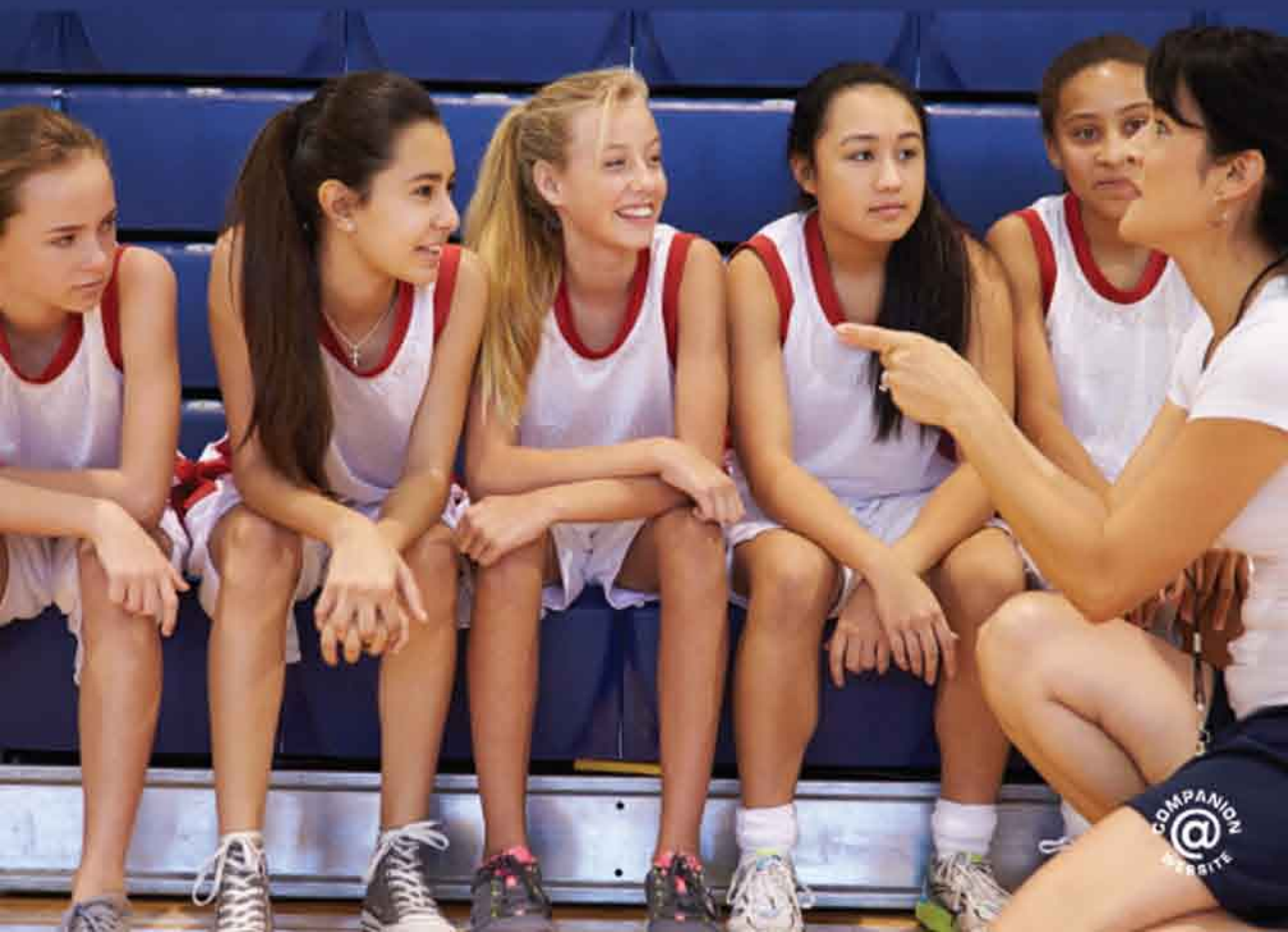
THIRD EDITION

ROUTLEDGE

UNDERSTANDING SPORTS COACHING

The pedagogical, social and cultural foundations of coaching practice

TANIA CASSIDY, ROBYN L. JONES AND PAUL POTRAC



Understanding Sports Coaching

Every successful sports coach knows that good teaching and social practices are just as important as expertise in sport skills and tactics. Now in a fully revised and updated third edition, *Understanding Sports Coaching* is still the only introduction to theory and practice in sports coaching to fully explore the social, cultural and pedagogical concepts underpinning good coaching practice.

The book examines the complex interplay between coach, athlete, coaching programme and social context, and encourages coaches to develop an open and reflective approach to their own coaching practice. It covers every key aspect of coaching theory and practice, including important and emerging topics, such as:

- athletes' identities;
- athlete learning;
- emotion in coaching;
- coaching ethics;
- professionalization;
- talent identification and development;
- coaching as a (micro)political activity.

Understanding Sports Coaching also includes a full range of practical exercises and extended case studies designed to encourage coaches to reflect critically upon their own coaching strategies, their interpersonal skills and upon important issues in contemporary sports coaching. This is an essential textbook for any degree-level course in sports coaching, and for any professional coach looking to develop their coaching expertise.

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Dedication

In memory of Denis Cassidy – a loving and playful father.
And; to T & *S*, as always.

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Contents

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Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the ideas presented in this book. We especially acknowledge the thousands of undergraduate students who, over the years, have enrolled in PHSE 101 and PHSE 201. The earlier students were the catalyst for the book, while the latter students have been the 'guinea pigs' for ideas reflected in some of the chapters.

TC: To my family and friends, a very big thank you for your constant love and support. A special thank you to Georgia, Jake, Toby, Zach, Lewis, Greta, Annabella, Rosa and Maurice for your love, making me laugh and giving me reasons to play.

PP: To Susi, Megan and Abigail – as promised!

RJ: For all the students who have, are and will engage with the sociology of coaching.

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Setting the scene

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

When the first edition of this book was penned, a case was still being made for coaching to be recognized as a pedagogical and social enterprise. Over ten years later, this perspective is much more widespread and accepted. For example, Kirk (2010), in arguing for coaching to be viewed as a socio-pedagogical practice, reiterated an earlier point made by one of us that coaching at all levels really is about athlete learning (Jones 2006a and b). Drawing on the work of Mauss (1973) who stated that 'there is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition' (cited in Kirk 2010: 166), Kirk tied learning to both culture and society. Such a view positions coaching as a social construction, in that all 'techniques of the body' are socially learned. It is a stance supported by Loland (2011), who argued that coaches socialize athletes into the movement schemes of their sport; a process often carried out by instruction and using other 'good' athletes as positive role models. It would make sense, therefore, to view coaching as a social, relational and pedagogical practice; that is, an activity between people within a cultural context. As we have previously argued, this pedagogical aspect can most obviously be seen when working with young athletes, where a degree of mastery or general understanding is needed for meaningful participation to occur. However, it is also evident when working with elite athletes where adjustment

to technique or the implementation of novel attacking or defensive strategies is required. Naturally, such a position takes issue with the continuing division of coaching by some into various artificially constructed 'domains' (i.e. 'performance', 'developmental' and 'participation'). Of course, we are not advocating that coaches behave the same way in all contexts. Rather, we question if coaching can be so divided in terms of the given lines of demarcation? For example, if such lines are based on chronological age, where do early specialization sports like swimming and gymnastics fit, where teenagers are regularly Olympic medalists? It also begs the question: once athletes graduate to the performance realm, do they stop developing? (They certainly don't stop participating!) The case made here is that overarching all coaching, whatever the athletic level, is the goal of athlete learning. This was the case put forward by Carl Rogers in his philosophy of education, where the pedagogical principles given were applicable regardless of age or ability of the learner(s) in question (Nelson *et al.* 2012).

In addition to Kirk, others also agree with the notion of coaching as principally to do with athlete learning. For example, Armour (2011) commented when participants are involved in sport-related activities, they become learners with the potential to gain much or little from the experience. Correspondingly, pedagogical developments such as Teaching Games for Understanding (Bunker and Thorpe 1982) and the associated counter-part Game Sense (Australian Sports Commission 1997) have increasingly found their way into the coaching realm (e.g. Light 2004; Harvey *et al.* 2010) in efforts to improve both athletes' and coaches' knowledge. Some scholars have also used educational theorists such as Vygotsky (Potrac & Cassidy 2006), Leont'ev (Jones *et al.* 2010) and Rogers (Nelson *et al.* 2012) to better understand and inform coaching practice. Such theorists, of course, do not view learning as taking place in a social vacuum, but as created in and influenced by cultural forces.

The notion of coaching as a distinctly social practice has also gained substantial credence over the previous decade, with a plethora of scholars producing considerable empirical and positional work in support of it (e.g. Cushion & Jones 2006; Denison 2007; Hemmestad *et al.* 2010; Potrac *et al.* 2013; Purdy & Jones 2011). This was further emphasized in Jones *et al.*'s (2011) recent *Sociology of sports coaching* text, which argued for coaching to be positioned as a relational activity inclusive of such concepts as power, interaction, structure and agency. Indeed, this once peripheral social agenda appears today to have become a leading perspective in the analysis of sports coaching.

Nevertheless, despite increasing recognition of coaching as a social practice, some still remain unconvinced (e.g. Abraham & Collins 2011; North 2013). Such authors advocate (to various degrees) a more reductionist 'modelling' approach to coaching, founded along psychological and 'decision-making' lines. It is a view that presents the coach as operating within a rather 'closed self-centred' circle almost independently of personal historicity and biography, as opposed to being part of a wider social and cultural arrangement (Engström 2000): a standpoint which considers coaching (and related athlete learning) as being relatively untouched – or uncorrupted – by values, interests and politics (Seidman & Alexander 2001). Continuing in the spirit of the earlier editions of this text, we naturally challenge such a position and alternatively see coaching as a socio-pedagogical construction undertaken by actors in context.

