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Do "In the Family" Coaching Hires Outperform External Hires in NCAA Division I Men's Basketball

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External Hires in NCAA Division I Men's Basketball

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When conducting searches to fill head coaching positions, many college athletics directors frequently look to candidates who have a connection to the university; former players, assistant coaches, or students. Hiring someone from a university's "family" is often a popular decision among stakeholders, but utilizing such parameters in a search severely restricts candidate pools. More importantly, little empirical evidence suggesting such hires perform better. The purpose of the current study was to examine whether NCAA Division I men's basketball coaches who are "In the Family" hires perform better than "External" hires in measures of (a) team success and (b) recruiting. The current study examined ten years of data (3,478 observations and 492 coaching changes) for 370 NCAA Division I men's basketball programs and utilized fixed effects modelling, controlling for a number of variables such as previous coach performance, conference affiliation, and post-season appearances. Results were also lagged for multiple years to account for the time it may take a coach to influence team success and demonstrate recruiting prowess. Results indicated no significant differences in games won between "In the Family" hires and "External" hires, while "In the Family" hires performed slightly worse in recruiting ranking metrics.

Keywords: coaching turnover, recruiting, internal hires, recruiting, winning percentage

W hen major NCAA Division I athletics departments have a head coaching vacancy in one of their high-profile sports, fans and media members who cover the department enjoy speculating as to who the athletics director will hire. Oftentimes, this speculation starts (and sometimes ends) with candidates who have some connection to the program (Conway, 2017; ESPN News Services, 2021; Goodman & Borzello, 2018). Such individuals might include former assistant coaches or managers, current assistant coaches, former players, or even current coaches who simply completed their undergraduate degree at the institution. In his analysis of recent Power Five college football coaching hires, Myerberg (2022) suggested those who have some sort of connection to an athletics department are more likely to be successful when hired as a head coach.

College athletics administrators also see value in the hypothesis that coaching candidates with a connection to the university will be more successful. For example, Duke University Athletics Director Nina King suggested her decision to hire former player and assistant coach Jon Scheyer to take over the men's basketball program was in part because of the coach's history with the team. "To be able to sit in a kid's living room recruiting him and say 'I've lived this — come throw in with me because I've lived Duke for X number of years,' I think it's important" (Witz & Zagoria, 2022, para. 16). In that same article, Montana State Athletics Director Leon Costello said of his decision to hire former player and assistant coach Danny Sprinkle to take over the men's basketball program, "we needed a spark. When we hired Danny, so many people came up to me and him, saying they were in the arena, and they remembered him as a player, and they were hoping he'd get a chance to come home. At a mid-major school like Montana State, that can be a powerful tool" (para. 25).

While many stakeholders believe in the importance of finding a head coach with a connection to an athletics program, virtually no evidence supports a significant correlation between hiring a former player or coach and team success (Johnson et al., 2017; Pierce et al., 2017; Studler et al., 2020), particularly when controlling for additional relevant factors. Limiting, or giving preference to, job applicants who have a connection to the program can severely restrict candidate pools, which can result in overlooking otherwise strong applicants. For most North American major league professional sport teams, hiring a former franchise player, particularly one with little coaching experience, is rare, yet it happens frequently in collegiate athletics, with highly inconsistent results (Witz & Zagoria, 2022). Some relatively recent prominent examples within college basketball include the hires of former star players Anfernee Hardaway at Memphis, Patrick Ewing at Georgetown, Juwan Howard at Michigan, Clyde Drexler at Houston, Fred Hoiberg at Iowa State, Hubert Davis at North Carolina, Jim Les at Bradley, Aaron McKie at Temple, Kevin Ollie at UConn, and Chris Mullin at St. John's (Goodman, 2022).

One justification for college athletics administrators' decisions to hire individuals with a connection to the institution is a belief that such a connection will improve the recruitment of student-athletes. Among college coaches, recruiting is an influential element of the job and one in which they wield great influence (Magnusen et al., 2014); coaches have a much weaker effect on player acquisition in professional sports (Al-Amine, 2020). Yet many college coaches who do not have a prior connection to the university at which they are employed have succeeded in recruiting top student-athletes, which may limit the efficacy associated with the practice of hiring individuals who are "in the family." Numerous studies have examined factors affecting the college selection process of student-athletes (Andrew et al., 2016; Czekanski & Barnhill, 2015;

Garbert et al., 1999; Popp et al., 2011; Vermillion & Spears, 2012) but in none of these studies has a coach's previous connection to his or her institution emerged as a significant factor impacting a student-athlete's college choice selection. To our knowledge, no prior studies within the college athletics administration literature have compared differences in recruiting results based on whether a college coach has a prior connection to a school.

