The Journal Of Athlete Centered Coaching

The Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching 2014-2016

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Note from Mark Mann, Ph.D., editor of the 2016 Edition of the Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching:

This compilation of the first three years of accepted entries to the Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching is put together in gratitude to our readers, and to all of the contributors, authors, reviewers, and members of our editorial board. Articles are from the years 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Opening Call for Discourse
Athlete Centered Coaching:
A time for reflection on meanings, values and practice.

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The launch of the Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching prompts both coaches and academics to reflect upon their understanding and application of the term 'Athlete Centered Coaching'. We contend that such reflection is a critical pre--requisite to advancements in coaching research and professional practice. Drawing on research insights, we present a case for rethinking, or certainly extending, the meanings of 'athlete centered coaching' and seek to prompt academic and professional discussions about the ways in which the term is interpreted and enacted.

The call for papers for the journal identified Athlete Centered Coaching with a "change in coaching focus that empowers athletes towards discovery based learning", adding that this includes strategies that provide the athlete an opportunity to have a voice and dignity in their participation experience. By providing opportunities for critical thinking and decision making by the athletes themselves, the athlete centered coach lives out the core values for which they entered the coaching profession in the first place. (Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching, 2014)

In this short paper we call into question what a commitment to the notion of 'athletes' voice and dignity in their participation experience' may encompass, and similarly, the sort of critical thinking and decision making that athletes are encouraged to engage with. Our stance is informed by recent and ongoing research that has revealed the impact that coaching practices and performance environments can have on athletes' long--term health and wellbeing, and acknowledges the influential role that coaches play in establishing and legitimating practices that come to define sporting cultures (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; McMahon & Penney, 2013; Stirling & Kerr, 2008). We accept that the stance presented is not one that all coaches or academics may agree with and do not expect consensus on the issues we raise. Difference in viewpoints is entirely legitimate in this arena. They reflect that the 'core values' that underpin coaches' entry to the profession and their ongoing professional practice will vary.

Our emphasis, however, is that there is a need for greater discussion of different viewpoints and values, and in particular, about the implications that these differences have for what happens in the name of 'Athlete Centered Coaching'.

Amidst the progressive development of any approach or philosophy of coaching, it is understandable that variations will emerge in what comes to be understood as core or 'defining' principles and characteristics. Who an individual coach talks with and comes to regard as 'an authority' in the area, what they read, how they have seen any approach enacted, and the way in which a coach then aligns conversations, observations and what they read with their own personal values, will all shape thinking about what it means to coach in a certain way. Hence various coaches and academics will come to have different understandings and visions of something such as Athlete Centered Coaching. In many respects, this can be seen as both inevitable and appropriate, as an approach is adapted and contextualized to suit specific coaching environments. Are we then justified in seeing varied understandings and applications of Athlete Centered Coaching as in any way problematic? Perhaps.

In our view, there are dangers that the significance of underpinning values may become lost amidst somewhat functional ways of thinking about Athlete Centered Coaching. An emphasis, for example, of the need to understand the different ways individual athletes learn, their individual learning/performance goals and needs, and adjust coaching techniques to match, may be the way in which some coaches think about and seek to apply Athlete Centered Coaching. Yet, this may only partially connect with the holistic orientation to the notion of 'understanding the athlete and their individual needs that we see as necessary to foreground. From this perspective, Athlete Centered Coaching needs to be about far more than matters such as greater use of questioning, or greater differentiation of learning; 'knowing the athlete' about far more than knowing their learning preferences and the ways in which they typically respond to various approaches. Athlete Centered Coaching is complex-it isn't an approach with a magic formula, it is an approach which requires a coach to understand him/herself and then understanding the athlete. It is about embracing a social constructivist approach, knowing that the athlete has a history -- psychologically, cognitively and physically, and being committed not only to trying to find out what that is but also come to understand it and with that understanding, explore with the athlete how to best enable them to become self--aware and independent, responsible for their own learning and performance. In an athlete centered environment, the athlete owns the direction, is accountable for that direction and

thus takes responsibility for their actions and performance (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010).

But how far should conversations about direction and responsibility go? The term humanistic is often used as a discourse for athlete centred, which makes sense in that, it is about being human, it is about accepting others as human and each in their own unique social construction. The essence of athlete centred is awareness, it is about athletes becoming aware of themselves, and coaches becoming aware of themselves so they can help athletes. 'Athlete Centered' suggests that this understanding of the athlete requires and understanding of self. Our emphasis is that coach--athlete understandings and conversations that are directed towards such understanding need to go beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of any specific coaching setting and beyond matters of what it will take to maximize individual performance. We suggest that a commitment to Athlete Centered Coaching should mean that a coach is concerned with the athlete as a person not just performer (Lombardo, 2001), their life within sport and outside of it, their long--term health and wellbeing as well as their short term performance. Phil Jackson is known for enabling players to grow as individuals through the nurturing of the group effort. He suggests it is about "listening without judgment", by being "truly present with impartial, open awareness." (Jackson & Delahanty, 1995, as cited in Humm, 2010, p. 259). That impartiality and openness arguably needs to extend beyond strategic thinking, and reflect a commitment to conversations that consider in a holistic sense what at any time may be best for the athlete from their perspective. Developing this sort of openness requires incredible empathy (Goleman, 1998) to understand what the athletes understand, how they view their own performance, what sport means to them, and how they look at the world. An orientation such as this, is arguably at the heart of what it means to be a truly Athlete Centered Coach.

As indicated in our opening, we do not expect everyone to agree that such an orientation is either necessary or appropriate. We accept that in some respects coaches (and particularly coaches working with young athletes) may feel notable pressures to draw distinct boundaries in relation to the aspects of an athlete's life that they know about and/or seek to connect with.

We also recognize that a deeper commitment to a holistic interpretation and enactment of Athlete Centered Coaching is destined to give rise to dilemmas and tensions, as coaches grapple for example, with the fine line between a training programme that may enable an athlete to attain a peak performance and a concern to protect an athlete's physical, social and emotional long term well

being. Both coach and athlete arguably need to engage with understanding of the potential longer term impact of particular coaching approaches and practices. In saying this we fully acknowledge that such impact is destined to be highly individual. This reaffirms the central importance of knowing the individual athlete in the fullest sense while at the same time, being incredibly self--aware as a coach. We will welcome others' views on the issues we have raised and look forward to further perspectives and research insights being put forward through the Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching.

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Professional learning: Developing a Community of Practice

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Abstract

This paper directs attention to coaches' professional learning. It arises from a three- year project in Aotearoa New Zealand that has evaluated a professional development programme designed to enhance and accelerate high performance coaches' learning; the Coach Accelerator Programme (CAP). Drawing on data from interviews with coaches, the programme manager and support staff, and participant observations, we report on the ways in which coaches' learning has been facilitated and supported. The concept of Community of Practice provides the theoretical framework for discussion of the programme and findings. Findings relating to two sub-themes (i) the dominant culture of the community, characterised as a culture of learning and sharing; and (ii) the structure, opportunity and support for the culture and community; are presented. Achievements to date and significant challenges that need to be acknowledged in ongoing development of the CAP are addressed.

Key Words: Coaching; Community of Practice; Professional Learning; Learning Networks; Culture.

Introduction

In recent years a growing body of research and literature has sought to enhance understandings of coaching from pedagogical perspectives. This work is characterised by a focus on learning and learning relationships and is reflected in several texts that are now well established in the field (see for example Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009; Jones, 2006; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2010). Amidst this development, a significant number of studies have directed attention to coaches' learning (see Cassidy & Rossi, 2006; Culver & Trudel, 2006; Cusion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Gilbert & Trudel, 2006; Jones, Potrac & Armour, 2004; Mallett, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006) and more particularly, high performance coach learning (Mallett, Rossi & Tinning, 2008; Occhino, Mallett & Rynne, 2013). This paper seeks to prompt further discussions about coaches' learning and particularly, the structures and relations that may best facilitate and support coaches' learning. It is underpinned by the belief that coaches' openness to learning is fundamental to an athlete-centred approach to coaching.

The paper draws on data arising from empirical research conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand, centering on a national professional development programme, the Coach Accelerator Programme (CAP). As we discuss below, the programme seeks to enhance and accelerate coaches' learning and stands out as having a long-term, ongoing development orientation. The project reported here represents a response to calls for research that supports ongoing context-relevant learning of coaches (Cassidy, Potrac, & McKenzie, 2006) and was designed to actively inform the ongoing development of the CAP. In this paper we draw on interview and participant observation data to address a major theme that has emerged from analysis; the notion of coaches as learners within a Community of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991, see below). Two sub-themes provide the focus for reporting and discussion of data; (i) the dominant culture of the community, characterised as a culture of learning and sharing; and (ii) the structure and support for the culture and community. In addressing both sub-themes, we reveal key factors contributing to the development and maintenance of a positive culture and community of learners and notable tensions and challenges inherent in efforts to achieve this through the CAP. The discussion of literature that follows reflects the theoretical perspectives underpinning our analysis of the CAP. This provides the backdrop to the research design and presentation of data.

Communities of Practice and coaches'learning

Community of Practice (CoP) is a concept presented by Lave and Wenger (1991) to engage with learning as a social phenomenon and bring to the fore the notion of a group of people coming together for mutual learning in and through processes of negotiation of meanings. It is a concept thus underpinned by a social constructivist understanding of learning. Learning and the community itself centres on a "process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). For there to be a CoP, there must be a sustained mutual engagement of phenomena and interactions within the community (Culver, et al., 2009). Wenger (1998, p.4) explains CoP as constituting: "Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interaction on an ongoing basis". The concerns, problems and meanings that effectively distinguish the community are contextual and learning within the community is characterised by negotiation as individual members relate personal contexts to the collective. Learning within the community is thus inherently social and reliant upon social participation (Culver & Trudel, 2008) and social relations.

From a coaching perspective this orientation aligns with the view of learning that is central to an athlete centred apporach to coaching. From a coach development perspective, the concept of a CoP is consistent with a shift from thinking of professional learning in terms of 'fixed knowledge' to be delivered and learned, to an emphasis on professional development as necessarily ongoing and situated, which has been repeatedly called for in coaching literature (see Cassidy & Rossi, 2006; Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Cushion, et al., 2006; Cushion, 2011a; Penney, 2008). It also acknowledges the significance of individual meaning amidst learning (Light & Dixon, 2007) while simultaneously capturing the learning potential inherent in the community as a collective. Within a CoP the relations and learning culture is dependent on meanings related to the members of the community (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005) and the learning of all individuals will be facilitated, supported and/or limited by the relations and culture.

Notably, the concept of CoP also embraces the significance of both formal and informal dimensions of learning (and learning relations). Mallett, et al (2009) define learning within formal (formal education, institutions, programmes), nonformal (institutions, educational programmes) and informal contexts. Their

work points to the particular significance of informal activities and experiences for coaches' learning. A growing number of research studies reaffirm this emphasis, reporting that coaches identify informal networks as presenting powerful learning opportunities (Culver, et al., 2009; Mallet, et al,, 2008; Occhino, et al., 2013; Rynne, et al,, 2008). In the context of Australian Rules Football (AFL) Mallett, et al (2008) highlighted that coaches' learning related to a complex web of sources, and that the networks associated with coaches' learning included relationships with players, officials, administrators and support staff. In Occhino, Mallett and Rynne's (2013) study, AFL coaches determined that their greatest learning opportunities came from individuals who the AFL coaches deemed 'coaches of influence'. As Allee (2000) suggests, such learnings are unstructured, sporadic and depend on relationships of need, such that the learning network is inherently both social and dynamic. Light and Dixon (2007, p.162) reiterate that learning "is socially and culturally situated and a dynamic part of our lives". With research affirming these as critical characteristics of coaches' learning, programmes seeking to advance and support coaches' professional learning are challenged to actively nurture learning opportunities and relations that build upon and develop the social learning capacity inherent in professional networks. In this regard, drawing from Wenger (1998), Mallet (2010) considered both the prospective merits and limitations of the concept of CoP, particularly in relation to high performance coaching contexts. As Mallet (2010) explains, three features characterise the nature of learning and learning relations that define a CoP as such; "a joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire" (p.128). A joint enterprise centres on "a shared common purpose or goal participation in the community", arising from "a collective process of situated negotiation" (ibid.,p.128). In essence, it is "concerned with what community is about" (ibid., p.128). Mutual engagement reflects Wenger's (1998) emphasis that practice resides in the community and its social relations; there is collective engagement in the community's work and this action is negotiated. The third feature, a shared repertoire is associated with the production of "resources and artifacts (e.g. routines, tools, vocabulary) that belong to the community and that identify members of that community" (ibid., p.129, emphasis added). Collectively, the three features reflect the relative autonomy of a CoP and highlight that self regulation serves to define and maintain boundaries to/of the community and hierarchies withinit.

Mallet (2010) has acknowledged that some well recognised characteristics of

high performance coaching environments do not necessarily align well with the suggested utility of the concept of CoP in coaching contexts. These characteristics include that high performance coaching environments may in many instances be "highly contested with power dynamics and fights for survival" (p.130) and provide "differential access to a community's knowledge and resources" (p.130, emphasis added). As Rynne and Mallet (2006) have recognised, communities of coaches may well have considerable knowledge within/amongst their members, but they do not always support collaborative endeavours. Observations such as these point to a need for further research that critically engages with the concept of CoP,and that specifically explores factors that act to facilitate or in contrast inhibit functionality of high performance coaching communities from a professional learning stand point.

Other research provides further insights into some of the complexities of collaborative learning amongst coaches. Cassidy and Rossi (2006) explored the importance of a 'newcomer and old timer' relationship for mentoring within a coaching community.
Cushion (2006) has further suggested that a CoP is especially significant in that both the mentor and the mentee can contribute to a community of learning. Such a learning relationship can be situated within a community's social and cultural context. Thus mentors are not viewed as "working on but rather with the world of practice (Cushion & Denstone, 2011, p. 97) and therefore engaged in the learning process.
Cushion and Denstone (2011, p. 97) suggest that such "horizontal interaction" and relationships can enable transparency of practices within (and defining) the community.

Mutual trust and shared values have repeatedly been identified as critical to relationships that facilitate coach learning and development. Mallett, Rossi and Tinning (2008) highlighted that the development of trust takes years to build and furthermore, that the length of this process can hinder coach development structures. The observation that coaches sought information from trusted sources, i.e. those who the individual coach felt they could trust (Mallett et al., 2008) points to the importance of endeavours to actively foster trust within organisations, networks and communities, but also, the 'agentic' role of coaches in developing their own networks (Occhino, et al., 2013) and thus, avenues for learning. As Culver and Trudel (2008) emphasise; people will work well with people they already know and work with and the development of trust is key to

enabling coaches to share information, knowledge, insights or ideas but it is the individuals who ultimately will instigate particular exchanges and not others. In this sense, the notion of Dynamic Social Network (DSN) and particularly the understanding that in the light of changes in trust and respect, relations and membership of networks will all evolve over time (Occhino, et al., 2013) is pertinent to the exploration of CoP in coaching. In addition, we suggest that the concept of culture that has featured prominently in much coaching literature (and research concerned with teams in particular) has potentially important application amidst efforts to extend understandings of CoP in coaching. Notably, while 'culture' is frequently embedded in commentaries associated with CoP, clarity about its meaning in this context is far more difficult to ascertain. Occhnio et al (2013) draw upon Wenger (1998), to foreground shared repertoire comprising "routines, gestures, words and actions" (p. 92). Sánchez and Alonso's (2003, cited in Sánchez & Yurrebaso, 2009, p.98) commentary on culture brings to the fore "suppositions, values and norms whose meanings are collectively shared in a particular social unit (work team or group) at a specific time", while Jones (2010) draws attention to reciprocal influence as a defining dimension of interactions associated with cultures in sport. Both of these emphases are echoed in research that has focused on team culture, with development of such a culture identified as involving individuals working together for mutual benefit (Carron, Habermas & Eys, 2005; Jones, 2010; Yukelson, 1997). Research has also highlighted that active leadership and facilitation has a critical role to play in the creation and maintenance of positive team culture. Thus, we echo Culver and Trudel (2008) in suggesting the importance of having a competent facilitator and a certain amount of structure to act as a scaffold for learning within the community. In the discussion that follows we associate these needs with the active development of culture within thecommunity.

Research design andmethodology

This research project was designed as an evaluation study to investigate the effects of the CAP on the pedagogical skills, knowledge and understandings of coaches involved in the programme, and to gain insights into the impact in relation to their athletes' learning. As a three year project the research sought to go beyond a 'snap shot' perspective and generate in-depth data that pursued the ongoing effect of the CAP in relation to how coaches engaged with and used established and new pedagogical knowledge, understandings and approaches

over time. The research design reflected a commitment to findings informing the ongoing development of the CAP, with regular communication and ongoing negotiation between the researchers, CAP manager and Sport New Zealand (Sport NZ) research management staff, an important feature of the project.

To address the above intentions, the research adopted a qualitative framework and drew upon case study research and ethnography. The project has utilised multiple methods and elements of data collection that are detailed below. An over-riding emphasis for all data collection has been to ensure the voluntary nature of participation in the research and to avoid perceptions of an expectation to participate and/or any sense that the research/researchers constituted an imposition on the CAP manager, coaches and/or athletes.

The research context: The CAP

The CAP reflects the broader contemporary philosophy of coach education in Aotearoa New Zealand, which has experienced a paradigm shift from education to development. This shift was reflected in the New Zealand Coach Framework (SPARC[1], 2006) that foregrounded formal and informal coach learning and aligned with an applied athlete-centred philosophy and focus on sharing to enable learning (Cassidy & Kidman, 2010). The CAP thus contrasts to one-off professional learning, which has typically been the dominant model of professional development provision in coach education (Culver & Trudel, 2008; Cushion, et al., 2003). It was established in 2009 with the stated objective "to create New Zealand coaches capable of producing World, Olympic and Paralympic champions within five years" (SPARC, 2010). Coaches working at high performance level, as defined by the National Sports Organisations (NSOs) apply for a place on the programme and require nomination and endorsement from their respective NSO. The programme seeks to develop coaches who coach different sports, and who have different levels of experience in high performance contexts. Thus, the CAP coaches work in diverse contexts and in differing roles but are not apprentice coaches. Selection involves a rigorous process, whereby coaches are nominated by their NSO, apply in writing[2] and are short-listed. Short-listed applicants participate in an interview that involves a seamless series of realistic role simulations (coaching, partnering interactions, decision challenges and judgements) designed to reflect issues and situations typically experienced by a Head Coach. The applicants then receive

feedback about the application process.

The CAP comprises technical, residential and individual programmes. The technical programme is linked with the NSOs and focuses on sport specific needs to develop

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[1] Sport and Recreation New Zealand, subsequently re-- named Sport New Zealand.

[2] submitting a CV, nomination form and a technicalprogramme

the coach. The residential programme involves a series of 3-4 day residential 'camps' for the coaches in each cohort group. As we discuss further below, learning activities at the camps are diverse. They are designed to enhance learning and develop coaching skills amongst the group members, promote application of learning in individual contexts, and facilitate development of learning relations within group. The individual programme involves the coach working one-on-one with a High Performance Coach Consultant (HPCC) dedicated to that coach, with a mentoring orientation to the role and relationship. The consultants work with the CAP coaches to facilitate a Individual Development Plan (IDP), regularly review this, and give the coaches feedback on theircoaching.

To date there have been 36 coaches selected for the programme, with the cohorts comprising 6 coaches in 2009; 6 in 2010, 6 in 2011,5 in 2012, 6 in 2013 and 7 for the upcoming 2014 CAP. Our data collection focused primarily on the coaches entering the programme in 2010. Data collectioncomprised:

i. Reflective individual in-person and/or skype interviews with coaches from 2009 and 2010 CAP intakes and with athletes linked to these coaches. The number and selection of coaches and athletes from these groups involved negotiation with the Sport NZ research management staff, CAP manager and individual coaches and athletes. Interviews were semi-structured, directing attention to the programme itself, the effect of CAP on coaching, any gained learnings and any challenges arising. In total 5 coaches from 2009 and 4 from 2010 were interviewed, and a total of 6 athletes linked to 2009 coaches and 6 athletes linked to 2010 coaches have been interviewed.

ii. Participant observation during 2011 and 2012 at residential camps held for coaches who had commenced the CAP in 2010. Presence at camps and/or specific parts of them was negotiated on an ongoing basis with the CAP manager and coaches, with a particular concern to avoid any negative impact on the group's development and taking into consideration that increasingly the CAP manager faced many requests from 'outsiders' involved in high performance to join the CAP coaches at camps.

iii. Ongoing interviews with the CAP manager in person, via skype and telephone (to date 6 interviews). These interviews were relatively unstructured and designed to be conversational, enabling open reflection and discussion about the programme in the light of the most recent camp and/or feedback the manager had received from coaches

iv. Individual interviews with CAP 'support staff' including High Performance Coach Consultants (HPCCs) appointed to work with individual CAP coaches, and staff within High Performance Sport NZ (n=4) with involvement and interests in the programme via their positions/roles. These interviews were semi-structured and addressed their roles in the programme and their work with the coaches.

In addition to the above data collection, in-depth interviews and observations were sustained with two coaches who had commenced the CAP in 2010 over a period of approximately two years (2011 and 2012). This aspect of the data collection was shaped by ongoing negotiation of participation with the coaches concerned, the practicalities of their specific coaching contexts and commitments (relating to location at various times and the nature of their coaching context), and resource constraints of the project.

Ethical approval for the project was gained through ethics committees at the researchers' universities. All interview data has been transcribed and copies of transcripts provided to participants to self-check and make adjustments if desired. Data analysis has involved collective and ongoing re-reading, coding and classification of data to identify key themes. This paper reflects that a particularly prominent and recurring theme arising from analysis of data from multiple sources related to the development of a distinct culture of shared learning. Pursuing this theme in the data, we progressively generated sub-themes that are reflected in the discussion that follows. It is important to note

that CoP is the conceptual lens we have brought to the data having been emersed in the research context. In progressively developing the programme, the CAP Manager did not specifically seek to respond to the research cited above centring on CoP. Rather the emphasis on learning within communities that has ultimately emerged reflects his growing belief that this direction would best facilitate and support development of the CAP coaches.

Findings and discussion

A Culture of learning and sharing

Previous research has pointed to the importance of cultivating a culture of learning and sharing to enhance the function of a CoP (Cassidy & Rossi, 2006; Cassidy; et al., 2006; Culver & Trudel, 2006). This is reflected in the data that repeatedly points to CAP coaches who are highly committed to personal development, to the CAP and shared learning within the programme and with the other CAP coaches within their cohort particularly. In this section we therefore focus on findings that provide insight into the development of a community and culture of learning and sharing, central to which are openness and trust.

Diversity of membership is a key factor and strength of the learning community

Over the course of the research many of the coaches highlighted that the bringing together of coaches from diverse sporting codes and contexts has been fundamental to the culture and relations arising from the CAP. Coaches believe that the networks and shared learning that they are able to engage in through the CAP would rarely be seen in sport-specific coaching/performance contexts. The diversity of sports and contexts represented in the CAP has, with effective management, enhanced dialogue and trust amongst the coaches and created a strong sense of belonging to an intake group and to the CAP. From observation and interview data, it has been evident that the differences in coaching contexts, but similarities in high performance roles, has contributed to positive relations amongst the CAP coaches and extending learning opportunities. This distinguishing feature of the CAP programme is reflected in these comments from athletes and the programmemanager:

> …the collegiality. One of the things that I think is a great feature of the [CAP], … you wouldn't get those coaches from those different sports spending time in each other's environments which they do relatively often. … you don't get a bike coach spending time with the [name] Cricket Team or the [national team] Coach going to Invercargill to attend a cycling camp… or a cricket coach going to a netball environment to see how they prepare for games and vice versa…and the rowing coaches spending time with the swimming coaches because they're physiologically based programmes and they try to share ideas. Those things I think are real positive features (CAP Manager Interview).

