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Investigating the alignment between coaches' ideological beliefs and academy philosophy in professional youth football

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Abstract

The impacts of professional sporting culture and institutional discourse on coaching practices and ideologies have largely been unconsidered and undiscussed. Understanding coaching practice from a social perspective can provide insights into the prevailing culture that coaches are immersed within, pointing to patterns of discourse, norms and values that govern coaches' actions. The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential for (mis)alignment between coaches' ideological beliefs and the instituted philosophy of the professional football academy at which they worked. Thirteen male football coaches (M = 36.23 years) were observed coaching on three separate occasions, equating to 2584 minutes of footage (M = 66.26 minutes). Each recorded session was analysed using a computerised version of the Coach Analysis Intervention System (CAIS). All participants were interviewed twice (before first observation and after final observation). Coaches were questioned about the academy philosophy and their personal behavioural profiles. Data were subjected to thematic analysis and placed within a theoretical framework utilising concepts of Pierre Bourdieu. Findings highlighted that coaches' interpretations of the academy philosophy were impacted by their prior socialisation and position within the status hierarchy. The data also demonstrated 'philosophy' being used as a 'buzzword' throughout the academy, derived from loose interpretations, but offered few specific suggestions regarding how coaches 'should' behave. Coach interactions were used as forms of social control rather than addressing pedagogical concerns, with coaches' personal dispositions proving extremely strong and ultimately prevailing. It is worth questioning, therefore, the extent to which the academy 'philosophy' can be displaced, and the mechanisms required to ensure collective acceptance to an instituted coaching approach.

Keywords: sports coaching, coaching philosophy, coach behaviour, ideology, Bourdieu

Introduction

Scholars have suggested that coaching research is starved of the contextual considerations and discursive practices comprising the coaching role (e.g., Jones, Potrac, Cushion, & Ronglan, 2010; Jones, Edwards, & Filho, 2014). This is particularly the case in elite developmental sport contexts, such as football academies, where coaches are central figures in athletes' developmental trajectories and considered as 'gatekeepers' of knowledge (Cushion & Jones, 2006). In this context, evidence shows that coaching encompasses periods of initiation and socialisation (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2006), forming a micro-political network (e.g. Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002) that provides a framework for social exchange governing coaching practice. The effect of this is that coaches' knowledge, behaviour, and practices are conditioned (but not limited) by cultural traditions, orthodox beliefs and hierarchical relationships (Cushion & Jones, 2006, 2012) within coaching sub-cultures. As individual coaches' practices form part of wider social and cultural arrangements (Potrac et al., 2002), individual activities are contextually-bound to achieve collective goals (Cushion & Jones, 2006). Thus, understanding coaches' behaviour from a social perspective provides hidden insight into the prevailing culture that coaches are immersed within, pointing to patterns of discourse, norms and values that govern coaches' actions. By investigating coaching behaviour from a social perspective, we are better placed to highlight transmission and actualisation within coaches' practices, providing a level of critical analysis and comparative insight.

The behaviours coaches employ are heavily informed by the conventions and traditions inherent in their coaching culture (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). Exposure to this culture typically involves a process of first observing and receiving coaching as athletes, then as novice or assistant coaches, before becoming head coaches themselves (Cushion et al., 2003). Over time, personal beliefs *about* coaching form deep-rooted theories *of* coaching

(cf. Argyris & Schön, 1974), reflective of ideological principles and rhetoric forming the basis for coaching methodology (Cushion & Partington, 2016). These 'folk pedagogies' become established and govern coaching practice, and despite attempts from coach education to bring the process of socialisation under greater control, coaching can be conceptualised as an ideologically determined practice. In other words, coach behaviour is as a result of his or her underlying belief system (cf. Pajares, 1992) resulting from exposure to the collective social consciousness and accompanying cultural discourse. In coaching, this often results in a reproduction of 'accepted' practices (Cushion et al., 2003), which 'mimic' those that went before.