Intriguingly, hiring high profile coaches is one of the most public and important job functions of the modern NCAA Division I athletics director; a poor hiring decision can derail an athletics director's career. Yet few empirical studies have examined the effect of hiring coaches with a connection to the program on team performance, and whether doing so improves a program's ability to attract top athletes. As such, it behooves administrators to understand which factors impact or do not impact coaching success. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to examine whether the hiring of a Division I men's basketball coach with a previous connection to the program has a relationship with (a) on-court performance and (b) recruiting success. In an era when many of the top men's basketball powers (North Carolina, Syracuse, Michigan, Duke) have elected to hire "in the family", it is imperative to assess the success or failure of these types of hires. In particular, by investigating the relationship between "in the family" hires and recruiting, the current study helps ascertain whether those coaches have a unique recruiting edge, presumably because of their deep understanding of the program's culture and history, a common rationale for hiring coaches with prior ties to an institution. Division I college basketball coaches are paid large salaries and are primarily evaluated on their ability to win games and recruit top players. Assessments such as the current study can benefit college administrators by offering empirical evidence supporting, or failing to support, common hiring assumptions in a very public field.

Literature Review

Within the business literature, several researchers have examined the impact of leadership change on organizational behavior (Giambatista et al., 2005). Related to the current study, some scholars have specifically investigated whether leaders who are promoted internally outperform leaders hired from external organizations. In general, the consensus has been internal hires promoted to positions of leadership exhibit greater measures of firm productivity. For example, Martins and Lima (2006) found a negative relationship between external hires for management positions and worker productivity. In a study examining hiring practices within the field of investment banking, Bidwell (2011) found internally promoted workers produce better job performance metrics and stay in their promoted positions longer compared to external hires. DeOrtentiis et al. (2018) found while internal and external management hires had similar job performance ratings, internal management hires led higher-performing units but received less pay and were less likely to be promoted when compared to external management hires, indicating a negative downside for internal hires themselves. Employers also prefer to hire internally, particularly for higher level positions, even when external candidates have better qualifications (DeVaro et al., 2019). Lazear and Oyer (2004) came to a similar conclusion utilizing a uniquely comprehensive Swedish employment dataset, finding higher-level positions were overwhelmingly filled with internal hires, with just under 90% of the two highest levels of positions being filled by internal hires. Sabina et al. (2018) took a qualitative approach to the issue, interviewing stakeholders in American school district administration regarding internal vs. external hiring practices. Internal candidate resentment and integrating external candidates with the prior institutional culture were cited as common challenges when hiring externally, while the

strong connections and new perspectives that external hires can bring to their new workspace were highlighted as strengths of external candidates.

Coaching Change and Team Performance

Examinations of coaching changes on team performance within the sport management literature has found rather conclusively that simply firing a poor performing coach and hiring a new one, without making other organizational or team composition changes, rarely improves team performance in the long-term, but is often done so to appease team supporters. Gamson and Scotch (1964) first coined the phenomenon as "ritual scapegoat theory", to depict the phenomenon of sport managers replacing a coach--often after calls to do so from fans and the media--but failing to examine other underlying factors which may be affecting team performance. Investigations of coaching changes in the National Football League (NFL) (Brown, 1982), Major League Baseball (MLB) (Cannella & Rowe, 1995; Smart et al., 2008), the National Basketball Association (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986), college basketball (Fizel & D'Itri, 1997), and European soccer (Audas et al., 1997; Balduck et al., 2010; Gomez et al., 2021; Heuer et al., 2011; Paola et al., 2012) all found coaching changes alone do not produce more wins. McTeer et al. (1995) did examine multiple professional sports and found no long-term improvement in team performance, with the notable exception of coaching changes in the National Hockey League (NHL). In a follow-up, White et al. (2007) came to the same conclusion, finding mid-season coaching changes in the NHL did seem to improve team winning percentages. Goff et al. (2019) studied the NFL, the NBA, and MLB and found that while changing coaches did lead to slightly more wins, the effect of coaching changes was limited due to a tight distribution of high-level coaching talent. Curtis et al. (1986), also found a unique exception to ritual scapegoat theory within coaching succession, noting that professional baseball teams in Japan often see performance improve after a coaching change, but the research team offered a notable explanation, suggesting cultural differences between Japan and other western nations often meant sport managers were not as quick to fire poor performing coaches.

Investigations into additional factors, however, related to team success post coaching change has indeed been shown to play a role in post-succession team success. Grusky (1964) was the first to suggest an examination of a coaching change on team performance needs to account for an important distinction; whether the new coach or manager was promoted internally or hired from an external organization. Since that time, several investigations into coaching changes have examined additional factors which may play a role in determining whether a coaching change will produce improved on-field results. Such control factors include items such as (a) a measure of historical success, (b) coaching experience, (c) the level of competition, (d) whether the previous coach was dismissed mid-season, and (e) whether the previous coach left the position under positive conditions (e.g. hired away after a successful tenure, retired after a successful career) or negative conditions (e.g. fired after poor team performance, fired for negative behavior; Johnson et al., 2017).