THE AIMS OF THE BOOK

A considerable amount of empirical research (e.g. Jones *et al.* 2004; Potrac 2001; Santos *et al.* 2013; Hauw & Durand 2005) indicates that good coaches can (to varying degrees) evaluate and reflect on what they do in terms of how they coach. They think about, and are aware of, their practice before, during and after the event: reflecting in some depth about plans, actions and consequences. Taking our lead from such findings, and of growing support for the socio-pedagogic nature of coaching (Cassidy 2010; Jones *et al.* 2011; Kirk 2010), we believe that if coaches are to increasingly understand why they are doing what they are doing, inclusive of related limitations and possibilities, it is useful for them to have a grasp of social, cultural and educational concepts. The principal aim of this book is to highlight some of these concepts, and to link them directly to the practice of coaching.

We recognize that good coaches almost certainly already use some educational and sociological concepts in how they coach. However, the adoption of these concepts often occurs implicitly rather than explicitly and, as a consequence, leaves coaches unaware of the assumptions and beliefs that inform their practices. This was a driving issue behind Jones and colleagues related texts '*Sports coach as educator*' (2006a) and '*The sociology of sports coaching*' (2011) where pedagogical and social theories were explicitly presented as relevant possibilities for coaches and coaching. By not questioning or critically engaging with their actions, coaches make it difficult to systematically develop their programmes for the maximal benefit of athletes; they also make it problematic for themselves to fully understand the ethical, moral and political consequences of what they do. Given that coaching does not occur in a cultural void (Jones 2000; Schempp 1998), we also believe that the social and educational values that construct the person of the coach need careful and thoughtful consideration if coaches are to act in enlightened, effective and sensitive ways (Jones 2000). Similarly, recognizing the constraints and possibilities for practice enables coaches to become aware of the suppressed culture of coaching rather than only of its visible, formal face as presented through dominant discourses (i.e. ways of talking about it) (Grace 1998).

We recognize that building a purely theoretical case about the value of sociological and educational concepts for coaching would, in all probability, have a limited impact on practice. Consequently, in an effort to give this book a wider application, we have provided practical exercises and thought provoking questions at the end of each chapter. We hope that the exercises provided will resonate with coaches, as they are grounded in the messy reality of coaching itself. The aim of these exercises is two-fold. First, it is to illustrate how the sociological and educational concepts discussed can be workably integrated into general practice and wider coach education programmes. Secondly, it is to encourage coaches and students of coaching to personally reflect on, and engage with, the technical, moral, ethical and political issues that occur in their own coaching contexts. In doing so, we hope to make a small contribution to closing the gap between theory and practice.

WHY IS THE BOOK NEEDED?

The principal rationale for writing this book is to further question some of coaching's taken-for-granted practices. This is done from a sociocultural and pedagogical perspective,

thus giving further credence to the view of coaching as a multivariate, interpersonal and dynamic activity. Such a stance implores us to avoid treating coaches as 'cardboard cut-outs' (Sparkes & Templin 1992: 118), and athletes as non-thinking pawns.

Indeed, the last decade has witnessed a growing number of coach educators and academics who are prepared to engage with the sociology of coaching (see Denison 2007; Jones & Armour 2000; Denison 2007; Jones *et al*. 2011; Piggott 2012). Equally, there are a number who have now critically engaged with the pedagogy of coaching (e.g. Armour 2011; Bergmann Drewe 2000; Jones 2006a; Kirk 2010). It is a position which resonates with our interpretation of pedagogy as a problematic process that incorporates the interaction between how one learns, how one teaches, what is being taught (Lusted 1986) and the context in which it is being taught (Cassidy 2000). The key to adopting this view lies in making coaches aware of the social and educational dynamics which have created (and continue to create) their identities and philosophies, and hence, their abilities to perform (Armour & Jones 2000). Developing such an awareness provides coaches with the ability to evaluate information from a range of sources, and the insight, confidence and courage to take responsibility for their decisions.

We contend that a growing number of coaches want to develop athletes who can make decisions and adapt to changing situations on the field or court. Such a stance implicitly supports the view that learning is less the reception of acts and facts, and more a social practice that implies the involvement of the whole person in relation not only to specific activities but also to social communities. In this respect, we agree that 'the study and education of the human is complex' (Zakus & Malloy 1996: 504) requiring sensitivity, subtlety and subjectivity. If coaches want to produce responsible decision-making athletes, then it is useful for them to adopt coaching practices that take account of, and can facilitate, such a socially determined goal. However, this doesn't advocate a collapse into a blanket questioning approach under the rather simplified mantra that coaches should 'make themselves increasingly redundant'. Rather, taking a lead from Sfard's (1998) notions of acquisition and participation, Bruner's idea of scaffolding (e.g. Wood, Bruner & Ross 1976), and Vygotsky's (1978) earlier conceptualization of learning as directed by a 'more capable other', we view the coaching role as being constantly contested and negotiated by relational social actors in context.

What we offer in this book are not 'handy hints' for coaches to neatly dip into when the perceived need arises. On the contrary, we present social and pedagogic notions which themselves should be viewed as pedagogic; in the sense of assisting readers for what is required of them, 'to learn what can only be implied, and never as direct advice' (Flyvbjerg *et al*. 2012: 4). By insisting that we only give readers ideas to think with as opposed to exact and 'correct' practical prescriptions, we hope to privilege the quality of communicative interaction over any preciseness of instruction (Pineau 1994). As in previous work then, the concepts here still need to be thought about hard, with imagination, and not just taken as *a priori* knowledge (Jones *et al*. 2011). The point is to continue to develop a 'quality of mind' in coaches to explore such questions as: do I understand why I act and coach in certain ways? Why do I espouse certain values and ideas and reject others? Can I explore ideas with which I do not normally conform? Am I able to see situations from others' points of view? Are my coaching methods congruent with my principles? And, can I devise alternative pedagogies that may be more educative? (Fernández-Balboa 2000). Those

hoping for a list of 'effective' coaching behaviours then, will inevitably be disappointed; a dissatisfaction for which we offer no apology.

The significance of the book also lies partly in response to Knudson and Morrison's (2002) call for a reality-based integrative approach to human movement. It is a position rooted in the belief that a sociocultural pedagogic approach is imperative for understanding such a complex and dynamic activity as coaching, where, invariably, the whole is considerably greater than the sum of the constituent parts. Within this approach, the coach is viewed as a more holistic problem-solver involved in the planning, prioritization, contextualization and orchestration of provision in an ever-changing environment. Adopting such a framework means that our discussion calls on theoretical ideas from disciplines which take account of the problematic human factor as well as real-life sports coaching scenarios, as we seek to develop a more credible view of the coaching process.

WHO IS THE BOOK FOR?

The book is principally written for sports coaching students, whose numbers are rapidly rising as programmes related to sports science, kinesiology, and physical education, in addition to coaching itself, proliferate in higher education institutions worldwide. It is also aimed at the physical education teacher market, the students of which invariably become involved in coaching school sports teams. For undergraduate students of coaching, it can serve as an introductory text to illustrate the social, cultural and educational nature of their principal subject matter, and how interacting related considerations can inform professional practice. Additionally, for beginning postgraduate students, the book may assist them to make links between theory and practice, and further develop their recognition that coaching can and should be a reflective endeavour. Since many sports science students are also working coaches, the book holds the potential to give such practitioners a greater awareness of the factors that influence their coaching and, where necessary, to consider alternatives.

We believe the book is applicable to coaches at any level; those working with children through to mature international athletes. Indeed, the concepts discussed within it are relevant to any coach who wishes to maximize the sporting experience for his or her charges, whatever the context might be. This is because coaching, as we have previously argued, in whatever guise it is packaged, is essentially a socio-pedagogical enterprise. It is social in that it involves human interaction, and educational in that it extends from learning basic skills to knowing about the minute intricacies of body adjustment and tactical awareness so necessary for success in elite sport (Jones 2006b). Finally, there is a potential market for this book within coach education programmes. It is perhaps here that the text could have the greatest impact as many sports' national governing bodies (NGBs) and those responsible for more generic coach education programmes appear to be increasingly recognizing that at the heart of coaching lies a complex social-learning interface.

HOW IS THE BOOK ORGANIZED?

The framework of this book is informed by our belief that coaching is fundamentally a social, cultural and pedagogical practice that comprises the interconnections between the teacher, learner, content (Lusted 1986) and context (Cassidy 2000). Although we are aware that the term pedagogy could be taken as including both social and cultural aspects, we decided to keep them somewhat separate to emphasize the importance of each component within the totality of coaching. Consequently, to fully understand (and achieve) high quality coaching (resulting in intended and appropriate athlete learning), we need to take account of coaches' biographies, their socialization and their personal interpretations of practice within respective working environments; a perspective that takes account of social and cultural factors on coaches' delivery and general interactive behaviours. Hence, the book is divided into four principal sections, namely (1) the context; (2) the coach; (3) the athlete(s); and (4) knowledge. Each section contains a number of chapters relevant to it, while each chapter concludes with an exercise or set of questions that encourage readers to critically reflect upon their own and others' coaching.

