Sports coaches as ‘dangerous individuals’ - practice as governmentality

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Abstract
Recent concern surrounding sports coaches’ interaction with young people has reflected a fundamental change in the way coaches and others regard the role of sports. In this paper, we consider the identification and definition of the contemporary sports coach, both acting in a professional and volunteer capacity, as a ‘dangerous individuals’ and suggest that particular child protection professionals acting in concert with others have contributed to a culture of fear in sports coaching practices. Drawing on data from a recently completed ESRC funded research project, we argue that contradictions in policy and practice, which serve to privilege a particular discourse, have cast the coach as both predator and protector of young sports performers. This has undermined the role of the coach, led to intergenerational fear, created doubt about coaches’ intentions, and promoted their adoption of defensive and protective practices. Utilising the Foucauldian concept of governmentality we argue that, as a consequence, fundamental trust based relationships, necessary in healthy athlete-coach engagement, have been displaced by a privileged discourse embodied in sterile delivery and procedure, governed by regulation and suspicion.

**Key words** – Foucault, Governmentality, Deprofessionalisation, Fear of the coach, Defensive coaching practices

**Background**

In this paper, we consider the [re]identification and [re]defining of sports coaches as ‘dangerous individual’ (Foucault, 1978), whose day-to-day practice should be treated with concern and suspicion by sport administrators, fellow coaches, athletes, young people, and their parents. In addition, sports coaches and their conduct are now considered important elements within the wider arena of welfare and child protection/safeguarding; the latter being considered essential to all forms of pedagogical engagement. Moreover, the practise of sports coaching appears to have been partially displaced by a new generation of defensive practices in which coaches are now policing themselves and others in sport and physical education settings (Piper *et al.*, 2012). In this paper we draw on the Foucauldian notion of the ‘dangerous individual’ (Foucault, 1978) suggesting that it is a lens by which we might better understand and explore the emergence of fear, mistrust and doubt which we contend has challenged and displaced coaches’ pedagogical practice and has limited purposeful engagement with young people and athletes. We acknowledge that this
insidious atmosphere in which professionals and others with a duty of care towards children have led individuals to adopt similar protective behaviours. While in this paper we draw primarily on examples from sports coaching (professionals and volunteers) who are working in community, elite, and educational settings, we contend however, that others such as nursery carers, youth workers, and physical education (PE) teachers, among other groups, may also be subject to the prevailing discourses of child protection policy and practices (Fletcher, 2013; Piper & Stronach, 2008; Piper, Taylor, & Garratt, 2012; Garratt et al., 2012).

This paper relates to a recently completed Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC] project (see Piper et al., 2011), which ran for a full year (September 2010-2011) and involved data gathering from observations of practice, individual and group interviews, the analysis of policy documentation, and participant observation of child protection training courses. The project adopted a broad ethnographically-inspired approach; the main field researcher being a qualified sports coach and PE teacher who has worked at community and national settings as well as in secondary and Further Education levels. The project involved nearly 100 participants from a variety of educational and sports settings in which we examined a variety of conditions that have contributed to an experience of profound change in the way sports coaches engage with athletes and young people.

Whilst sports coaching activity in the United Kingdom (UK) continues to be predominantly carried out by volunteers, 76% (Sports Coach UK [scUK], 2011), who commit their time to the instruction of others through a local allegiance and mutually shared love of the sport. While there has been an increase in the number of qualified coaches, up from 30% in 2004 to 54% in 2011, there still remain a limited number of coaches (24%) who receive payment from their services (North, 2011). In addition there has been a marked shift in UK Sport's policy, the effect being to attempt to professionalise the sports coaching sector, its systems and its participants (Taylor & Garratt, 2010a, 2010b; Taylor & McEwan, 2012). As part of this policy, the aim to 'improve' the delivery aspects of the workforce gained momentum in 2002 with the appearance of the Coaching Taskforce: Final Report (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2002). Since this publication, and through a number of state sponsored organisations and initiatives, the professionalisation of sports coach education and coaching practice has been significant; this shift in emphasis has led to increased governance and state involvement, where individual sports have become explicit
through a series of financial incentives and grant awards (Houlihan & Green, 2009). The effect of such compliance has been exacerbated by disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1977) that serve to regulate behaviour. An example of such is that future funding being conditional on sporting organisations embedding predetermined or centralised policy into their practice and the development of systems that modify traditional instructional practices. This is particularly effective in a context where a lack of financial independence, maturity, and ontological security (Giddens, 1991) has compromised individual sports. Part of this process has resulted from successive governments’ wish to guarantee that sports coaching and instruction, in a new and more professional guise, is a safe and appropriate environment for young people. This sensitivity and concern followed a number of high profile sexual abuse cases (Brackenridge, 2001; Garratt et al., 2012).