> I definitely think he's taken a lot from the programme and tried to ….Because there are different sports from what I hear, different coaches and learning off them. It's not clear, because he won't voice that he's taken this from the Accelerator Programme, but …Yeah, I think he's probably chatted to some of the other team coaches and asked what their standards and what their selection criteria is and I think he's definitely making a stance about it. (Sam – Athlete Interview)

The CAP gives coaches a focus, a challenge to continue to develop and learn – and this appears to be enhanced by the diversity of coaches in the programme. As one coach identified, the CAP community presents opportunities to think beyond established boundaries:

> That was another part of the attraction of getting onto the course as well. My sport … is quite insular at times. I think it's very old school in the way that coaches are selected and the way we go about some of the environmental factors of what [sport] is about, I think it's really ingrained in tradition … well I've got the chance to work along with 4 or 5 other coaches and with all the other sports now, … and you can learn so much from them as well. (Georgy - CoachInterview)

Occhino et al's (2013) study on AFL coaches would tend to support the stance that the learning capacity of the community is extended by it incorporating coaches from varied sporting codes. Their study found that coaches tended to form dynamic relationships as they did not feel comfortable relating to particular club coaches or direct opponents, turning instead to 'influential coaches' from a range of sporting codes, whom they perceived as able to offer

the support that they were seeking.

> Trust, openness and honesty were highly influential to establishing and maintaining a strong learningcommunity.

Within a CoP, the ability to have open conversations is linked to individuals being able to contextualise learning and thereby, gain trust (Cushion, 2011b; Occhino, et al., 2013). The CAP reaffirmed to us the skill and planning required to achieve such openness and progressively build trust in the context of a structured coach development programme. Establishing rapport and trust among group members was an explicit priority for the CAP manager in organising the first two camps.
Participation observation at camps has clearly demonstrated that trust and shared recognition of the importance and value of each others' perspectives, were well established and valued features of the group. Some of the coaches commented on the role of the CAP manager in initially establishing and subsequently maintaining this trust:

> [To gain trust] we talked about it at the first. We said how we wanted to be as a group. We did a vision, " How do we want to be as a group and how do we want to be seen by the coaches? How do we want to be interacting with one another?"
> ....we have to have a confidential group and trusting... (Sandy – Coach Interview)

> There's a whole heap of things that we've all shared in that group that you know, if we went to the media they'd have a field day. You just need to understand it's a great environment and you don't want to ruin it by one person speaking out of school you'd lose the whole trust element and you wouldn't be able to go as deep into issues as you do...(Matthew – Coach Interview)

Further comments from coaches supported this view and notably, identified trust and safety as extending beyond the formal CAP contexts, to being acknowledged by the coaches as a feature of their wider, informal communication and networking:

> It's a really nice environment at the moment where all over the world we're regularly communicating now and when we come together at camps it's a really rich learning environment. The guys are able to relax in a safe environment and an accountable environment where they are valued and respected and share some stuff which I think ultimately grows us all. (Fenauge - Coach Interview)

> Both formal and informal learning (and networks) have contributed to the development of the culture andcommunity.

The networks of learning and support associated with the CAP are multiple and inter- related, centring on each intake group and camps held for the group, while at the same time also developing beyond this. Individual coaches have been able to develop highly valued peer support networks with particular colleagues from within their intake group. This is an example of the dynamics of learning evolving (Light & Dixon, 2007; Occhino et al., 2013), whereby informal networks, communication and learning evolve (and are actively developed by members of the CoP) to be multi- faceted and multi-level. The CoP is set up as a formal network, yet when the group is not together, members utilise and rely on informal networks to help their learning. In these terms, the developing CAP networking aligns with Mallett et al's (2008) description of a dynamic systemsnetwork.

Our data has pointed to dynamic, informal learning opportunities as an invaluable dimension of the CAP from the coaches' perspective. Informal learning has continued to occur beyond the residential camps and through a range of experiences and communication. One of the coachesexplained:

> The stuff I've learnt from other people has been a real eye opener and one of my goals was to spend time in other high performance environments so going along to [place] and spending time with the [sport] and really getting a feel for what goes on in their sport. (Marley - CoachInterview)

The growing strength of the CAP coaches as a community characterised by the diversity, trust and learning networks described above, is in the view of one of the HPCCs, evident in the changes seen with coaches using the programme, including a mutual language and understanding ofcoaching:

> Well you observe the changes in the people, they start using different language. The biggest thing is that they start to be able to articulate what they are doing better and it has a better train of thought attached to it. So that it's uncovering layers and then they start to make clearer decisions off that, whereas before they were making clearer decisions but then they couldn't figure out why it had gone wrong so quickly. ...Whereas up till then everything has been very pragmatic, very rote, that's how I've done it before or I've experienced it from somebody else before. (Kai – HPCC Interview)

Structure and support for the culture and community

In relation to structure, opportunity and support for the culture and community, residential camps, mentors and the programme manager are identified as all highly influential to the programme's success. However, it is also evident that though the time together is invaluable, that in their individual coaching environments, finding time and space to learn and develop is difficult. The transfer of learning into the actual setting is also challenging. Coaches and athletes have acknowledged that this needs to be approached with some caution in order to avoid perceptions of too dramatic and/or too many changes in coaching approaches, relations and/or expectations.

Residential Camps

The purpose of the camps is to gain information and learnings that can be applied. The CAP manager uses the intake community to promote shared learning, and brings in individuals with specialist knowledge and experience in certain areas. From participant observation, the topics covered have focused on pedagogy (coaching and learning) and leadership, with little or no emphasis on the more traditional sport sciences, nor sport specific techniques. At camps, where most were spent of which were held in a secluded setting, attention has variously been focused on communication, reflection, self-awareness, creating and selling a vision, leadership and relationship building. Activities such as visits to professional and organisational settings, expert guest workshops, and coaches' case study presentations have facilitated these foci. Commenting on the reflection as part of their learnings presented, one coach acknowledged:

> I haven't been fantastic on reflections in the last - forever really. But now I keep a much better diary of my reflections. My man management is fantastic

> with athletes, my man management with staff above me - my patience hasn't been all that flash, but some of the exposure I've had through Coach Accelerator has probably helped me develop a better working relationship. (Blare – Coach Interview)

As explained, in the initial camps for each cohort the CAP manager has explicitly focused on trust of/amongst the group, and highlighted the importance of learning together. Shared learning also features and is facilitated at camps through 'case study' activities. For each camp, coaches prepare a case study in the form of an actual scenario from their current coaching experience. This is presented as a story and then opened up for discussion with the other coaches. The shared reflection of events (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006) encompasses both pedagogical and managerial perspectives and centres on coaches' personal coaching environments. Douglas and Carless (2008) found that stories have been effective in stimulating interest and discussion among coaches, and provide a medium for engaging with questioning, summarising and ways of incorporating response styles into coaching experiences and development. These strengths have been evident in our observations, where first the coaches questioned the different scenarios for clarification and understanding, then summarised the major points of the stories, then related their own situations to incorporate the information from the case study. From observing the coaches' discourse and from ensuing evaluations of the camps, it is apparent that the case studies have been a powerful tool for coach learning. The challenge that coaches have faced to relate the scenario to their own context has prompted a deeper level of thinking and reflection (Cassidy, et. al., 2009; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006), and helped coaches to assimilate ideas about their own coaching.

> Every time we are going through a case study and presentation we're listening to it through our eyes and thinking about the coach with a case study and how it impacts our practice. So I think that's some of the really most useful pedagogy that we've been learning, … it's helped me make decisions. (Marley –Coach Interview)

The case studies have also again brought to the fore the value of the mix of contexts represented by the CAP coaches, with this serving to challenge and extend coaches' thinking about specific coaching issues or situations, and also, ways in which they might usefully extend their learningnetwork:

> The mix of people makes you realize that some of the challenges that you face are not individual to your scenario. Like that is just part of the beast so immediately that opens your mind to learning from others because you are just constantly reminded that … there's a [team name] coach with exactly the same problem as I do with athlete motivation. If I can speak to him about athlete motivation maybe I can speak to a math's teacher about periodised planning (Marley - Coach Interview)

Mentors

In the CAP each of the coaches has the opportunity to choose a mentor, with this relationship acknowledged as largely informal. Mentoring is an interesting term, as it signifies one who has more power than the other, helping someone else to learn (Eby, Rhodes & Allen, 2010). Lave and Wenger (1991) and others refer to mentors who can enable learning, as 'experts'. The CAP coaches have demonstrated that their 'mentors' do not have to be 'experts', but rather, need to be people that they trust to help them in within a particular situation. The CAP Manager explained:

> We encourage all of them to have mentors and in fact the mentors are invited to contribute to when we do their IDP and some of them brought them along and some of them didn't. Some of them also have mentors that are outside of their sport … So each of them have got people that they use. It's not a formal arrangement, so there is not a requirement that they must meet regularly with that person and document it. It's on an 'as needs' basis because realistically they should have the support of … there's sort of several layers of the sport around them and the other layer of support that they do have and I think what has been a feature of the programme is each other, and in fact in one of the other groups, one of the coaches revealed that he was struggling with certain areas and two of the other coaches took it upon themselves to mentor him through that, and they are continuing to do that. (CAP Manager Interview)

In relation to the latter point, Cushion and Denstone (2011) advocate for mentors who are participants not 'knowledge givers', pointing to the social and cultural context as extremely important. Within each CAP intake, the social and cultural context has focused attention on trust and mutual respect. Hence, the mentor relationship is strong amongst the CAP coaches.

> I use [coach name], I've done a little bit with him and I say the way he doesn't come across like it but he is very….He's got a lot of empathy for his players and he's taught me how to listen and that's something that I really needed – to be able to listen first- before you act - and he uses examples with me all the time with players that he's got around selection time… dropping players … which is probably the worse job I reckon as far as being a coach and you know just the way you deal with that, the way you work with that. (Charlie - Coach Interview)

> Then there's the group, the big Coach Accelerator guys themselves. We are now at the stage we are emailing group emails a lot and there's always something that will come out of those. That group is really important. [Coach name] who I work with through the [CAP], he's another guy who is specifically helping me with being clear and strong. (Fenauge - Coach Interview).

Support staff

As some researchers have emphasised (see Culver & Trudel, 2006; Culver, et al., 2009) ongoing facilitation is a key to providing and maintaining social phenomena to enhance learning. In the CAP there are two major support staff for each coach, the CAP Manager and the HPCC assigned to the CAP coach. In the interview and participant observation data, it was evident that the role of the CAP Manager in facilitating and maintaining the community of trust and its networks cannot be overstated. This is reflected in comments from one of the coaches:

> The biggest thing about a programme like this is generally the people and when you take away the leader of the people, it starts to break down. My biggest fear is that someone like [CAP Manager] is going to become sick of it and is going to move on. They [would be] taking away a leader of the programme who is being very innovative….One of the strengths that he has is the ability to bind the people together and create that environment … his ability to bind the group and facilitate the information and the information is huge. I think if you did a risk profile, the biggest risk would be losing the person who is leading the programme … Regardless of the people outside of the structures and processes, it is the people who make it work. (Mate - CoachInterview)

As part of the CAP structure to enhance learning, the HPCCs are formally assigned by HPSNZ to individual coaches and as explained above, their role centres on the IDPs and is to mentor coaches in the programme. The coaches comment on the value of the HPCCs being able to support not only their IDPs, but also their coaching more broadly, by giving feedback about their learning as it is applied to actual coaching:

> … there is a variety of stuff. We get a 360 review, I get feedback questionnaires that go out to my athletes about how we are functioning as a coaching team. Then feedback on how [HPCC name] observes so I bring him into camp environments… sometimes I just get him to observe in general, whatever feedback, sometimes he will structure the questions around the IDP… he sits down with us and [my sport] has a coach profile as well, so 360, feedback here, feedback here, just helping to collate it and question me about how I want to utilise it and what I am going to do with it. Then I go away and create a plan and come back and we debrief it and review it and how is it really going to work, and how I am going to use [HPCC name] to give me feedback and questioning. He also acts acts as a sounding board for what I do… (Mate - CoachInterview)

The HPCCs also find value in the role and relationship and see the change and learning that occurs with the CAPcoaches:

> … if you looked at [sport] for example, [High Performance Coach Manager's name] will have some input into the plan, the coach will have some input into the plan. I'll have some input into the plan and there will be some feedback assessment that has gone on through [CAP coach's name] programme. We are very careful not to load them up too much. So we tend to work on three things … within the feedback document and we're trying to align what the High Performance Manager is seeing with what is coming back in the feedback document with what I'm noticing as well, with what the coach might think is important. [CAP coach's name] for example completely prepared his own plan, came up with a different format in a different way and it looked like a really good plan. [CAP coach's name] needed a little bit more help, in terms of preparing it, not finding the meat to go in it or just in terms of setting up the document and figuring out when will you measure, how often will you measure, what will success look like? What are the actions going to be? How does that support which goal, which objective? And

> how does that feedback into the profile? (Robyn - HPCC Interview)

The significance of structures, resourcing, and individuals, has been very apparent in our data. In now turning to what we have identified as tensions, challenges and opportunities associated with the ongoing development of the CAP, it is evident that programmes such as the CAP need to encompass support for those in leadership and facilitation roles, and for their needs to be acknowledged amidst efforts to extend and strengthen a group such as this as a Community of Practice.

Issues arising: Tensions, challenges and opportunities amidst the ongoing development of the CAP

Relevance and meaning

In expanding and continuing the CAP, a key challenge is to ensure ongoing engagement in learning. As we discuss further below, it is this that is arguably key to the CAP achieving sustained impact. As all coaches will appreciate, time to devote to learning and to the CoP is a constant pressure. In this context, the CAP coaches are prepared to make clear judgement calls in regard to their participation in aspects of the programme. Reflecting on a session at one of the camps, a coach explained:

> I think some of the most relevant stuff that we do, is actually sitting around the table chewing the fat .... The lecture this morning, you know, full respect for what [the presenter's] talking about ... but I don't see relevance and so I had to leave. I've got a shit load of other stuff that I could be doing right now, I don't think that this is quite relevant to me at the moment. I suppose it's something I've learnt from the [coach accelerator] programme. In the past I would have sat here and just wasted an hour and a half of my life. (Charlie - Coach Interview)

As highlighted in preceding sections, personal meaning is a key to learning, and without perceived relevance of the information or practice, coaches will become disconnected (Mallett, et al., 2009). One coach found the case studies irrelevant and their sense of belonging was undermined because of this lack of meaning:

> I find it interesting hearing their perspective but I'm disconnected from it a lot of the time and I probably look like that half the time too. I think they look at me like is there like anything you've heard and I'm like "No. Not really." And they've got different interests, like at the end of the day they're used to card games and swearing and it's just different, it's just not in our environment, in my environment. They're just not things we do. (Andie - Coach Interview)

Linked to relevance and meaning is a concern for continuity in learning over the course of participation in the programme. Again, this is an issue that is important in considering maintenance and ongoing development of a CoP (Culver, et al., 2009).

> I'm not sure if I think there could potentially be some better techniques of harnessing all of the information that we receive in a short period of time during the camps, and whether that sort of follow up on some specifics. I feel that sometimes with different camps we've been exposed to things but haven't reaped the full reward specifically. We've kind of moved on to the next camp … There's been some continuity, but I think it's been possibly a little hap hazard … that environment, I think it would be really good to do some case studies on how we have applied some of the specifics of the course and going through that process would probably help us to realize how much of a positive impact the programme has had and it might also enhance it yeah, for the quality of the learning. (Marley - Coach Interview)

Continuity of learning beyond the duration of participation in the formal programme is also an issue that is acknowledged as well worthy of further exploration.

Network relations

As indicated, the networks associated with the CAP are diverse in membership and extensive in scope. Further, they are multi-faceted. Arguably one of the biggest threats for coaches in the CAP is that there is so much input going into their coaching. They have the formal elements of the CAP, HPCCs who are serving as mentors, High Performance Directors specific to their sport, their NSO, the media, Olympic Committees, personal coaches when athletes are in their home bases and more. One HPCC recognised the management of this as

being a challenge:

> ... I think if the coach is the centre of it. One of things to notice is that there can be a whole lot of inputs going into the coach and you've got to be mindful, so one of the coaches in [city name] had a significant mentor who he suggested, arranged, worked with himself and I worked with this coach for, 6 or 7 years, really quite strong positive relationship and I was happy for that to happen and did not need to have any interaction there at all because it was just another brick in the wall. (Nicky - HPCC Interview)

Meanwhile, for coaches continuing in the CAP there is a need for a flexible approach to programme management that enables learning opportunities and time-frames to be adapted to suit individual learning needs and coaching contexts. It is also important for further work to be directed towards shared visions and understandings amongst the various stakeholders in the programme and associated with any individual participating coach.

Change of structure

Programme structures are always susceptible to wider organisational changes. HPSNZ and Sport New Zealand (SNZ) have gone through a major restructure during the course of this research. HPSNZ became its own entity, with responsibility for and control of high performance sport. Amidst this change there was a review of CAP and personnel who for various reasons, moved on, including three HPCCs. Some CAP coaches were more affected than others and the restructure affected the CAP manager and the HPCCs, in that there were new policies, different time constraints and a considerable period of adjustment.

The future and sustainability

Any programme with a specified time period of funding is destined to generate questions about sustainability. The CAP represents a significant investment in the advancement of coaching in New Zealand, which is openly acknowledged and greatly appreciated by the coaches who have had the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the programme.

> .. I think the cool thing is we're not even half way through the [CAP] so we're sort of thinking if this is where we've got to after a year and a bit where are

> we all going to be after three years and we're already starting to talk after three years surely this can't just be it. What's next for us? I think without exception we'll keep in touch if there was going to be no formal structure for it, but we're talking about ways we can either wean ourselves off the [CAP] or continue together as a group in some other way because I think the philosophy of the [CAP] with ...different codes coming together is tremendous. (Fenauge - Coach Interview)

One of the major findings of Culver et al's (2009) research was that once the programme was completed and the facilitator moved on, the CoP was not able to sustain the ongoing learning, and the participants returned to previous ways of doing things. Though sustainability has not been determined with CAP (as only two groups have finished the formal programme thus far), it is a serious concern for many who are associated with the programme. The CAP Manager explained:

> I'd like to think that a lot of the changes that have occurred, the coaches see them as now embedded in their practice. So from that perspective I would imagine that they are sustainable over the long term, lasting changes over time that they have implemented as a result of the process that they've gone through ... that action learning cycle and that they're seeing the benefits of them so that they are getting reinforced for doing it that way, so they keep on doing it. (CAP Manager Interview)

Conclusion

This paper has reflected that to a great extent, the strength of the CAP as a programme that was intended to facilitate and support the ongoing professional development (through an athlete centred coaching approach (SPARC, 2006) and learning of coaches, lies in the community and culture that has been established to date. In pursuing this finding, we have found the concept of Community of Practice highly pertinent to engage with. Data has thus been analysed and reported using that lens, and we have thereby sought to gain depth of understanding of some of the subtleties and complexities associated with the learning relations and networks developed and emerging in the context of the CAP. We have highlighted that amidst an externally initiated and resourced programme, the community of coaches and support staff have developed an internal dynamic that has been key to extending learning amongst the

members. Repeatedly, trust and shared values and individual coaches' belief in the capacity of the programme and community to assist in advancing their coaching have come to the fore as critical features of the CAP. Further, all involved are acutely aware that the learning and learning relations achieved to date owe much to the skill and insight of the CAP manager and the collective input of all members of the community. The research has also identified notable challenges that need to be considered in order for the programme to achieve its aim of sustained influence on coaches as learners in high performance coaching contexts.

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Introduction

Thank you for taking time to read the JACC. In this issue, once again, we have a global representation of athlete centered coaching articles for you to read. We hope that you will gain a deeper understanding about the dedication and commitment of scholars in the field of sport coaching to the dynamic discipline of athlete centered coaching. Furthermore, we hope that you will join us in this movement that is designed to make athlete's experiences more meaningful, and positive social change possible through sport. We dedicate this issue to all of the coaches in the world who are making the athlete centered coaching paradigm the paradigm of choice for them.

Mark D. Mann, Ph.D. – JACC.

Shifting Perspectives: Transitioning from coach centred to athlete centred – Challenges faced by a coach and an athlete

Author 1 – Dr Jenny McMahon, University of Tasmania.
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Abstract

This paper outlines the voices of a practising coach and also athlete who reveal their experiences as they transitioned from the coach centred approach to the athlete centred approach within the Australian swimming culture. Using narrative accounts, their stories of experience are presented. While the benefits that the athlete centred approach to coaching can have for both athletes and coaches have been detailed in numerous research investigations, not as much has been done in relation to challenges faced by the coach and athlete as the transition occurs from coach centred to athlete centred. Inherent challenges in the transition phase from coach centred to athlete centred are important to understand in order to assist coaches and athletes when such a transition occurs. The athlete and coach in this study revealed a number of challenges. Firstly, the extent to which dominant cultural ideologies had permeated their thinking and doing was extensive even though both of them had self-- determined the transition. Other issues that arose included disciplinary power and a concern for the approach being untested in terms of competitive performance. From these findings, the authors make a number of suggestions to better support both athletes and coaches during the transition from coach to athletecentred.

Key Words: Coaching; athlete centred; transition; disciplinary power; athlete; coach

Introduction

Much has been written recently about the benefits that an athlete centred approach to coaching can have for both athletes and coaches (Kidman, 2005; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; McMahon, 2013).

These benefits range from ensuring the athlete has agency within the coaching process to enabling athlete learning and growing as a sentient being. From a coaching perspective, it enables the coach to work alongside an athlete, in a socially collaborative manner and more importantly in a humanistic way

(Penney & Kidman, 2014). While some challenges have been detailed by Hadfield (2005); Norton (2005) and Smith (2005) in relation to problems that may result from the athlete centred approach once it has been implemented, not as much has been done in relation to challenges faced by the coach and athlete as they transition from coach centred to athlete centred. Inherent challenges in the transition phase from coach centred to athlete centred are important to understand in order to assist coaches and athletes when such a transition occurs. This paper outlines the voices of a practising coach and also athlete whom reveal their experiences and the challenges they faced when transitioning from the coach centred approach to the athlete centred approach within the Australian swimming culture. It is the authors' intentions to firstly highlight the impetus that caused them to transition and second the challenges they faced as they transitioned from coach to athlete centred. From these findings, suggestions for future investigations may be drawn.

The athlete centred coaching approach is far from being a simple method (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010). It promotes a sense of belonging, as well as giving athletes a role in decision making and a shared approach to learning (Kidman, 2005). The athlete centred approach is about embracing a social constructivist approach by knowing that the athlete has a history -- psychologically, cognitively and physically, and being committed not only to trying to find out what that is, but also come to understand it and with that understanding, explore with the athlete how to best enable them to become self aware and independent, responsible for their own learning and performance (Penney & Kidman, 2014, p.3).