Despite previous mixed-method studies providing an enhanced understanding of coaches and their practices (e.g., Harvey, Cushion, Cope & Muir, 2013), from a critical sociological perspective much of this work has been, arguably, descriptive and reductionist in nature, viewing coaching as a linear process through applying models of best practice (Jones et al., 2014). Essentially, understanding coaches' behaviour as a form of ideological expression enables deeper insight into how the nature of the activity (i.e., social, cultural, historical) affects coaching practice (Cushion & Partington, 2016), rather than simply documenting behaviour as a systemic chain of propositions that equate to a coherent and calculated system of 'common-sense' pedagogic activity (Jones et al., 2014). Such insight invites the possibility for learning and change through exposing the internalised structures and schemes of perception that influence coaching practice (cf. Bourdieu, 1977).

Our purpose, therefore, was to build on the existing critical sociological research into coaching to provide insight into the mechanisms underpinning the transmission and reception of an instituted coaching philosophy within a coaching academy, an area popular for discussion within coach learning and practice. In using Bourdieu's theoretical architecture, we are better able to make sense of the (mis)alignment or disjuncture between the instituted

academy philosophy, and coaches' ideological beliefs.

Theoretical framework

A significant body of research has drawn upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu to provide insight into the social mechanisms that regulate coaching. These mechanisms include the unequal distribution of power across coaching practice, highlighting the symbolic violence built into the interactions between coaches and athletes (e.g. Cushion and Jones, 2006, 2012) as well as the patterns of socialisation that frame coaches' learning (e.g. Cushion *et al.,* 2003; Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez, 2010; Hassanin and Light, 2014). Further research has explored the interplay of power and culture within formal coach education systems (e.g. Townsend and Cushion, 2017; Cushion, Griffiths, & Armour, 2019) and in coach mentoring (e.g. Leeder & Cushion, 2019; Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom, 2018). Taken together, this body of research suggests coaching has a tendency towards social and cultural reproduction, that is, the reproduction of existing and dominant discourses, practices and knowledge. In thinking with Bourdieu, we are able to place coaches' practice into a wider framework of social structure, exposing the social origin of coaches' actions, discourses and behaviours and highlighting the mechanisms that contribute to cultural reproduction in coaching (cf. Bourdieu, 1989). Exploring contrasting fields of practice within coaching is important to expose the various forces at work in socialising coaches. In exposing these regularities across fields with different sets of structured social relations we are better placed to move away from reproduction and towards transformation.

Bourdieu utilised the concept of fields and the analogy of the 'game' to illustrate the behaviours and relationships of social actors. Fields have recognisable social boundaries, and represents a social space in which there are collections of structured social positions. Each field contains a particular social 'game', for which its actors develop a 'feel' for, engaging in regular and predictable practices to accumulate various forms of capital, thus (re)producing

socialisation processes and collective ways of thinking and doing (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu's concept of field is useful for understanding the set of logics that structure institutions and the activities within them (Bourdieu, 1990a). In this context, the field of coaching includes such things as: sport-specific governing body policies, procedural directives (understood as club playing directives) and coach education; the knowledge and expertise of a range of social actors, and, the organisational structures and hierarchies in place within particular coaching contexts. Together, these provide a social framework for sets of orthodox practices and norms that coaching follows.