The current study focused specifically on whether Division I men's basketball coaching candidates who have a prior connection to the university see more success than coaches who have no prior connection. Similar studies in the context of college athletics have found externally hired football coaches performed significantly better than internally promoted hires (Ehrhardt et al., 2011), while internal coaching hires performed no better than external coaching hires in collegiate women's basketball (Pierce et al., 2017) and collegiate baseball (Studler et al., 2020). In contrast, Galdino de Souza et al. (2020), in an examination of Brazilian football clubs, found interim hires and non-Brazilian hires fared much worse than their permanent and domestic peers,

Lane, Popp & Jensen

although that study is not a direct comparison to the other college athletics focused studies mentioned above.

A handful of prior studies have examined the relationship between coaching changes and team performance in college basketball. Fizel and D'Itri (1997) determined newly hired collegiate men's basketball coaches perform worse, in general, but can limit poor performance with greater efficiency in how they utilize available resources. They did not, however, account for whether a new hire had a connection to the hiring institution. Bousch (2014), on the other hand, did account for the hiring of "insiders" and found no statistically significant difference in team perform pre- and post-coaching change. In an interesting twist, Mott and Gladden (2009) sought to determine not whether a coaching change was related to team performance, but rather attendance, suggesting fans may buy more tickets after a new coach is hired. Their results, however, demonstrated when a university hires an internal candidate to replace a prior coach, attendance actually decreases following the change.

Athlete Recruitment

The relationship between successful recruiting and team performance is indisputable. For example, Treme and Burrus' (2016) concluded the quality of recruits in men's college basketball significantly impacts results, with highly touted freshman guards making the biggest contributions to their squads. Recruiting has also been shown to positively affect success in college football, with Caro (2012), Bergman and Logan (2016), and Droynk-Trosper and Stitzel (2017) each unearthing a positive correlation between the quality of recruits brought to an institution and program success. Strong recruits also bring monetary value to their institutions, with Borghesi (2018) finding that men's basketball 5-star prospects (the most elite prospects) create $625,000 in marginal revenue for their institution, and Bergman and Logan (2016) suggesting 5-star college football prospects each generated $150,000 in expected Bowl Championship Series (BCS) bowl proceeds to their institutions.

College coaching staffs play a key role in the recruitment of athletes to their institutions. Several studies have noted coaches--and the relationship they form with recruits--are one of the most influential factors in the college selection process for student-athletes (Andrew et al., 2016; Czekanski & Barnhill, 2015; Garbert et al., 1999; Popp et al., 2011; Vermillion & Spears, 2012). Anecdotally, athletics department stakeholders have suggested coaching hires who have a prior connection to the university will possess a recruiting advantage (Witz & Zagoria, 2022). In fact, Mott and Gladden (2009) hypothesized new coaches who brought in stronger recruits would see an increase in game attendance, a supposition for which their study provided empirical support. Yet to our knowledge, no prior studies have empirically investigated whether a coach's prior connection to a university influences the college selection process of college athletes, although Magnusen et al. (2014) present an argument for understanding more about such relationships.

Accounting for the impact of recruiting prowess requires investigators to include an appropriate amount of lag time between when a coach is hired and when recruiting classes contribute within the athletic arena. Day and Lord (1988) cite the absence of providing proper lag time to evaluate the effectiveness of a managerial change as a common flaw in all forms of succession studies. In collegiate athletics, a lag period of several years is necessary to assess the recruiting potential of a new coach. Considering the positive impact strong recruiting has on athletic success in college athletics, a coach's performance is much more likely to be scrutinized after they have the chance to win with their recruited talent (Treme & Burrus, 2016). Johnson et. al (2017), Pierce et al. (2017), and Studler et. al (2020), each utilized this proper lag time in their

coaching succession and coaching trait studies, however, they do not specifically direct attention to studying the quality of a coach's recruits.

Novelty of Current Study

The current study is unique from prior work in three significant ways. First, while several prior investigations have examined the impact of a coaching change on team success controlling for whether the hire was internal or external, they have generally defined an internal hire as an individual whose immediate previous position was an assistant coach with the program (Bosch, 2014; Erhardt et al., 2011; McEvoy et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2017; Mott & Gladden, 2009; Pierce et al., 2017). Studler et al. (2020) expanded the list of independent variables in their model to include not only whether a new baseball coaching hire was an internal promotion, but also whether the new coach was an alumnus of the university. The current study broadens the definition of an internal hire to any newly appointed coach who was previously an assistant coach, team manager, former player, former head coach, or former student of the institution at any point in his lifetime. For example, it is frequently suggested a college program look to a former player to take over as coach of the team, even though he has never been employed by the team, or for an athletics program to bring back a former assistant coach who has gone on to be a head coach somewhere else (Goodman, 2022). In the current study, such hires are referred to as "In the Family" hires.