This commitment to safe practice must be set against the desire expressed by successive governments to increase rates of participation in youth sport and to counter the perceived consequences of increased sedentary lifestyles, in part through the fulfilment of particular expected Olympic legacies (Taylor & McEwan, 2012). The commitment to make sport safe and enjoyable for young people is shared by a number of non-governmental (sporting) organizations (NGOs), government departments, and children’s charities; the delivery of these commitments being closely aligned to other child welfare developments such as Every Child Matters (DfE, 2003) and the need to focus on the importance of school-based sport. The recognition that sport and coaching engagements must be understood as taking place within a risk-averse society (Beck, 2000) provides a framework for interpreting the significant increase in the number of organisations perceived responsible for the regulation of safe sporting practices. Young people’s involvement in sport cuts across such domains as education, health, community, and youth intervention programmes, therefore, the numbers of agencies involved with child protection are numerous. Indeed, there are estimates that 100,000 coaches are employed in a school setting (North 2011). One organisation, however, which is central in formulating the agenda for child protection in sport, is the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU).

1 Recently, however, the Coalition Government has withdrawn £160 million funding in support of school-sport partnerships in England (Slater, 2010).
Prevailing policy

In 1995, the first child protection course in sport was piloted, and soon after the National Coaching Foundation (now Sports Coach UK), working in conjunction with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), formalised workshops as part of continuous professional development for sports’ administrators, coaches, and others working in sports instruction (Malkin et al., 2000). Almost without prior notice, all sport and those involved in its delivery, was defined as an area with a problem. Coaching practices such as instructional touch, physical support, and tactile congratulations, which have had historically justified became deemed problematic and redefined risky. Sport was understood to require a new kind of professional training and moral ethic to self-regulate, to cleanse itself of individuals who might be intent on inappropriate behaviour with young people. According to Rose (2000), such rapid developments are a common feature in the context of increased control practices. More specifically, Andrews and Silk (2012) suggest that ‘while the dose may vary, the basic prescription of neoliberalism remains the same: purge the system of obstacles; celebrate the virtues of individualism [meaning accountability and self-regulation] ... and recast social problems as individual ones’ (p.7). In Foucauldian (1983) terms, this situation reflects the great paradox of liberalism: the right of the individual to be autonomous alongside the ever greater need for regulation and social control. Such was the desire for sport to be seen to be ‘cleaning up its act’, and thus its coaches, that a specialist unit located within the NSPCC was developed in 2001: the aforementioned CPSU. This occurred even though there was little evidence that sport and sports coaching were any more likely to be targeted by those with ill intent than other comparable areas in which adults take charge of young people (O’Neill, 2012; Piper et al., 2012).

While those organisations and institutions that have a primary or secondary responsibility for child protection are numerous (and few, if any, would claim it is not within their remit), the arrival and consolidation of a well-resourced designated body such as the CPSU saw the centralisation of responsibility and concern, as it relates to sport, being significantly vested in a single organisation. The CPSU, as an arm of
the NSPCC, while being part funded by the Sports Council, was presented as being in the best position, independent and staffed by experts, to advise and guide sports in matters relating to child protection and welfare. Indeed, ten years after its inception the CPSU continues, unsurprisingly, to locate and promote itself as the sector’s source of specialist expertise (CPSU, 2012). When asked, during the ESRC research project interview process, about their continuing relevance and whether they were confident that sporting organisations should perhaps eventually be sufficiently skilled in these matters, an officer of the CPSU responded that there would always be a need for the unit and that there were always new ways in which individuals seek to harm and abuse young people in sport. It is notable and relevant here that at the present time the CPSU is the only designated unit of its kind located within the NSPCC, while other youth based activities such as theatre groups, choirs, Koran classes, Sunday Schools, have not been singled out for such scrutiny and treatment. As Goode notes (2010), paedophiles are interested in access to young people per se, and the vehicle by which access may be gained becomes secondary.