Preceding the aforementioned sections, we present this Introduction (Chapter 1) and a chapter on reflection (Chapter 2) to 'set the scene'. The general purpose here is two-fold. First, it is to clarify the purpose of the book, and to provide some insight into how our thoughts and considerations have evolved since the publication of the last edition. Second, by following this with a developed chapter on reflection and reflective practice, the goal is to assist a more critical reading of the text as a whole; an encouragement for readers to become increasingly reflexive practitioners, particularly in terms of the concepts presented within it. The ensuing Section One explores the context of coaching in relation to coaching ethics (Chapter 3), coaching as a (micro)political activity (Chapter 4) and the professionalization of coaching (Chapter 5). Section Two ('the coach') includes an examination of coaching selves (Chapter 6) and the coach as a pedagogical performer (Chapter 7). Section Three ('the athletes') contains discussions on athlete learning (Chapter 8), 'developing' athletes (Chapter 9), talent identification and development (Chapter 10) and athlete identities (Chapter 11). Finally, Section Four ('knowledge') explores issues related to content knowledge (Chapter 12), knowledge (re)production and discourse (Chapter 13) and assessing knowledge and ability (Chapter 14). Although the analysis has been presented in a linear format, many of the concepts discussed have cross-chapter relevancy, highlighting the inter-disciplinary nature of the subject matter. At relevant points, to assist in making the interconnections between the coach, athlete(s), content and context, we will direct readers to complementary discussion in other chapters.

THE COACH AS PRACTICAL THEORIST

Some years ago, one of us attended a coaches' seminar at a plush hotel venue in the UK. The lead speaker was a well-known coach educator and policy 'guru'. He was to give a short address about a 'future vision' to start proceedings. Although he (thankfully) kept to time, his talk was littered with references to 'mental models', 'meta theory', 'values-driven

best practice' and 'cohesive effective lobbying'. When he was done, a coach in the preceding row leant across to a colleague and asked 'what the **** did he just say?' It is certainly a problem that some rhetorically rich 'theories' remain far beyond the reach of those they should benefit, namely the practitioners. But the fault here can be seen as lying on both sides; theoreticians for not making their thoughts and research accessible enough, and coaches for a relative unwillingness to engage with more abstract complex thinking. The irony here, of course, is that coaches experience this complexity every day in their practice; they live it, yet many prefer to cling to a 'how-to hand book', perhaps because it's just easier to follow.

Far from remaining distant, the notions and ideas presented in this book are intended to both inform and guide practice. How can we be so sure? Precisely because most of the work cited and discussed has not only arisen from everyday achievements and actions, but also addresses pressing contemporary coaching issues. In this respect, we adhere to the words of the educator Kurt Lewin who famously proclaimed that 'there is nothing so practical as good theory' (in Sandelands 1990: 235). In doing so, we have also tried to respect Apple's (1999) call that theory needs to be 'connected' to issues and people, and that abstract concepts should be contextualized in practical experiences and perceptions (LeCompte & Preissle 1993). In this way, the text marks an attempt to take theory 'off the table and into the field' (Macdonald *et al*. 2002: 149), allowing for a deeper understanding of coaching and more realistic coach preparation programmes that better mirror the complex reality of practice (Jones *et al*. 2011).

Consequently, this book is not a bid or proposition for more 'coaching consultants' and policy sound bites. Neither does the text foreground the often-heard lament for 'more empirical research' ignoring the considerable amount that has been done. It is a call for coaches (and scholars of coaching), through the ideas presented, to play a more important role in developing perspectives to help themselves. Hence, it does not respect the traditional distinction between academic and practitioner knowledge, but encourages a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action (Reason & Torbert 2001). Following Lewin, we urge readers to approach the ideas given within the book 'with a view to making things happen' (Sandelands 1990: 248). The key here, of course, is having the courage to experiment, which, in turn, is reliant on possessing considerable knowledge of the concept(s) in question.

We locate this discussion here, not to blur but to clarify the difference between theory and practice and, in particular, the value of the former to the latter. Theories can never be translated into practice, because they are not simple 'tools' to be used – like a hammer to hit a nail. In this regard, theories stand a little apart from practice. However, theories are able to bring new observations or insight to light. In this respect, although theoretical notions can rarely be directly practiced, they can often be 'practical', as evident 'when contact with theory calls into mind action which otherwise would have gone unnoticed' (Sandelands 1990: 254). Theory and 'intellectual' concepts then, can often bring out new sensitivities and subsequent ways of practice.

Acknowledging the practical nature of theory requires coaches to become 'practical theorists', increasingly aware of the often-unnoticed constraints on, and opportunities for, action. This should not be such a big step, particularly as the concepts presented in this book have been generated and inspired from the field (e.g. Denison 2010; Jones *et al*.

2004, 2011; Purdy & Jones 2011; and others). Indeed, this continues to be the place where our data and related thinking originates; where our intellectual challenges are grounded. This was an issue recently engaged with by Cassidy (2010) in making the case that 'theories of practice' (more formally developed concepts and notions) in addition to 'practice theories' (knowledge largely developed from experience) can be of great benefit to coaches. This is because they (i.e., theories of practice) are often able to provide a sense-making framework inclusive of a grammar and vocabulary 'for what is observable' (Cassidy 2010: 177). It was a point made earlier by Eisner (1993: viii), who believed theory can 'make coherent what otherwise appear as disparate individual events', whilst being 'the means through which we learn lessons that can apply to situations we have yet to encounter'. This is not to say that the linkages between theory and practice are smooth and seamless. On the contrary, they are almost always riven with dynamic tension (as is coaching itself). We see this tension, however, as a positive, constructive force; a potency which makes the relationship between theory and practice collaborative and synergistic.

The case for the coach as a practical theorist was recently developed by Hemmestad *et al.* (2010), who offered the notion of phronesis (interpreted as 'practical wisdom') to describe coaches' actions. Here, coaching was depicted as the product of context-dependent tacit skills, what the sociologist Bourdieu (1990) famously called a 'feel for the game'. The point here is to generate the ability to recognize the presence and power of social structures and prevailing attitudes that make us act in ways that we do, and the agency available that allows us to act in the ways we want. In addressing the theory-practice gap or relationship then, phronetic thinking demands that we deliberate about (often unrecognized) values, objectives and interests as a precursor for action (Flyvbjerg 2001). Here, Flyvbjerg believed that, as an individual progresses from beginning to advanced skills, behaviour becomes increasingly intuitive and situation-dependent rather than rule-governed; a sentiment that most (if not all) coaches are familiar with.

COACHING HOLISTICALLY: OR AT LEAST WITH SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN MIND

Although the value of holistic coaching has been increasingly recognized, this has tended to remain at the level of abstract thought and generalized support (Cassidy 2010). In response, Kretchmar (2010: 445) claimed that 'if we don't understand something, or if we use terminology in ways that confuse more than enlighten, we need to do some homework'. Indeed, for Kretchmar (2010), greater attention needs to be given to definitions, as we shouldn't argue for anything unless we can articulate what the associated key terms mean. In order to avoid such confusion and subsequent criticism, we begin this section by defining what we mean by the term 'holistic coaching'. A dictionary definition of the term 'holistic' equates to a consideration 'of the whole person, including mental and social factors' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1991: 562). Even though this sets us on our way, we would like to be more wide-ranging in asserting that the person is also an emotional, political, spiritual and cultural being. To coach holistically then, is to coach with these considerations in mind. Although this inevitably leads to discussion about appropriate and workable boundaries for the coaching role, we consider that if such factors affect athletic

performance and enjoyment then they should warrant consideration within the coaching remit. It is a position which somewhat resonates with that of Lyle (2010: 450), who saw holistic coaching in terms of recognizing 'balance and comprehensiveness in all of the factors impinging on sport performance and the welfare of individual athletes'.

Taking such a holistic approach to coaching, as I'm sure you've recognized, is not literally in line with the stated aim of this book. This is because the text does not take into account the rationalistic thought which has characterized much psychological, physiological and biomechanical writings on coaching. This is not to say we do not support the concept of the need to coach holistically. In fact, we very much believe that coaches should treat each situation, inclusive of its many variables, on its merits, assess it, carefully weigh the options and choose the most appropriate course of action available. To do so, a coach must draw on many knowledge sources and decide, with insight, how to amalgamate and utilize them in what fashion, when and where. Our goal here, however, is to redress the balance a little away from the predominant bio-scientific view of coaching, and to highlight the need to also take account of the personal, emotional, cultural and social identity of the athlete if maximal performances are to be obtained. It is to raise awareness in coaches and students of coaching about factors which need to be considered if the goal of coaching holistically is to be achieved; factors which have remained for too long hidden in the depth of the activity.

Such a position is based on recognizing coaching as intellectual as opposed to technical work, requiring higher order thinking skills to deal with the humanistic, problematic and dynamic nature of the tasks involved. The case is summarized around three principal issues. These include the need for coaches to consider: (1) cultural factors; (2) the development of social competencies; and (3) the pedagogical contextualization of practice, if lasting improvement is to occur. In making the case that Kenyan middle-distance athletes are culturally as opposed to naturally produced, Bale and Sang (1996: 17) stated that 'running can mean different things to different cultures'. They argued that sport participation and achievement should be firmly placed within the context of culture if they are to be properly explained. The same could be said of coaching. Douge and Hastie (1993: 20) agreed that 'effective leadership qualities may be unique to a social fabric', while Schempp's (1998) declaration that 'our social worlds offer no immunity to sports fields or gymnasia' provide further evidence of the belief that knowledge of culture and related social factors should be prime considerations for coaches. For instance, in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, a coach expecting a Māori athlete to engage in direct eye-to-eye contact is potentially problematic, since for many Māori, looking an older person in the eye is taken as a sign of disrespect (Durie 1998). Additionally, many Māori are more impressed by the unspoken signals conveyed through subtle gesture, with words, in some situations, being regarded as superfluous and even demeaning (Durie 1998). Within the cultural context then, learning is considered both an individual and a social process, with meanings being constructed both in the mind of the learner and through his or her community of practice (Langley 1997). Consequently, we need to be culturally sensitive; that is, to develop social competencies when coaching, as culture exerts a considerable influence over identities and motivations particularly when it comes to influencing others.