A second way in which the current study differs from all other previous studies is the use of a dataset which not only includes data points surrounding the season in which there is a coaching change, but also includes modelling that captures team-seasons in which no coaching change takes place. By utilizing fixed effects modeling that isolates within-subject change over time, a more accurate picture of the actual impact of a coach change on the outcome variables of team success and recruiting prowess emerges. This enables the current study to avoid the impact of confounding variables (institutional reputation, historical success, market size) that arise in between-subject analyses, allowing for stronger and more practically applicable conclusions to be drawn from the data. Research has shown fixed effects models are a reliable method to isolate whether a significant relationship exists between the predictor variables and other independent variables. Prior research in coaching succession has utilized fixed effects analysis to draw conclusions about coaching tenures. For example, Paola and Scoppa (2012) used a fixed effects model in Italian soccer to suggest that coaching changes do not lead to improved performance, with the fixed effects model playing a key role in eliminating the confounding variables that occur when attempting to compare teams with various reputations and levels of success.

Finally, the current study is the first to examine not just short-term team success after a coaching change, but also to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the type of coach hired and the ensuing recruiting classes. As was suggested in the introduction, many pundits believe "In the Family" coaching hires will be able to recruit more effectively because of their insider knowledge and experience with their university and athletics program. As the first study to include recruiting performance in an empirical comparison of internal versus external coaching hires, the results will be able to inform athletics administrators whether such a belief is supported by factual evidence.

Method

Data and Sample

The dataset utilized for the current study includes 10 years of NCAA Division I men's basketball coaching and team data ranging from the 2008-09 to the 2017-18 seasons. A 10-year timeframe was chosen in order to provide sufficient data for longitudinal analysis, while the 2017-2018 cutoff provided a multi-year buffer in case additional data was needed. The data are inclusive of all Division I institutions and instances of coaching succession for all institutions that competed at the NCAA Division I level for at least four seasons in the timeframe, regardless of conference, ranking, or relative size of the institution. If schools reclassified into or out of Division I during the timeframe of the study, they were included if they competed in at least four seasons of Division I competition. A minimum of four years of data were chosen because they allow for adequate lag time to assess the impact of a new coach to bring in his recruits, a time period mirrored in other collegiate coach succession studies (Erhardt et al., 2011; Pierce et al., 2017). Data on coaches and coaching changes were gathered from KenPom.com and institutions' athletics websites, as well as other media sources. When a coaching change was made, biographical sketches and media articles covering the incoming coach were examined to determine if the new coach had a previous connection to the institution. Data on recruiting classes were drawn from *247Sports.com*, a website which tracks and tabulates composite college basketball recruiting rankings. While other ranking sites provide similar composite rankings, *247Sports.com* was selected over competitor *Rivals.com* due to more comprehensive data from the early years of the sampling period and from schools outside of the top 50 in recruiting rank.

Variables

The key independent variable in the current study is the "In the Family" variable which was categorized into five sub-categories for more detailed descriptive statistics: (a) current or former assistant within the program, (b) former head coach within the program, (c) former player within the program, (d) former player and coach within the program, and (e) a non-athlete/coach alumnus of an institution. In the model assessing overall success, total number of wins was used as the dependent variable, similar to Pierce et al. (2017), Treme and Burrus (2016), and White et al. (2007). The second model, focused on recruiting, utilized *247sports.com's* recruiting ranking as the dependent variable, similar to Borghesi's (2018) study of NCAA men's basketball recruiting. The website ranks basketball recruits with a top-heavy ranking system from 0 to 1; players with a rating of .990 or higher representing five-star recruits, .935 to .989 four-star recruits, and three-star recruits falling below .935 (two-star and one-star recruits were not highlighted on 247sports.com). The 247Sports composite team recruitment rating is created by utilizing a Gaussian distribution formula to prioritize teams' top recruits, in which a team's highest ranked recruit is worth 100% the value of a team's second highest recruit and so on, helping balance out the impact of large recruiting classes on their team's raw recruiting score. For the current study, recruiting ranking was chosen as a variable over raw recruiting score because of the ease of understanding ranking when compared to score, which is difficult to contextualize for those who are unfamiliar with the specificities of the scoring system. In addition, each model will contain numerous control variables to account for the varied factors that may also impact winning or recruiting success. These control variables are listed in Table 1.

The control variables were selected to cover the various aspects, traits, and priorities of college basketball programs to cover the broad range of factors that can lead to the success or