To understand one's position within a social system, habitus represents durable and transposable patterns of behaviour and dispositions which, is both structured by and structures individual actions (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Habitus is a conceptual tool for understanding internalised social structures that are manifested in ways of being, actions, language and behaviour. Habitus encompasses orienting dispositions, providing individuals in the same objective conditions with a shared or similar worldview. Fields, such as a football academy, act on individual coaches to establish 'how things are done', that is, an invisible reality that governs practice, which Bourdieu terms doxa (Bourdieu, 1977). Where there is doxa, there is symbolic violence, which exists when doxa produces or sustains an unequal distribution of capital (Everett, 2002) that is accepted and normalised by individuals. In coaching fields, the logic of practice orients coaches towards a singular purpose, ensuring collective acceptance. The degree to which individual actors are taken 'in and by the game' is referred to as illusio (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Following the 'rules' of the game can evoke potential benefits, with this being measured by alignment between habitus and the field in question (Bourdieu, 1990a). Social positioning, then, is dependent on the power of habitus in the field to which it is attuned.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's concept of capital governs the position individuals occupy within a social space (Bourdieu, 1989). According to Bourdieu, the level of capital afforded to an individual represents the material and symbolic resources available to them based on their current position or prior history in a given field. Within coaching, coaches harbour varying levels of capital, applicable to and impacting upon their social hierarchy, which includes cultural (coaching qualifications), social (position within a club), and physical (attributes and abilities). Symbolic capital refers to the recognition of a species of capital as highly valued, providing benefits and advantages for that individual within a particular field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Individuals are continuously seeking to elevate their social positioning (Bourdieu, 1990a), thus the concept of capital elicits notions of relative advantage and power distribution. For example, social capital is associated with status, professional relationships, experience and reputation within coaching, and varying extents of social capital can be accrued according to biography, and knowledge and understanding of coaching. Whereas, symbolic capital relates to the perception of other forms of capital when transformed by an individual in a position of authority (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Thus, capital has a powerful influence on 'what' can be learned in coaching.

In this research we use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital to help understand coaching as a social practice and investigate the potential for (mis)alignment between coaches' ideological beliefs and the academy's philosophy, alongside a set of secondary explanatory concepts such as doxa, illusio, and symbolic violence, which have rarely been used in coaching research. More specifically, the framework offered a set of 'thinking tools' (Bourdieu, 1989) to illuminate social positions when conceptualising the logics of practice, structure-agency dialectic and field disjuncture or acceptance, visible from the methods employed. Indeed, the use of mixed-methods, as supported by Bourdieu himself

(Bourdieu, 1984) adds an additional dimension to this study, as much of the previous work drawing upon Bourdieu has been limited to single methodologies. Therefore, the use of observations alongside interviews offers a further contribution to the wider coaching literature.

Methodology

Paradigmatic perspective

This research is guided by the key principles of critical theory. Thus, the relationships of power in social practice are considered with the shared nature of reality and of knowledge (Creswell, 2013). From an ontological and epistemological perspective, social practice is fundamentally mediated by power relations; these are both social in nature and historically constituted (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). The issues of power, domination, and oppression are central to critical theory, and in highlighting who has power, who does not, and why (Kincheloe *et al.,* 2011) within a social system. More specifically, research within a critical tradition generally accepts theory as a form of social or cultural criticism, with certain groups being privileged over others; the oppression that characterizes this is reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable (Kincheloe et al., 2011).

Research design

This season-long study involved a single site investigation of the academy within a professional football club from the north of England. The case study method was considered appropriate in enabling an in-depth investigation into coaches' behaviour in reference to the academy's coaching philosophy (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006). The purpose was to gain context-dependent knowledge of one site, with previous research suggesting such knowledge and expertise are central tenets of the case study as a research method (Flyvbjerg, 2006). While this study captures the coaching processes of only one professional academy, readers

can interpret these findings through the lens of their own practice and context (Smith, 2018).

[Insert Table 1 Here]

Participants and context

Professional football clubs are highly-stratified and notoriously difficult to access (Cushion & Jones, 2012). The club under study had an existing relationship with the authors with desire to extend this to coaching. Therefore, prior to the start of the season, the second author met the Head of Academy Coaching and Academy Manager to discuss areas where coaching support could be provided. From these discussions it emerged that the head of coaching and academy manager wanted to understand more about the coaching behaviour of their staff. The role of the second author was to map out a methodology for how coaching behaviour could be investigated and determine how this data could be used to support the coaches' continued learning and development. Once agreed, all coaches were brought together by senior academy staff for an initial meeting to explain the nature of the work. Given this was the first time a study like this had been undertaken at the academy, it was decided that all full-time and part-time academy coaches would be asked to take part. Shortly after starting the study, the Academy Manager and other senior coaching staff both moved positions. One stayed at the club and the other left the club, but neither were able to participate in the study. After institutional ethical approval, thirteen male coaches (M = 36.23 years) agreed to take part in this study. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of the participants (see Table 1).