In the proceeding analysis we suggest that the prevailing atmosphere, which has led to an increase in the attention to child protection issues in sport, can be interpreted through a process of understanding the discursive practices of particular claim makers and how the subjectification of responsibility and control impacts on both the intent and action of coaches. Methodologically, we employ Foucault’s (1979) concept of governmentality, from which we derive our understanding of the term ‘government’ and its antecedent practical expression and meaning. ‘Government’ in this sense is not a sovereign force, but rather the product of a more dispersed structure of disciplinary technologies, through which conditions of regulation and control are both mediated and directed (Foucault, 1983). For Foucault, ‘government did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed’ (1983, p.221). In this important respect, ‘governance’ rather than ‘government’ reflects a radical shift from ‘a regime dominated by structures of sovereignty to one ruled by the techniques of government … and the necessity for the development of disciplines’ (Foucault, 1979, pp.18-19). The corollary in the context of sports coaching is that particular discursive practices, emanating from policies that speak into existence ways of being and
doing, serve to govern and ‘structure the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault, 1983, p.221), by putting in place the possible outcome. This is exemplified in the manner in which government financial incentives and grants have served to encourage compliance within the coaching community.

The impact of governmentality, with its attendant disciplinary technologies and practices, has led to the identification of sports coaches as in some way ‘lacking’, of being in need of correction, producing a definition and further reification of what constitutes the ‘good coach’ and/or ‘good practice’. We suggest that the ambition to construct a ‘safe coach’, more professional in action and intent, is riven with contradictions, fundamentally at odds with nurturing appropriate dispositions towards intergenerational relationships, and actually contrary to the welfare of coaches and young people.

**The emergence of the coach as the ‘dangerous individual’**

In considering the formative struggle undertaken by the field of psychiatry in the latter half of the 19th century, Foucault (1978) argued that in an effort to legitimatize professional knowledge and practice within the European penal system, psychiatrists attempted to subjectify particular criminal acts and in the process constructed the notion of the ‘dangerous individual’. By claiming expert knowledge of a scientific discourse, new medical professionals became the moral guardians of a process of classification and division within the field of psychiatry (Foucault, 1983). Foucault suggested that through such dividing practices, enhanced by assertions of scientific rationality and validity, individuals became categorized as ‘dangerous’ and therefore in need of special treatment and control. Dividing practices were also used to classify ‘in groups’ and ‘out groups’, inclusive and exclusive identities (Rose, 2000). Those regarded as problematic were isolated, and excluded from certain areas of social practice while others were called upon to monitor, watch, and control from a distance.

Foucault (1978) argued that in the emerging case of psychiatry new professional understandings were formed in the cultural shift between classical knowledge and modernity. Rose (2000) contends that this move created opportunities for claim makers to adopt new powerful and authoritative positions. In the case of the growth
and legitimacy of psychiatry, it became an autonomous body assuming significant prestige because it had been able to develop within the framework of medical discipline and was conceived of as a reaction to the dangers of the social body. For Foucault (1983, p. 212), this authoritative position permits a form of power that serves to categorise ‘the individual, marks him [sic] by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him’. This account matches the process by which, through the acquisition of power, child protection professionals have emerged as a legitimating authority in sport (Garratt et al., 2012), with a specialised knowledge that speaks into existence a new professional discourse while further obscuring and marginalising other forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1978; 1980). Through processes of adoption and ascription, such professionals and their representative bodies take on a legitimizing authority which permits not just the privileging of their own ‘truths’, but also the ability to categorise others. Once the process of division and categorisation takes hold, those inhabiting particular domains come to recognise themselves as being simultaneously the objects and subjects, or masters and servants, of new constructions of professional knowledge (Rose, 2000).