Table 1
List of Variables and Their Definition

Variable Type	Variable Name	Variable Definition	Data Source
Dependent	Recruiting Rank	A variable measuring the rank of a team's 247Sports recruiting score, which measures the overall strength of a recruiting class	247Sports.com
Control	Year of Tenure	Measures how many years a coach has been in charge at their given program.	Kenpom.com
Control	New Hire	A dummy variable measuring if a coach is in their first season in charge of their team (1 = new hire, 0 = year two of tenure or later).	Kenpom.com, Athletics Websites, Media Sources
Control	Midseason Hire	A dummy variable measuring if a coach was hired midseason or not (1= midseason hire, 0= hired between seasons).	Kenpom.com, Athletics Websites, Media Sources
Control	Previous Coach Fired	A dummy variable describing if the previous coach was fired.	Athletics websites, media sources
Control	Power 6?	A dummy variable describing if the team is a member of a power six conference: ACC, Big 10, Big 12, Big East, Pac 12, or SEC	Kenpom.com
Control	Next 5?	A dummy variable describing if the team is a member of a "next 5" conference: A10, AAC, MVC, Mountain West, and WCC, or a team in any other conference.	Kenpom.com
Control	NCAA Qualifier	A dummy variable measuring if a team made the NCAA tournament the previous season (1 = made tournament, 0 = did not qualify).	Kenpom.com
Control	NIT Qualifier	A dummy variable measuring if a team made the NIT tournament the previous season (1 = made tournament, 0= did not qualify).	Kenpom.com
Control	Average Attendance	Measures the average attendance of all home games	NCAA.org

failure of a program. The "Year of Tenure" variable permitted tracking the year of coaching succession, including the year in which a coach took control of their program, important in assessing the progress of coaches over time and accounting for any shifts in performance during coaches' tenures. The "New Hire," "Midseason Hire," and "Previous Coach Fired" variables account for various types of coaching changes, ensuring gains and losses associated with unique transitional circumstances are incorporated into the model.

   Conference affiliation ("Power 6"/"Next 5" Team) was another important control variable, as it accounts for teams experiencing changes in success after moving to a higher or

lower-profile conference. The previously discussed recruiting rank variable was also utilized as a control variable to isolate the effect in the quality of recruits between coaches within an institution. However, since not all institutions have recruiting rank data, recruiting rank is only utilized in some of the models to preserve the national scope of the analysis. "NCAA Tournament Qualifier" and "NIT Tournament Qualifier" were utilized to account for the effect of postseason success on overall success. Since coaches are often judged for their ability to compete in postseason basketball, these variables ensure this emphasis was accounted for in the overall model. Similarly, "Average Attendance" was included as a control variable, as institutions view increases or decreases in attendance as a key measure of overall program success, with coaches even being fired for dropping attendance numbers (Haisten, 2022) or rewarded for improving them (Mott & Gladden, 2009).

Data Analysis

The current study utilizes fixed effects models to isolate the impact of hiring in the family on both recruiting and overall performance. Fixed effects modeling allows for the removal of within subject variance, which is vital when studying college men's basketball, an environment with an extremely high degree of variance between teams (Pearl, 2009). By removing within subject variance, the current study was better able to track change in wins and recruiting rank over time, with lagged models proving insight into the effect of a coaching change over time, rather than focusing exclusively on the season preceding a coaching change. Prior sport management studies have utilized fixed effects models to look at longitudinal impacts of particular factors on dependent variables such as sponsor recognition (Jensen & Vlacanich, 2023) and event ticket sales (Popp et al. 2019).

Results

The final dataset included information from 370 teams over a 10-year period, totaling 3,478 observations (not all teams had 10 years of data). A total of 492 coaching changes were made during the 10-year period, averaging 49 coaching changes per year. A total of 163 (33.1%) of the 492 new hires were "In the Family" hires. Average tenure for coaches was 5.7 years. Among all observations, 1,152 (33.1%) seasons were coached by an "In the Family" hire. Out of those 1,152 seasons, 812 (23.4%) were coached by former assistant coaches, 97 (2.8%) by former players (who did not previously coach at that institution), 31 (0.9%) by former head coaches, 190 (5.5%) by those who were both former players and former coaches, and 15 (0.4%) who were alumni of the university but did not play nor coach at that school. Only 21 of those 492 total new hires were mid-season changes where an interim or permanent coach oversaw the majority of games in a given season. In total, 292 firings occurred in the sample (which includes coaches fired after/during the end of the 2008-09 season and excludes those fired after the 2017-18 season), an average of just over 29 firings per season.

In total, 741 (21.3%) of the 3,478 coached seasons occurred in the "Power 6" conferences (the "Power 6" conferences for college basketball included the *Atlantic Coast Conference*, the *Big East*, the *Big Ten*, the *Big XII*, the *Pac-12*, and the *Southeastern Conference*), and 487 (14.0%) occurred in the "Next 5" conferences (the "Next 5" conferences for college basketball included the *American Athletic Conference*, the *Atlantic Ten*, the *Missouri Valley Conference*, the *Mountain West Conference*, and the *West Coast Conference*). Teams averaged 16.8 wins per season, with teams in the "Power 6" averaging 20.5 wins per season, and teams in the "Next 5" averaging 18.3 wins per season. A total of 674 teams qualified for the NCAA Tournament in the

sample, with 218 unique teams making the tournament at least once. The "Power 6" conferences accounted for 347 (51.1%) of the 679 qualifying teams and 109 (16.1%) were from the "Next 5" conferences. For recruiting rank, 1,125 recruiting classes were ranked, averaging 140.6 teams yearly from years 2010-11 to 2017-18. A total of 573 (50.9%) of 1,125 teams with a ranked class were in the "Power 6" conferences, and 230 (20.4%) teams were in the "Next 5" conferences.