Research continues to suggest that elite coaches, although not often educated to do so, have a tendency to coach contextually (Jones *et al*. 2011). That is, they appear to utilize

flexible planning strategies within detailed set routines that permit improvised adaptation to the evolving situation at hand. Such practice is based on the belief that definitive standards cannot be applied outright, as they often conflict with other structural constraints within the coaching situation, and are often witnessed in relation to reacting to athletes' particular needs (Saury & Durand 1998). Consequently, in what clearly can be seen as a more holistic approach, such coaches appear aware of the need to care for athletes' well-being beyond the sporting arena, and of exercising social competencies to ensure the continuance of positive working relationships (Jones *et al*. 2003, 2004). The message here is that coach–athlete relationships need to be carefully nurtured, and be flexible enough to deal with the multiple realities and needs that exist within given processual boundaries if athletes are going to reach their potential, and success is to be achieved. Current practice then suggests that the coach is (or should be) much more than a subject-matter specialist and method applier (Squires 1999). Rather, he or she is a person with multiple dimensions operating within given structural constraints in a dynamic social environment. From this perspective, coaching is fundamentally about making a myriad of connections between subject, method and other people to overcome the many and varied problems faced.

THE SOCIOCULTURAL NATURE OF PEDAGOGY AND COACHING

During the process of conceptualizing this amended Introduction, we thought it pertinent to further explore and clarify coaching's relationship to pedagogy (and culture). What is not intended here, however, is a revisiting of old ground (e.g. Jones 2006a), where the similarities between teaching and coaching are again emphasized. Neither is the purpose to discuss particular pedagogical 'strategies', styles or techniques which coaches could (in theory) use in practice; a sort of an easy-to-use pedagogical 'tool box' to dip in and out of at will. Rather, it is to present the pedagogical act within coaching (and the subsequent intended learning trajectory) as one inherently influenced by sociocultural factors (Hardman 2008); in that it is a terrain possessing a particular past, which allows a certain, bounded present. Consequently, the interaction evident within coaching is taken as located in, and influenced by, a wider 'social order'. What complicates things a little here, however, is that this shaping process is not one directional. Hence, not only is practice moulded or sculpted by culture, but it also has an active role in moulding culture; that is, people also 'shape the very forces that are active in shaping them' (Daniels 2001: 1). This was the case made recently by Jones *et al*. (2014) in arguing for activity theory as an insightful lens through which to view and better understand sports coaching.

Derived from the work of the Soviet educational psychologists Vygotsky (1978) and Leont'ev (1978), activity theory is a perspective drawn from the idea that all social action, including pedagogy, is mediated, mainly by language, discourse and other cultural means. One cannot, therefore, understand or (effectively) use pedagogical action without recourse to the situation in which it takes place and that situation's foregrounding history. That is, pedagogy, in Vygotsykan terms, is declared as never being politically indifferent (Vygotsky 1997). Rather, it arises, and is fashioned, in particular social circumstances. From such a perspective, learning is also viewed as a collaborative activity devoid of uniform methods,

where cultural production and reproduction takes place. It is a view of pedagogy as a rule-bound activity system, built over time, involving mediated action by an experienced 'other', and where power and control influence practice (Hardman 2008). Central to the perspective then, is the belief that athlete learning and, hence, coaching is a 'culturally based social endeavour' (Hardman 2008: 67), where an appreciation of the social, beyond the interactional, needs to be developed and accepted. Indeed, this critique can also be aimed at much coaching research which, to date, has given primacy to individual mediation processes at the expense of socio-institutional and historical factors from which such interactions arise. In short, there is no separate reality that constitutes the coach–athlete relationship.

In developing these ideas further, Daniels (2001: 15) claimed that 'the very idea of mediation carries with it a number of significant implications concerning pedagogic control'. Similarly, as we argue in this book (and have done elsewhere), sometimes context dictates action, while the idea of a coach having total control over any environment is naive in the extreme. This is not to say that coaches (and other pedagogues) are merely cultural dupes. Far from it, as they can legitimately be considered active agents in athletes' development. Rather, it is a view that gives credence to situational effects, and individuals' actions which shape those effects, on that development. In the words of Vygotsky (1978: 28), 'just as a mould gives shape to a substance, words can shape an activity into a structure'. This is why the work of a pedagogue or coach should never be stereotyped or routinized. On the contrary, it should 'always carry a profoundly creative character' (Davydov 1995: 17).

What enables this creativity, are the use of 'tools' and/or 'artefacts', which also are considered culturally bound. Such tools could be material, demonstrative or psychological in nature, but all carry certain meaning and messages, which can be used in the internalization of knowledge. That such meanings are, on the whole, understood by most if not all contextual actors, reminds us again of their historico-cultural character and location. Without an appreciation of such shared understandings, every social act or challenge would have to be negotiated and explained anew. The tools themselves could range from physical items, through to other people, to interpersonal relations. Indeed, as suggested by Jones *et al.* (in press), perhaps the most prevalent tool used in this respect is that of coaches' talk. This is in terms of the concepts discussed or presented to athletes (or other contextual stakeholders), how messages are delivered, and how resultant interactions are structured and re-structured. Indeed, the ideas and notions presented throughout this book can, in many ways, be considered the artefacts through which coaches (can) attempt to develop and improve athletes' knowledge and related performances. This, then, is how they should be read.

THOUGHTS ON 'GOOD' COACHING

Despite increasing evidence and nuanced arguments alluding to the non-linear contested nature of coaching, many still search for the holy grail of 'what works', the 'silver bullet', which guarantees success. Although the push for effectiveness has been prevalent since the 1970s, its presence in the coaching literature can be traced as far back as the 1950s

through Friedrichsen's (1956) analysis of loop films as instructional aids in coaching gymnastics. Since then, grids have been developed to increase the efficiency and value of coaching games (Bean 1976), coaching effectiveness programmes have been designed (Bump 1987), and guides written that have focused on helping coaches to know 'how to' more successfully teach sport skills (Christina & Corcos 1988). This, of course, led to, and was informed by, the systematic observation of 'good' and 'winning' coaches, and to a 'models for' approach. Although this may appear rather 'old ground', the legacy of such thinking firmly remains in the 'competency approach' still currently evident in coach education (e.g. Jones & Allison 2014). Here, it is assumed that coaching practice can be judged as 'good' or 'bad' contingent on the proficient demonstration of certain behaviours. The fallacy of the assumption was recently highlighted by Chesterfield *et al.* (2010), whose coach-certification candidates engaged in a form 'synthetic coaching' to satisfy their examiners' related expectations and successfully obtain the desired qualification. Here, the required demonstration of given competencies was more important than any evidence of (coaching) outcome. Similarly, Piggott (2012: 535) witheringly concluded that where 'courses were governed by prescriptive and rigid rationalities, coaches found them useless'.

As any serious researcher or practitioner knows, the search for the 'best coaching recipe' is a fool's errand. Such a 'one size fits all' just does not exist. However, this does not mean that 'anything goes' within coaching either, as plenty of 'good practice' guidelines certainly exist. In this respect, many of us can consensually identify a good coach when we see one working. Here, notions akin to being innovative, caring, focused, pedagogically-orientated, reflective, responsible and deeply engaged immediately come to mind. However, as opposed to being tightly defined proficiencies, the guidelines under which such practitioners operate and display such attributes are more-than-often considered steering principles; that is, they are used and implemented with perceptive flexibility within given boundaries (which are also, to various extents, permeable) (Jones & Wallace 2005). Of course, many of the ideas and concepts that could act as such principles form the basis of this book.

A further exploration of seemingly 'successful practice' was recently carried out by Jones and colleagues (2012). Believing that the 'what' and 'how' of coaching had been relatively well engaged with, the question of 'who is coaching?' was deemed worthy of consideration. Here, the person of the coach, as much if not more than the methods he or she applies, was deemed a crucial element in what constitutes 'good' or successful coaching. In borrowing from the work of Agne (1998: 166) among others, the case was made that 'children [read athletes] learn by absorbing who you are to them, not memorising what you say'. Indeed, if coaching is enacted by somebody, then it naturally matters who that somebody is. The primary thrust of such work is humanistic in nature, emphasising caring as a key characteristic. According to Agne (1998: 168), such committed caring is more significant in the generation of 'student learning and effective teaching than anything else'. Similarly, Jones, Armour and Potrac (2004) found elite coaches to invest high levels of time and energy into their work, achieving a form of self-actualization, a 'self-in-role', through their actions. This was not seen as merely a matter of being unique (Mead 1952) or a simplistic recourse of being somehow 'true to self'. Rather, it was to do with developing greater sensitivity towards the self in the coaching role, which can result in relationships of considerable trust and respect – crucial components for 'good' coaching.

POSTSCRIPT

Over a decade ago when we began the project of writing the first edition of this book, we were united in the belief that linking sociological and educational concepts to coaching practice would assist coaches and students of coaching to make some sense of the muddled realities of their work. What we did not foresee was that the practice of writing a consensual text about coaching was just as messy and complicated as coaching itself. The influence of the contextual factors became very evident as we swapped our 'draft' chapters for the first, second and now third editions. Suffice to say, it did not look as if we were singing from the same hymn sheet. Over time, and with the help of each other, the ideas became more harmonious again. The reason we briefly share this experience is to highlight that even with the best of intentions, and a reasonable level of theoretical and practical understanding, collective compromise and consideration, in addition to individual determination are required to realize one's coaching goals.