Following the advent of the child welfare professional in sport from the 1990s, and progressive emergence of the policy ‘expert’ of child protection in sport during the last decade, there is now a situation in which controlling institutions are managing risk by defining the activity of professional coaches and other sports’ volunteers as work done by what could be described as ‘dangerous individuals’. Through prevailing mechanisms such as, designating bodies to advice and develop policy, compulsory child protection training and the issuing of guidelines and new regimes of practice the focus has been to manage the coach and their practice to treat them as a as a ‘dangerous individual’ This management of risk has manifested itself in defining practices such as ‘no touch’ policies, the insistence that coaches should not engage in one-to-one delivery, the recommendation that before any contact permission is sought, and other policy frameworks that have altered practice with the view of reducing ‘risk’. Thus, not only is there now identification of those at risk (i.e. young people involved in sport), but a further negative labelling of those perceived to be ‘risky’, potential sources of harm and danger. In addition, there is the identification of certain behaviours, practice and sporting spaces which are now associated with new
forms of ‘risk’ and subject to [re]definition in the name of child protection and safe practice. Hence the image and meaning of the paedophile or abuser is now becoming confused and conflated with the actions of the ‘predatory’ coach. In this form of governmentality, which locates the act of sports coaching and its spaces as sites of potential concern, sport itself is inappropriately regarded and pathologised as another problematic arena and, in turn, sports administration takes on an imperative to manage its practice in general and coaching in particular. Sequentially, remedial training and corrective education (Foucault, 1977) have been and will be implemented in order to ‘make sport safe again’, with categories of potentially ‘dangerous’ activity being discouraged or avoided. In this new atmosphere, actions once regarded as perfectly ‘natural’, such as touching an athlete, providing un-observed one-to-one feedback, or offering a helping hand to a novice swimmer, become classified as ‘risky’ and ‘deviant’ through a process of normalisation (Piper et al., 2012). Abnormal practices, of distance, removal, and disconnection, are adopted through a new process of governance and ethics to achieve the status of a ‘safe professional’. As we have noted elsewhere (Piper et al., 2012), and as evidenced in our recent research (Piper et al., 2011), an experienced soccer coach, having spent years coaching at various levels, now appears reluctant to touch a player by simply shaking their hand, an act he once undertook with little hesitation. He added:

The coaches actually shake the kids’ hands when they arrive and when they go. Now I don’t think there’s any harm in that, but again, I was very uncomfortable doing that, so I stopped doing it … I let my assistant coach do it but I didn’t do it … I’d go in and every night and as they were coming in, I’d say ‘hiya Johnny’, ‘hiya Bill’, ‘how are you, Dave’, ‘how are you’? Every single night, you know them by their Christian names but I would not shake their hands. (Neil level 4 FA Coach)

Foucault also suggested that in an effort to claim new authority, vested interests will be complicit in the generation of both a ‘literature of criminality’ (Foucault, 1994, p.192) and ‘language of description’ (Rose, 2000, p.322). In this, a key purpose is to embed into the consciousness of society the notion that criminality is a constant and ever-present menace to the social polity. The development of discourse which
speaks into existence a new literature and language can take a number of different forms: the reporting of instances of abuse in sport; the release and publication of policy documents; guidelines for relevant parties; calls for political action; and codes of ethics to inform and govern practice (Garratt et al., 2012). As a result of the claim to specialist expertise, many of these documents receive little, if any, critical comment or review and are taken by many as authoritative declarations, so providing a powerful underpinning of the prevailing discourse and adding to the network of governmentality (Foucault, 1979). In concept, and underpinning the official literature, is an on-going privileging of particular discourses and discursive acts. Such discourses and acts serve as normalising conditions, which as ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1980) control not just the behaviours of individuals but also the manner in which we think about ours and others’ behaviour (Foucault, 1978). The embodiment of disciplinary technologies through rapport a soi presents ‘another side to the moral prescriptions ... the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself ... which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions’ (Foucault, 1991, p.352). Thus, a particular form of ethical thought constitutes a powerful condition, assuring the inscription of the ‘conduct of one’s conduct’, within the individual’s consciousness (Foucault, 1991, Rose, 2000).