Since 2011, all English professional football academies are required to fulfil the guidelines of the Premier League's The Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP). The EPPP was in response to calls for more home grown and higher quality English players. As such, the purpose of the EPPP is to "promote excellence, nurture talent and systematically convert

this talent into professional players capable of playing first team football at the club that develops them" (The Premier League, 2011, p. 12). Players are scouted, selected and contracted to embark on a three-phase performance pathway (i.e., Foundation, Youth Development, Professional) (see The Premier League, 2011, p.15). In the present study, players of different phases were split across two sites; a main site outdoor facility (Youth Development and Professional) and off-site indoor facility (Foundation). The performance of academies is measured through 10 key performance indicators (i.e., vision and strategy, coaching provision) (see The Premier League, 2011, p.28), with at least the UEFA 'B' Licence being a prerequisite for coaches delivering. Through this independent audit process, academies are categorised across levels 1-4 (see The Premier League, 2011, p.31), with the lower the category status awarded (i.e. level 1) the greater the levels of funding. In the season prior to the study, the academy had attained Category 2 status.

Academy coaching philosophy

A section of the EPPP states "clubs will be encouraged to apply their own specific approaches to performance planning and create their own bespoke player development models" (p.15). The EPPP emphasises that "the board of each club will define its own Football Philosophy as the club's individual "DNA" and then delegate responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of the Football Philosophy at Academy level to the Academy Manager and his/her staff" (p.16). In the academy under study, the senior staff (i.e. Academy Manager, Head of Academy Coaching) developed the coaching philosophy (provided in the bullet points below), which was intended to serve as the framework for how coaches worked with their players:

- "Although educating the players to play as part of a team, it is vital that all our players understand the roles and responsibilities they have within the team structure as an individual."

- "Coaching will be structured through enjoyable sessions and taught in a number of styles that must enthuse, guide and excite our players."
- "Coaching sessions will follow our curriculum although it is vital that our playing philosophy of ball retention is evident throughout the session and not dismissed at the expense of the topic."
- "Coach intervention along with instruction is encouraged, however players must learn to make their own decisions and have ownership of their own personal development."

The EPPP document suggests an academy should be "able to articulate its own Football Philosophy and demonstrate how it is embedded into the day-to-day running of the Academy and the wider club". Importantly, the philosophy is "measured by the values that the club, staff and players demonstrate through their actions on a day-to-day basis" (p.16) and is thus observable. In this study, the academy's coaching philosophy was shared during pre-season directly with full-time coaches during face-to-face staff meetings and less directly with part-time coaches through a printed curriculum handbook.

Procedure

Single research methods (i.e. observations only) do not provide sufficient coverage of the coaching role (Potrac et al., 2002), offering no more than a descriptive analysis (Cope, Partington, & Harvey, 2017). In response to this, a mixed-method approach has been welcomed in the coaching literature, as the data generated shows an appreciation of what coaches do and their interpretations of this (Harvey et al., 2013). In short, accompanying systematic observation data provided insights into coaching practices and questioning the coaches (i.e. interpretive interviews) against these behaviours uncovered subjective reasons for them (Cushion et al., 2003). A mixed method approach fits with the paradigmatic assumptions of critical theory as interviews were able to reveal something of the history and discursive construction of coaches' practices, whereas observational data provided insight into shared patterns of behaviour, disposition and interaction; that is, their *practical*

knowledge (cf. