formal roles, which are assigned to a person via social norms or an organizational assignment, research regarding informal roles is relatively undeveloped, with the first literature on the subject appearing less than fifty years ago in industrial/organizational psychology. Now, sports psychology is beginning to contribute to the conversation as well. Much of the early support for informal roles on sport teams is coming from heavy anecdotal evidence, meaning practitioners already recognize and see value in these roles. This research, then, serves to supplement that evidence and offer intentional description and analysis to serve as partial groundwork in the field, with the hope that more theoretical and practical research will follow. In this study, five collegiate coaches were interviewed about the informal role called nonverbal leader, and their responses gave way to several themes within four main categories: characteristics, emergence, consequences, and management. The study ultimately provides sound evidence for the ongoing existence, consistent effects, and intentional handling of nonverbal leaders on sport teams. Vast potential for the

development of this topic still exists, both through the study of other informal roles as well as methods and practices for maximizing team functioning in light of informal roles.