In the context of child protection in sport, any attempt to establish a counter-argument brings forth a situation in which critics and dissenters who wish to challenge such developments are exposed, somewhat unfairly, to accusations of inappropriately opposing the protection of children; a process paradoxically compounding the notion of risk. Since discourse around safeguarding and child protection has the effect of producing an explicit and unquestionable ‘good’ and ‘moral purpose’ to protect young people in sport, counter-narratives are treated as peripheral and dismissed without due consideration. (Heather, can you provide examples/evidence here please?) Foucault (1978) argued that securing the claim to be an authoritative body allows experts not only to speak to the apparent concerns of society, but also to imbue the discourse with a tone, legitimacy, and significance that others are denied. Mathiesen (2004) refers to this marginalization of the ‘other voice’ as a process of being ‘silently silenced’, where not only the voice of the alternative narrative is muted, but also the avenues by which that discourse may be openly articulated is restricted. He goes on to suggest that while there are concerted efforts
to silence alternative positions, they do, paradoxically, serve a purpose for those in authority in as much as they present a set of arguments against which the prevailing discourse is defined, judged and thus deemed in the ‘public good’. In doing so, they help classify and distinguish ‘inclusive and exclusive identities via legitimated languages of description’ (Rose, 2000, p.322).

This governing of the individual, their actions and condition, is not characterized by centralized and hierarchical control but rather through a network that is altogether more dispersed and insidious in effect. It is not a matter of disciplining and nominalizing the sports coach by overt punishment, but by their conduct being continually monitored and reshaped within and through these networks of practice. In a more distributed and amorphous network, the individual becomes subject to the panoptic and synoptic structures of surveillance and training that have been built into the flow of everyday existence (Rose, 2000). Sports coaches are, by regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980), identified and defined as being ‘safe to practice’. By the process of Criminal Record Checks (CRB), attendance at child protection courses, and being ready and willing to be [re]trained they are considered ‘live and current’ by authoritative bodies and are thus deemed inclusive. To remain so requires an obligation to continuously and repeatedly provide evidence of one’s worth and commitment. In exercising self-betterment and prudence, they must [re]educate themselves with the assistance of experts and must actively engage in partnerships with expertise to maintain inclusiveness. This, in turn, combats potential threats to individual and collective security. In these regimes, the government and management of conduct ‘is designed into the very fabric of existence itself into the organisation of space, time, visibility and circuits of communication’ (Rose, 2000, p. 327).

According to Rose (2000), such practices and potent regimes of governmentality define and develop inclusive and exclusive identities. Opposed to inclusion and the circuits that maintain it, stands exclusion, although those who are excluded are not completely ‘outcast’, as they are also subject to strategies of control. Those sports coaches who have not yet attended CPD courses on child protection or continue to demonstrate ‘unprofessional’ and ‘unsafe practice’, are often excluded in terms of restrictions on the sporting domains or spaces they are permitted to work in. For
those coaches subject to licencing by NGBs, the exclusion is evident by prospective employers checking on registration databases. For those needing to physically carry a ‘licence to practice’, inclusion and exclusion conditions are printed and visible for immediate external consideration and checking. The subjectification of exclusion is complete in as much those who fail to comply and engage with the mechanics of normalisation do so via an illusion of choice. With this exclusion comes the promise, for some, of re-familiarization and re-acceptance should one’s own conduct of conduct meet the prevailing conditions. Paradoxically, those excluded are managed by a veiled promise of inclusion. Those coaches who wish for transformation are subject to additional attention, an arrangement which relies on both the internalisation of responsibility to seek remedial training, and on the collective responsibility coaches and others in contact with young people now assume.

Those working in pedagogical settings are co-opted to be ‘partners in prudence’ (Rose, 2000, p. 227); that is, they are accountable both for their own intentions and behaviour and are further responsible for monitoring and policing others’ actions to ensure compliance in all coaching interactions. Recommendations given to a group of novice coaches attending a Sports Coach UK child protection workshop (observed during 2010 as part of the ESRC project) emphasised the anxiety surrounding the possibility of private or un-observed interactions. The wide ranging and pervasive character of concern was exemplified when the course tutor advised the attendee coaches to:

Be careful when placing a young player [cricket fielders] too close to the square leg umpire. They could be out there some time, time enough to be exposed to grooming. (Transcript from scUK Child protection Course)