The between-subject correlation between wins and "In the Family" was .120, and the correlation between "Recruiting Rank" and "In the Family" was .024, indicating that being in the family had a very small positive correlation with both winning and recruiting success when considering *between-subject change* over time. While these findings indicate successful programs are slightly more likely to hire in the family than less successful ones, the extremely small effect size of the correlation makes it a challenge to extrapolate meaningful conclusions from these findings. However, as stated in the methods section, the objective of the current paper was to assess *within-subject change* over time between success and "In the Family" hires to better track the true effect of family affiliation, the key independent variable. Importantly, collinearity was not an issue in any of the models, as the mean variance inflation factor (VIF) for the un-lagged models were all under 2.0, well below the minimum threshold of 10 recommended by Kennedy (1998). Additionally, the current study heeds the advice provided in Day and Lord (1988) by running alternative models that lag the "In the Family" variable to ensure that a four-year window is observed when interpreting the results of a new coaching hire, a process also present in Popp et al.'s (2019) analysis.

"In the Family" and Team Success

Three models were conducted analyzing the relationship between "In the Family" hires and team success. The first model contained the total sample, the second included recruiting data as a control variable, while the third lagged the "In the Family" hire variable to track four years post succession. Running a model without recruiting data was important to include the whole sample of schools, as recruiting data was not available for all schools. The results for the three models can be found in Table 3.

The within subject R^2 for Model 1 ($R^2 = .3901$) indicated that the model explains 39% of the variance in total wins. The key independent variable, "In the Family" had a non-significant negative relationship with wins ($t = -1.79$, $p = 0.074$). Variables that were statistically and practically significant included the "New Hire" variable, the "Power 6 Team" variable, the "Next 5 Team" variable, which were all negatively correlated with wins, and the "NCAA Tournament Qualifier" variable, the "NIT Qualifier" variable, the "Average Attendance" variable, and the "Previous Coach Fired" variable, which were positively correlated with wins. For proper context, it is important to note that these dichotomous variables utilized "1" as the "Yes" value (a "1" for "Power 6 Team" indicates that the team is in the Power 6) and "0" as the "No" value. The model suggests coaches who are hired from within "the family" do not outperform their externally hired peers when controlling key environmental factors surrounding the program.

Model 2 included 1,125 total observations from 267 schools and explained a significant amount of the variance in change in wins, $F(11, 847) = 94.22$, $p < .001$. The within subject R^2 for Model 2 ($R^2 = .5503$) indicates the model predicts 55% of the variance in total wins. The key independent variable, "In the Family" had a non-significant relationship ($t = -0.28$, $p = .779$) with wins indicating it has essentially no effect on a coach's ability to win more games when accounting for recruiting rank. The lone statistically and practically significant variables in this model were "NCAA Tournament Qualifier", "Average Attendance," and "NIT Qualifier," which

Table 2
Breakdown of NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Coached Seasons from 2008-09 through 2017-18 (n = 3,478)

	Avg Wins per Season	Total coached seasons	NCAA Tournament qualifiers (*n* = 674, 19.4%)	Teams w/ ranked recruiting classes (*n* = 1,125, 32.3%)
"Power 6 Conferences"	20.5	21.3%	51.1%	50.9%
"Next 5 Conferences"	18.3	14.0%	16.1%	20.4%
All other conferences	15.3	64.7%	32.8%	28.7%
Total	16.8	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3

Regression Analysis Results (Wins as DV)

Predictor Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
In the Family Hire	-0.4383 (-1.79)	-0.1257 (-.28)	0.2554 (.45)
Average Attendance	0.0011*** (11.48)	0.0006*** (5.16)	0.007*** (5.14)
Year of Tenure	0.0301 (1.23)	0.0767 (1.75)	0.0576 (1.17)
New Hire	-0.9515*** (-4.31)	-0.0141 (-.04)	-0.2857 (-.75)
Midseason Hire	0.2177 (.30)	-1.6724 (-1.24)	-1.9866 (-1.38)
Power 6 Team	-3.5817*** (-3.62)	-3.5614** (-2.87)	-4.1367** (-2.82)
Next 5 Team	-1.4708** (-2.59)	4.097782	4.956247
NCAA Tournament Qualifier	7.6505*** (32.27)	8.2122*** (24.82)	8.2674*** (23.79)
NIT Qualifier	6.1354*** (23.25)	6.185*** (17.27)	6.0089*** (15.69)
Previous Coach Fired	0.9016*** (3.8)	0.3189 (.66)	0.6681 (9.38)
Recruiting Rank		-0.0008 (-.20)	0.0005 (.12)
In the Family Hire Season Two			-0.7826 (.211)
In the Family Hire Season Three			0.1044 (.874)
In the Family Hire Season Four			0.0320 (.955)
n	3466	1125	1020
F-statistics	198.58	94.22	65.98
Within-Subject R²	0.3901	0.5503	0.5552
Between-Subject R²	0.6413	0.606	0.6017
Total R²	0.4956	0.6243	0.6186

Note: Standardized coefficients reported (β); t-statistics in parentheses

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

had strong positive relationships with wins, while "Power 6 Team" and "Next 5 Team" possessed strong negative correlations with wins.