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CHAPTER 2

Reflection

INTRODUCTION

For over three decades a focus on reflection, or on becoming a reflective practitioner, has gained popularity in a wide range of contexts. These include education (Smyth 1991), graphic design (Poynor 1994), art (Roberts 2001), engineering (Adams *et al.* 2003), medicine (Middlethon & Aggleton 2001) and coaching (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Knowles *et al.* 2001). Practitioners are being encouraged to 'stand back and reflect upon the construction and application of their professional knowledge' (Hardy & Mawer 1999: 2). The surge of interest can largely be attributed to the work of Schön (1983), who discussed reflection in relation to architecture, town planning, engineering and management. Reflection is a term that has been described in multiple ways including: 'turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration' (Dewey 1910: 3), to having 'a capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study' (Stenhouse 1975: 144). Although useful in a general sense, there are negative consequences of having multiple interpretations of reflection, particularly in relation to it becoming a popular rallying call. This is because such ambiguity has the potential to lose the concept's core meaning (Smyth 1991), while paradoxically, allowing reflection to be used in 'an unreflected manner' (Bengtsson 1995: 24). The primary purpose of this chapter

is to introduce the concept of reflection, and discuss how four interpretations of reflection have been utilized in the sports coaching context. In addition, the chapter also serves as a conceptual framework through which the concepts introduced in this book can be thought about and possibly integrated into personal practice.

When attempting to gain an understanding of the complexities associated with reflection, it is useful to consider Tinning's (1995: 50) point that 'if becoming reflective were simply a rational process, then it would be easy to train … teachers [read coaches] to be reflective'. He argues that becoming reflective is not simple, because the issues on which practitioners are encouraged to reflect often possess 'a large measure of emotion and subjectivity embedded within them' (1995: 50). Additionally, many coaches learn how to coach from being an apprentice to another coach – often one they admire – and base their own practices on those of a mentor. Therefore, it can be challenging to reflect upon, and possibly analyze, taken-for-granted practices that are associated with valued memories that may also have become integral to a sense of self.

Increasingly, there is encouragement for coaches to become reflective practitioners (see Armour 2010; Cropley *et al.* 2012; Denison 2007; Denison & Avner 2011; Gallimore *et al.* 2013; Gearity & Mills 2012; Gilbert & Trudel 2006; Handcock & Cassidy 2014; Jones *et al.* 2011). This is despite, nearly 20 years ago, Crum (1995) raising the question: should being a reflective practitioner become standardized practice; in other words should it become the 'norm'? While he debated this question in the physical education context, the issue has relevancy for sports coaches. According to Crum, the answer depends on the definition held of physical education or, in this case, coaching. If a practitioner holds a 'training-of-the-physical' perception of coaching and believes his or her role is only to improve fitness and adopt a technical/utilitarian approach, then becoming a coach who reflects deeply is not going to be paramount. While some coaches still cling to this view, growing recognition exists that it is useful for coaches to engage in some degree of reflection, even if it is only at the practical level (Handcock & Cassidy 2014). Coaches who recognize their work as being 'a teaching-learning process', that is 'socially constructed and historically situated', see much greater merit in reflecting on practice (Crum 1995: 15). By doing so, coaches can expose their perceptions and beliefs to evaluation, creating a heightened sense of self-awareness. This may, in turn, lead to 'certain openness to new ideas' and potentially improved action (Hellison & Templin 1991: 9).

WHAT IS REFLECTION?

Over 100 years ago, John Dewey contrasted routine behaviour with reflective thought, defining the latter as the '[a]ctive, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends' (Dewey 1910: 6). According to Dewey (1966), those who adopt a reflective pose investigate the assumptions that inform their behaviour and accept responsibility for their actions. Dewey (1916) suggested that before an individual can engage in reflective thinking, three personal attributes need to be present: open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility. Open-mindedness was conceived as 'an

active desire to listen to more sides than one …; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; [and] to recognise the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us' (Dewey 1916: 224). Wholeheartedness, meanwhile, as the name suggests, referred to being 'absorbed' and/or 'thoroughly interested' in a particular subject. Finally, responsibility concerned the consequences of actions being fully recognized and accepted, thereby securing integrity in one's beliefs.

These attributes appear relevant to contemporary coaches as evidenced by Wayne Smith's (ex-coach of the All Blacks, the national rugby union team of New Zealand) description of the qualities needed to be a good coach. In his own words:

> the key thing I think is the openness to learning. I think coaches need to look at things on merit and understand that just because they've played the game, they don't know everything about it … Having a passion to improve is important. Knowing that you are a part of the problem means that you can also be part of the solution.
>
> (Kidman 2001: 43)

Similarly, when Denison and Avner (2011: 209) used a Foucauldian framework to reflect on the concept of 'positive coaching', they suggested that 'for coaches to become a positive force for change, they must engage in an ongoing critical examination of the knowledges and assumptions that inform their problem-solving approaches'.

Despite Dewey's early theorizing, the increased recent interest in reflection can be attributed to the work of Schön (1983, 1987) and Zeichner (1983, 1987). While Dewey's view of reflection focused on 'future action rather than current action' (Eraut 1995: 9), Schön's (1983) interpretation took existing practice into account. Hence, Schön (1983: 50) introduced the notion of reflection-in-action, which described what people do in practice; namely 'thinking about what they are doing, even while doing it'. In other words, Schön (1983) considered reflection-on-action to be integral to reflection-in-action. For example, a big-league baseball pitcher described the process of reflecting-in-action by explaining how in the midst of playing the game, '[You get] a special feel for the ball, a kind of command that lets you repeat the exact same thing you did before that proved successful' (1983: 54). Further, Schön stressed that phrases such as 'keeping your wits about you', 'thinking on your feet' and 'learning by doing' highlight 'not only that we can think about doing, but that we can think about doing something while doing it' (1983: 54).

Schön (1983: 50) identified three general patterns prevalent within reflection-in-action. First, that reflection is often initiated when a practitioner is 'stimulated by surprise'. In the process of dealing with an unexpected phenomenon, an individual reflects on his or her understandings that are implicit in the action, before critiquing, restructuring and embodying the practice in future action. In other words, when something unexpected happens people 'turn thought back on action' (1983: 50) and try to deal with it. The second pattern prevalent in reflection-in-action was what Schön (1983: 268) called a 'reflective conversation with the situation'. What he meant by this was that while an 'inquiry begins with an effort to solve a problem … [t]he inquirer remains open to the discovery of [new] phenomena' (1983: 268). Here, in attempting to solve a problem, a discovery is often made that is incongruous or incompatible with the efforts to solve that problem. When this happens, the inquirer 'reframes' the problem (1983: 268). Schön

argued that a consequence of having such a reflective conversation with the situation is that it enables practitioners to achieve some degree of professional growth by reflecting-in, and -on, practice.

The third pattern inherent in reflection-in-action was what Schön (1983: 62) termed the 'action-present'. He described this as the 'zone of time in which action can still make a difference to the situation' (1983: 62). While all processes of reflection have an 'action-present', Schön conceded that this 'may stretch over minutes, hours, days, or even weeks or months, depending on the pace of activity and the situational boundaries characteristic of the practice' (1983: 62). How the 'action-present' is interpreted will dictate whether a more generic reflection-in-action term is utilized to describe the reflective process, or whether more specific terms such as reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983) or retrospective reflection-on-action (Gilbert & Trudel 2001, 2005, 2006) are used.

While Schön (1983) viewed reflection-on-action to be integral to reflection-in-action, not everyone agrees. Gilbert and Trudel (2001, 2005, 2006), for instance, view them as separate types of reflection with reflection-on-action occurring 'within the action-present, but not in the midst of activity' (Gilbert & Trudel 2001: 30). They contended that when a coach reflects on an issue in between practice sessions, he or she is reflecting on action. Reflection-on-action can also occur before the action; for example, when a coach reflects on what could happen and acts, thereby pre-empting a possible problem arising (Bengtsson 1995). Gilbert and Trudel (2006) also suggested a third type of reflection, which they termed 'retrospective reflection-on-action'. This was described as 'that [which] occurs outside the action-present (e.g. after the season or after a coach's reflection can no longer affect the situation)' (Gilbert & Trudel 2001: 30).

BECOMING A REFLECTIVE COACH

In the first edition of this text, we had a section entitled 'Why is it useful to become a reflective coach?' That we decided to re-title it to read 'Becoming a reflective coach' is testament to our belief that the coaching community has 'bought into', at least rhetorically, the value of coaches becoming reflective practitioners. While mindful of Gilbert and Trudel's (2006) different types of reflection, in this chapter, we follow the lead of Schön (1983) by using the general term reflection-in-action, which recognizes the three aforementioned reflective patterns. Empirical evidence has highlighted the value of reflection-in-action when aiming to improve coaching practice (for example see Cassidy *et al.* 2006; Cushion *et al.* 2003; Denison, 2007; Gallimore *et al.* 2013; Gilbert & Trudel 2001; Jones *et al.* 2004; Kidman 2001; Knowles *et al.* 2006). When Cushion and colleagues (2010) reviewed the literature on coach learning and development, they noted that reflection was consistently mentioned in conjunction with how to support experimental learning. However, they also noted that 'time and space is required within a learning programme to develop reflective skills, otherwise these are likely to be superficial and uncritical' (2010: ii). Similarly, Cropley and Hanton (2011) went further to suggest that many who embrace the concept of reflective practice, and work within the sports coaching field, have done so without being fully aware of what is required to become a reflective coach.