Attendance at a number of these three-hour child protection workshops during the research process provided telling evidence and insight in the context of this analysis. There was an explicit focus upon the disclosure of inappropriate practice, often accompanied by anecdotal examples of coaches found guilty of abuse from the course tutor. This took precedence over providing candidates with important practical guidance on how to help coaches maintain the integrity of their sessions while keeping all involved safe. The prevailing atmosphere promoted the idea that for any
coach, dangerous practices are literally only unguarded moments and actions away. This approach produces a pronounced disciplinary effect. A consequence of such training is that coaching practice is perceived as best managed and coordinated by a unitary and universal appeal to de-contextualised guidelines. Simplistic solutions are regarded as most effective, an antidote to previous inappropriate practices and indiscretions. Just as child protection policies are often implemented by blanket application, the implementation of guidance for practice assumes homogeneity (Goode, 2010). By implication, inappropriate coaches are expected to respond to new standards to ensure an environment and practice of risk-free coaching. Such examples include initiatives to prohibit the transportation of young people by an individual adult, communicating via text messaging, and discouraging previous ‘natural behaviour’, including celebrating success by forbidding any type of physical contact other than ‘high fives’ or providing physical reassurance by any means other than the ‘sideways hug’ (Piper et al., 2012).

This means of correct training, in a Foucauldian sense, leads to a normalisation of practice and, as Rose (1999) has suggested, the management and governance of practice from a distance. Indeed, the [re]educated coach becomes responsible for the ‘conduct of their own conduct’ and ‘conduct with a direction’ (Andrews & Silk, 2012; Foucault, 1997), and so by implication also becomes the observer of others, protector of young people, and further responsible to and for the wider ethical claims of sport. The ‘good coach’ is thus engaged in continuous training and lifelong learning, in a bid to self-improve, become the ethical coach, become safe, in order to free themself and others from ‘danger’ (Piper et al., 2011). Centralised training is the means by which professional conduct parts company with the past, producing a displacement of practice and pedagogy associated with the daily interactions of coach-athlete relations across individual sports. To be deficient of evidenced training is to become unprofessional, lacking in moral direction and instruction in how best to keep the athlete, themselves and sports safe.

As Giddens (1999) and Seldon (2009) suggest, the distancing of particular communities and individuals has led to a growth of mistrust, which is palpable both at the level of individual actions and intentions, and with regard to interpersonal relations and commitments. The propagation of de-contextualised knowledge has,
we would argue on the basis of the ESRC project findings, led to a cleansing of engagement and, as a result, many coaches are now practising within a climate of fear, threat, and impending allegation. We contend that this has given rise to a distortion of practice in which safeguarding and child protection discourse have served to impair rather than enhance the quality of interpersonal interactions between coaches and young people within and across particular sports.

**A radical displacement of practice**

Drawing on the recently completed research (Piper *et al.*, 2011), we focus on the notion of displacement in order to highlight a number of conflicts in coaching practice. While the claimed intention of various child protection bodies has been to remove so-called ‘risky acts’ from the practice of coaching, the consequence has been that good practice has become paradoxically disconnected from the immediate realities of normal coaching interactions. Particular coaching practices, once regarded irrational, having been modified to meet the needs of a heightened perception of risk, are now considered rational. Indeed, they are instrumental in the protection of the coach against harmful allegations and false claims of being ‘dangerous’. Examples gathered from a range of interviews and observations suggest there has been a marked change in current practice in relation to what has gone before and that coaches now find their behaviour referenced by a number of powerful preconditions. Peter, a kayak instructor, suggested how he had to change his thinking and actions:

Certainly, things like rolling [teaching an Eskimo roll] is the obvious one, where you're in a pool, and certainly you do find that what you could do in 10 seconds is taking you 10 or 20 minutes because you're fudging around and just being overly aware of what you're doing, and thinking actually 'I just want to go there, hold this person by the shoulder and I wanna move their arm in this way' and I wanna go 'can you feel this?' 'Push there', whatever it is. But I'm being ... I feel restricted that ... I don't feel comfortable to do that all the time because you know, other people in the pool might go hmm 'well that's wrong'.
In addition, there is a stress on the importance of the coach exposing him/herself to the watchful eye of other people. The conversion of private space to public viewing is thus regarded as a prudent necessity, to ensure collective witness; but at the same time restricts and interferes with effective coaching delivery. Moreover, this control of the pedagogical space adds to the classification not only of what is unacceptable, but where and how it should be carried out. In a Foucauldian sense, managed space becomes an additional technology of control (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Bobbie, an outdoor instructor, recounted her thoughts when teaching climbing harness-fitting:

No, never ever be alone with a child, like they say it is completely in my opinion ridiculous. Say, you had to double back someone's harness buckle on their harness [for a safe fitting]; they didn't know how to do it. You have to make them stand in front of everyone, with their hands on their head you know, so everyone and everything can see the whole performance ... what a joke.