In contrast, the coach centred approach is described by Kidman (2005) as controlling "athlete behaviour not only throughout training and competition, but also beyond the sport setting. This kind of coach espouses all knowledge to the athletes and actually disempowers the athlete by taking total ownership" (p. 14). Further, Kidman (2005, p. 15) says that coach centred coaches "believe they are expected to win and that successful coaches are (and should be) hard - nosed and discipline orientated."

The coach and athlete at the centre of this investigation were both involved in the Australian swimming culture. In previous research conducted by McMahon and others (McMahon, 2010; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2011; McMahon, Penney & Dinan Thompson, 2012), it was revealed that the Australian

swimming culture was deeply entrenched with technocentric practices and coaches were typically coach centred in their approaches to coaching. Bain (1990) explains "that within such a technocentric ideology, people are viewed as human resources where attention is focused on the development of an increasingly effective and efficient means for achieving goals" (p. 29). As the technocentric ideology was widespread and deeply embedded in practices implemented by coaches and team managers at various levels, these practices were also normalised all in the name of performance. A surprising finding in this previous research was that the swimmers revealed that the technocentric practices that they were exposed to during their adolescence and while they were immersed in the Australian swimming culture were being recycled some 10-- 30 years later on as adults after they were no longer embedded in the culture. This reveals the extent to which these practices were deeply embodied. These findings resonate with Garrett's (2004, p. 140) notion that our "bodies are both inscribed with and are vehicles of culture." Hughes and Coakley (1991) discuss the often repressive systems of social control that occur in sporting cultures and how athletes are taught to uncritically accept what they are being told by their coaches. Athletes internalise these accepted norms and use them as a basis to assess themselves and others as 'real' athletes.

In other research conducted by Zehntner and McMahon (2013), it was revealed that within a mentee- - mentor coaching relationship in the coach education pathway of Australian swimming that disciplinary techniques occurred which in turn influenced the coaching practice, personal behaviours and beliefs of the mentee coach. The Australian swimming culture and its intermediaries encouraged conformity by mentee coaches (Zehntner & McMahon, 2013). As such, it is important to recognise, particularly in relation to this paper, how deeply entrenched cultural ideologies are within the Australian swimming culture, specifically technocracy and the coach centred approach (as detailed above). Further, there are disciplinary techniques that are at play for both coaches and athletes to ensure conformity to such ideologiesoccurs.

The athlete and coach who feature in this research take on the dual role of researchers and participants. McMahon (writing from an athlete perspective) was a five time Australian representative who had the same coach for 20 years, having taught her to swim at age three. Her coach over this 20 year period very much adopted the coach centred approach. It was much later in McMahon's sporting career when there was an impetus to seek out an alternative approach to

coaching. Inadvertently she chose a coach who utilised the athlete centred approach, as she felt this approach more conducive to her social and emotional wellbeing. This particular coach was not respected amongst other coaches, classified as 'having out there' approaches and often ostracised from the culture. Zehntner (writing from a coach perspective) is an established silver license swimming coach who has had experience coaching amateur through to elite athletes. Zehntner has been coaching for 22 years. Until recently, he utilised the coach centred approach. Both authors represent encounters within the Australian swimming culture, albeit from the perspective of one athlete and one coach. As such, it must be acknowledged that the findings of this research are confined to one swimmer and one coach who transitioned from the coach centred approach to the athlete centred approach and therefore are not representative of all swimmers or coaches who undergo this transition. Using narrative accounts, the authors (McMahon & Zehntner) present stories of experience in retrospect and also in the present day. Simplistically, narrative can be described as any written or verbal representation (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993). The narratives below are made up of written stories, poems and diary extracts and have been arranged into two sections to allow ease of readership. The first section is entitled 'impetus.' This is the time when the authors first realised that they no longer felt comfortable utilising or being a part of the coach centred approach. The two stories that are included were their experiences that brought about a change, a shift in perspective that enabled them both to transition to new ways of thinking and knowing – that being the athlete centred approach. The authors felt it was important to include the impetus to change to this paper to firstly highlight their intrinsic motivation to change and the internal battles they faced. The second section is entitled 'transitioning' and represents encounters that occurred to both McMahon (athlete) and Zehntner (coach) as they transitioned from the coach centred to the athlete centred approach. Some of the narrative accounts include inner thoughts and feelings. These inner thoughts and feelings provide personal insights as athlete and coach. By including these very personal insights, the authors hope that the readers are able to resonate or even confirm a verisimilitude with their stories as they attempt to immerse themselves in new ways of being – that of the athlete centred approach.

Impetus

Jenny (athlete perspective)

I achieved a lot as a swimmer; Australian representation, gold medals and records. However, never was I given the space to have a voice; make a decision or have input into my training or my body. Throughout my time with my coach, I was always told "if you do not want to listen to me; then go somewhere else." I saw others during this time who did find the courage to speak up, only to be berated in front of the rest of the squad. I feared speaking up; I feared voicing how my body was feeling. Most of all, I feared losing my coach as I truly believed that I could not possibly achieve success without him. I also loved him like a grandfather – he was special to me. As I approached adulthood, I found myself battling with my inner thoughts and feelings on what was best for my body. I found part of myself wanting to have input to my swimming and the other part so fearful of speaking up and the possibility of losing my coach or even worse failing. Below is an extract written from this conflicting time. The poem represents the precise time, when I realised that my own voice wanted to be heard. It was like my consciousness finally recognised the need for my own athlete voice to emerge. While I silenced it for the moment, it was shortly after when I realised that things needed to change.

I am not with you today…my swimmer body is here…but I am not. I wonder what you have planned…my body is ready…it is YOURS! I see the other swimmers… slim inphysique…

You smile approvingly; I don't get the same treat. My body fails MY expectations… YOURS as well… Holding me back from Olympic representation. Here I sit on the side of the pool…waiting…

Ready…for your master critique.

My body is yours…make it win.

I look up to you…following the rest…

I will do what you want…to be thebest.

I listen to HIM now not you…one of my voices say. The other conveys…this is not the way.

An internal battle of the voices transpires…momentarily… Before one says…If you fail…you willpay.

Olympic representation I want…he can give me… Not you I say as I will be history. The struggle continues…momentarily…
Listen to me…NO I say…the coach is the only way!
I ignore YOUR voice…and ready myself for his. He has produced champions in the past…beside me they sit…
Listening to his voice…IT is the key… Succeed I will…without you indeed. His way now…or fail indeed.

I surrender to his voice – coach knows best.

Coach: "If you are serious about making that Olympic team next year, you are going to have to lose weight. You are carrying too much weight."

Warmness is absent from his voice. It is déjà vu. I have heard these types of comments many times before from him and other coaches on the Australian swimming teams. I want to reply. I bite down on my tongue as I have learnt to silence my voice, because a reply is usually met with disapproval. I bite down hard but I cannot help myself.

Me: "What do you mean? I have been meeting with my dietician on a weekly basis for the past two months. We have made some real progress. I am losing weight each week." Coach: "You need to lose more weight if you are serious, you can't swim fast with the weight that you are carrying."

Me: "But, I have lost 6 kilograms."

Coach: "It needs to be more; you are carrying too much weight on your bum."

I try not to let his comments affect me. I have been swimming so strongly, so fast – my coach knows this. Even though I try to remind him, he refuses to listen. I try to focus on that rather than him feeling my bum is too fat to make the Olympic team. I start to question that my coach's comments might not be the only way, that my voice and opinions might be valid.
(McMahon, 2010; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2011)

Chris (coach perspective)

As a beginner coach, I hung on the words of my instructors and mentors within

the coach development pathway. I readily embraced the phrase 'record the recordable – control the controllable'. This phrase and the accompanying rhetoric insinuated that in order to achieve a high performance edge, my athletes, their training performance and their racing performance must be tightly controlled. This pseudo-- scientific approach was palatable to swimmers' parents and created a sense of importance among the swimmer athletes as they felt the value placed on their efforts by coaching staff. I found myself embracing the pseudo-- scientific approach, until one day – I had a revelation, a moment that made me reflect on my approach. I outline this moment below.

'Did you see this in the paper?' asked Michael, proffering the crumpled newsprint. 'Someone wrote in to letters to the editor about how you don't let your swimmers take toilet breaks during the session!' His tone was slightly accusatory and I felt a little defensive.

'What, really, they wrote that?' I asked, reaching for thepaper.

'Yes, apparently they overheard you saying it to someone during a session'

'Wow, listen to this' I exclaim, reading with a slight nasal tone. 'I was recently swimming laps at my local pool when I overheard the swimming coach say to his swimmers that they were not allowed a bathroom break. I am disgusted that this coach (who was dealing with some young children) would not let his swimmers take a break, is this child abuse?'

Shaking my head I quickly explain to Michael who is a past club president that I do allow toilet breaks, just never in the middle of a set. 'I expect them to commit to the session and once they start I expect they will finish what I've set. I live and breathe this stuff Michael, and I expect the same in return from my swimmers. This lady has obviously just heard a snippet and blown it out of proportion, she doesn't understand about commitment. There is no way I would let a swimmer weasel out of the hard stuff, I'm committed to them, I'll support them, besides if I let one of them go there will be a flood of full bladders. You can bet your last dollar the Kieren Perkins doesn't get out mid set!'

Michael nodding throughout my response approves with a curt 'Quite right too'.

I am secretly gutted by this accusation; I don't want to come over as a pushover to

my swimmers or to Michael for that matter. Who wants to be remembered as a soft coach? I secretly feel like I am pretending to be the 'hard liner' and it begins to dawn on me that I don't have the stomach for it (Zehntner and McMahon, Under Review).

This excerpt illustrates conflicted thinking surrounding athlete decision making and the degree to which I controlled the athlete training artefact. On the continuum that is my personal coaching philosophy I was yet to realise the benefits of athlete self-- determination as described Kidman and Hanrahan (2010). Unfortunately this approach also created an unbalanced meritocracy that differentiated swimmers, by placing value on performance without consideration of social and emotional development (McMahon, Penney & Dinan Thompson, 2012).

Chris (coach perspective)

[1] Kieren Perkins is a dual Olympic gold medallist and only the second Australian to defend an individual Olympic championship. He overcame adversity to succeed in one of the most gruelling races on the Olympic program, the 1500 metres freestyle (Gordon, n.d.).

This camp which I have been asked to be a part of will bring together coaches to work with the National Age Squad under the tutelage of the National Age-- group coach attendants. I am stoked to be here. I am determined to soak up as much information as possible and spend a lot of my time listening to the conversations of other coaches and watching their interactions with their swimmers and the head coach. This camp, we are told, is to help prepare swimmers and coaches for more advanced squads such as the National Open Squad. At various times throughout the three day camp, the coaches as a group were taken aside by the Head coach and his assistant for lectures and seminars. Towards the end of the camp, the coaches were called into a small room at the aquatic facility that we were using for training. What followed was initially a very informal talk about balancing work – life- coaching pressures and then progressed to a review of the expectations of a coach on the national open team.

Head coach: 'If you are selected as a coach on a national open team there will be a huge expectation that you will deliver quality results for your swimmers and the

team. As a part of the process of learning how things happen on the national team, you will be expected to defend your sessions to the other coaches in the team.'

Ok this makes sense, I talk about what I propose to do and the other coaches offer input on the options I have, win-win.

Head coach: 'It is not a very pleasant experience; however, all of us have had to go through this in our time.'

What? Suddenly I am not so sure of what is about tohappen.

The Head coach steps purposefully to front row of assembled coaches and glares over our heads towards a coach at the back of the group.

Head coach (in a gruff and snappy business like tone): 'As he is one of the more experienced coaches here I have decided to look at Aaron's work. Firstly, Aaron, could you tell us what you hope to achieve by doing hard fly workouts so soon after a big competition and so close our event?'

The room goes deathly quiet, I feel myself shrink into my chair, and I just know that this is not going to be nice. Aaron tries to stand but the packed nature of the room restricts him, he settles on a semi crouch at the front of his chair. Aaron (who is usually a confident and outspoken coach starts to respond with a detailed justification of the workout):

'I chose a hard fly set because I felt the swimmers in my lane needed …'

Head coach (interrupting): 'I am not sure that you were looking at the same swimmers that I was, they were struggling physically, their technique was poor, a poor choice.

Have you spoken to their home coaches? Have you determined from the swimmers their mental and physical state? Are you even looking at how they hold themselves in the water?'

Aaron: 'I thought that by reintroducing hard efforts, their bodies would not turn off and begin to relax …'

Head coach (interrupting): 'Turn off? Are you kidding? They will shut down … That is just ridiculous!'

Aaron: 'I do this in my home programme after some competitions …'

Head Coach (interrupting): 'I don't care about your home programme! You are dealing with other coaches' swimmers here. These kids are obviously not coping with what you are giving them. Can you see that?'

The questions were rhetorical as each of Aaron's responses no matter the validity was cut short or picked apart in an extremely aggressive tone by the head coach. Ten to fifteen minutes pass and the attack continues, I watched with mounting trepidation as Aaron's answers become weaker and less convincing, his face flushed with colour and his body language at first confident now clearly shows how uncomfortable he is. If he starts on me I am going to bolt out of here … Yeah but where does that leave you, idiot?… Better to face the music … What is the bloody point though? This is ridiculous! If I don't do it 'their' way all the time, I will be torn to shreds like Daniel. If I do I am fine. Even though I know 'their' way will avoid such a conflict encounter by the head coach of Australian swimming, some of their ways do not feel right. (Zehntner & McMahon, 2013)

Transition

The below stories are presented by the athlete (McMahon) and coach (Zehntner) as they transition from the coach centred approach to the athlete centred. Both authors indicate that these stories occurred within the first six months of transitioning from coach centred to athlete centred.

Jenny (athlete perspective)

It was shortly after this encounter when I started training with another coach, a coach who adopted an athlete centred approach. Some may say that is all I needed in my swimming career to develop into all that I could have been earlier, however this time was filled with mixed emotions and mixed experiences. I was constantly second guessing myself, second guessing my voice that not so long ago battled to keep suppressed. I truly believed that with my input into my training, that I would fail.

I sit down with my new coach to discuss my goals for the season. It is just him and me. He greets me as I walk into his office. I like that I don't have to share my goals with anybody else but him.

Coach: "Have you thought about what you think you might like to aim for this season?"

Me: "yeh, I have. I don't know if you are going to like it? I don't even know if it is achievable. It is kind of what I want to dothough."

Coach: "so, let me know what it is."

Me: "I am kind of sick of pool swimming. I just don't feel like I can achieve in the pool anymore. I know I probably can physically, but I just keep talking myself out of it mentally – you know?"

Coach: "so, what would you like to do?"

Me: "I want to give open water swimming a crack. I like swimming in the ocean and I know I have done lots of background miles in the past to provide a good foundation for me."

Coach: "so, have you looked at what events are coming up? And what distance in particular that you would like to do?"

Me: "The first race is not until April, which is 3 months from now. It is 2 kilometres. I don't think that I would like to go over 2 kilometres in distance."

Coach: "I agree with you that you have a good foundation to do this. I think that doing a race in 3 months is more than achievable. What do you think you need to be doing in your training to get you ready for this?"

I am panicked by this question. Like, I do have ideas about what I should be doing. But I am the athlete, not the coach. I don't want to say my ideas, because what happens if we do them and they don't work? I don't trust myself. As thoughts race through my head, I feel pressured to respond. But, I definitely don't trust my ideas enough to say them so I just shrug.

Coach: "That's ok. Let's meet every week and if you feel like we need to be doing anything extra, let me know. We can talk about them and adjust your training. I think that your mileage is good but we could focus on doing a little more distance at 15 beats below maximum heart rate. How does that sound to you?"

Me: "Cool."

I am glad I did not have to risk trying my ideas – don't want to fail.

Jenny (athlete perspective)

I am in the middle of the main set but my coach stops me. I get frustrated. I don't want him to stop me. I want to keep going. I don't want to miss any laps.

Coach: "How is your technique feeling right now?"

Me: "I don't know to tell you the truth – I wasn't really thinking about it."

Coach: "Ok, I want you to think about it over the next 400 and let me know how you feel?"

400 metres later the coach stops me again.

Coach: "So, how do you feel?"

Me: "Ok, I guess. I am not sure what you mean?"

Coach: "We are in the final kilometre of a 3 kilometre main set. You are starting to feel fatigued. How does your technique feel? How you are feeling now is how you will be feeling in a race so I want you to be able to counteract any things that you might do with your technique as you become fatigued."

Me: "Oh ok, well, I kind of feel like I am just sludging up and down the pool."
What they hell do I actually mean by sludging…I don't even know?

Me (again): "I suppose my body roll doesn't feel that even."

Coach: "what do you think you can do to get a more even body roll?"

Me: "Well, I suppose I can breathe to on both sides?"

Coach: "Great. Work on trying to breathe bilateral when you feel like that it will help you even out your roll on both sides."

I push off and start swimming again. I do what my coach has said….and breathe bilateral. Then I think about that conversation and I start to get worried. I realise that my coach did not actually tell me that I needed to concentrate more on my body roll, it was me. I am not sure if I even need to concentrate on it. I just tried to come up with something and that was the only thing I could think of. How do I know if it is right? Why can't he just tell me if that is what I need to do or if it is something else? I finish of the final part of the set and am not sure if my technique is actually feeling better. After I finish, my coach asks me again.

Coach: "So, how did it feel when you started breathing bilaterally?"

Me: "Good, I guess."

I get out of the pool, confused and worried. Why can't he just tell me what I am doing wrong – he is the expert after all. How will I ever achieve my goals if he doesn't tell me? Even though I purposely chose to swim with this coach because I knew he gave his swimmers more input, it is not as easy to do as I thought. I am constantly filled with self-- doubt and a fear of failing.

Chris (coach perspective)

I was determined that I no longer wanted to be a 'traffic cop coach' shouting instructions and constantly being the centre of attention. I wanted my swimmers to take more responsibility for their performance in the training session. At this particular training session we gained a new member. I asked one of the senior girls to help this chap get started.

The swimmers arrived sporadically to the aquatic centre and in a general way began to complete a short stretch and strengthening routine before assembling in

their bathers at the end of the pool. I talked briefly about the aim of the session and as the first swimmer dived in I walked around to the side of the pool to vie the session. At various times throughout the session I spoke with the group, but it was not until the end of the session when we did some race start practice that I interacted more closely with individual swimmers.

At the conclusion of the session as the swimmers were towelling off, I was approached by the mother of our new member, smiling I greeted her.

Point blank she asked how much the sessions were going to cost per week. I explained the breakdown according to the number of sessions a swimmer attended. She then asked;

Mother: "And what do we get for our twenty dollars a week? It looks like they (the swimmers) just do their own thing."

I was stunned and after a long pause just managed to mumble;

Me: "Well at the moment, I am the only practicing silver licence coach in this town, and we are reining state-- wide club champions." This felt very hollow as I said it and I knew it was unconvincing. She looked at me a little dubiously and asked how much attention I would give to her son's technique. I had recovered my shock at this stage and began to explain my philosophy in relation to giving the athletes more space to make decisions, but I could feel her disapproval and at the conclusion of the conversation knew I had not explained myself to her satisfaction.

I dwelt on this mother's comments for weeks and the incident still gives me a little anxiety years later as I wrestle with her simple question. Have I done a disservice giving greater choice, could they (my swimmers) have been better had I dominated decision making and not allowed them to opt in or out of a particular session? Was this my failing as a coach or something that I could be proud of?

Chris (coach perspective)

Working with adult swimmers has many challenges, including multiple strong personalities, well established patterns of movement and strong expectations of a

coach's role in their swimming experience.

Recently I was working with a small group of swimmers concentrating on body position and balance in the front crawl. Using an athlete centred approach, I was trying to focus the swimmers' attention on the feedback that they could get from their own body rather than rely on a third party (me) to tell them when it was right or wrong.

Me: "The aim of these activities", I explained "is to help us maintain a horizontal streamlined and balanced body position using our upper body and head rather than our leg kick"

As we progressed through each skill or drill, I could see one particular chap getting more and more frustrated. I sought his feedback regarding how his body felt in the water and what effect the activity was having on his leg position.

Swimmer: "I feel like a bloody idiot wallowing around like this, what's the bloody point! Can't you just tell me how to fix myfreestyle?"

Stumped, I explained how it would be more advantageous if he could develop an awareness of what his body was doing in the water and then he could self-- correct his stroke. Grumbling to himself he pushed off for the next lap, but as soon as he got to the other end of the pool he ducked under the lane rope and into the adjoining lane where a group was completing a set of short repeats in freestyle.

I was exasperated, yes I could have just said; press your head and chest deeper into the water, make sure your eyes are looking directly down. How many times am I going to have to say that though?

Why can't he feel what I want him to feel? Did I not describe the drill clearly enough?

Frustration and self-doubt creeps in as I realise my total failure to connect with this swimmer. I wonder secretly if the remaining swimmers are just humouring their beloved coach and really just want the token technical feedback that I have offered in the past. I know in my heart that it would be easier for me to offer the correction mid-- session, but time and time again I watch as the next 5 strokes alter, closer to a more proficient technique only to fade back to a more familiar pattern of

movement.

The club directive was for a greater focus on specific stroke correction instruction I say to the president as he comes up to me at the end of the session to discuss my new approaches.

Me: "well what I am doing is smart stroke correction! I need them to be patient, this is not something that can be fixed like that" I say, clicking my fingers.

I secretly hope I am not losing respect from the president and the swimmers with my new approach.

Discussion

Within the Australian swimming culture, the coach centred coaching approach was a deeply embedded practice where swimmers were viewed by coaches as instruments and object for manipulation (McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2008; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2011). The notion that the coach is the bearer of all knowledge in order to achieve success was a dominant ideology that permeated not only coaches' thinking but also athletes' thinking and provided the foundation of all overarching practices (McMahon, 2010). This was evident in McMahon and Zehntner's initial stories where they both continued to live and play out the culturally dominant norm (coach centred approach). Both participants after a 20 year period, had encounters which they identified as the impetus to transition from a coach centred approach to an athlete centred approach. It is important to acknowledge the extent to which culturally dominant ideologies such as the coach centred approach (accepted practice) continued to permeate their practice, behaviour, conversation and being as can be seen in the narrative accounts detailed by McMahon and Zehntner. Particularly as those who did not conform to the culturally accepted way of practice (coach centred) were disciplined (as mentioned by McMahon) or ostracised from the culture.

The second challenge that McMahon and Zehntner had to overcome was that they both had achieved competitive performance with the coach centred approach. Although their impetus for change was due to the coach centred approach 'not sitting right with them,' they both had doubts in regard to the new athlete centred approach as it was unfounded in terms of competitive performance and deviated from the cultural norm. McMahon embodied the notion that she could not be

successful without coach decision making. Even though she had committed to try the new athlete centred approach, she still displayed characteristics of a coach centred trained athlete.

Kidman and Davis (2006) say that a coach centred trained athlete would lack confidence and competence in regard to making any decisions and is dependent on the coach. Her uncertainty stemmed from her fear of failing and not trusting her own voice and opinions in regards to her training. Further, she felt her voice could not be a voice of authority that would achieve success. The deeply embedded ideology that the coach is the bearer of all knowledge in order to achieve competitive success was realised when analysing her inner dialogue.