Reflecting on one's practice is not an easy or quick exercise (see for example Gallimore *et al*. 2013). Indeed, there are many traditions, rituals, and so-called norms associated with coaching culture(s) that act as constraints on an individual's willingness and ability. For example, one's unwillingness to experiment with reflection is associated with a commonly held belief that 'thinking interferes with doing' (Schön 1983: 276). This is founded on many perceptions; one of them being that there is no time to reflect when in the middle of the action, or that it can be 'dangerous to stop and think' (Schön 1983: 278). In a sporting context, for example, it could be physically risky for a scrum half in rugby union to stop and consider all the options when he or she is holding the ball at the back of the scrum. But, as Schön (1983: 278) reminds us, 'not all practice situations are of this sort'. Indeed, it is unlikely that coaches would find themselves in 'dangerous' positions if they chose to stop and think in the middle of a coaching session. Yet, while a coach may not be in any physical danger, Jones *et al*. (2004) pointed out that the 'front' coaches use is crucial to maintain credibility. Therefore, if a coach visibly 'stopped and thought', there is a danger that athletes could interpret the action as indecision or a lack of knowledge, thus putting the coach's standing at risk.

The view that thinking interferes with action is also reflected in the common saying; 'paralysis by analysis'. This is considered to occur when there is a tendency to over-analyze behaviour and consequently lose the 'naturalness' of the action. For example, a golf coach may suggest a player change his or her grip. Here, it is reasonable to expect that the player would feel less comfortable playing a shot until she or he becomes accustomed to the new grip. Also, if a coach incorporated a new pedagogical strategy like providing open-ended scenarios, which require time for deliberation in the middle of a session, it would not be surprising that the amount of physical activity would be reduced. However, coaches and athletes can be taught to think about new information and their respective behaviours in a very short period of time. For example, utilizing the same strategies to assimilate reflection into coaching action, a tennis player can be taught to 'take a moment' after they have seen the outcome of a shot, and integrate subsequent learning into their next shot. Over time, when reflection is incorporated this way, it is likely that performance will be enhanced which may, in turn, assist in the recognition of its merits.

Sometimes thinking does interfere with action, albeit temporarily. Whether or not coaches are prepared to pay this price, and incur 'a temporary loss of spontaneity' (Schön 1983: 280), depends on their willingness to construct a 'high-risk' environment. We contend that, more often than not, the cost is worth the gamble. This is because reflection-in-action is often initiated when performance is unsatisfactory or a problem has been identified. As such, we agree with Schön (1983: 279), who asserted that the question then becomes 'not so much *whether* to reflect, as what *kind* of reflection is most likely to help us get unstuck'. The purpose of the next section is to provide an overview of some of the frameworks used to facilitate reflection whilst recognizing the social conditions in which practice occurs. In particular, we introduce four frameworks, and illustrate how they have been used within sports coaching. It is worth noting that the frameworks described below are not the only ones that have been used to understand the reflective practices of coaches (see Gallimore *et al.* 2013).

FRAMEWORKS FOR ENCOURAGING REFLECTION

Three levels of reflection

Zeichner and Liston (1996: 19) were concerned that the reflective process had a potentially 'inward' focus, and thus lacked 'sufficient attention to the social conditions that frame and influence practice'. They, along with Van Manen (1977), believed that one way to encourage consideration of the social context of practice was to think of reflection as occurring on a number of levels. Drawing on the work of sociologists associated with the Frankfurt School, Van Manen (1977) argued for three levels of reflection: (1) technical; (2) practical; and (3) critical. Although he identified differing levels, he did not position one as necessarily better than any other. Rather, he acknowledged that they could occur in conjunction with one another. According to Van Manen (1977) and Zeichner and Liston (1987), a *technical* level of reflection occurs when a pedagogical practitioner (read coach) focuses on achieving set objectives, and on the effective and efficient application of knowledge. Examples of questions a coach could ask at this level include:

- What resources could I utilize to improve the teaching of this task?
- What goals did I achieve in this session?
- What can I do to fix this problem?
- What part of the training could I change so that it finishes on time?
- What can I do to better structure this drill?

Alternatively, a *practical* level of reflection occurs when coaches acknowledge that athletes (as well as themselves) bring assumptions to the coaching environment. It may also occur when a coach views the culture of the sport as being flexible, in addition to recognizing the practical and educational implications of an action (Van Manen 1977, 1995; Zeichner & Liston 1987, 1996). Examples of questions illustrative of a practical level of reflection include:

- How can I structure the session so that it better suits athletes?
- How does my posture(s) and what I am wearing influence the verbal messages I am giving?
- How are my experiences of being coached influencing what I do and my expectations of athlete behaviour?
- How does my behaviour reinforce stereotypes?
- How does the type of feedback I provide influence what athletes learn?
- How do I include a range of learning media to facilitate athletes' learning?

Finally, a *critical* level of reflection occurs when a coach focuses on the political, moral and ethical meaning of knowledge, and the domination of various forms of authority. It occurs when coaches question the worth of knowledge, work towards justice and equality, and problematize the context in which coaching occurs (Van Manen 1977; Zeichner & Liston 1987). Examples of questions a coach could ask illustrative of a critical level of reflection include:

- Whose knowledge, and whose point of view, is represented in the knowledge being (re)produced in the training session?
- Why do I play the best athlete who is coming back from injury and is only 80 per cent fit, when I have a fully fit but less skilled athlete on the bench?
- What do I do about practices that are inequitable or unjust, but are part of the team or club traditions?
- Is there a difference between the type of feedback I give to the more skilled and less skilled members of the team? If so, why?

Many conscientious coaches already ask themselves these sorts of searching questions. The challenge is to answer them rigorously and systematically taking into account multiple contextual pressures and constraints. Examples of the three levels of reflection being used in the sports coaching context are limited, but there are exceptions (see Cassidy *et al*. 2006b; Handcock & Cassidy 2014).

Action research

Another framework that encourages coaches to have a reflective conversation with the situation is that of action research. Although there is no universal interpretation of action research, Carr and Kemmis, in taking a socially critical slant, described it as:

> a form of *collective* self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and *justice* of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.
>
> (in Kemmis & McTaggart 1992: 5 *emphasis added*)

Notwithstanding the variations in interpretations, it is generally agreed that the action research process comprises four phases (planning, acting, observing and reflecting), in addition to the basic spirals of observation, interpretation (including the integration of theory), action and reflection. In this respect, Tsai *et al*. (2004) suggested that the action research process allows for the continuous construction and testing of theoretical explanations in practice, leading to improved understanding and learning. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986), the *plan* must be orientated around some future action and be flexible enough to cope with unforeseen circumstances. The plan should also assist a coach to realize new potential for action. The *action* is a carefully considered, and critically informed, variation of practice, and is acknowledged as a 'platform for the further development of later action' (Kemmis & McTaggart 1992: 12). Action is also considered to be dynamic, 'requiring instant decisions about what is to be done, and the exercise of practical judgement' (1992: 12). The role of *observation* in the action research process is to document the effects of the action, and to provide data upon which to reflect. Not only is the overt action observed, but so are 'the effects of action (intended and unintended), the circumstances of and constraints on action, [and] the way circumstances and constraints limit or channel the planned action and its effects' (1992: 13).

Collective self-enquiry is a characteristic of Kemmis and McTaggart's (1992) interpretation of action research, and it was this interpretation that Cassidy and colleagues used to increase their understanding of how technology was utilized by a software developer to support coaches (Cassidy *et al.* 2006b). While the collective self-enquiry was appropriate and generative in this instance, it is important to recognize that collegiality cannot be forced. Hence, it may be difficult for some potentially reflective coaches to be part of a like-minded group, given that various sport cultures can limit access to such colleagues (Rynne 2008). Collective self-enquiry was also difficult to achieve when an action research pedagogical approach was used in a UK graduate sports coaching programme (Jones *et al.* 2011). Here, issues linked to power and voice increasingly came to the fore as discussion surrounding what and how reflection was to take place occurred.

Experiential learning model

It has been well documented that a relationship exists between reflection and experiential learning (Moon 2004) (also see Chapter 8 on Learning). Hence, it has been suggested that an ability and willingness to reflect are important attributes for coaches if they are to benefit from experience and other informal learning opportunities (Cushion & Nelson 2013). Gilbert and Trudel (2001) drew on the work of Schön (1983) to develop an explanatory model for how youth coaches reflectively conversed with their own situations. The model has six components: '(1) coaching issues, (2) role frame, (3) issue setting, (4) strategy generation, (5) experimentation, and (6) evaluation' (2001: 22). For Gilbert and Trudel (2001), a reflective conversation is stimulated by what a coach views as a coaching issue and his or her personal role frame. However, the key to the reflection process lay in the consideration given to issue setting, strategy generation, experimentation and evaluation. The conversation is not necessarily a 'one-off'. Rather, it is possible for it to be on a sub-loop, with the above process being continuously revisited (Gilbert & Trudel 2001). This model illustrates the type of reflection Schön (1983) termed reflection-on-action because the reflection takes place after the coaching session has been completed. While the reflective conversation model does not explicitly collaborate with others, Gilbert and Trudel (2001) identified that 'having access to knowledgeable and respected coaching peers' was 'critical to facilitating the reflective process' (11: 32).