The perception of mistrust is exhibited by the coach’s desire to expose and further make public their behaviour while also (and in a sense, in contradiction) guarding against the possibility of misrepresentation. Thus, in contemporary situations where issues of voice and athlete-centeredness have redefined the nature of coaching relationships, the notion of protecting oneself has been amplified through a palpable fear and mistrust of young people, along with the growing realisation that even false accusations can be extremely damaging, and even career ending (Piper & Stronach, 2008; Sikes & Piper, 2010). A soccer coach and physical education teacher working in the context of an after school activity suggested that young people are aware of such insecurities and vulnerabilities among coaches, and that these can sometimes be used against them:

I think in many cases now ... where maybe the socio-economic background of the children is not as advantageous as it could be, the parents don’t have that ‘we believe the school’; they’ll come in ... and say ‘what have you done to my little Billy’. They believe their child ahead of they believe the profession.’

(Alun)
While there is considerable data from the research to suggest that new ways of behaving are influenced by fear and mistrust of self and others, there were also notable examples of cases in which the desire to standardise policy and practice has failed. The Staffing Director at one of the Sports Council’s National Centres suggested that being regarded ‘expert’ and achieving a high-profile within the field afforded, in practice, the privilege not to conform to blanket defensive expectations:

We’ve tried to resist having a policy, as much as we possibly can. Because … I don’t want to stifle the individual decision-making that goes on, and are people doing what they believe is the right thing? You know I do believe really, really strongly in empowering staff … if I have to have policies for all those kind of things then they’re sort of employing the wrong staff; you know, they kind of should be employing people who are all big enough and ugly enough and grown up enough to make their own decisions about that sort of thing. It’s about the professional staff and the centre because we are who we are, we have greater licence, I feel. (Mark)

This suggests the possibility of more nuanced action and local practice, where ontological security (Giddens, 1991) within a hierarchy allows teachers and coaches to operate subversively within the system in order to resist policy and further privilege their own agenda. However, highlighting such a possibility would seem to assume that power falls evenly upon its subjects, which clearly is not true in all cases and situations. In practice, while opportunities for resistance may exist, the pressure (and incentive) for coaches to comply may sometimes simply be too great. When interviewing a member of the medical team from the English Institute of Sport, the interviewee recounted that, in her observation of coaches in the preparation of elite Olympic athletes for the upcoming 2012 London Games, ‘all bets are off. It is not what you do; it is about getting it done’. She went on to add to this ‘sense of anything goes’ that:

We have the coaches, some of them from abroad, doing whatever it takes, we are only months away for some of them to make the cut, and athletes know their career is on the line. No one, trust me, is going to say or do anything that rocks the boat. (Paula)
As we have attempted to show, any displacement of practice is, as Derrida (2000) suggests, inevitably incomplete in as much as it has little regulation and control in the manner of its manifestation. This is because its point of departure, we contend, has focused upon what not to do, i.e. the elimination of perceived poor practice, rather than thinking more positively about what to do, i.e. the establishment of good practice (see Piper & Stronach, 2008). Sports coaching and pedagogy has thus been left with a deficit model where the coach is blamed and pathologised for the indiscretions of others in the past, and, at the same time, held responsible for the implementation and ‘subjectification’ of a programme of new guarantees for the present and future. The outcome, which produces a contradiction, becomes institutionalised and further obscures consideration of alternative discourses and critical conceptions. Indeed, such is the level of emotion and hysteria surrounding the issue of child abuse and protection that the fear of the perpetrator extends beyond those directly involved in coaching. For example, at least one school has insisted that parents who wish to watch their child represent the school team from pitch side should undergo a CRB check before setting foot on school premises (Gore, 2012). It may of course be that this constitutes not merely a risk-averse regulatory action on the part of the school, but a strategic paradoxical attempt to disrupt the dominant discourse of risk and protection by applying it to the extreme. After all, some parents are teachers and coaches too, and thus dangerous.