I am panicked by this question. Like, I do have ideas about what I should be doing. But I am the athlete, not the coach. I don't want to say my ideas, because what happens if he does them and they don't work? I don't trust myself. As thoughts race in my head, I feel pressured to respond. But, I definitely don't trust my ideas enough to say them so I just shrug.

A third challenge that occurred specifically for Zehntner was the hierarchical power structures that existed for him as a coach in his employment situation; within a mentee-mentor relationship and within the culture. In Zehntner's narrative, the club president expressed his concerns on behalf of the club in regard to a lack of specific stroke technique directions. This in turn created doubt in relation to the approach as so many people were unhappy withit.

President: The club directive was for a greater focus on specific stroke correction instruction.

Chris:"They asked for stroke correction, well what I am doing is smart stroke correction. I need them to be patient, this is not something that can be fixed like that" I say, clicking my fingers.

I secretly hope I am not losing respect from the president and the swimmers with my new approach.

Even though Zehntner had explained his new way of doing things to the club president and committee which was in turn was communicated to the swimmers, the narrative reveals that the
swimmers struggled with the new approach, particularly in regard to the

questioning and self analysis of their own technique. They were more accustomed to listening to the coach's directives and the coach making the decisions. This is indicative of a coach centred athlete (Kidman & Davis, 2006).

Zehntner, as a mentee coach operated within a power relationship–that being the mentor-mentee coaching relationship and was expected to conform to a certain way of doing things by his mentors otherwise he could not progress along the coach education pathway of Australian swimming. Even though some practices did not 'feel right' for Zehntner, if he did not implement them he could experience disciplinary action, and place at jeopardy, his position within the hierarchy of the Australian swimming culture. The narrative revealed that the mentee–mentor relationship that the head coach, Daniel and Zehntner became engaged in could be viewed as a site where disciplinary actions were taken out. Even though Zehntner's interactions with the head coach were brief but intense, they housed most of the rich experiential learning that in turn informed his coaching practice. The sport's governing body as a collective of practitioners, subscribe to a set of attitudes and behaviours that are key indicators of coaching ability.

Conclusion

The athlete and coach in this study revealed how during the transition from the coach centred to the athlete centred approach that a number of challenges occurred. Firstly, the extent to which dominant cultural ideologies had permeated their thinking and doing was extensive even though both of them had self-- determined the transition from the coach to the athlete centred approach.
Other issues that arose included the disciplinary power which occurred for Zehntner as a mentee coach within a mentor-mentee coaching relationship. Even though the impetus was there to adopt the athlete centred approach, mentors (senior coaches) expected him as a mentee (junior coaches) to conform to their way of doing things which has been found in previous research to be technocentric and coach centred (McMahon, 2010; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2011; McMahon, Penney & Dinan Thompson, 2012; Zehntner & McMahon, 2013). Disciplinary issues in Zehntner's place of employment arose when a number of swimmers did not respond in a positive way to the athlete centred way of doing things. While the workplace as a site of disciplinary power is a difficult obstacle to overcome, dominant cultural ideologies may be somewhat easier to address. A small scale research project conducted by Mcmahon (2013) with ten Australian swimming coaches investigated the use of narrative, where coaches were able to

engage with swimmers' lived experiences. These lived experiences in particular were events that actually occurred to the swimmers during their involvement in the Australian swimming culture. Coaches were presented with a number of swimmers' stories. These stories initiated self reflection for the coaches to occur. They were an educational tool that was effective in providing coaches with space to cast the beam of consciousness over their own practice. As a consequence, self reflection was initiated, as was empathy and more of a holistic and athlete centred approach to coaching. While this research conducted by McMahon, 2013 was only done with a small number of coaches, the findings are promising particularly in relation to moving coaches beyond dominant ideologies and practices to a more holistic, empathetic, athlete centred way of practice. Further research could be conducted using McMahon's (2013) approach and applying it to coaches and athletes as they transition from the coach centred approach to the athlete centred approach, to see (if at all) how it might assist them. While McMahon's study (2013) was conducted with coaches, the same approach could be applied to swimmers, where they could engage with other swimmers' stories who have transitioned from the coach centred approach to the athlete centred approach. Athletes engaging with other athletes' narratives may offer some space for them to resonate and understand the obstacles others faced as they transitioned from coach to athlete centred. This could also be another avenue for future research could better support athletes as they transition from coach to athlete centred.

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The Coaching Process as Sensemaking

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Introduction

The last decade has seen the concept of 'player' or 'athlete centered coaching' firmly established in the coaches' lexicon amongst both practitioners (Sport New Zealand; International Rugby Board) and academics (de Souza and Oslin, 2008; Kidman, 2005; Kidman and Lombardo, 2010). Therefore, as an academic, I was delighted that in the first edition of the Journal for Athlete Centered Coaching, Lynn Kidman and Dawn Penney recognized the need to ignite some scholarly discussion surrounding athlete centered coaching, and in doing so explore the meanings, values and practices of this coaching approach. I certainly concur with Kidman and Penney (2014) that in attempts to operationalize what athlete-centered coaching may look like for the practicing coach, "there are dangers that the significance of underpinning values may become lost amidst somewhat functional ways of thinking about Athlete Centered Coaching" (Kidman and Penney, 2014, p. 2). Therefore, in response to the call to arms to "re-think and extend the meanings of athlete centered coaching" (Kidman and Penney, 2014, p.2), I present my commentary to extend our understanding of athlete centered coaching through the application of sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

The Coaching Process as Sensemaking

Sensemaking is a process of social construction whereby as people negotiate their lives and confront events and endeavor to interpret and explain salient cues based on their experience (Weick, 1995). As people make sense of their experiences, they give meaning to them and this guides future behaviour (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995). Consequently, Weick (2009) postulates that there are a number of intermingling 'sensitizing concepts' underpinning the process of 'making sense'. In applying sensemaking to the coaching process, as athletes (and coaches) come together and collectively experience events, when they act based on

their pre-defined socially constructed beliefs [identity] and generate tangible outcomes [cues]. Athletes use these cues to review and discover what is occurring, construct credible explanations of their experience (e.g., rationales for coach behavior and decisions), whilst further constructing and re-constructing their own identity through the process.

A sensemaking understanding of the coaching process celebrates the agency of athletes in constructing the meaning of their experience (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Human agency is the capacity for people to make choices, and in particular refers to both the creativity and the motivation that drives individuals to break away from scripted patterns of behaviour (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). As Weick (1995, p. 8) argues "sensemaking is about authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery". The applicability of sensemaking to athlete centered coaching lies in the central agency given to those within the social network to be the author of their future. This central agency can both be a concern for the athlete centered coach and an outcome for those practicing it's philosophies (Kidman, 2005). These processes are depicted in the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy whereby "believing is seeing" (Weick, 2009, p. 14). For the athlete, an awareness (conscious or subconscious) of their agency and role as author (or personal authority) is likely to capitalize on their self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 1985) and lead to self-actualization (Maslow, 1968). This process further supports the empowerment drive and humanistic beliefs associated with athlete centered coaching.

Despite sensemaking's central role in constructing experience and behaviour, it is apparent that as sensemaking can be a subtle, socially located process and easily taken for granted, "the transient nature of sensemaking belies its central role in cultivating meaning and determining human behaviour (Weick et al., 2005). However, if coaches identify themselves as athlete centered, and consider athletes' needs as paramount, sensemaking (despite its subtlety) offers not only a framework for coaches to breakdown the complexities of the athlete experience from a point of praxis, but also a framework to enact Kidman and Penney's (2014) understanding of athlete centered coaching.

The Athlete Centered Coach and 'Sensible Environments'

'Sensible environments' are shaped by identifying and understanding sense-giving triggers, enabling the act of sense giving by leaders and members (Maitlis and

Lawrence, 2007) and the socially discursive and educative practices in negotiating and cultivating meaning (Lesser and Storck, 2001; Sonenshein, 2007; Wood and Bandura, 1989). All of these constructions become important when we consider the position of the coach, who Goosby-Smith (2009) cites as a sense maker and sense giver. For athlete centered coaching, there are two relevant applications for sensemaking I would like to raise in this short commentary; sensemaking as a form of self-awareness and 'leading by compass not map'.

Sensemaking and Self Awareness

It is important to note that for the athlete centered coach there are two layers of sensemaking that one needs to be cognizant of; sensemaking of the athletes and their response to coaching, as well as that of the coach as a consequence of his or her experience. As Kidman and Penney (2014) stipulate, "The essence of athlete centered is awareness, it is about athletes becoming aware of themselves, and coaches becoming aware of themselves so they can help athletes" (p. 3). A product of 'sensible experiences' for both athlete and coach is a heightened sense of cognition in order to interpret experience, from which facilitate a state of self-awareness. For the coach, it could be argued that the very acknowledgment and awareness of the presence of sensemaking in the coaching process will enable the coach to enact the underpinning values of athlete centered coaching. For example, coaches need an awareness of athletes and the coaches' socially constructed histories (Kidman & Penney, 2014), the agency of athletes and a need for decentralizing of power (Kidman, 2005) and the role of environmental cues and therefore the significance of coaching behaviors (good and bad) in athletes making sense and constructing meaning (Jones and Wallace, 2005). If athlete centered coaching is to offer a "change in coaching focus that empowers athletes towards discovery based learning" and ultimately ownership of their sporting experience (Kidman and Penney, 2014), then a coach needs be able to offer what Weick (1995) terms as 'sensible environments' (with sensemaking emphasis at the fore).

'Leading by compass not map'

One particular salient leadership approach relevant to athlete centered coaching that has a powerful 'sensitizing effect' on the social landscape is that of relinquishing power and authority by acknowledging "I don't know" (Weick, 2009, p. 263). This notion shares considerable similarity with the underpinning of athlete centered coaching, namely an emphasis on promoting athlete awareness,

independence and responsibility for learning and performance (Kidman, 2005; Kidman and Lombardo, 2010; Kidman and Penney, 2014). Weick (2009, p. 265) argues, "People who act this way help others make sense of what they are facing." Sensemaking is not about rules, and options and decisions. Sensemaking does not presume that there are generic right answers about things like taking risk or following rules. Instead, sensemaking is about how to stay in touch with context… The effective leader is someone who searches for the better questions, accepts inexperience, stays in motion, channels decisions to those with the best knowledge of the matter at hand, crafts good stories, is obsessed with updating, encourages improvisation, and is deeply aware of personalignorance.

Weick (2009, p. 264) uses the metaphor of "navigating by means of a compass rather than a map" to describe these leadership practices that create sensible environments. He argues that whilst maps may be the basis of performance but in an equivocal, unknowable world, the compass is the basis of learning and renewal. He states:

"It is less crucial that people have a specific destination, and more crucial for purposes of sensemaking that they have the capability to act their way into an understanding of where they are, who they are, and what they are doing."

In a partially charted world, if coaches admit that they don't know, then athlete and coach are more likely to mobilize resources for meaningful mutual direction (Weick, 2009), namely learning. The coach who can lead with a compass invariably will be able to cater to individuality when working with athletes (Kidman and Penney, 2014), the variance of their needs and rates ofdevelopment.

Conclusion

I aimed to present a case that if we are to stay true to the underpinnings discussed by Kidman and Penney (2014), applying the notion of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) to our understanding of the athlete and coach experience, may shed new light in our journey towards a clearer understanding of athlete centered coaching approaches so that we can effectively understand the athlete and their individual needs.

The concept of sensemaking offers a medium to re-connect philosophically and practically with the underpinning values of athlete-centered coaching, and in doing

so commits to both the notion of 'athletes' voice' (Kidman and Penney, 2014, p. 2) and gives agency to the athlete as author of both their experience and future. The acknowledgement of the world as unknowable and unpredictable, and the place of sensemaking amongst the milieu re-acknowledges athlete centered coaching as not "an approach with a magic formula" (Kidman and Penney, 2014, p. 3) but rooted in complexity. A sensemaking perspective further grounds athlete centered coaching as a non-linear pedagogy, and helps to ensure that practice does not become reduced to a set of functions or tools.

I hope this short commentary offers a fresh and alternative response to Kidman and Penney's (2014) call for discourse to reflect upon present understandings of athlete centered coaching practice and in turn may generate some discourse of its own. To the practitioners I hope this paper presents some thought provoking concepts to help understand athlete centered coaching. To academics I hope sensemaking may offer new perspective through which to investigate phenomena connected to athlete centered coaching, to further explore ways athlete centered coaching is interpreted and enacted (Kidman and Penney, 2014).

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Developing a Coaching Philosophy: Exploring the Experiences of Novice Sport Coaching Students

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Abstract

Sport coaches play an essential role in developing positive and engaging sport climates and coach educators have identified that a strong coaching philosophy is a central factor in the provision of these positive experiences. A coach's philosophy is composed of their values and beliefs and is influenced by their life experiences and background. This study explored the coaching philosophies of 1st year sport coaching degree students in order to establish; their understanding of the concept of philosophy, the primary values and beliefs expressed, and the origins of these beliefs. The written coaching philosophy statements of 77 sport coaching students, submitted during their first semester were examined. Inductive content analysis generated several key areas to which students tended to refer; Defining Success, Encouraging Fun, Building Character, and Origin of Beliefs. Consistent with previous research on novice coaches, it was noted that participants appeared to struggle to articulate the precise nature of their philosophy and in particular, how it would translate into action. Developing coach education systems which encourage deep reflection and critical analysis of coaching philosophies is imperative for inclusive and effective sportprovision.

Introduction

Sport coaching has been the focus of increasing academic interest (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2008), particularly in the areas of coach behaviour and its impact on athletes, development of knowledge and expertise, mentoring, experiential learning, and reflection (Gilbert and Trudel, 2004). Yet paradoxically, despite the fundamental relationship that exists between coach behaviour and coaching philosophies (Jenkins, 2010), the latter have been relatively unexplored. This lack of attention to the development and articulation of coaching philosophies is particularly surprising given the pervasiveness of personal reflective exercises and resources in coach education courses; activities intended to develop precisely these philosophies. Indeed, most of the work purporting to explore philosophies originates from anecdotal accounts, often drawn from media interviews or the autobiographies of high performance coaches .This study presents an analysis of the coaching philosophies of novice sport coaches studying for a sport coaching degree at a university in the United Kingdom (U.K.). Using written statements submitted by students near the beginning of their course, the paper seeks to explore both the content and the perceived origins of their coaching approach. The results focus primarily on elements relating to the principal purpose for coaching and to the relative influences of previous sport experience, significant others, and self-- reflection. This paper is underpinned by the necessity to develop deeper understanding of coaches' philosophies, with the ultimate aim of facilitating the development of more effective athlete-- centred coaching through improved coach education.

Background and context

The concept of a coaching philosophy has been defined most frequently as linked to the importance of values (Cross and Lyle, 1999). A particular coach's philosophy can therefore be considered as comprising their beliefs regarding the role, purpose, and approach to the coaching act. Lyle (2002) suggests that a coach's set of values provides context for behaviour and a conceptual framework through which experiences are evaluated and ranked. He proposes that these personal values are more deeply embedded than beliefs and remain relatively stable over time. In his work on the constructs of beliefs, values, and principles, Rokeach (1973) describes a useful framework for analysis. He categorises values as "prescriptive or proscriptive" beliefs, which identify one mode of conduct (instrumental value) or resultant end-- state (terminal value) as being preferable to others. From Rokeach's study on American societal values, examples of instrumental values included ambitious, courageous, honest, and responsible, while terminal values included such concepts as freedom, happiness, and self-respect.

Applying this to a coaching context then, it could be assumed that elements such as being reliable, kind, organised, or strict could be considered to be instrumental values, while end-- state, or terminal values could include for example equality, respect or self-- determination. Coaching practice is therefore assumed to be a reflection of the core values held by each individual coach, which can be expressed in a set of guiding principles, or a coaching philosophy. This interpretation however is less simplistic in practice for a number of reasons. While coaches may state a certain set of core values, their behaviour may not always match this. Firstly, a lack of effective self-- reflection may result in the coach being unaware of any incongruence between their alleged values and their actual behaviour. Alternatively, the coach may deliberately misrepresent their value system, in order to either present a more socially desirable front, or to conform to specific organisational value systems.

Identifying one's coaching philosophy is a complex task and can be easily confused with possessing a philosophy about a certain sport, which in reality merely amounts to technical/tactical knowledge or models. Rather than a more holistic set of values regarding practice in general, technical/tactical models are likely to be a set of beliefs about the ways to approach preparation, game strategies, or desirable performer qualities. In order to develop an awareness and reach a genuine understanding of one's philosophy, suggests that in-depth self-reflection and

potentially the use of critical incidents from practice are crucial.

Although identifying a distinctive coaching philosophy is by no means a simple task, it should not be avoided. Examining one's coaching philosophy helps to ensure practice is consistent and not reactive, and also that power in the athlete-- coach relationship is not misused. The development of an appropriate philosophy has been touted as being key to successful coaching and positive sport experiences by a number of authors (Martens, 2004), and Cassidy, Jones and Potrac (2008) state that being able to articulate a philosophy is a prerequisite to good practice as a coach. Coaches can be highly influential socialising agents, particularly for young athletes, and an appropriate philosophy plays a role in helping participants to develop life skills. (Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2012)

As discussed however, problems may arise when claimed philosophies are actually actioned, or not as is more likely. Coaches will often feel at ease writing descriptions of their values and approach but find it difficult to articulate how these aims are actually implemented (McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000). The constraints and contextual pressures of real-- world coaching are often ignored when describing philosophies and in practice, the coach is likely to revert to comfortable and familiar territory, rather than critical self-- awareness. This is epitomised by Stewart (1993) when coaches are described as "talking" rather than walking" their philosophy. For a philosophy to be functional then, it needs to take account the constraints of real-- life practice and be specific enough to influence behaviour. This requires an in-- depth engagement with the process, rather than the production of a list of meaningless, generic statements.

The literature explicitly exploring philosophy has been somewhat divided on coaches' abilities to articulate their philosophy. In their series of studies designed to examine the means by which high school coaches teach life skills and build character in their players, Collins et al. (2009) uncovered an unanticipated volume of data on the importance of the coaches' philosophical beliefs. The ability of these coaches to discuss their philosophies at length could be attributed to their level of expertise, as they were considered to be highly experienced and successful in their fields. In contrast, Nash, Sproule and Horton (2008) examined the philosophies and beliefs of sport coaches across a range of experience from novice level to expert. One of their findings was that early-- career coaches tended to focus on more practical aspects such as safety and discipline predominately and seemed to struggle to define the enormity of the coaching role. They also tended to attribute

their approach and values to personal experience gained as athletes or to rely on their own previous coaches' philosophies. The means by which coaches learn their craft has been the subject of considerable attention and has resulted in a body of work too broad to explore in any great depth here. The consensus from this work however is that experience and observation of peers remain the primary sources of knowledge for coaches (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003). Nash et al. also suggest that novice coaches tend to focus on sport-- specific skills and content, rather than more general values. This is reminiscent of Lyle's assertion that, when asked to discuss their philosophy, many coaches will tend to confuse a particular and sport specific approach to training and match-- play with a deeper, more value-- based analysis of their principles.

The suggestion that less experienced coaches found the articulation of a philosophy difficult was challenged however by Collins' et al. (2011), who concluded that pre-- service coaches in their study appeared to have reasonably clear ideas of their philosophies. The authors concluded that despite, their lack of coach education or experience, the participants already held strong beliefs regarding the purpose and process of coaching. They did feel however that, while the coaches could express their philosophy, they were less sure of the process of implementation. This sentiment is echoed in McCallister's et al. (2000) work with youth baseball and softball coaches, who also seemed to demonstrate difficulties in expressing the means by which they actually implemented their philosophies and in fact had produced accounts of behaviour which was directly contradictory to their supposed beliefs. For example, while the coaches stressed that they did not emphasise the importance of winning, team meetings were reportedly only held after a loss. While the coaches suggested this was for the purpose of reassuring participants, one coach was quoted as saying, "they need to know what they did wrong so they won't make the same mistake again"(p41).

With regards to the actual content of coach philosophies, the interplay between coaching objectives (e.g. fun versus success) and the beliefs which underlie the desire to achieve these objectives are a common focus (Collins et al., 2009). Despite some suggestion that an emphasis on winning and competitive success is prevalent (and potentially damaging in youth sport) (Marten, 2004), empirical evidence from the limited studies available implies the issue is rather more complex. Personal, social, and emotional development of players has been highlighted by coaches as a prime objective, as opposed to winning games and competitions (Bennie and O'Connor, 2010; Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2012; Collins et al., 2009). For

example, the high school coaches in Collins et al. (2009) study emphasised the importance of player development; socially, psychologically, and academically, rather than just physically, and the development of key life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and a good work ethic, off and on the field were considered to be a core element in their philosophies. Wilcox and Trudel (1998) pose an interesting conclusion in their investigation of the philosophy of a youth ice hockey coach, suggesting that their participant was able to balance the achievement of both winning games, and focusing on the development of social and emotional skill. These examples could of course be reminiscent of Lyle (2002)'s assertion that coaches may misrepresent their values in favour of those deemed more socially acceptable. Nonetheless, it would appear that the construction of beliefs and values in coaching, particularly around the issue of competition versus fun, may be more complex than previously thought.

Procedures

This study is part of a wider research project following the development of student coaches' philosophies in Higher Education. Students on a sport coaching degree at a U.K. university submitted written coaching philosophies as part of a first year, first trimester coaching practice module. Following ethical approval from the author's institution, the students were informed of the research focus and purpose during a lead lecture. Interested parties were given an information sheet with further details and a consent form, which would allow their assessments to be accessed by the researcher after the conclusion of the module. It was stressed both in person and on the participant information sheets that the analysis would in no way influence their performance in the module, nor any future module within their programme, that participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any point in the study. 77 students subsequently granted permission for their statements to be used.

The written statements contained descriptions of how the students viewed their current approach to coaching; the underpinning values, primary influences, and an attempted concretisation of their perception of their current philosophy. Using an inductive, qualitative approach, the documents were read and reread to enable familiarisation with the data, and recurring themes and sub-- themes were established and coded using NVivo software (Patton, 2002).

While it is acknowledged that students in the study described in this paper may

have been subject to either social desirability bias or an inadequate level of reflection, the results are viewed nonetheless as a useful starting point for the exploration of the development of coaching philosophies.

Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the written statements generated a large volume of data and while there were a number of emergent themes, this paper considers the interplay between coaching objectives, sub-- themed as defining success, building character, and encouraging fun, and the perceived origin of these beliefs.

Purpose of coaching

Previous literature (Bennie and O'Connor, 2010; Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2012; Collins et al., 2009; McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000) has challenged the notion that coaches are predominantly concerned with winning. Rather, it has been suggested that the coach's focus is more complex and often depends upon the context. These findings were replicated within the novice coaches' statements. While students considered encouraging achievement to be a main focus of their philosophy and purpose for coaching, most used terms such as "fulfilling potential" or "being challenged", indicating a reference to personal development, rather than winning. There were still a number of students however who were more forceful in their language in referring directly to competitive success.

Defining success

"The main idea of sport is based on pushing the limits and being better than ever before. For me athletes should be prepared and are expected to make sacrifices for their team or sport, athletes should strive to be the best that they can be in and outside their sport, and finally participants should strive forward in their pursuits and except [sic] no limits in sport."