Model 3 added lagged data and included 1,020 observations (266 teams). The model again explained a statistically significant amount of the variance in wins, $F(14, 740) = 65.98$, $p < .001$. The within subject R^2 for Model 3 ($R^2 = .5552$) indicated the model predicted 56% of the variance in total wins. All four lagged seasons did not approach statistical significance, indicating a limited effect between family affiliation and wins. Just as with the unlagged model, the results support the premise that coaches who are hired in the family do not outperform their externally hired peers.

"In the Family" and Recruiting Rank

Two additional models were developed to assess the effect of hiring in the family on recruiting prowess. The dependent variable in both models was *247Sports'* recruiting rank, while "In the Family" remained as the key independent variable. The second of these two models lagged the "In the Family" variable for four years post succession. All results are listed in Table 4.

Lane, Popp & Jensen

Table 4

Regression Analysis Results (Recruiting Rank as DV)

Predictor Variables	Model 4	Model 5 (Incl. Lagged Variables)
In the Family Hire	8.5634* (2.07)	6.4678 (1.26)
Wins	-.0646 (-.20)	0.0381 (.12)
Average Attendance	-.0029** (2.67)	0.0078
Year of Tenure	1.182** (2.92)	1.2101** (2.73)
New Hire	-3.096 (-.95)	-4.2521 (-1.25)
Midseason Hire	10.9886 (.88)	17.962 (1.38)
Power 6 Team	-3.4656 (-.30)	5.5332 (.42)
Next 5 Team	12.8013 (1.64)	9.4369 (1.11)
NCAA Tournament Qualifier	.2196 (.05)	2.3729 (.57)
NIT Qualifier	-.6691 (-.17)	-.4564 (-.11)
Previous Coach Fired	1.0040 (.22)	.1534 (.03)
In the Family Hire Season Two		6.0329 (1.07)
In the Family Hire Season Three		0.4584 (.08)
In the Family Hire Season Four		5.1927 (1.01)
n	1,125	1,020
F-statistics	3.02	2.17
Within-Subject R^2	0.0378	0.0394
Between-Subject R^2	0.4551	0.2845
Total R^2	0.3098	0.1953

Note: Standardized coefficients reported (β); t-statistics in parentheses

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Model 4 explained a significant amount of the variance in change in recruiting rank, $F(11, 847) = 3.02$, $p < .001$. The within subject R^2 for Model 4 ($R^2 = .0378$) indicated the model explained approximately 4% of the variance in total wins. It is important to note that when using a ranking metric such as the recruiting measure utilized in this model, the variable is reverse coded because higher rankings equal worse scores (the best ranking = 1). The key dependent variable, "In the Family", had a significant, positive correlation with recruiting rank, with in the family coaches bringing in recruiting classes that were 8.5 ranking positions worse than their totally external peers ($t = 2.07$, $p = 0.039$). Only two other variables had statistically significant correlations with recruiting rank. "Average Attendance" had a negative correlation with recruiting rank, indicated that for every 1,000 fans in attendance, a team's recruiting rank would improve by 2.8 positions. "Year of Tenure" had a small positive and statistically significant correlation with recruiting rank, where each year in charge of a given program worsened a school's recruiting rank by a slight amount. Unlike the results found in the wins model, the recruiting rank model did indeed display a statistically and practically significant positive correlation between recruiting rank and "In the Family" status. Thus, "In the Family" hires were actually more likely to produce worse recruiting rankings.

Model 5 also explained a significant amount of the variance in change in recruiting rank, $F(14, 740) = 2.17$, $p < .0077$. The within subject R^2 for Model 5 ($R^2 = .0394$) indicated the model explained approximately 4% of the variance in total wins. Each of the lagged "In the Family" variables had a nonsignificant correlation with recruiting rank. Just as in the unlagged model, "Average Attendance" had a significant negative correlation with recruiting rank (for every 1,000 fans in attendance, a team's recruiting rank would improve by 3.0 positions). "Year of Tenure" also had a small positive and statistically significant correlation with recruiting rank, where each year in charge of a given program worsened a school's recruiting rank by just over one ranking spot per season. In contrast to the unlagged model, the lagged "In the Family" variable reflected a nonsignificant relationship with recruiting rank. Thus, the model suggests an "In the Family" head coach does not appear to impact a school's recruiting rank.