Building on earlier work, and recognizing the importance of engaging with knowledgable others, Gilbert and Trudel (2006) suggested that four conditions influence the reflective conversation. These were listed as;

> (1) access to respected and trusted peers, (2) a coach's stage of learning (coaches with more experience are less likely to consult coaching material, instead relying on creative thought and joint construction), (3) issue characteristics (for challenging dilemmas it is more likely that coaches will consult during strategy generation, experimentation and evaluation) and (4) environment, for example, the support provided by the community.
>
> (Gilbert & Trudel 2006: 119–120)

'Technologies of the self'

Another framework beginning to be used by coaches to reflect on practice is Foucault's (1985) 'technologies of the self'. Such technologies have been described as 'those intentional and voluntary actions by which men [sic] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves' (1985: 10). Foucault claimed that by utilizing technologies of the self, he was able to 'go back through what I was thinking, to think it differently, and see what I had done from a new vantage point and in a clearer light' (1985: 11). Doing so provided him with a framework to question 'the manner in which one ought to "conduct oneself" – that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the [moral] code' (1985: 26).

When discussing the relationship between social theory, reflective practice and personal experience, Denison (2007: 380) suggested that engaging with technologies of the self offers coaches 'a workable framework to know how to change their coaching practices for the better' by enabling them to engage with the social, moral and political dimensions of coaching (see Gearity & Mills 2012; Pringle & Crocket 2013). Not only has Foucault's framework been used by coaches, it has also been used by athletes (Pringle & Hickey 2010) and coach educators (Cassidy 2013) to problematize the moral codes associated with sport. Developing such self-awareness in relation to taken-for-granted practices, holds much promise for coach development. This is not only in relation to 'what is', but in realizing unwritten constraints on practice, 'what could be'.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Over the past two and a half decades, and thanks largely to the work of Schön (1983), the concept of reflection has become popular in many fields. Nowhere has this been more evident than in sports coaching. Much of the current sports coaching literature thus encourages coaches to become reflective practitioners whilst providing considerable empirical evidence in support of such a position. Yet, some environments are more supportive of practitioners becoming reflective than others. Schön (1983) asserted that reflection was more likely to occur in an environment that prioritizes flexibility, acknowledges that multiple views exist, appreciates the complexity of issues, and is non-hierarchical. In the previous edition of this book, we said that Schön's ideal environment hardly sounds like a typical coaching context. Since then, however, coaching has come to be increasingly realized as a complicated practice possessing many dynamic social and personal elements, thus better aligning with Schön's vision.

As the sports coaching community strives to become recognized as a profession, practices will change and questions will be asked of some traditional customs and sentiments. These may come from those who have graduated with tertiary qualifications in coaching science (or the equivalent), from coaches working in the 'swamp of practice' (Schön 1983) or from a combination of both. The challenge is to ensure that any change is engaged with integrity and an open mind (two of the attributes Dewey identified necessary when adopting a reflective pose) and not 'the modernist desire for certainty and

for getting things "right"' (Cassidy & Tinning 2004: 187). While certainty may be desirable for some, aiming for such a state has the potential to close down discussion and experimentation. Once we accept that we cannot 'control social life completely' (Giddens 1990: 153), it becomes easier to experiment and to reflect. Such willingness is needed because 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character' (Giddens 1990: 38).

END-OF-CHAPTER TASKS

1 Van Manen (1977) argued that reflection could occur on three levels. Drawing on a sports coaching context with which you are familiar:

   a Identify the three levels, then for each level, provide two questions you could ask to facilitate reflection on your coaching practice.
   b Identify and describe some of the factors that could constrain and enable you to become a reflective practitioner.

2 Identify an area of your coaching practice you wish to improve. Design an action research project (incorporating planning, acting, observing and reflecting), making note of what resources would be required to successfully conduct each phase.
3 It has been argued that using 'technologies of the self' can provide opportunities to 'know how to change coaching practices for the better' (Denison 2007: 380). Reflect on how engaging with a social, moral or political dimension of coaching could improve your coaching practice.

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Section I

The context of coaching

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CHAPTER 3

Coaching ethics

INTRODUCTION

The notion that sport builds character has been a popular claim for decades, and rests on the taken-for-granted assumption that there is some sort of internal connection between the practice of sport and the development of moral qualities (Carr 1998). The belief has often led to a culture of non-teaching or coaching in relation to moral values, as it is based on the perception that a coach's task is simply to organize sporting activities for children and athletes who learn ethical behaviours from simply participating in them. Despite the popularity of the notion of sport being a character builder, it has not been the subject of widespread critical examination. Indeed, it has not garnered anything approaching consensus, let alone necessary operational definitions. This is particularly so in relation to what is meant by the term 'character', and how the context and/or the coach is meant to develop it (Sheilds & Bredemeier 1995). This lack of clarity has led to inadequate conceptualization of the professional responsibilities associated with the coaching role in terms of coaches' own moral development and that of athletes (Carr 1998).

Since antiquity, people have debated the constitution of ethics. Hence, it should come as no surprise that dispute and deliberation still exist on the nature of ethics and morals. Nevertheless, before we enter the discussion related to coaching ethics and coaches' moral behaviour in earnest, it is appropriate that we provide some related conceptual definitions, lest there should be similar confusion in the ensuing analysis. Morality has traditionally been associated with the differentiation of intention and action (i.e. the goodness or

badness of human behaviour, or with the distinction between right and wrong). Ethics, on the other hand, refers to the series of rules provided to an individual by an external source (e.g. society). In this sense, ethics address questions about morality. The terms are plainly interrelated and, therefore, as has been done elsewhere (Kretchmar 1994), will be used interchangeably in this chapter.

In trying to debunk the myth of the character-building qualities of sport, Carr (1998) contended that involvement in sport is no more morally or ethically educative than any other pursuit or school subject that involves children learning to work cooperatively with others. The important caveat here is that, although it cannot, and should not, be assumed that ethical behaviour will be learnt through mere participation, the sporting environment may well be a place where it can happen. Perhaps the preliminary question to be addressed then, is whether coaches should be regarded as moral educators.

Echoing earlier work situating coaches as, above all, social pedagogues (Jones *et al*. 2004; Jones 2006), and in light of their often influential positions as 'significant others', we believe that coaches should qualify as agents of moral education. This, however, is a consequence of the particular professional role occupied and not because of the peculiar nature of physical activities. The ethical learning context then is one that is created and maintained by the coach, and not by virtue of it being defined as 'sport'. It is a case given recent support by Hardman and colleagues (Hardman *et al*. 2010; Hardman & Jones 2011), who argued that the coach should play a central role in sculpting the 'moral terrain within contemporary sport practices' (Hardman *et al*. 2010: 345). To fashion such an environment, coaches must first recognize that the ethical development of the athletes in their charge is a part of their role, and that, similar to other pedagogic professionals, they are 'employed to teach in a context of wider concerns about how to live and what to value in life' (Carr 1998: 131). They hold important positions (often being in *loco parentis*) with regard to caring for minors; a duty that, like it or not, carries significant ethical obligations and responsibilities. In this respect, a coach's moral responsibilities should extend beyond policing foul play, to the fostering and cultivation of certain virtues, which are directly implicated in the realization of the value of sport.

Having declared our stance that a coach should act as a moral guide, the purpose of this chapter is to explore how his or her subsequent behaviour can be representative of such a person. However, the aim is to go further than to merely document circumstances where ethical dilemmas could typically emerge for coaches, or to direct coaches to 'ready made' moral decisions as manifest in existing codes of conduct. Rather, it is to promote an understanding of the often complex and relative ethical dilemmas in sport, and how to better deal with them. In this respect, it builds on the earlier work of Sheilds and Bredemeier (1995) in seeking to extend current theory by discussing a framework useful for understanding, investigating and promoting ethical action in coaching. What informs our approach here is the need to avoid the individual–social dualism, which has so far over-simplified much of the work into coaches' ethical dilemmas, and to emphasize that social interactions and the cultural contexts in which they occur, affect moral behaviour. Moral dilemmas in coaching, therefore, are often better viewed as 'shades of grey', with a fine line of distinction, itself open to interpretation, existing between ethical and unethical behaviour.

However, this is not to advocate a totally relativist stance, thus abdicating responsibility for trying to live a life founded on good ethics. Indeed, following a discussion on the

purpose of an ethical code and selected writings on ethical coaching issues, we introduce the work of scholars who utilize a Foucauldian lens to reflect upon and explore the challenges coaches face to practice in an ethical manner. The work of McNamee (1998, 2011) and Fernandez-Balboa (2000) are then used to provide a framework whereby coaches' ethical decisions are personalized and made accountable. Here, the case is made for a 'virtues' as opposed to a 'rules-based' approach, in order to secure lasting change in the moral climate within which coaching occurs (McNamee 1998, 2011). This places the onus firmly on coaches to carefully consider courses of action and their consequences in relation to ethical behaviour.

ETHICAL CODES AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN COACHING

Sport is often thought to mirror society and its prevailing value trends. Additionally, because of its popularity, it is often considered a primary medium through which many young people come to learn about the core values of their culture. Having the potential to convey social values however, also encompasses the possibilities of transmitting undesirable as well as desirable ones (Sheilds & Bredemeier 1995). Consequently, some critics have claimed that sport impedes, as opposed to develops, 'good' character, and point to the many reports of unethical behaviour related to violence, parental brawls, aggressive nationalism, sexism, racism, homophobia and the illegal use of performance-enhancing drugs as evidence (Reddiford 1998). Such actions result from both adopting values that are counter to the norm, and of following desired social values too closely. This latter tendency has been termed 'positive deviance', which distorts ideals and leads to twisted value priorities where the ends are seen as justifying the means. Indeed, recent questions about the morality of sport have largely arisen from such deviance, as witnessed by a harsh competitive ethic driven by huge extrinsic rewards. It is a concern about the emphasis placed on the prize more than the process, which tends to blur 'our vision of the human and humane potential of sport' (Sheilds & Bredemeier 1995: 2). According to Kretchmar (1994), it is through such a distorted focus that we develop 'moral calluses' which, in turn, keep us from engaging with ethical questions of right and wrong at any meaningful level.