This is a particularly provocative quote as it seems to replicate almost verbatim the language describing the norms of the sport ethic; the expectation that athletes should push beyond normative boundaries to achieve an athletic identity. Over-- conformity to the sport ethic was proposed by Hughes and Coakley (1991) as an explanation for deviant behaviour e.g. use of performance enhancing drugs, eating disorders, in athletes. The sport ethic encapsulates four key elements thought to be essential in the achievement of the status of "true" athlete: being an

athlete involves making sacrifices for The Game, being an athlete involves striving for distinction, being an athlete involves accepting risk and playing through pain, and being an athlete involves refusing to accept limits in the pursuit of possibility. These norms are thought to become internalised by fans, journalists, coaches, and sponsors, becoming an accepted and indeed expected standard of behaviour for athletes. It is clear from the excerpt that this discourse has been incorporated into the philosophy of this particular novice coach, which is perhaps a little troubling, considering the potential implications. While these elements may appear valid and necessary tenets for athletic success, some participants will "over-- conform", pushing them to; play through pain to the point of permanent damage, over-- train, engage in disordered eating or performance enhancing drugs, or perhaps participate in cheating, all in the effort to fulfil what they perceive to be the requirements for athletic identity. As discussed previously, a coach can have a considerable influence upon their participants and the potential for transmission of harmful discourse is high. Rynne and Mallett (2014) utilise the analogy of "bashing a bag of eggs against a wall", where only a few will eventually remain intact, to represent the process of elite sport development and the tendency to opt for short-- term gains, which could potentially risk the future career of their athlete (and indeed, their own).

The tendency for sport to reproduce discourse emphasising high performance, oppressive coach-- athlete relationships, and elitism (Fernández-- Balboa and Muros, 2006; Light and Evans, 2011;
Sparkes, Partington and Brown, 2007) was not the most dominant theme emerging from the coach philosophies but there were certainly several references to the ideologies of achievement and autocratic practice.

"Beginners in the sport want to have fun and enjoy themselves, however when you progress in your sport it is not only about having fun but also about winning and in order to win you must work hard. "

"I think it is important for players to be of a competitive nature and to strive and push themselves to the best of their capabilities, no matterwhat."
The emphasis on competitive success in modern sport is now so deeply ingrained it is little wonder the novice coaches should demonstrate at least some trace of the desire to win within their philosophies. Watson and White (2007) highlight the prevalence of the "win at all costs" message in sport media and advertising, citing examples such as; "you don't win silver, you lose gold", "you are nothing until you

are number one", and second place is the first loser" (p64). The persuasive power of this discourse contributes towards the current, dominant, western sport culture; one which Watson and White (2007) propose is characterised by a willingness to; mistreat opponents through acts of violence and aggression, use performance enhancing drugs, overtraining, or disordered eating, and engage in the practice of deceiving officials or manipulating rules for personal or team gain. Although student coaches will be exposed to many conflicting discourses concerning the values inherent in sport, for example from education, peers, and organisations, overcoming the omnipotence of the "win at all costs" discourse would seem to be a major challenge for coacheducation.

Other novices however conceded that, while winning may be important, they were less concerned with the outcome of matches or games and more interested in their athletes' personal development.

"I consider the results or outcome of a tournament or competition to be less important than increasing the athletes [sic] knowledge of the sport and developing on their performance.

Educating the athletes is extremely more significant than the results of a match. I need to focus on how the athletes perform the skill and making sure they have a clear understanding of exactly how to execute it"

"I see success in many ways winning a league, not getting relegated, reaching a cup final. My ultimate goal is getting the best out of my team. All I ask is my team play to their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses. This will include both training sessions and competitive matches. Success is also measured by respecting rules from the manager, coach and referee. If we lose a game but have respected the rules, the other team, and played the style I want them to play as a team. If we have set out a goal for a certain game and we achieve this, or I ask for them to improve on certain aspects which we were poor from the previous game, I consider these all successes. If we win the game, then that's an addedbonus."

The reluctance to emphasize competitive success as a component of these philosophies may be a genuine reflection of the coaches' value systems, but it is also possible that these statements embody the rhetoric described by Lyle (2002), suggesting that they become merely a list of ideological statements, which would not be enacted in practice. This could be due to an inability to reflect in enough depth to ensure there is no incongruence between "talking" and "walking" the philosophy (Stewart, 1993), or a desire to deliberately misrepresent their approach

to; present a more socially desirable front, to fulfil what they believe to be the expectations of the module marker, or to conform with a specific organization's set of values. Several of the quotes above also demonstrate incongruences in the coaches' philosophies, as they perceived it, similar to those described by McCallister, Blinde and Weiss (2000). For example, the last quote emphasizes a strong player development theme but, when giving examples of success, mentions winning a league or avoiding relegation; both very outcome focused objectives.

Building character

The assertion by Collins et al. (2009) that their high school football coaches were more concerned with the social, psychological, and academic development of players than competitive success appears to be substantiated by the novice coaches in this study. At this early stage in their development however, it is possible that they have not yet considered the actual implementation in practice of this form of development (Collins et al., 2011; McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000) or indeed whether the constraints of real world will allow it (Stewart, 1993).

"As a coach, I want the best for my athletes. I feel that coaching is as much to do with building character and developing life skills, as winning. Through coaching I aim to inspire my athletes to be the best they can be not only in their chosen sport but life in general. I believe that through participation in sport you learn how to socialize with your peers and adults, what the qualities of a good leader are and develop the qualities required for good decision making and accepting responsibility, which are all important parts of an adults' day to day life."

"This means that our role as the coach is to, teach and educate through sport. We must help our athletes not only develop the skills and techniques they need to perform at the highest level their ability allows. We must also coach them in becoming better people"

The assertion that sport participation can produce positive developmental effects in young people is common in literature but some aspects of the coach's role in facilitating these life skills is less well known (Collins et al., 2009). Gould et al. (2007) clarify this by positing that, while much research has examined, for example, the effect of coaches' relationship skills upon psychosocial development, and the teaching of mental skills to young athletes, the elements which are less clear are whether these life skills transfer beyond sport and how these skills were actually

taught. Indeed, several authors have attempted to explore the mechanisms by which coaches transmit these skills but found that, while the coaches are able to identify certain values as being important, they are less certain or of the teaching strategies through which this is achieved. In their series of papers on a wider project examining this area, Collins et al. suggest that the development of life skills in participants cannot be separated from routine coaching, that strong coach-- athlete relationships and an understanding of the social context were essential in the process, and that an emphasis on personal development within coaching philosophies was critical.

The use of sport as a means of developing desired character traits has been a common theme throughout history but perhaps most notably in the Muscular Christianity movement of Victorian Britain. The term, which was first used in 1850 to describe the traits portrayed in the novels of Kingsley and Hughes, refers to the connection between godliness and physical fitness (Watson, 2007). Sport was advocated as a means of developing both the physical and mental strength necessary in particular to prepare boys and men for a life advancing British imperialism across the continent. The notion that sport can develop characteristics such as honour, discipline, and restraint is a belief still held strongly by many, often without due criticality or understanding of mechanism.

Encouraging fun

Perhaps predictably, the concept of "fun" was highlighted frequently by the student coaches but some were clearer on the execution or importance of this thanothers.

"As a coach I feel that it is my job to enforce the element of fun into my lessons and decide how much fun should happen throughout my class, whether it is younger children at a beginning level or an athlete at an elite level training for theOlympics."

This is a thought-- provoking quote as, while the meaning may have been obfuscated by the writing style, from the use of the words "enforce", and "decide" it would appear to demonstrate a strong degree of coach control, despite apparently discussing the concept of fun.

"Sport was initially created as a way to have fun, so I believe it should stay like this. Sport participation and coaching should be treated as a gift and talent that you should appreciate and work at because it is almost your responsibility, if you have a

gift it is for a reason. If you do not enjoy a sport, then you do not have the motivation to be successful and be victorious or have a competitive edge, however if you love it and have fun whilst playing it you will most certainly be more motivated to do better in it."

Similarly, while this second quote employs quite emotive language to stress the importance of retaining the element of fun, it is still strongly tied to the notion of competitive success. There are also underlying fatalistic tones; the use of the terms, "gift", "talent", "responsibility", and "it is for a reason" imply an almost spiritual bent to sport participation i.e. that the athlete has been bestowed with a natural talent by a higher power and that not acting upon this talent would be in some way immoral. The link between sport and spirituality has, of course, been discussed briefly in relation to the influence of Muscular Christianity.

"By making my coaching session more fun orientated than serious skill development I believe that I fulfil Martens philosophy "Athletes First, Winning Second" I believe that this is my coaching philosophy because I would rather my athletes had fun when training in their sport, than be disciplined in training. For most people sport is a hobby, something that they do out of their own free time and should therefore be an enjoyable experience. Not one that they go home with a negative outlook on. Something that they want to do out of their own motivation rather than the feeling that they need to comeback."

"Despite my beliefs that the sessions should be fun, I admit, from my own experiences, you can enjoy a sport more through playing well and being reasonably good at something. For example, if you are playing a game and are unable to make many shots it can be demoralising a little for some people, including myself. I appreciate though that this statement is biased based on my beliefs as there are those who happily play games even if they are not that great at curling and don't make any shots; they enjoy the game and enjoy the social part of curling"

In a similar vein to the findings of McCallister, Blinde and Weiss (2000), it is interesting to note that, while fun was deemed to be an important element within sessions, it was believed by some coaches that this was often linked to winning, i.e. that in order for children to enjoy their sport, they would need to experience some degree of competitive success.

The term "fun" is one which is frequently utilised by coaches, often without real

understanding of why, or what actually constitutes fun. Côté et al. (2007) provide a useful framework of coaching contexts in which to evaluate coaching excellence. During the sampling years (~6-- 12 years of age) and the recreational years (13+), coaches would be classed as participation, whereas during the specialising years (13-- 15) and the investment years (16+) the emphasis is predominantly on performance. Côté et al. (2007) suggest that a different set of competencies is necessary for these two forms of coaching and highlight the importance of fun at both the sampling and recreational stages. Within these contexts, the coach ought to encourage activities which emphasise experimentation, internal satisfaction, playfulness, and opportunities to socialise. There may be some informal competition at the recreational stage but outcome-- based competitive environments should be avoided within these typologies. The emphasis on fun emerging from the coaches' statements in this study suggests that the majority have, at this point, gained experience primarily within the sampling and recreational years. This would seem logical, given their relatively novice status and it would be interesting to observe their career over some time to explore whether they remain within this remit or move to a more performance-- based environment. In this case, Wilcox and Trudel (1998) would suggest that the coaches' focus would therefore shift to adapt to the new context and that winning and player development should not be seen as opposites but rather as elements in a continuum. Côté et al. (2007) do not suggest that this is a natural progression however, proposing instead that the competences for excellence at each stage are distinct.

Origins and development ofphilosophy

The development of coaching knowledge has been a key theme in the literature but this has been less explicitly discussed in terms of coaches' philosophies. The coaches in this study tended to attribute their philosophical approach to three primary sources: personal experience in sport, significant others, and reflection.

Personal experience

Most students noted that the primary motivators for them as coaches were the positive experiences they encountered through sport participation during their youth.

"I have had great times playing sport and think that if I can contribute to having the same amount of enjoyment and fun as I have had whilst participating in sport then I

can be very content with myself."

"From being a participant and having a great love of my sport and as a coach I have a drive to provide others with my passion for sport through providing competitive games and adapting situations to provide participants with the feelings of success and wining [sic] which may result in them participating in the sport forlife."

The clear accumulation of sport experience prior to engaging with the coaching degree further substantiates the claims of Cushion, Armour and Jones (2003) that coaches arrive with already deeply embedded values, or a sport habitus, which may then blunt attempts to integrate unfamiliar practices. The attraction sport holds for the novice coaches could also be linked to the assertion by Lyle (2002) that participants are drawn to continue in sport as it matches their value system. One individual seemed to be drawn to sport initially as an escape from traumatic experiences as a young person and reflects upon the potential for sport to be personally empowering andpositive.

"Being bullied at school can destroy your confidence, this happened to me during primary and early secondary. The way I found best to deal with this was athletics, through the help and encouragement of coaches in my local athletics club I was able to build confidence not only in sport but in life. By learning how to run for long distances I was able to put the aggression the confusion and the pain into my running helping me to get rid of these feelings. It taught me patience, discipline and control three qualities I take into my coaching style. I went through a lot and it is because of this I want to help anyone I can, not just the people who are struggling but the people who are enthusiastic. These enthusiastic people aren't always the most talented but their enthusiasm and willingness to learn and get better inspires me to get better as a coach and as aperson."

The ability of this participant to articulate and exemplify the origins of their philosophy is laudable and produces quite useful data as it provides a relatively clear picture the underlying values which guide their coaching philosophy. The statement suggests an ability to empathise with those who are not necessarily high performance athletes and to develop self-- esteem and confidence in those who perhaps who have not already developed a traditional sport habitus (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003).

Significant others

The role of significant others reoccurs frequently in the literature, whether discussed as socialising agents during childhood, as formal or informal mentors (Bloom et al., 1998) or within communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The primacy of this form of learning was replicated in the coaches' understanding of the shaping of their philosophies. Again, many of the key figures mentioned as being influential in the development of the novice coaches were positive role models, largely parents or Physical Education teachers. Several students however did cite the influence of negative experiences through coaches who they believe did not have an approach they themselves would care to emulate. In fact, these students suggest that they will always remember actions these coaches had taken and would use that information to do the opposite.

"During my time as an athlete myself, a number of personal experiences which I have had, are possibly the reason why I coach the way I do today. One stand out bad experience was during a training session at my athletic club. On this day, I wasn't performing to my best level and the coach picked up on this. Instead of being taken to one side and helping me figure out my flaws within the skill, I was made to stand in front of the class and show everyone what I was doing and how I was doing it wrong. By being made a bad example it made other laugh which left me feeling demoralised and underachieving. I have never been negative towards any of my pupils as I would never wish for them to leave a session feeling as put down as I did."

This particular participant demonstrates a degree of reflection as, rather than blindly replicate the practices of what was clearly a fairly insensitive coach, they were able to process their emotional response and develop their own interpretation of the experience. The majority of participants however emphasised the importance of positive role models during their developmental years.

"I always ask myself why I got into sport. I believe I got into it due to the incredible role models I had growing up which include my P.E. teacher, my parents and sports idols like David Beckham. I believe that as a coach I can be a huge role model on the athletes by the way I coach and the way I interact with mygroup."

"My football manager has taught me that you must push your players so they work hard in training, this is a major part of my coaching philosophy as what you do on the training field, you take onto the park."

"I believe that my coaching philosophy has been moulded through my childhood

with my parents, friends and also the laid back and friendly atmosphere I have lived with my whole life through being brought up in a small island community. With this constant socialisation with a range of age groups knowing exactly who I am and talking to me on a day to day basis I have been able to build up social skills which mean I'm not intimidated by coaching a group of 5 year olds or a group of 30 year olds."

The last quote is thought-- provoking in that, rather than attributing their philosophy to one or two key individuals, the participant demonstrates an awareness of the contribution of his/her holistic environment throughout their developmental stages. The tendency for coaches to rely on informal, experiential learning has been long-- established (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003) and appears to be replicated in the participants. In their study of expert coaches, Rynne and Mallett (2014) reported that the three primary sources of learning were unmediated; on the job experience, discussions with others, and experiences as athletes. The propensity for the coaches in the current paper to cite their own coaches, physical education teachers, and parents as influential figures, rather than coach peers may be representative of their stage of development as the majority were at the beginning of their coaching careers and perhaps did not have the wealth of workplace experience cited by Rynne and Mallett's coaches as being important.

Self-- reflection

Perhaps most surprisingly for novice coaches, there was considerable attention given to the importance of self-- reflection in their philosophies. It is accepted that this is likely to have been taught or learned by the students within the assigned reading but, given that the documents were written fewer than ten weeks into the module, it is interesting to note that this reasonably high-- level activity was so well represented.

"I believe that to be a successful coach I continually need to re-- evaluate and assess my coaching style. I will watch and learn from the good practices of other coaches and always be aware of new techniques which may assist me in my coaching sessions."

"The first step in my coaching philosophy is to look at myself as a coach and to discover and understand myself. To understand myself I have to look at the habits of my personality and see how they can help to communicate to the athletes that I

will be dealing with in my coaching."

It has been suggested that reflection is a relatively complex, higher order cognitive process and is less likely to be undertaken effectively by novices. Knowles et al. (2001) highlights the complexity of the process, purporting that one cannot assume reflective skills will be naturally acquired simply through participation in education or through experience. While it may be that the individuals had already achieved this stage of development, perhaps through engagement with National Governing Body coach education, it is also possible that: firstly, the coaches may have again been simply paying "lip service" to a concept which they considered the module assessors would expect them to address; and/or secondly, that they may feel they are reflective without necessarily engaging fully in the process. The literature has suggested that the process of reflection is most effective when undertaken with a "knowledgeable other" (Gilbert and Trudel, 2005), perhaps explaining the significance of discussions with others in Rynne and Mallett's study (2014) and so it seems less likely that in-- depth reflection has occurred as often it was cited in the statements.

Conclusion

This paper sought to advance the relatively under-- researched field examining the intricacies of coach philosophies, and to address the dearth of research into tertiary education coaching degrees. While a number of the coaches who participated appeared to be able to articulate reasonably strong views on their approach, despite their novice status, there was also some evidence of the disparity between intent and action, as reported previously in the literature. The tendency for the sport environment to replicate competitive, high performance discourse was apparent in the statements of some coaches but more chose to emphasise an approach characterised by individual personal development and encouraging fun; an outcome perhaps related to the level at which they coached at that time (Côté et al., 2007). The novice coaches in this study echoed the findings of previous work suggesting that the definition of success is a complex issue and it is clear that the interplay between coaching objectives, plus the underlying values motivating these objectives, are crucial factors in the development and implementation of coaching philosophies. The nature of these elements of the coaches' practice, particularly in terms of whether they are fixed or dependent on context would benefit from further, longitudinal research.

It is hoped that the findings of this paper will be utilised by coach educators in universities to help inform the content and structure of future programmes. Of high priority for educators is the provision of resources to assist students in developing and articulating an authentic philosophy; one in which there is minimal dissonance between intention and action. Given that there is clear evidence to suggest that coaches develop expertise predominantly through experience, it seems logical to format education systems which are equipped to utilise this knowledge. Potential recommendations for implementation therefore could involve the use of a formalised mentoring system, in order to provide each student with personal access to a "knowledgeable other" to prompt deeper reflection. This mentoring relationship could be extended to include regular coach observations (in a naturalistic setting, rather than within class sessions) and the use of video footage to provide more objective confirmation of intended behaviour. While these recommendations may be easily suggested, higher education resources are often stretched, with large class sizes preventing extensive staff engagement in this manner. An appropriate solution may therefore be the facilitation of a system to match final year and postgraduate students with more novice practitioners, hopefully to the mutual benefit of both parties.

By assisting student coaches to critique their proposed philosophy and better match it to their actions in the field, educators ought to be more successful in challenging previously established values, potentially guarding against the reproduction of harmful or ineffective practices, and allowing the development of more reflective, athlete - centred coaches.

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Elite Athletes'Experiences of Athlete-Centred Coaching

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ABSTRACT

Athlete-centred coaching is a method of sport coaching proposed to enhance performance (Lyle, 2002), develop life skills (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010), and prevent athlete maltreatment (Kerr & Stirling, 2008). Despite these proposals, very little is known empirically about athlete- centred coaching, the extent to which it is implemented, or athletes' experiences with this style of coaching. The purpose of this study therefore was to examine recently retired elite athletes' perspectives on the extent to which their most athlete-centred coach demonstrated the behaviors representative of this style of coaching. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight male and female recently retired Olympians. The findings of this study indicated that some athlete-centred behaviors such as using a process-oriented approach were commonly experienced while others, including the asking of stimulating questions, were reportedly absent. Explanations for the mixed findings are discussed and a continuum of athlete-centred coaching is proposed. Lastly, suggestions for future research and practical implications are presented.

KEYWORDS: Athlete-centred, Coaching, Coach Education, Elite Athletes

Introduction

An athlete-centred coaching philosophy has been recommended consistently within the sport literature (Clarke, Smith, & Thibault, 1994; Headley-Cooper, 2010; Kidman, 2005; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; Lyle, 2002; Miller & Kerr, 2002); this philosophy advocates for the development of the athlete as a person alongside of the development of athletic skills. It is a process by which "athletes gain and take ownership of knowledge, development and decision making that will help them to maximise their performance and their enjoyment" (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010, p. 13).

The tenets of athlete-centered coaching are as follows: (1) fostering the holistic development of the athlete and the development of life skills through sport (e.g., developing independence, leadership, teamwork skills, and decision making skills; highlighting respect, trust, responsibility, accountability and the view that sport is only part of the life experience); (2) creating a partnership relationship between the coach and athlete (e.g., athletes are empowered and included in some of the planning, decision making and evaluation processes); (3) teaching by guiding not prescribing (e.g., teaching games for understanding and using stimulating questions); (4) establishing a quality team culture in which the athletes gain responsibility for establishing and maintaining a direction for the team (e.g., athletes are having fun, recognizing athletes as part of a greater whole, and defining 'success'); and (5) utilizing resources (e.g., good assistant coaches, outside help, and feedback systems) (Clarke, Smith, & Thibault, 1994; Headley-Cooper, 2010; Kidman, 2005; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; Miller & Kerr, 2002).

The tenets of an athlete-centred coaching approach are rooted in Deci and Ryan's Self- Determination Theory (2008) which focuses on the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Research on Self-Determination Theory has highlighted the associations between development of these needs with enhanced psychological well-being as well as increased persistence and performance in experiential types of activities (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Given that the athlete-centred coaching tenets, including empowering the athlete, building relationships, and fostering autonomy, are derived from Self-Determination Theory, it is proposed that they will also be associated with such outcomes. For example, Lyle (2002) recommends that performance coaches adopt an athlete-centered coaching approach because it fosters the coach-athlete relationship, thus increasing coaching effectiveness, athletes' motivation and satisfaction, and team

performance. Kidman and Lombardo (2010) contend that a coach with an athlete-centred approach would optimize coachable moments and/or organize the sporting experience to maximize the occurrence of such events to develop life skills.

Researchers have also proposed that an athlete-centred coaching approach diminishes the 'win-at-all-costs' approach that so often characterizes sport. It is well known that the primary concerns of performance athletes, coaches, and sporting organizations typically revolve around winning games, making money, and being champions (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010). Further, these desires for performance excellence can eclipse coaches' focus on athletes' personal well- being (Miller & Kerr, 2002). In fact, Kerr and Stirling (2008) recommend that an athlete-centred philosophy may be the most effective way to diminish the 'win-at-all-cost' approach that has been associated with occurrences of athlete maltreatment, thus enhancing athlete protection.

In spite of the propositions that athlete-centred coaching enhances performance, develops life skills, and prevents athlete maltreatment, very little is known empirically about athlete- centred coaching. Studies by Kidman and Lombardo (2010) reported that athlete-centred coaching was associated with increased player engagement, communication on and off the playing field, competence, and motivation. These studies were conducted with adolescent athletes who had experienced athlete-centred coaching and elite coaches who used an athlete-centred approach. Kidman and Lombardo (2010) used a multi-method approach to observe a senior boys' high school volleyball team, interview the head coach and two players, and conduct several group interviews with the players. These findings are very detailed; however, they are only one team's experience of athlete-centred coaching. In addition, Kidman and Lombardo (2010) interviewed elite head coaches from a variety of sports to obtain their perspectives of athlete-centred coaching behaviours. Previous studies on athlete-centred coaching within the elite context have examined coaches' views only and as such, there is a paucity of research on elite athletes' perspectives of athlete-centred coaching behaviours and the nature of these experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to empirically examine elite athletes' perspectives of the extent to which their most athlete-centred coach exemplified athlete-centred coaching behaviours.