Discussion

The objective of the current study was to determine if college athletics departments which hire head men's basketball coaches who have a prior connection to the institution win more games and/or produce better recruiting classes than coaches who are external hires. Anecdotally, many observers and college athletics administrators have assumed such a relationship exists (Conway, 2017; ESPN News Services, 2021; Goodman & Borzello, 2018; Witz & Zagoria, 2022). The results of this investigation, however, provide no evidence to confirm such a hypothesis. Utilizing within-subject analysis to examine all NCAA Division I coaching performances over 10 years and all available recruiting classes over eight years, and controlling for additional environmental variables as well as performance lag times, the study results indicate no relationship between "In the Family" hires and post-succession wins. The results also suggest "In the Family" hires have slightly worse recruiting records compared to their externally hired peers.

While the current study's definition of an "internal" hire was broadened to include candidates who had a prior affiliation with the institution even if it did not immediately precede their hire, results echoed prior work investigating this phenomenon (Bosch, 2014; Earhardt et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2017; Pierce et al., 2017; Studler et al., 2020). This body of literature examining coaching succession seems to indicate collegiate coach hiring may be unique to employment practices in other occupations, where internal hires have been shown to outperform external ones (Bidwell, 2011; Martins & Lima, 2006). One possible explanation for this is that while internal hires bring greater institutional knowledge and familiarity to a head coaching position, they are also more likely to bring less diversity of thought, experience, and strategic approach. DeVaro et al. (2019) arrived at a similar conclusion in their study of internal and external hiring in the business world, finding that external hires had both higher education levels and more experience when compared with internal hires. This limited scope may have a greater organizational impact on collegiate sports teams, which operate in extremely competitive environments and where coaches exert exceptional influence over the variables of interest in the study: winning and recruiting. Head coaches also differ from most other occupations in that a head coach functions as the CEO of the basketball program and possesses tremendous ability to mold the culture around them, limiting the difficulty of transition that may plague external hires in other industries. Prior work exploring college athletics indicates frequent homogeneous applicant pools (and groups of finalists) for coaching vacancies (Welch & Sigelman, 2007), which is commonly due to social network bias during the search process (Couper, 2016) and search committees which lack diversity (Regan & Feagin, 2017). When there is little diversity among a group of job finalists, it lessens the chance for a diverse finalist to be offered a position

(Johnson et al., 2016). Regardless, the evidence seems overwhelming that when athletics administrators use institutional connections to limit who they consider for head men's basketball coaching hires, the new coach has no greater likelihood of winning more games than his predecessor.

This study was also the first to explore the relationship between whether a new coach is an "inside" or "outside" hire and future student-athlete recruitment success. Recruiting is clearly the lifeblood for any high-level college athletics team (Bergman & Logan, 2016; Caro, 2012; Droynk-Trosper & Stitzel, 2017; Treme and Burrus, 2016). However, the current results suggest hiring an "In the Family" coach is no more likely to improve the level of players recruited than an external hire is. In fact, the results suggest recruiting levels tend to decrease with "In the Family" hires. The evidence indicates college athletics administrators who wish to improve recruiting levels should not assume coaches who have a connection to the institution will have an advantage, and instead should look more toward a coach's "political skill" and "positive affectivity" to find a strong recruiter, as those traits have been shown to be indicators of strong recruiting skills (Magnusen et al., 2014; Treadway et al., 2014). Notably, many exceptional collegiate men's basketball coaches who went on to have a transformational cultural impact at their institutions were not "In the Family" hires. Hall of Fame coaches such as John Wooden (UCLA), Mike Krzyzewski (Duke), Bob Knight (Indiana) and John Thompson (Georgetown), were each "outside the family" hires who shaped the basketball legacies of their respective institutions and were highly successful in recruiting (and developing) many of the top players in the sport.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of the current study is the lack of recruiting data for lower-level institutions who do not bring in starred recruits, and therefore are not scored in the *247Sports* recruiting rankings. Future researchers may need to find an alternative way to assess recruiting class strength, perhaps one that utilizes recruits' productivity once they begin their college careers. Additionally, the current investigation explored dependent variables easy to quantify, namely number of wins and team recruiting ranking. However, high-profile coaching hires often influence other elements important to athletics departments such as donor support, publicity, and culture building. Similar to the work of Mott and Gladden (2009), who examined the relationship between a college basketball coaching change and game attendance, future studies should investigate the impact of coaching hires, and whether a new coach had a prior connection to the institution, on other key factors. In addition, the men's college basketball climate has changed considerably since 2018, with the loosening of transfer rules and the permissibility of student-athletes to profit from their name, image, and likeness (NIL). Future studies could benefit from analyzing these aspects, both as primary subjects of study as well as control variables. Accounting for transfers is especially important for studies with data after the 2021 legalization of the one-time transfer without penalty, as the new rules have made transfer athletes vital components of elite basketball programs. Additionally, the current study does little to analyze the playstyles of teams and coaches, which could play an important role in the success or failure of a coach's tenure.

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