Such defensive practices produce a curious logic that extends far beyond the gymnasium or games pitch (Gardner, 2009). The following quotes illustrate the scope and extent of such regulation, with the second conveying a strong sense of being watched by others. Commenting on club policy concerning the issue of giving lifts to players, a soccer coach stated:

> Wait with them, but wait outside the car … let it be visual, don’t sit in the car with one kid … it’s not just protecting, you know … the player/kid/youngsters, but protecting the coach as well’. (Paul)

Liam, a swimming coach working in schools with disabled pupils, went on to add:
You are sort of under the spotlight, aren't you, because you have got sets of eyes looking down on you, even from the gallery, the parents are there, the helpers, the pool staff ... I suppose swimming ... more than any other sort of sport, if somebody wanted to do anything inappropriately, then swimming would be one of the easiest ways to do it, wouldn't it?

While child protection legislation has found itself increasingly to be a mainstay of coaching education in the UK, still there is little compelling evidence to suggest that cases of child abuse in sport have become any less frequent or that the associated benefits within the wider discourse of child welfare have produced substantial change (Piper et al., 2011).

**Conclusion - new conduct and the 'new professional'**
The conception of the newly conditioned coach is located within a discourse and micro-politics of surveillance in which subjects are charged with the governance of their own conduct to live ethically and virtuously. At the same time, the actions of such individuals are subject to a collective body of regulations, a counter regime of managerialist policies and practices that serve to define a form of new professionalism, a form also treated as a goal by many volunteers. This master narrative bears little resemblance to a notion of coaching and sports instruction based on the autonomy of particular individual sports, local practices and decision making (Taylor & Garratt, 2010b). Yet the guarantee of professional conduct, as opposed to a more discerning conception of professionalism, sees an increasing reliance on the inscription of regulations and guidelines. Being professional is thus translated into being a ‘good technician’, where a reductive and arguably de-contextualised form of coaching practice leads to the actual de-professionalisation of coaches.

The tacit acceptance of this new, performative regime of truth (Foucault, 1980) defining the modern professional, both confuses and conflates the issue of increased regulation and control with a discourse of improvement and standards of best practice. Furthermore, in the act of translating policy into practice, the coach becomes aligned to the mechanism of governmentality. The focus is a campaign for continuous self-improvement, of on-going corrective training, for which subjects
become active agents in the manifestation and development of well-managed, regulated interaction. Moreover, the discursive framing of the coach as simultaneously predator upon, and protector of, young people leads to a deepening of self-doubt and further erosion of confidence, the corrosive effects of which produce a malign mistrust of intentions both within coaching and from outside.

Proposed solutions enthusiastically adopted and pursued by claim makers and particular child protection professionals can result only in the increased governance of self and others, fuelling yet further professional anxiety. The notion of in loco parentis, one which has been historically at the heart of local provision and consumption of sports coaching, has been displaced by the arrival of the newly trained, card-carrying individual. The main reference point of the new professional is no longer reflective of, or sensitive to, local needs, expectations, and notions of good practice, but is rather more exclusively focused on the directives of external regulation, mitigated through the internalisation of fear, doubt and unrequited duty. The transformation of the coach into a new ‘technician’ and agent of child welfare and protection, further naturalises a process of de-politicisation, in which coaches lose much of their critical capacity to influence the very nature and content of sports pedagogy.

In conclusion, we argue that coaches now find themselves placed in an environment bedevilled by the contradictory framing of being part of both the problem and also the proposed solution (Piper et al., 2012). On the one hand, coaching interactions give rise to problematic relationships and notions of inappropriate actions; on the other hand, coaches are simultaneously cast as protectors and moral guardians of the young, the innocent, and of sport’s ‘moral promise to society’. This paradoxical relationship has produced, in essence, a radical displacement of the modern professional coach. Coaching practice, formerly inspired by community engagement, is now realised more often through the internalisation and embodiment of centrally prescribed regulation and control, via a process of governance and the ‘conduct of conducts’ (Foucault, 1991). The ubiquitous practice of physical touch, historically central to aspects of safety, instruction, and the individualisation of technically skilled coaching, has been curiously redefined as dubious and dangerously sexual.
References