METHODS

Participants

Eight recently retired Olympians who had experienced athlete-centred coaching at some point in their careers participated in this study. The participants were at least four months into
retirement and no longer than four years into retirement. Retired athletes were chosen based upon the assumption that they would have the benefit of time and distance from the environment to reflect upon their entire sporting experience.

Athletes from both individual (n=4) and team (n=4) sports were represented including one athlete from a para-sport (wheelchair basketball). Additionally, both male (n=4) and female (n=4) athletes participated. Based upon the assumption that the coach-athlete relationship likely varies from team to individual sports, as well as from female to male athletes, and between able- bodied and para-athletes, a diverse sample was sought. More demographic information about the participants is included in the table below (pseudonyms have been used to keep the participants' identities anonymous).

Table 1. Demographic Information about the Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Sport	Time Retired	National team	Olympics
Sean	34	M	Aerial Skiing	2.5 years	10 years	3
Ben	32	M	Sailing	4 years	10 years	1
Tom	27	M	Swimming	5 months	11 years	2
Jim	37	M	Wheelchair B.ball	5 months	17 years	5
Sam	42	F	Hockey	4 years	19 years	3
Jill	31	F	Rowing	6 months	7 years	2
Emily	34	F	Basketball	6 months	15 years	2
Jane	26	F	Trampoline	4 years	6 years	1

These athletes had reached the highest level of sport performance. Together, five of the eight participants earned 5 gold, 2 silver, and 1 bronze Olympic medals; 11 gold, 2 silver, and 4 bronze World Championships medals; and 25 gold, 12 silver, and 11 bronze world cup finishes. The other three participants did not medal at these events but did medal at other smaller events.

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Recruitment

Purposive sampling (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007) was used to recruit recently retired elite athletes who had had an athlete-centred coach.
Variety in sports and athletes with different coaches were attained through multiple recruitment avenues. The authors maximized their existing networks with elite athletes and sport science providers to elite athletes to identify and contact potential participants. Once potential participants' names and contact information were gathered, they were contacted through email, sent a letter of information and informed consent explaining the study and inquiring about their willingness to participate. Once athletes confirmed that they would like to participate, a phone, Skype, or in-person interview was arranged with the researcher at a convenient time.

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was designed to encourage participants to provide rich details of their experiences with their most athlete-centred coach. The interview guide was designed in accordance with the five tenets of athlete-centred coaching: holistic development of the athlete; creating a partnership relationship between the coach and athlete; teaching by guiding; establishing a quality team culture in which the athletes gain responsibility for establishing and maintaining a direction for the team; and utilizing resources. Each section included numerous questions regarding specific behaviours. The participants were asked questions about their coach's behaviours, followed by probes for specific examples or stories of those behaviours. Some examples include: "Did this coach develop independence/decision- making?", "Did this coach help prepare you for a success post-career?", "If so, how did s/he do this?" "Can you provide specific examples?" The participants' opinions about the identified coaching behaviours were not sought although in some instances, these opinions were revealed.

Data Collection and Analysis

Three of the interviews were conducted in person, two via Skype, and three over the phone. All of the interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the participants and ranged from 90 minutes to 120 minutes in length. To determine if the participants had experienced athlete-centred coaching, a preamble was given at the start of the interview describing some of the behaviours associated with the

basic tenets (he/she asked you questions, believed in you, gave you responsibility, empowered you, involved you in decision-making, and developed you as a person outside of sport). After the preamble, the participants were asked to identify if any of their coaches fit the description and if so which coach best fit the description. The identified coach was then considered their most athlete-centred coach who served as the primary focus of the interview.

General data analysis occurred simultaneously during data collection. This concurrent process helped shape the direction of the research throughout the interviewing process. Once all of the data were recorded and transcribed verbatim, the transcripts were then reviewed numerous times before analyzing inductively for final themes, categories or patterns. Coding was used as a means of generating concepts from and with the collected data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).
Specifically, an inductive analysis allowed for themes and categories to emerge from the data in order to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Creswell (2007) identified inductive data analysis as including "the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem" (p. 37). Following the inductive analysis was a deductive analysis. The deductive analysis consisted of comparing the themes and categories that emerged from the participants against previous frameworks of athlete-centred coaching behaviours. Strauss (1987) highlighted that a key component when coding is to provide "provisional answers about the relationships among and within the data" (p. 31).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The participants' most athlete-centred coaches engaged in coaching the participants for 6.7 years on average, ranging from 2 to 15 years. Of the athlete-centred coaches addressed, one was a club team coach, one was a university coach, two were university and national team coaches, and four were national team coaches. Four of the coaches had athletes achieve Olympic medals and three of those were some of the most decorated Canadian coaches. Additionally, two coaches have numerous university coaching records.

The following findings of this study will be divided into the five basic tenets of athlete- centred coaching, the first being holistic development.

Holistic Development

Mixed findings emerged with respect to the extent to which coaches demonstrated behaviours related to holistic development. An example of a coach who promoted a balanced life was represented by Jill's account:

He used a lot of stories from his own life and personal experiences, and he would bring in a lot of examples of how life outside of sport was as important or as exciting or as big. So this (sport) is just one part of your life, it is not everything and he would do that through story telling.

Similarly, Jim recalled when his coach reinforced that he couldn't play sport forever:

He kind of told me how important it was to finish university before you go on, and that (sport) won't last forever, but at that time I thought I'd play (sport) forever, but he was pretty adamant about it, like "you need a fall back plan, like it might be a bit of money and you can travel the world now, but you need a strategy or alternative goal in life that is going to help you make money when you are done playing (sport)."

Conversely, several participants reported that their coaches did not do a good job of promoting a balanced life. For example, Emily recalled an experience of 40 straight days spent in dorms with lots of practice but no outside events. In addition, Sean reported how his coach did not want him in a relationship and did not approve of his girlfriend at the time.

Several of the coaching behaviours related to holistic development were supported by all of the participants' reports, including: the promotion of education, continued learning, and a successful attitude. Likewise, behaviours that developed confidence emerged in all the interviews. This finding supports previous research that used interviews from athlete-centred coaches to highlight the importance of developing confidence by enabling and empowering athletes (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010). Similarly, research by Côté and Sedgwick (2003) found that building athletes' confidence was one of seven effective coaching behaviours based on interviews with expert rowing coaches and elite rowers. Developing confidence and empowering athletes promotes autonomy within the athletes, one of the three basic psychological needs from Deci and Ryan's (2008) Self-Determination Theory. Furthermore, the development of leadership was reported by the participants from

team sports, but was not highlighted by the participants from individual sports, except for Tom.

Creativity was reportedly promoted by all participants' most athlete-centred coach except for
two. Lastly, the participants reported ways in which their coaches behaved with respect to managing pressure. For example, Jane described how her coach diffused pressure:

He just had so many good athletes and so much other stuff going on in his own life; he has a wife, a daughter, and a (sport) company, builds (equipment), a full business. So I felt a lifted pressure from that, like he wants me to do well but he really doesn't care. Like if I screw up at the end of the day he is like whatever. He just wanted us to do our best. He didn't care necessarily about us winning. It just diffused the pressure a little bit.

Similarly, Jill elaborated on how she never felt pressure from her coach:

I never felt pressured from him. If we did have a bad performance, if we did something that was obvious, that he knew that we could have done better, he would tell us, but if we had executed a performance perfectly, we had been training for it and it just didn't go our way, he would never make us feel bad about it. It was always, "you know what, you did this, you executed it perfectly, and this is where we are today." It was pressure to execute our perfect performance plan that we were practicing. It was never pressure to win, it was just be your best, go out there and be the best you can today. So I never felt like "oh my god I can't go back to the coach I will get in trouble" - never once.

On the other hand, two participants reported that their coaches added pressure, instead of helping to manage pressure. Sean described his experience with his coach resulted in so much pressure that it became all-consuming and distracted his focus:
Everything was about winning; there was no talk of second. Second was first loser. We talked about that all or nothing, or win or nothing. And for sure, that was probably the worst part of it. There was so much pressure that it was all consuming instead of just doing your job every day and let the results take care of themselves. If you do your job you are going to win… we were so focused on the outcome we lost sight of how we were going to make it happen.

Similarly, Emily explained that her coach would get stressed and that would transfer to the players:

Sometimes she can get a little bit high strung and stressed out, she would yell or she would call a timeout, come in and yell at us. It wouldn't necessarily be the best productive time out. I think sometimes she could have done a better job at calming her nerves and her stress, and relaying the message to us that needs to be relayed… I think that sometimes her anxiety would get a little too much and she would make some of the other players that way too.

These reports of coaches not helping the athletes manage pressure contradict previous research on athlete-centred and effective coaching. In Kidman and Hanrahan's (2011) practical guide to becoming an effective coach, they emphasize the importance of coaches having self- control, not adding pressure during important games, and showing faith in the existing plan and in the athletes. Findings related to the second tenet will be discussed next.

Partnership Relationship

All of the participants recalled having a partnership relationship with their coach to some extent. Athlete-centred coaching behaviours related to partnership relationships that were well supported included providing independence and communicating openly and honestly. For example, Sam stated that she respected her coach for being honest:

I think that when it came to evaluation meeting I don't think she did a great job, but at the same time she was just being honest and I respect that. I'd rather her do that then say "okay you are doing this great, this great, this great," then come back and you are not going to make the team. She is very real.

These findings support previous works such as Kidman and Lombardo (2010) and Kidman and Hanrahan (2011), who emphasized the importance of communicating effectively. Likewise, McMorris and Hale (2006) highlighted the importance of coaches being honest and fair as effective coaching behaviours. Moreover, one coaching behaviour associated with the second tenet that was not reportedly experienced consistently by the participants was democratic rather than autocratic coaching. Specifically, Tom's and Sean's coaches were more autocratic than democratic, giving them little to no say in their training plans. Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) encourage coaches to be more democratic than autocratic to

cultivate ownership "by enabling and encouraging members to become involved in decisions that affect the team and themselves personally" (p. 59). These behaviours help produce autonomous motivation by fulfilling the basic psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness from Self-Determination Theory. Conversely, Ben provided an example of his coach being democratic:

He would sit down with me and build the training program. Like "what are you doing to do? How are you going to get good? Where are you going to train? Who are you going to train with?"... it was my program that I was directing and he was advising on it. It wasn't the other way around... I am the guy in charge of my journey and I am asking for advice from my coaches.

Although relationships beyond sport were not reported by two of the participants with their most athlete-centred coach, the other six described strong relationships built beyond sport. They described their coaches as friends, mentors and 'father figures', with two participants reporting that their most athlete-centred coach attended their wedding. These findings are consistent with previous research that identifies establishing a positive rapport with each athlete as one of seven behaviours associated with effective coaching (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003).

Optimal Teaching

The tenet of optimal teaching was the least supported of all of the tenets according to the participants. Specifically, the behaviours associated with teaching democratically, such as using stimulating questions and providing freedom to learn, and not "over-coaching" were reportedly used by coaches infrequently. Only three participants reported that their most athlete-centred coach used stimulating questions. Sam was one of those three; she described how her coach would stimulate the team members and encourage them to understand why certain systems were being used in certain situations:

She would probably say "why would we use a 2 1 2 for check in this situation?"... She would do that, like "why would we do this? Why are we using a man on man down low defense or a box plus one?"

Similarly, Jim reported that his coach used stimulating questions to help the players make better decisions within and outside of sport: He would also do that in real life: "When do you decide to not have another beer?" He was very good at that, using his

knowledge and relating it to his players to help make better decisions… He asks the questions instead of telling you to go from point A to B, he asks you "what do you think right now is the best situation?" If you say go from point A to C, "what if you took the route of going to point B first?" Creating the stimulation that way; I think that was his teaching style.

Furthermore, two participants recalled instances of over coaching. For example, Jim described a situation in which his coach learned from an instance of over coaching. The team was down by one with six seconds left in double overtime, and made a play to score, but the coach had called a timeout to set up a play. So the point didn't count, they got the ball back, didn't score, and lost the game. Jim recalled:
Our coach felt he was trying to over coach, he wanted to control the situation, looking back on it, and he has never done it since. He told me after that he decided "at the end of the game I want you guys to be so prepared that it should be second nature what you guys should be doing, you don't have the ball you go there, you do that, we don't have to take a timeout we can just go with the flow."

These findings contradict the athlete-centred behaviours highlighted in the literature, including Kidman and Lombardo's (2010) and Kidman and Hanrahan's (2011) work: utilizing questioning and teaching games for understanding. Furthermore, McMorris and Hale (2006) highlighted the importance of not overloading athletes' short term memory with too many instructions, suggesting a specific form of instruction – shaping skills. "The coach instructs the performer to concentrate firstly on one small part of the skill. Once the learner is able to perform that part reasonably well, a second part is added and so on" (p. 92). McMorris and Hale also advocate "learning by guided discovery, i.e. the coach sets a problem and helps the learner solve it" (p. 92).

Given that the use of stimulating questions and strategies to empower the athlete are central behaviours to the theoretical framework behind athlete-centred coaching, these findings are particularly significant. The behaviours associated with this tenet of athlete-centred coaching are necessary to encourage autonomous motivation in athletes, which in turn has been linked with greater psychological health, increased persistence, and more effective performance on experiential types of activities (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Unfortunately, however, the current findings suggest the use of behaviours to encourage autonomy within athletes is a weakness amongst this sample of coaches.

Compartmentalizing skills was the only athlete-centred coaching behaviour associated with the third tenet that was reportedly experienced by all of the participants in this study. For example, Sam reported how her coach reduced a skill or strategy into parts and teaching in a progressive manner: "Breaking down whether we are doing a d zone coverage and man on man with box behind. Moving slow at first and just kind of giving hypothetical examples." This finding supports previous research by Côté and Sedgwick (2003) who reported one of seven effective coaching behaviours is teaching skillseffectively.

Quality Team Culture

The behaviours associated with the fourth athlete-centred coaching tenet, quality team culture, received mixed support. Using a process-oriented approach in conjunction with goal setting is the athlete-centred coaching behaviour that was most commonly experienced by the participants in relation to the fourth tenet. For example, Ben described how his coach broke down his goals into smaller more meaningful goals:

This coach would definitely focus on my goals, and help me think about like "I want to win this (performance)," well that doesn't mean anything, so he would break it down into smaller pieces. Like if you have a big goal, you really need to focus on these littler goals, and littler goals, and need to break it down… The job of a coach is to really help the athlete figure out the really tiny things the athlete needs to improve upon whether it is fitness, equipment or techniques, and help them work on all those mini goals.

Sam mentioned how her coach emphasized process over outcomes: "she always said that every time that we are playing was to give a gold medal performance, the outcomes are the outcomes as long as we give a gold medal performance." This finding supports the emphasis McMorris and Hale (2006) place on coaches to create rules, consequences, and team goals together to increase team cohesion. Likewise, research by Côté and Sedgwick (2003) identified the abilities to create a positive training environment and facilitate goal setting as two of seven effective coaching behaviours. Further, facilitating goal-setting by allowing athletes to determine their personal and team goals promotes autonomy which is a central component for producing intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

As part of establishing a quality team culture, the participants consistently reported that practices were fun and engaging for the most part. Jane recalled:

It was always really fun, mostly because of the environment he created; we were all really good friends. And he would be like "if you want to blast whatever music you want you are allowed to I don't care, just have fun, make this a great environment." When we didn't have competition we would try and do new tricks and he was really open to letting us do whatever we wanted.

Jill remembered a situation in which her coach helped lighten the mood during an intense workout. Her coach had his 13 year old daughter with him that day and after she whispered something into the coach's ear he told his daughter to relay the message to the athletes: She said to us "don't listen to him, do whatever you want and have fun!" So that cracked us up and kind of lightened the mood… Even though it is push, push, push, he realizes when there needs to be a moment of laughter.

However, a couple of instances were recounted in which practices were not viewed as fun and engaging. Tom explained that there were times that he didn't want to be there:
In my last year he wasn't particular nice with me, so that didn't make me super excited to go to practice… Just like stupid remarks, being grumpy around me, being short, in general being less friendly and smiley… it did affect my enjoyment level.

In addition, several participants claimed that team cohesion had not been achieved by the coaches; one participant reported that his coach had clear favourites within the team, while another allegedly displayed preferential treatment of athletes such as giving the star players more leniencies. For example, Sam described that some players got away with more than others:
A certain player was in the bench and was pissed maybe at the play and from time to time to anybody would be like "move the F'ing (object)" you know which isn't obviously that productive, and one time got a water bottle in a game situation and whipped it in the bench and hit the bench and team physio… But because she was one of the top players it was kind of okay. So not favouritism but leniency, there wasn't discipline really for it. And I think that a lot of players believed that there should have been.

A more extreme example was given by Tom, who reported that his coach displayed fairly blatant favouritism:
Extremely bad effect if you happened to be someone he didn't like. Because he would be non-stop doing anything to make your life miserable, like putting people off to train by themselves away from the team, doing other sets and practices,

literally not talking to people for days. Those were the worst cases, and even if he didn't like you, like you didn't do anything particularly bad, he would just not be particularly friendly with you. But the guys he did like could get anything from him.

Kidman and Lombardo's (2010) interviews with athlete-centred coaches highlight the importance of establishing a quality team culture as an athlete-centred coaching behaviour. More specifically, Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) suggest coaches can keep motivation and enjoyment levels high by "training in a different place, learning something other kids don't know, playing music at training, trying something a bit daring, having a chance to really scream or yell, getting a special treat, trying out original strategies or tactics, and playing games" (p. 108). These behaviours were reportedly not implemented consistently by the participants' coaches.

Utilize Resources

The behaviours associated with the fifth athlete-centred tenet, utilizing resources, were reportedly used by the participants' coaches. More specific examples included: utilizing standard help, specialists, assistant coaches, special tools, technology, and knowledge of the sport. For example, Jane explained the level of special tools, technology, and knowledge her coach used to help her improve:

He is the best; he is by far the best [sport] coach in the world, my opinion. Technically he understands mechanics. He has like multiple cameras set up so you can watch your performances over again. He has every bell and whistle you can imagine. He is just like technically superior. He has just a really good feel for the sport. Technically one hundred percent awesome…

These findings support research such as Côté and Sedgwick's (2003) work in which they highlighted proactive planning as one of seven effective coaching behaviours.

Possible Explanations for Findings

The participants in the current study provided examples of athlete-centred coaching behaviours that had been implemented by coaches they considered to be athlete-centred.

However, there were also several athlete-centred behaviours that were not reportedly demonstrated by the participants' coaches. The barriers to implementing an athlete-centred approach could help explain these divergent

behaviours. These barriers have been documented previously by Kidman and Lombardo (2010) and McCallister and colleagues (2000). In particular, the professional sports model with its 'win-at-all-costs' approach has been identified as a major barrier to the implementation of the athlete-centred coaching model (McCallister et al., 2000). The professional sports model that promotes a 'winning is everything' culture can be used to explain the absence of several of the athlete-centred coaching behaviours in the current study. Foremost, coaches with a professional sports model approach likely assume the common misperception that the performance outcome of 'winning' and the athlete's personal development are mutually exclusive (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Consequently, the professional sport model approach may explain the lack of emphasis from some of the coaches on the more personal, development-related behaviours, such as promoting post-sport careers, general life outside of sport, and personal attributes. It is important to reiterate that according to the athlete- centred literature, developing an athlete as a person and as an athlete will increase athletic performance (i.e., personal development helps athletic success; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; Lyle, 2002; Miller & Kerr, 2002).

Similarly, fun and engaging practices are not always perceived to be associated with optimizing performance outcomes; possibly explaining the divergent findings. Although managing pressure has been identified an important athlete-centred behaviour, several participants reported that their coaches were too focused on winning causing them to underperform from the immense pressures and lack of process-oriented focus. Hence, the professional sports model could explain that some coaches did not manage pressure well because they let the 'winning is everything' mentality consume their focus, contributing to choking under the pressure. In summary, the professional sports model is proposed as a plausible explanation for the absence of certain athlete-centred coaching behaviours.

Another major barrier to implementing an athlete-centred approach is a coach's knowledge of the approach. Unless a coach has received formal training on the athlete-centred approach or had extensive experience with an athlete-centred coach as an athlete, she or he is unlikely to naturally adopt athlete-centred coaching behaviours. One way to facilitate an athlete- centred coaching approach is through coach education. Taylor and Garratt (2010) argue for the professionalization of coaching where required coach education programs ensure all coaches are properly educated. Furthermore, current coach education

programs are not well informed by pedagogy with respect to the principles of Self-Determination Theory and athlete-centred behaviours, which could explain why these behaviours were the least supported in the current study (e.g., teaching skills more democratically than autocratically, such as using stimulating questions, teaching games for understanding, and providing freedom to learn, not over- coaching). One of the challenges pertaining to coach education is the prevailing assumption that the major determinant of becoming a successful coach in sport is believed by many to be one's past experience as an athlete (Taylor & Garratt, 2010). In reality however, the ability to play a sport does not translate well to the ability to coach or teach the sport. Until cultural views around coaching and coach education change, the promotion of an athlete-centred approach will remain a challenge.

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A Proposal for anAthlete-Centred Coaching Continuum

The variability in the extent to which athlete-centred coaching behaviours were reportedly implemented, according to the participants' reports in the current study, implies that athlete-centred coaching may exist on a continuum. On one end of the continuum is the ideal athlete-centred coach who implements all of the athlete-centred behaviours; in the middle are coaches who demonstrate some but not all athlete-centred behaviours; and at the other end is the non-athlete-centred coach or coach-centred coach who does not implement any of the athlete- centred coaching behaviours. Theoretically, as the barriers to implementing an athlete-centred coaching approach increase, the more a coach will move away from the ideal athlete-centred coach. In addition, based on the preliminary insight from this study and the proposed benefits from the literature on the relationship between athlete-centred coaching and performance success, we suggest that the closer a coach is to the ideal athlete-centred coach, the more performance success will follow. Such a continuum would also account for flexibility in the use of various coaching behaviours according to the age and maturity of the athletes as well as situational variability.

Effectiveness of Athlete-Centred Coaching

It was significant that the participants were athletes who had reached the pinnacle of sport performance, namely the Olympics and World Championships. The fact that these high performing athletes had reportedly had athlete-centred coaches begins to debunk the common misperception that athlete-centred coaching and performance success are mutually exclusive. Not only did they identify the behaviours, it was noticed that the participants also spoke favourably of many of the athlete-centred coaching behaviours. Although an assessment of the participants' opinions of their coach's behaviours was not a focus of this current study, it was still noticed. Likewise, the positive relationships the participants had with their coaches and the respect they conveyed for their coaches must be highlighted.