Ethical issues then, are very much a contemporary concern for coaches, with considerable attention having been given over recent years to appropriate and inappropriate coaching behaviour. This has been generated by a seemingly endless array of athletes failing drug tests, allied to some high-profile sexual harassment cases and allegations of child abuse (Fasting & Brackenridge 2009; Lyle 2002). Such abuses were starkly highlighted by the recent Pennsylvania State University scandal in the US, where a former defensive football coach was found guilty of sexually abusing boys over a 15-year period. Not only did this tragedy cover the obvious sexual wrongdoing, but also the intersecting vectors of institutional violence, media coverage of the event and its aftermath (Giardina & Denzin 2012), an institution's mission drift to market values (Giroux & Giroux 2012), and a general abuse of power. On a more localized level, the range of ethical issues likely to concern coaches was categorized by Lyle (2002) into interpersonal relationships, power differentials, social role (failure to maintain) and inappropriate goal setting. Although we recognize the limitations of such discrete classifications, because most coach–athlete

relationships are characterized by differences in age, experience, knowledge and gender, as well as close physical contact, psychological dependency and emotional intensity, they are a potentially fruitful context within which unethical behaviour can occur. The resulting tension is heightened in elite sport, where both coaches and athletes constantly stretch the boundaries of permissible action in order to maximize performance. In many ways, this is hardly surprising as they are actively encouraged to do so by a performance-driven culture which values the development of an 'edge' over opponents.

As a consequence of the potential to break the rules, and in response to those who have done so, many sport-specific and generic ethical codes of conduct have been established. For example, in 1979, Martens and Seefeldt proclaimed the Bill of Rights for Young Athletes, while in 1992, the Council of Europe created the European Sports Charter, both of which arose from unease regarding issues of over-competitiveness in youth sport. These were followed, in 1998, by the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport in response to concerns over gender equity, and in 1996 by the National Coaching Foundation's wide-ranging guide to ethical practice (Kidd & Donnelly 2000). Their value has been justified by the premise that by giving an outline of what is permissible and what is not, they demonstrate to everyone concerned what behaviours can be expected from coaches and other related personnel (Lyle 2002).

Such codes are considered to be 'issues-led' with general concerns related to cheating, drug taking and child abuse dominating the agenda. In doing so, they have historically focused on apparently inappropriate behaviour. Thus, such codes remind us of the social rules by which we should live, of what 'ought to be', by emphasizing what we should not do. Similarly, the rationales for writing such codes have been couched in negative terms; for example, 'to avoid arbitrariness', 'to highlight impermissible conduct', 'to impose clarity and simplicity in a confusing world', 'to set out standards and criteria by illustrating the need for them' and 'to provide a framework for resolving conflict' by confirming what is not allowable (McNamee 1998). It is a common-sense view of morality, expressed as a set of rules, which are designed to stop people from acting unfairly in the pursuit of their own interests to the detriment of others.

FOUCAULT, ETHICS AND COACHING

In contrast to the given codes of conduct discussed above, recent work has utilized the writings and thoughts of Michel Foucault to examine concepts associated with ethical coaching. Foucault's (1992) conception of morality or the 'moral code' referred to a set of behavioural rules promoted by various regulatory agencies; that is, those values and behaviours endorsed and maintained by powerful social structures and interests. Foucault's moral code then, was grounded in a cultural relativism; that is, how we come to think of ourselves 'is the result of various (historical) discourses and practices' (Denison & Avner 2011:214). In doing so, he acknowledged that morals do not exist in a social or political vacuum. Within such a conceptualization, however, Foucault believed that ethical behaviour did not necessarily mean compliance with such rules. Rather, to act ethically involved a process of self-reflection and developing self-awareness in relation to the existing moral code. This comprised both critically reflecting on the code and on the

unwritten moral conventions and values that dominate, as well as how the self responds to them, particularly in moments of tension (Pringle & Hickey 2010).

Advocates of this Foucauldian stance define ethical coaching as the act of engaging in constant critique of knowledge and assumptions, specifically in relation to existing power relations and associated 'regimes of truth' (Denison 2007; Denison & Avner 2011; Foucault 1978). Such conduct involves considerable social and cultural appraisal, and an ongoing commitment to problematize every aspect of practice, both official and unofficial (Pringle & Hickey 2010; Shogan 2007). Doing so, according to Foucault (1992), has the power to transform a person into an 'ethical subject'. This occurs through the individual increasingly recognizing how the personal is enmeshed into wider political and social structures. The point here, however, is not to paint a passive picture of individuals resigned to their collective fate, 'trapped within a coercive sporting framework' (Pringle & Hickey 2010: 134). Rather, it is to give a sense of personal possibility and agency; to help coaches reflect on and realize how much power they actually have to think of practicing in 'other' ways (Markula & Pringle 2006).

Taken as such, a Foucauldian reading of sports coaching can be seen to be as much about innovation as a given ethical way of acting. However, this should not be envisaged as only devising new solutions to old problems, as simply 'pouring old wine in a new bottle' (Denison & Avner 2011: 218). What Denison and Avner (2011) call for here is a 'new flavour' to coaching practice, consisting of reframing or resetting difficulties and dilemmas. For example, rather than viewing an athlete's sudden inability to run faster through a physiological or a 'not-training-hard-enough' lens, it can alternatively be seen as a need for greater practice stimulation which could, in turn, be delivered through an array of differing perspectives (e.g. physical, mental, rhetorical or social). Similarly, again as illustrated by Denison and Avner (2011), a coach could reconceptualize power as being relational, or part of a prevailing social exchange (Blau 1964), as opposed to being embedded in him or herself. Such a heightened sensitivity about how problems are initially framed holds the potential for coaches to 'practice better'; with coaching itself being reconsidered as an ongoing 'process of learning, discovery and self-transformation' (Denison & Avner 2011: 224). Although this Foucauldian insight gives us some direction in relation to the process of coaching ethically, given Foucault's post-structuralist stance, it only limitedly engages with resulting actions. Consequently, it is to this, and more specifically to the work of Mike McNamee (1998, 2011), that we now turn.

PROBLEMATIZING ETHICS: MOVING TOWARD VIRTUES-BASED CONDUCT (McNAMEE 2011)

Existing codes of professional practice are generally accepted to be necessary documents. Yet, some scholars have questioned whether they are entirely relevant (Carr 1998; McNamee 1998, 2011; Reddiford 1998). The concerns do not relate to the aims of such codes, but to their inadequacy in dealing with the ethically complex coaching environment, and to their view of morality as a set of clear regulations to be unproblematically followed. The absolutist lines they draw have been criticized for leading us to 'right–wrong' binary thinking, and to the false belief that we are successfully addressing moral difficulties when

we are not (McNamee 2011). Although their clarity is often unquestioned in terms of outlining 'proper' human relationships in the coaching environment, such codes have been accused of inviting us to think of ethical life in terms of a series of rigid obligations. McNamee (1998: 148) views them as being reflective of moral conservatism, 'a flight back to the language of moral certainty, of duties, and rules', and to a 'culture of blame and punishment for perceived wrongdoing' (1998: 151). Such regulations maintain that rule adherence is at the heart of ethical conduct, and imply that if coaches follow rules then they must have a sense of moral maturity. Although such codes have been useful in identifying those who are unethical in their practice, thus enabling punishment, needless to say, we believe there is more to the development of moral maturity than that. This was a theme developed in a recent edition of the journal *Sport, Education and Society* (2013), where the issue of coaches' touching behaviour was discussed. Here, echoing the work of Piper and colleagues (Piper & Smith 2003; Piper & Stronach 2008; Piper *et al*. 2012), Jones *et al*. (2013) argued against a defensive policy discourse which positions all physical contact by coaches as being morally dubious. Rather, in borrowing from Noddings (1984: 648), they contended that 'pedagogical practice (which could well involve touching) should depend on a sensitivity to a constellation of situational conditions', interpreted from the perspective of both coach and athlete. The general point made was that such issues regarding physical contact, (e.g. hugging in joyful celebration or a consoling arm around the shoulder of a distraught athlete) and related decisions, could never be managed by the technical. Indeed, Reddiford (1998) considered 'given' instructive codes had little, if any, effect on the moral motivation of those who seek to make unjust gains, and that their existence merely leads to more sophisticated ways of cheating. McNamee (2011) also questioned the need for rules that outline obvious wrongdoings. For example, he asked:

> Why do we need a rule concerning sexual harassment in a code of conduct? Is it not clear that such actions are wrong, so why do we need a code to tell us this? We can no more sexually harass our colleagues or athletes than any other person in the street. The rule tells us nothing new.
>
> (McNamee 2011: 31)

Alternatively, he believed that the situations responsible for unacceptable behaviour need to be understood in order to ensure (as best we can) that they are not repeated. A climate of conduct that precludes such actions should, therefore, be constructed not because a rule book tells us that unethical behaviours are wrong, but because we sincerely believe them to be so. Finally, McNamee (2011) criticized the rule-based approach as being, by its very nature, under-determined. That is, he questioned how a set of regulations can anticipate or describe all the actions that may be considered unethical, or tell everyone what to do and what not to do in all circumstances. Plainly, it cannot. Such codes appear to leave many questions unanswered as they are simply unable to write out the particularity of quandary (McNamee 2011), or to assist coaches in addressing the infinite variety of moral issues they constantly face, once they have avoided obvious wrongdoings. Even when attempts have been made to achieve absolute rule clarity in terms of a certain act, judgement is often still needed in interpreting a possible unethical behaviour as fitting a