While future research needs to address the effectiveness of athlete-centred coaching behaviours empirically, the participants' comments provided some preliminary insight. Particularly, the findings of this study suggest a potentially positive relationship between athlete- centred coaching and performance success. In general, the more successful Olympic athlete participants reported that their

most athlete-centred coach displayed more athlete-centred coaching behaviours than the less successful Olympic athlete participants. The performance success of the participants was operationalized based on medals earned at Olympic, World Cup and World Championship competitions. Specifically, three out of the four, or 75% of the athletes who reported their coaches displayed almost all the athlete-centred coaching behaviours were the most 'medal-winning' participants, and only one out of four, or 25% of the participants who reported their coach did not display all of the athlete-centred coaching behaviours was from the more successful participants. The theoretical framework of athlete-centred coaching helps to explain these findings. Self-determination theory states that autonomous motivation leads to greater psychological health, increased persistence, and more effective performance on experiential types of activities (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, if a coach does not implement the necessary athlete-centred coaching behaviours that foster autonomous motivation, then it is plausible that the athletes will not achieve the associated benefits, including enhanced performance. Again, future research is needed to further examine this relationship.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

One of the strengths of the current study is the inclusion of voices of recently retired Olympians with respect to their most athlete-centred coach. Each participant painted a concise picture of his or her most athlete-centred coach. It is also important to note that the approach used in the current study provided a unique view of coaching behaviours, such that we were able to gather information about elite level coaching behaviours through the athlete's eyes.

Limitations to this study include potential retrospective memory recall and related biases. It is possible that the participants exaggerated their coaches' behaviours to portray them in a better or worse light even though the participants gave the impression of honesty as they described their coach's weaknesses and strengths. Similarly, issues of memory recall could have affected the participants' reports. Recalling specific memories was found to be problematic for some of the participants as they tried to recall their coaches' behaviours from up to over ten years ago. Also, the notion of recalling more positive memories as time progresses may have influenced the reports of the participants. Using one measure for data collection further limits the validity or trustworthiness of the data.

Several recommendations for future research are derived from the present study.

Research is needed to inquire further into the many proposed benefits of athlete-centred coaching, in particular, the relationship with performance success, and the transferability of life skills. The concept of an athlete-centred coaching continuum could be utilized to examine these relationships. In addition, future research could take a closer examination of the differences in athlete-centred coaching between different sports, including individual and team sports, able-bodied and para-sports male and female coaches, and male and female athletes. Gender, sport, (dis)abilities and group differences likely play a role in the athlete-centred coaching relationship.

Future research would be strengthened by supplementing the interviews with such measures as observation and or questionnaires. Specifically, future research could take a triangulation approach, including the perceptions of the athlete and coach about the coach's behaviours, followed by several video recordings of the coach in practice or competition. Furthermore, if an athlete-centred assessment survey were to be developed, then more data could be collected from a larger population.
The findings of this study could inform future coach education and coach assessment programs. Specifically, the detail and examples provided by the participants could help develop a more behaviourally-focused athlete-centred coaching model. Therefore, future research would benefit from designing a comprehensive behaviourally-focused athlete-centred coaching model. From there, athlete-centred coach education and assessment could be developed. As a result, future research may ascertain the extent to which athlete-centred coaching 'works' by assessing the effectiveness of interventions.

CONCLUSION

Eight recently retired Olympians provided insightful reports of their most athlete-centred coach. These coaches reportedly implemented athlete-centred coaching behaviours to various degrees. Specifically, the participants' coaches reportedly promoted a successful attitude, developed confidence, provided independence, communicated openly and honestly, compartmentalized skills, used a process-oriented approach, and resources. However, behaviours that were not reportedly implemented by all the participants' coaches included: managing pressure, being more democratic than autocratic, having fun and engaging practices, creating team cohesion, and developing leadership, encouraging relationships beyond sport, and creativity. Furthermore, at least half of the coaches were more autocratic than democratic in terms of their behaviours. This is concerning as using stimulating

questions and providing freedom to learn and not over-coaching are central components to Self-Determination Theory, the theoretical framework behind athlete-centred coaching. These behaviours provide the autonomy necessary to stimulate intrinsic motivation and subsequent outcomes of greater psychological health, increased persistence, and more effective performance on experiential types of activities (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Based on the reported variability of athlete-centred coaching behaviours being implemented, the concept that athlete-centred coaching exists on a continuum is proposed. This continuum is a conceptual contribution to the athlete-centred coaching literature. Furthermore, the common misperception that athlete-centred coaching hinders performance success is challenged by the findings of this study. More specifically, a relationship between athlete-centred coaching and successful athletic performance is suggested by the inclusion of Olympic medalists as participants. Further research is needed to empirically assess the proposed benefits of athlete-centred coaching. In other words, to examine the extent to which athlete-centred coaching does what it purports to do with respect to integrating personal and performance development.

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Case Study: The USA Paralympic Volleyball Coaching Internship Course

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A group of American University Graduate Students participated in a one week internship at the USA Paralympic Volleyball training center in Oklahoma, USA. A primary goal of the internship was to increase the motivation of the students in the program towards their own coaching endeavors as they examined and reflected upon their core values in coaching. The student coaches in the study (n=9) were exposed to Coaching by Master Coaches from the USA Paralympic Volleyball team. These master coaches were skilled in an Athlete Centred Coaching Style that manifested the core values of: 1) an exemplary work ethic, 2) player empowerment, and 3) a prioritization of team cohesion. Upon the completion of the internship, data analysis revealed that there was a significant difference on scores for the student coaches on the Sport Motivation Scale II, a reliable and valid instrument designed to measure sport motivation. This increase in coach motivation occurred in large part as a result of the students' exposure and interaction with the Paralympic Master Coaches and the USA Paralympic Volleyball teams.

Background

In the area of Sport Coaching, one of the major discrepancies that exists is the life of the Coach is the disconnect between the coaches' core values that they profess on paper, and the actual coaching values that are expressed in reality. This disconnect between professed and perceived core values can be damaging to athletes. In each of the following cases, research has shown a decrease in team and coach motivation when the coaches' words do not match up with their actions. For example, a coach who professes the core value of developing cohesiveness but whose coaching practices more often alienates players, or a coach who professes that he is an empowering person and instead suffocates autonomy, or a coach who claims "work ethic" as a core value but gives the impression that he is unprepared or lazy, is a coach who will confuse his athletes and undermine the motivational climate in which the team plays its sport. What beginning coaches need, among other things, are role models in coaching who demonstrate a strong connection between professed core values and core values in practice. Specifically, coaching core values that incorporate specific psychological and physiological needs of the athlete create a synergy between player and coach that gives the beginning coach

confidence that he or she is on the right track. Coaches who learn of this synergy early in their career are on a path towards a fulfilling and fruitful coaching career. Therefore, it is important for coaching education programs to incorporate as early as possible internship opportunities where coaches can see best practices in coaching in action. These best practices include establishing a healthy motivational climate in which the athletes can learn and grow.

Research in self-determination theory (Deci, p.121) has shown that a healthy motivational climate exists when the individuals within the group have needs that are being met in three distinct categories. These needs consist of the need for competence (improvement in skills), autonomy (participation in the decision making process), and cohesion (feeling that you are an important part of the team). In such a climate, participants (athletes) will score high in sport motivation and will be intrinsically motivated to participate in their sport. The adage success breeds success comes into play when reflecting upon the fact that it is much easier for a coach to remain highly motivated when his or her players are highly motivated.

For a coach to foster growth in competence, autonomy, and cohesion for each athlete on his team requires a great deal of experience and coaching skill. For our coaching students, the goal was to expose them to a coaching environment where a coach who does foster growth in three key areas mentioned above could be observed and learned from. The coaching cadre for this internship was chosen based on these criteria. The head coach for the USA Paralympic team has over 30 years of coaching experience and is known for his ability to teach the importance of incorporating core values into his team's preparation for international competition at the highest level. The uniqueness of the USA Paralympic Volleyball Team motivational environment and the coaching staffs' willingness to allow us to attend their practices for a weeklong period, was an ideal venue for coaches of able- bodied athletes to learn from a master and the athletes in his program. A second factor that helped us in the selection of the USA Volleyball Paralympic site as the ideal internship environment was that the athletes from the National Paralympic team would also serve as a motivating influence to our coaches as they observed these athletes gaining competence in skills, leading each other, and in spite of whatever adversity, playing together with a unified purpose.

Methods

The participants in the study were a convenience sample. The participants were students in an existing internship course offered at a regional state university in the Southern USA. The participants were given the Sport Motivation Scale II (SMS II) at the beginning of their internship, and then, after a one-week internship with the USA Volleyball Paralympic coaches, the SMS II was readministered to the participants. The research hypothesis for this study was that the student coaches' exposure to the USA Paralympic Volleyball Team master coaches would create an increase in coach motivation as measured by the Sport Motivation Scale II for Coaches. The student coach's motivation would be measured by a pretest/posttest of the Student Coaches (N=9) on the SMS II. The SMS II measures the level of intrinsic motivation and positive extrinsic motivational factors that a coach might have towards their participation in their sport. The SMS II also measures the amount of amotivation a coach would have. Amotivation would lead to coach burnout and dysfunction within the coaches' team that he or she is working with. The higher the student coaches scores on the SMS II, the greater the likelihood for coaching success. One additional benefit to the SMS II is that a low score on the SMS II can be elevated over time as interventions can be implemented to help increase the coaches' motivation for coaching.

In order to facilitate student/coach engagement, the student coaches', as part of their curriculum during the internship, were given data that was presented as evidence of the master coaches ability to meet each of the core values being studied. For the core value of exemplary work ethic, the student coaches were asked to read about the USA Paralympic Teams Master Coaches research on Volleyball Skills Training. For the Paralympic athletes, the particular skill the master coach had focused upon was the volleyball skill of serve receive passing. It was pointed out to the student coaches that the Paralympic Team head coach had done extensive research on the game of volleyball and concluded that this particular skill (serve receive passing) was of primary importance to winning points (more so than hitting, setting, serving, or digging). A BYU study, highlighted by the coach, clearly showed the serve receive passing skill was paramount to successful point scoring (Miskin, p.11). By exposing the student coaches to this emphasis by the master coaches in practice, the students learned about one key characteristic of an exemplary work ethic. That being, to be a student of your sport, be aware of research going on in your sport, and implement these findings in your practices by (in this case) allocating more time to that particular skill. Based on a study that showed that at NCAA Division 1 competitions and at International Paralympic Competition that the Serve Receive

Pass was a skill highly correlated with Point Scoring (Mann, p.5), the student coaches were given an enhanced focus on this part of practice during the one week intensive time of observation at the training center. In summary, the background research conducted by the coach gave evidence of an exemplary work ethic and how such a work ethic translated to practice sessions where time was well spent on critical tasks.

The student coaches were also asked to make qualitative observations of the sense of competence that was demonstrated by the athletes during their practices by keeping a daily journal of the game like drills and skill focused drills that were conducted with the players each day. They were also given access to conduct personal interviews with members of the Paralympic team during breaks, and after the practice sessions. The Head Coach also spoke to the group at length about his coaching strategies and coaching philosophy. For the core value of player empowerment as it relates to the players' sense of autonomy, the student coaches were asked to observe different leadership roles within the team. The students were asked to observe with their daily journals if players felt comfortable leading different aspects of practice. This included everything from warming up to drills to game like activities, to actual scrimmage situations. Students recorded these observations in their daily internship journals. For the core value of developing cohesion, student coaches were asked to observe how the team approached social and task cohesion situations. This was unique because the USA men's and the women's Paralympic teams both worked out together, creating some unusual but also enlightening interactions from a cohesion perspective. Students recorded these observations in their daily internship journals as well.

Results

The quantitative data collected were the results of the pretest and posttest scores on the SMS II by the student coaches who participated in the student coaching internship at the USA Paralympic Volleyball Training Centre in Oklahoma, USA. The average (mean) improvement on the SMS II for the coaches (n=9) in the class was a 13.56 point improvement from pre to post test on a 100 point scale. The T-Score was 3.38 with a P score of .0048, making the improvement in the SMS Score for the participants statistically significant.

Student Reflections on their Observations of the Master Paralympic Coaches:

Below are key statements extrapolated from the qualitative data collected from the participants' student journals kept during the internship at the USA Paralympic Volleyball Training Centre in Oklahoma, USA.

OVERALL Observations:

"I would like to continue my transition from a coached centred methodology to a player centred methodology." "First I want to say the course was absolutely tremendous, from the first moment of walking in to the gym and seeing the Paralympic logo on the floor, as I did in the 1990's at Lake Placid where the 1980 Olympics was held. The feelings I had was goose bumps and a rush you could not imagine. There are so many things that I have witnessed in the past few weeks that will give me great insight on the coaching philosophy I will have."

COACHING STYLE: (Core Value of Exemplary Work Ethic: which helps athletes improve skills and become more competent.)

"From the week in Oklahoma, I have been inspired by these amazing and wonderful athletes. They have a different demeanor and attitude that you are just drawn to. You can't help but stare and watch them move because they move so effortlessly across the court. From these athletes, I have learned to be persistent and relentless, especially from Michelle. Michelle was born with her right arm that wasn't fully developed. She told us the story of how she started to play with her prosthetic when she made the team. Hours of setting against the wall, and all the times she constantly said she couldn't do it, but Coach Hamiter believed in her. From this, we need to remember that someone sees the best in us and they can see what we're capable of, so we need not to give up. Her determination when she was learning how to set is so inspiring."

"While in Oklahoma, they played "Fast 2s/Fast 3s" meaning they played quick games either 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 which I completely loved. The first reason why I loved this drill because it helps with a players focus, it allows for the player to always be on their toes and ready for anything. Another reason why this drill was amazing is because it allowed for increased playtime and contacts with the ball. It is annoying waiting in line during practice when all you want to do is play and touch the ball. This drill accommodates for that, and I will definitely use this drill in my future practices."

COACHING STYLE: (Core Value of Player Empowerment: which helps players to feel a strong sense of autonomy.) For the core value of player empowerment as it relates to the players sense of autonomy.

"Bill Hamiter spoke of wanting his players to be able to think for themselves so they do not need to depend on their coach in competition. He made it clear that if they are focused on the coach, they cannot focus on the game."

"While given the opportunity to listen to Coach Hamiter's coaching suggestions, he stated as well to ask questions. Ask questions to make them think and in return they will understand the game and will be able to adapt and make changes on their own. This is probably one of the most prominent aspects that I will be instilling into my coaching foundation and as a tool to help athletes be successful at an early age."

'feed-forward' as opposed to 'feedback' forces athletes to think, and empowers them. Feedback in general needs to be specific and immediate, but Bill Hamiter explained a different understanding of this. First, while feedback needs to be specific, it should not be given only when in relation to the result being good or bad. If we want athletes to learn skills we need to tell them, or ask them, what they did well or be specific as to what was a good/poor job in relation to the skill. Immediate feedback is also most beneficial, but not if it comes from coaches telling them what to do and thus disabling their ability to think for themselves."

COACHING STYLE: (Core Value of Improving Cohesion: which helps athletes feel that they are a vital part of the group.)

"Disciplined, determined and doubtless. I see all of these words in the women's sitting volleyball team. The team was so disciplined in practice even though Coach Hamiter was not present; they were so determined during practice. They allowed for peer feedback and critiques. They were so focused on what needed to be done during practice. The way this team carried themselves allowed us to feed off of their energy just watching them from the sidelines."

"The two challenges that Bill Hamiter mentions young coaches have: they talk too much and get too emotional. The solution he suggests is to know your coaching philosophy AND how to engage it, focusing on what is going to help the team."

“Like coach Hamiter mentioned you could treat all your athletes fair, but not the same. When he got down on the floor with his athletes they showed a strong bond they have between them but also a sense of respect. These are qualities I want to convey with my athletes."
"Coach Hamiter's style of coaching more resembles what I would like for my athletes in the future. He has a quiet but respectable quality and he holds his players to high standards."

Discussion & Conclusion

Exposing coaching students to an athlete centred coaching philosophy at a highly competitive level was an enlightening experience for graduate students in sport coaching. Seeing master coaches who have extreme pressure to win, and yet, had a coaching style that was geared to measure up to the core values of putting athletes first, empowering them, preparing them, and allowing them to have a voice on their team, was a valuable experience for our collegiate student coaches to observe. Student reflections as evidenced in the qualitative data that was collected demonstrated appreciation for an athlete centered coaching philosophy. Such experiences will assist new coaches in goal setting and carrying out their own core values in their coaching. Quantitative data collected from the Sport Motivation Scale II (SMS II) also warrants the prioritization of student exposure to programs akin to the Internship experience with USA Paralympic Volleyball under Coach Hamiter, his staff, and his athletes as the results indicate improved motivation among student coaches to perform as coaches in the field, and to be athlete centered in their approach.

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Autonomy-Supportive Coaching: An Autoethnographical Account of the Coaching Process.

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Abstract
Existing literature suggests that coach behaviours can influence the motivation of an athlete. More specifically, the creation of an autonomy-supportive environment is believed to nurture the athletes' psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Embedded in self-determination theory, the aim of the present study was to provide an in-depth examination of the development of autonomy-supportive coaching behaviours. An autoethnographical approach was adopted to explore and chart this process. Data were drawn from field notes, reflective journals, and critical conversations during the seven week study. Data are represented in three progressive stories – Athlete Input, Provision of Choice for All, and Self-Awareness of the Autonomy-Supportive Coach, which raise awareness of the contextual and social influences on the development and sustainment of autonomy-supportive coaching behaviours. Difficulties in creating a motivational climate are reflected upon (e.g., the implications of providing an A-S environment to children). A reflective examination of the process, and product of autonomy-supportive coaching is provided, bringing the unexplored and mundane aspects of the coaching process to life. To fuel the development of autonomy-supportive coaching behaviours, coaches are encouraged to adopt a research-oriented approach to practice.

Keywords: Motivation; Athlete-Centred; Autoethnography; Reflection; Behaviour

Flashback: My initial exposure to self-determination theory (SDT) felt unfamiliar and foreign. It was the distinct opposite from the autocratic coaching style I had previously demonstrated. On reflection, I had adopted this authoritarian approach as it was what I had experienced as an athlete, it was what I had been taught, and it was all that I knew.

Introduction

According to SDT, coach behaviours can influence the motivation of an athlete (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Furthermore, it is suggested the action and behaviour of a coach can create an environment that will adequately nurture an athlete's self-determined motivation (e.g., motivation becomes autonomous) (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). More specifically, self-determination theorists propose that satisfying the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, will drive motivated behaviour while leading to optimal development and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Consistent findings within the literature specify three characteristics of need-supportive environments (i.e., environments are autonomy-supportive (A-S), well-structured, and can facilitate coach involvement) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Integrating these three characteristics, Mageau and Vallerand (2003) propose a motivational model of the coach-athlete relationship that translates the meaning of being A-S. Consistent with SDT and Vallerand's (1997) hierarchical model of motivation, Mageau & Vallerand (2003) identify seven behaviours associated with an A-S interpersonal style. The following behaviours are proposed: (1) the provision of choice, (2) provide a meaningful rational for tasks, (3) acknowledge athletes perspective and feelings, (4) provide opportunities for initiative taking, (5) provide non-controlling feedback, (6) avoidance of controlling behaviours, and (7) prevention of ego-involvement in athletes.

Mageau and Vallerand suggest these A-S coaching behaviours will only become beneficial (e.g., they foster the three psychological needs simultaneously) when they incorporate structure and coach involvement. For example, Jang et al., (2010) found that teacher autonomy-support and structure integrated as a complementary approach which positively correlated to predict student behavioural engagement. Like Grolnick and Ryan (1989), Jang et al's., findings suggest when those in a position of leadership (e.g., parents, teachers, and coaches) work to combine high autonomy-support with structure, they are more likely to nurture the psychological need of competence, allowing the recipient to be motivated within the environment.

Flashback: How do I provide choice? How much choice is acceptable? Are they

competent to make their own decisions? How do I maintain control without being characterised as controlling? How do I provide a highly structured session that facilitates athlete input?

On closer examination of the literature, it became apparent that the process of applying A-S coaching behaviours within the sporting domain had not received concurrent attention. For example, studies illuminating the importance of creating A-S environments were from an athlete perspective (e.g., Adie et al., 2008; Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). Additionally, studies that had successfully differentiated autonomy-support from a controlling instructional approach neglect to detail how the contextual factors relate to the multi-layered nature of A-S coaching. Perhaps more pertinent to the current study, the research that does provide a coach perspective (e.g., Mallet, 2005) is outcome-focussed, excluding the process information a coach may seek when developing their own A-S coaching behaviour.

To begin to bridge the gap, the aim of this study was to provide an in-depth examination of the development of A-S behaviours, by providing what Sparkes and Smith (2014) refer to as an inside-out perspective. Like Jones (2009), this paper challenges the dispassionate third person stance commonly found within the sporting domain by creating an opportunity to place the person back into the study of people. What follows is a reflective account of my personal experience as coach. To complement previous literature grounded within SDT, I present an autoethnographical approach to provide a personal perspective, charting the complex and murky reality of the process I, the principle author, experienced on my journey to becoming A-S. Combining the characteristics of ethnography and autobiography, autoethnography provided me with an opportunity to widen the lens of autonomy-support (Ellis et al., 2011), and in doing so, make the characteristics of this process available to a wider audience (Richardson, 2000). Similar to Tessier et al., (2013), I detail 'how' my interpersonal style and associated behaviours relate to the satisfaction of the three psychological needs.

Flashback: Do I really need to control everything? My philosophical stance is changing. My introduction to SDT (through my sport coaching degree) had provided an alternative approach; I could adopt the role of facilitator. Through continued exposure, I developed a sound understanding and began applying this theory to my own coaching practice. My suitability in occupying a coaching-researcher role throughout this study will be underpinned by my ability to develop critical awareness – something in which I, as a coach, had begun to practice.

Autoethnography: my chosen method of research and representation

Following institutional ethical approval, I began a seven-week professional development placement within one UK primary school. Throughout this period I occupied a dual role (e.g., the researcher and the subject), delivering weekly coaching sessions to replace the primary 6 core Physical Education class. Participants were aged 9-10 years old. Informed consent was collected from all participants (and assent from parents or guardians).

In the promotion of a need-supportive environment, each coaching session was designed to incorporate the seven associated A-S behaviours outlined by Mageau and Vallerand (2003). To monitor my A-S behaviours I drew from the SDT evidence base, specifically, an autonomy-support rating sheet (see Reeve et al., 2004) when designing each coaching session. Two initial observations of the environment I would become immersed in as coach and researcher, acted as an early familiarisation phase to establish trust with the participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Reflective journals were used throughout the seven-week period to document my observations and experience as coach. Reflecting on experience facilitated an opportunity to makes sense of what was happening while encouraging the development of analytic thoughts, a technique said to benefit the ethnographer (Bryman, 2012). My period of reflection followed a structured process as I made use of diaries, reflective conversations with other coaches and mentors, and the on-going analysis of critical incidents (Anderson et al., 2004). The six stage model of reflection offered by Gibbs (1988) provided the structure for each reflective journal. I reflected on field notes, session evaluations, and memories to assist the reflection process.

My fieldwork was flexible, facilitating an emergent process of data collection. My final analysis drew from all of the reflective journals collated, acknowledging insights and patterns I had identified across the seven-week period. Each reflective journal entry was subject to thematic analysis following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Similar to Scarfe and Marlow (2015), I engaged in on-going discussions with my co-author who acted as a critical friend. Discussions throughout the seven-week period centred on my process of analysis and provided an opportunity to explore alternatives in my interpretation while facilitating reflective functioning, generating a greater breadth, depth and richness in the data (Morrow, 2005).

For the purpose of this paper, and to increase our empathetic understanding of the coaching process (Jones, 2009), my experience as coach is exemplified in three separate but progressive stories. Each story represents a theme that emerged during thematic analysis and is constructed verbatim from my reflective journals. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of

all student participants. Like Purdy et al., (2008) each story is theoretically complemented by drawing from existing literature to explain my autoethnographical account. The first story, 'athlete input' draws directly from my observations during the early familiarisation phase. Here, the story is critiqued and contrasted with my first coaching session as an A-S coach while documenting the process I experienced as I introduced the students to an athlete-centred environment. The second story, 'provision of choice for all,' draws specifically from a critical incident involving significant others. Here, the plot of the story hinges on the impact of contextual and social influences on the provision of A-S behaviour. The final story, 'self-awareness of the autonomy-supportive coach' illuminates the importance of reviewing the effectiveness of my coaching practice. Specifically, the story highlights the necessary processes I engaged with on my journey to becoming A-S.

Story 1: Athlete Input

Journal entry 1: 18th February 2014

> I completed non-participant observation sessions to allow the students and myself to become familiar with each other. When observing the student-participants I made reference to their collective engagement using the rating sheet. I made notes consistent with the seven suggested A-S behaviours, structuring my field notes accordingly. As the session unfolded it became evident the structure of the session would not adequately challenge the students – as James shouted "Miss, why are we doing the same thing again and again? Did we not do this all of last year and the year before?" The teacher replied "This is what we are doing, shh." Throughout the session I made mental comparisons between the teacher and myself, contemplating what to embed into my forthcoming sessions. As the teacher initially addressed the students: "Sit down, legs crossed, arms folded and mouths shut," she successfully set the dictatorial tone she intended for the session. The teacher's refusal to address questions in an appropriate manner (e.g., one that did not patronise the students), seemed to deter future questions. "I'm not asking her, you do it. She'll just shout at us" said Ryan. A lack of rationale for tasks was consistent in advancing the confusion throughout the session. Students had no choice, no input and one piece of advice – "You're not doing what I did. You must do this." Student questioning was the ideal opportunity for the teacher to encourage a sense of involvement in today's session. Questioning the students could have confirmed several things for the teacher while allowing the students to feel heard. Providing appropriate challenge could have increased the dwindling interest and persistence from students. Before my next observation, I will consult

existing literature on the controlling environment I witnessed today to ensure my observations are informed for the forthcoming session.

The suggestion that teachers on average are more likely to show controlling behaviours (Reeve, 2009) had shaped my initial preconceptions of the motivational climate I had expected to witness within the school setting. Reeve (2009) defines a controlling style as a manner in which students may feel pressured to adopt the teacher's perspective, a manner that permits teachers to pry forcefully into thoughts or feelings, and a manner that enables teachers to force a specific etiquette upon their students. Research has demonstrated when a person perceived as a leader combines their perspective with one or both of the behaviours described above, they are believed to thwart the three psychological needs and consequently become conceptualised as highly controlling (Deci et al., 1981).

Following this line of thinking to the first story, the effort portrayed by the students can be interpreted as a key indication that the controlling interpersonal style of the teacher had begun to interfere with the psychological needs of the students (Reeve et al., 2004). Bartholomew (2010) suggests that a noticeable decrease in effort may be linked to the facilitation of non-self-determined extrinsic motivation (NSDEM). This was evident throughout the session as I noted the students' persistence in tasks decreased over time. Ryan's work in the 1980s (see e.g., Ryan, 1982; Ryan & Connell, 1989) offers perspective by underpinning the differentiated states of extrinsic motivation. Developed specifically to distinguish between the identified variations of extrinsic motivation, organismic integration theory (OIT) – one of the five mini theories embedded in SDT, proposes a continuum that reflects each motivated state from the least amount of autonomy, namely, external, introjected, identified, and integrated regulation. The continuum suggests that NSDEM is comprised by external and introjected regulation which results from obligation or coercion (Deci et al., 1994). Here it is believed the locus of causality is external to the self. For example, an athlete may need to cover excessive miles in pre-training and does so as a result of coach pressure (external regulation). This athlete may generate feelings of guilt if they do not undertake the additional training, and will therefore continue with the training to perhaps please their coach (introjected regulation). Fortunately, research has shown those in a position of leadership (e.g., the coach) can work to promote self-determined motivation by facilitating movement along this continuum (Deci et al., 1994).

Reeve et al., (2004) suggest the use of pressuring language from a teacher can interfere with the congruence of students' self-determined motivation and their persistence within the present activity or task. Research has also shown a lack of challenging activities to facilitate student enjoyment and interest can account for a drop in task persistence (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss,

2000). Therefore, in the current example it is anticipated the teacher put her needs before the needs of her students in this typically coach-centred environment. For example, James' outburst could be attributed to the familiarity of the session – it appeared a well-rehearsed routine. The response James received from his teacher produced a negative effect as he set about his task in a demotivated state. Work by Reeve (2009) suggests the lack of acknowledgment for James' perspective in this instance would contribute to his motivational concerns. Had the teacher acknowledged James' perspective, she may have warranted some degree of understanding or empathy for the concern James had voiced.

Findings from an experimental study by Deci et al., (1994) can help to explain what happens when the psychological needs of an individual are not met. The authors conducted a study on motivation and three A-S behaviours, namely, providing choice, providing a rationale, and acknowledging other's perspective. Children participating in the experiment were asked to pin-point a dot on the screen of a computer, and several conditions were made available (i.e., one, two, or all three of the A-S behaviours were implemented). It was concluded that the children's motivation was more self-determined when more A-S behaviours were included. Thus it is suggested that teachers should explain or rationalise their strategies while acknowledging the student's feelings towards the demands of the task. Perhaps if the teacher responded differently in the current example by acknowledging James' perspective, she might have influenced some positive re-engagement in the session (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Kidman (2005) suggests that those in a position of leadership can nurture student's intrinsic motivation by using effective questioning. In doing so, it is believed leaders will encourage student input by facilitating a level of engagement at a conscious level while positively affecting concentration and task persistence levels. Therefore, the combined lack of questioning and acknowledgement of student perspective in the current findings are suggested to have contributed to the disengagement shown by the student participants. This was evident as the students active involvement in tasks decreased over time (Reeve, 2012).

Story 1 continued: Athlete Input
Journal entry 2: 4th March 2014

> Two initial observations of the Physical Education environment shaped the aims of this first coaching session. Understanding the degree of autonomy-support I could apply to this educational setting had played heavily on my mind. The first test came in the early stages of the warm-up and stretching routines. I encouraged the students to input on the warm-up movements by implementing the

> provision of choice. I asked for a volunteer and selected Billy to demonstrate a stretch to his peers. He complemented his demonstration by explaining the technique of the stretch while talking it through step-by-step. Billy's ability to self-initiate is what had surprised me most – he began offering informative feedback to his peers on how to improve their stretching technique. I encouraged Billy to choose a classmate to demonstrate next. During the session I felt prepared as practical ideas emerged on how to introduce my A-S coaching, stimulated by my previous coaching experience. My preconceptions of how the students would react were misplaced – at least for the majority of them. Some of the quieter students struggled initially with the concept of having a choice. Delivering this approach to a new group of students was daunting, I wondered if they could make decisions or input into the session in the way I had hoped. I accepted it was not something they were used to and instigated a mental debate over their ability to make decisions based on my previous non-participant observations. During the session students responded with a level of engagement that was missing from the initial two observations I had made. Students began asking questions, and not the ones I had witnessed previously such as - "can I go to the toilet?" or "can I sit out?" They were asking questions that related to the tasks they had been given or the choices they had to make. My acknowledgement of student perspectives played a key role in the development of their positive tone, indicating increased levels of interest and enjoyment. I had witnessed an improvement. At the end of the session I posed questions to the students about how things had gone, what they had learned and what they liked or disliked. The opportunities presented throughout the session had an impact on the confidence of students. Some strived on the choices they were given, showing signs of competence whilst others perhaps felt intimidated or found the experience daunting. Changing the mind set of these particular students will be a gradual process.

Making a change, I implemented the provision of choice into my session purposefully encouraging student engagement and creativity (Mageau and Vallerand, 2003). Conclusions from a study by Adie et al., (2008) offer support to my findings. In a test of Basic Needs Theory (BNT), the authors envisaged that the perception of A-S would predict positive nurturing of the three innate needs which in turn would create feelings of advanced vitality -- an increased feeling of energy. Furthermore, the researchers made predictions on the positive and negative welfare of the athletes in relation to the autonomy-supportive environment. It was found that athletes who were given choice perceived their coach to be A-S, relating to greater satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness. It was concluded that when the athletes perceived themselves as the source of their action their vitality increased with

positive signs of engagement.

Incorporating choice into the present study created an opportunity for the students to self-initiate (e.g., the student discovers solutions to tasks and choices). Mageau and Vallerand (2003) state that the coach-athlete relationship created in the A-S environment should support opportunities for self-initiated behaviour by combining non-controlling feedback and independent work. Mallet (2005) extends support to this claim in his example of creating a training environment for elite athletes. Mallet provided opportunities for the athletes to self-initiate by encouraging athletes to take personal responsibility for self-learning. Athletes were encouraged to work both independently and interdependently offering each other feedback to promote a sense of autonomy and belonging which provided opportunities for athlete input. In the present study, and similar to Mallet (2005), opportunities which facilitated student input encouraged the development of self-initiated behaviour. For example, in the early stages of a coaching session, students were asked to work in pairs concentrating on a basketball pass they felt needed improvement; I noted some of the students had begun to provide feedback to their partner. I encouraged students to be informative (e.g., encouraging them to rationalise why improving the hand positioning might be of benefit to their peer) when giving feedback to develop this behaviour. Collaborative feedback became a theme that we progressed in each coaching session.

Questioning was another tool used throughout the session to purposively develop student collaboration and allow students to reflect their understanding of tasks. Potrac and Cassidy (2006) claim that questioning can lead to self-initiated behaviour. Questioning throughout my session drew primarily from scaffolding techniques (e.g., providing hints) which can be associated with offering explicit guidance on what knowledge may be required to succeed at a task (Vygotsky, 1978). Posing appropriate questions was an indirect way of guiding the students in a meaningful direction while creating a space for their understanding of tasks to develop. Using scaffolding techniques increased the student's ability to work confidently in the environment and was evident in their ability to answer questions with a variety of responses. Student's willingness to respond to questions appeared to increase with time. Engagement response from students can be an indicator of increased self-determined motivation (Mallet, 2005).

Story 2: Provision of Choice for All
Journal entry 1: 11th March 2014

> To develop student input, half of the students created a warm-up game whilst the remaining half chose the cool down practice. The behaviour of the students reflected their positive emotional tone and led me to think that motivation had increased. Providing choice

> throughout my session created multiple opportunities for the students, including, the initiation of team work and self-initiated behaviour. As the session emerged I noted some students appeared to have a controlling effect on their peers. Specifically, when provided with the opportunity to make a choice, I noticed that instead of working equally as a group, the 'dominant characters' had taken charge to direct the decisions themselves. Had I simply allowed the dominant characters to control the session?
>
> On observing the dominant characters taking control, I took the opportunity to develop my involvement. I began working in close proximity to the groups when they were provided with choice. It was here that I noticed the controlling behaviours of some of the students. I switched my attention to the 'quieter' students and quickly realised I had silenced them by creating a situation where their peers could dominate, thus reducing their autonomy. The A-S environment that I was creating was not integrating effectively with the structure of my session. Consequently, the majority of the quieter students were left with the opposite of what I was trying to create: no choice, no input and seemingly reduced confidence. My session had failed to incorporate an appropriate structure (e.g., one that portrays leadership from the coach, clear organisation and plans, and an appropriate challenge). I could have ensured all group members were contributing by immersing appropriate guidelines or requirements into the session.

It is suggested adopting A-S behaviours may be more difficult to employ in some circumstances. Cowan et al., (2012) demonstrate that providing choice to nurture the psychological need of autonomy is based on the assumption that students have both the ability and confidence to make meaningful decisions. My observations initially highlighted the 'quieter' or non-dominant students appeared withdrawn and disengaged from the session. Specifically, my non-participant observation of the controlling environment offered support to the suggestion that these students lacked the belief that they could make a choice effectively. Kutnick et al., (2008) shed some light, suggesting that students are known to show high levels of dependency on their teacher who, for the majority of the time, direct students on what to do. The non-dominant students in this example had transferred their dependency to their peers.

The controlling environment the students had previously been exposed to may have shaped their disbelief and feelings of low efficacy. These students struggled to psychologically thrive in an environment that did not meet their basic need for competence (Brown & Ryan, 2007).

Story 2 continued: Provision of choice for all

Journal entry 2: 18th March 2014

After much consideration in relation to the literature and critical friends, I adapted the structure of my next session to increase the perception of autonomy-support for all student participants. I chose the spokesperson for each group, adopting a different approach from last week. Firstly, this was to encourage other students to input into the session but, more specifically I wanted to guide them to interact meaningfully with their peers. To further facilitate this interaction I created smaller groups. In particular, a critical conversation with my supervisor prompted an idea on how to provide an opportunity for everyone's psychological needs to be met – by specifically targeting the two dominant characters. As the group work got underway I asked Ryan and James (the two dominant characters from the previous session) to work on an additional task I had purposefully created. Providing each group with specific guidelines to incorporate into their plans offered a better structure and direction for the session. I felt in control of the session while adopting my A-S behaviours. I noted that collectively the input from each group had increased. Students were becoming determined to add their perspective to the group decisions as they continued to provide informative comments to each other. I observed an improvement in the manner in which they set about tasks (e.g., they became active quicker with an increased intensity). However, on closer inspection of the 'quieter' students, I noted that some of them still appeared uncomfortable with the perception of choice. Although they were integrating more effectively as a group, some individuals appeared passive during the session. Increasing the confidence of these students will be a lengthy process.

I noted several differences in relation to the two dominant characters. Firstly they were beginning to work together as a team, and secondly they were acknowledging each other's perspective. Although the students were acting autonomously (e.g., they were in control of their choices), I had created a scenario where I could facilitate a specific outcome. The environment was becoming mastery-oriented, creating the optimum opportunity for peer learning. Students were now working together to achieve goal-related outcomes while the ego-involvement that the dominant characters previously displayed was lessened. Excluding the two dominant characters from the group worked today, but may not be an appropriate long-term solution. I will continue to engage in critical conversations with my supervisor and coaches to gain additional perspectives to make sense of my observations and advance my coaching practice further.

Reeve (2009) argues that in order to facilitate a specific student outcome it may become appropriate to integrate high autonomy-support with a highly structured coaching session. Structure can be defined as the clarity of instruction or guidelines set by those in a position of leadership to direct students in the achievement of desired outcomes. Mageau and Vallerand (2003) propose that in the absence of structure, tasks may become chaotic, creating confusion for the students involved. Furthermore, the authors claim a coach who provides structure whilst portraying behaviours of involvement can nurture the psychological need of relatedness facilitating a feeling of connection with others. Adopting this perspective in the present study initiated a change in behaviour from the non-dominant characters who had shown signs of withdrawal from the previous session. For example, during a basketball session, each group of students were provided with three specific guidelines to be incorporated into the drill they were asked to design. This helped to direct the students toward a specific outcome, but more importantly it provided students with the necessary information to allow them to act confidently in an autonomous situation. As a result, students appeared to integrate as a group effectively during this specific task. A mastery climate began to evolve as the students tried hard to develop their skills by working together as a team (Papaioannou & Kouli, 1999).

Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) claim that a mastery motivational climate can be achieved when the context of a coaching session facilitates the opportunity for students to become task involved. In contrast, an ego-orientated environment encourages students to narrow the focus to the outcome of the task while fundamentally steering them to compare their performance with respected others. Standage et al., (2003) add that a mastery-oriented environment can be perceived when the structure of a session facilitates learning, hard work and vicarious experience. Integrating high levels of structure and autonomy support in the current example encouraged the two 'dominant' characters to begin to work together. This change in behaviour could be attributed to a shift in focus from outcome to process related goals (Ryan & Deci, 2008). The present study supports suggestions that a mastery-oriented climate is associated with enhanced engagement and self-determined motivation when the A-S behaviours are accompanied by structure and involvement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Cury et al., 1996).

Story 3: Self- Awareness of the Autonomy-Supportive Coach
Journal entry 1: 1 April 2014

> It's while I write this reflection that I realise my on-going development throughout this study has been shaped significantly by my reflective and critical routine. My self-awareness as a coach to the

> ever-changing environment and to the needs of the students has continued to increase with each reflection or critical conversation I engage in. This process of development has at times, offered a means of escaping feelings of isolation. Importantly, when issues surfaced that I had yet to experience, it forced me to ask 'why?' Striving to provide solutions, I often sought the help of others – turning to my critical friends. It created an opportunity to produce and critique my ideas with knowledgeable others, gaining multiple perspectives which prompted more reflection and discussion. My reflective routines provided a valuable opportunity to make connections to both my past and present experiences. Critical conversations in relation to peer-coach observations prompted an opportunity to ensure I explored what I had interpreted whilst immersed in the world I was studying. In a sense, autoethnography has opened my eyes to aspects of my practice I have previously overlooked. For one, I have never looked close enough to witness the issues that arose in relation to the dominant students. Existing literature guides you as an autonomy-supportive coach to provide choice, but it's what it doesn't say that may have cause for concern. There is no guideline on how much choice I should provide to a class of 10 year olds, nor is there direction on how to facilitate such choice effectively when you become responsible for 22 students. Fortunately, this experience has facilitated a front row view to my practice, guiding me to the little things that seem to make a big difference. Reflective practice and critical conversations have facilitated a new way of knowing. It is through this process that I have been encouraged to continuously evaluate my effectiveness as a coach. It has provided depth to my interpretations creating a whole new learning experience for me as both a researcher and a coach. As my self-doubts begin to ease, I feel more confident in the process of sharing and discussing my experience with others. As my involvement draws to an end I will continue to embed this critical reflective practice into my professional development. I now appreciate the advantages of constantly working to raise my self-awareness in a complex profession.

With the need for a more authentic portrayal of the coaching process, many researchers have become increasingly interested in providing holistic accounts of coach education and development (Cushion et al., 2003; Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Abraham & Collins, 2011). Underlying this rise in attention, is the need to understand, as coaches, 'why' we practice the way we do. Ahlberg et al., (2008) offer a case-study solution aimed at capturing changes to a coach's practice. Using a research-oriented approach, the authors suggest that action research facilitated an increase in coach awareness and developed personal coaching behaviours whilst illuminating processes that assist the on-going

development of the coach. Similarly, and while arguing the case for autoethnography, Jones (2009) offers support by suggesting that a reflective approach to research (e.g., writing from a personal perspective) can generate potential in creating an innovative way of bringing the everyday and unexamined aspects of coaching practice to life. The present study aimed to provide empirical evidence for this assertion.

The acceptance of autoethnography as method continues to rise within the sport and exercise science domain (e.g., McMahon & Dinan- Thompson, 2001; Jones, 2006; Purdy et al., 2008; Jones 2009). Allen-Collinson (2012) argues that autoethnographers must develop critical awareness and reflexivity in order to manage the demands of occupying a dual-role (e.g., coach and researcher) throughout the research process. As a result, researchers are encouraged to reflect upon their experience to successfully capture the unique nature of this approach. Consequently, the reflective and critical routines I engaged with throughout this process became central to my on-going coach development. For example, as I became increasingly interested in the effect that my coaching behaviours had on the students psychological needs, my reflective journals provided a means to ask 'why?' Continuous reflections created a space to draw upon previous work as I searched for ways to move forward in current and future sessions.

Reflective practice, now commonly associated with the professional development of a practitioner, can help to illuminate the processes and factors that influence the effectiveness of service delivery (Anderson et al., 2004). For example, the incident with the 'dominant students' was brought to my attention as I began to reflect in-action. This process of reflection encouraged me to look closer at my interpersonal style, specifically how I could integrate my A-S behaviours more effectively to meet the psychological needs of all students collectively. My reflections provided an opportunity to make sense of the decisions I made as coach that day.

Anderson et al., (2004) state that embedding reflective practice into the training and practice of practitioners can help to illuminate and explore the decisions we make in order to increase our understanding of practice. As such, it can be suggested that the knowledge gained from my critical reflections may have served a particularly useful role when exploring the constraints that the social environment may have on the application of A-S behaviours. Anderson et al., suggest that when dealing with complex practical situations such as coaching, a theory to practice approach is insufficient. Alternatively, practitioners are encouraged to develop a knowledge-in-action approach (i.e., a combination of research based knowledge and tacit knowledge) which will better facilitate our ability to identify good coaching practice. Schön (1983) argues that this may be achieved through the reflective examination of both research based knowledge and our own knowledge-in-action, helping to

develop the characteristics of a competent practitioner. This became evident in the current study as I began to engage in critical conversations to assist my reflective capacity.

Knowles et al., (2001) assert that dual-stage reflection can initiate both immediate and delayed reflection on-action by encouraging the practitioner to share their experience. Klein and Hoffman (1992) describe this process of storytelling as a direct way of developing our cognitive-perceptual skills as a practitioner. In the current example, my critical conversations with my co-author and respective coaches enabled me to verbalise my thinking. In a sense, it encouraged me to generate a new depth of understanding as I began to gain insight in the knowledge and methods used by other practitioners. This was achieved in the present study by reframing problems through reflective questioning. I gradually became aware of the intricacies of A-S coaching as I began to access my tacit knowledge. Consistent with an autoethnographical approach, Knowles et al., (2007) claim that our ability to draw upon tacit knowledge can facilitate an opportunity to rationalise our approach and therefore, is integral to a practitioner's professional development. Reflectively, and like Mallet (2011), it is suggested that the adoption of a research-oriented approach fuelled the development of my coaching practice by increasing my understanding of 'how' to effectively implement A-S coaching behaviours.

Concluding Remarks

The existing literature on the provision of autonomy-support within a sporting context has focused exclusively on the product of A-S behaviours, while overlooking the process information a coach may seek when creating an A-S environment. The aim of this study was to provide an in-depth examination of the development of A-S coaching behaviours. The study raises awareness to the contextual and social influences on the development and sustainment of A-S coaching behaviours. Specifically, the findings illuminate the significant role that peers can hold in the provision of an A-S environment. Furthermore, findings illustrate that a research-oriented approach to practice may provide the necessary processes required to excel current coaching practice through engagement in reflective conversations, exploration of decision-making, and the evaluation of alternative approaches or strategies that may be implemented into coaching practice. Like Purdy et al., (2008), an autoethnographical approach helped provide an insight to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the coaching process. Findings from the present study highlight that an autoethnographical approach can be a beneficial tool for coach development. This process of research has made the characteristics of A-S coaching available to a wider audience, and in doing so has provided a developmental coaching tool along the way.

To further develop our knowledge of the coaching process, similar methods could be used with different age groups. The degree of autonomy-

support provided may differ by age, and the student participant's ability and confidence to adapt to the environmental change. For example, had the present study captured the process of adopting A-S behaviours with older participants, my experiences and perceptions may have been somewhat different. Future research is needed to examine the contextual and social influences on the development and sustainment of A-S coaching behaviours. Specifically, an inside-out perspective may provide a clearer picture of 'how' coaches adapt their A-S behaviours to meet these challenges. Autoethnography offers one approach to explaining the development of A-S behaviours but to generalise, a quantitative approach could generate further breadth to the area. For example, a controlled intervention offering observational analysis of participant behaviours with an A-S and non A-S coach would appear merited.

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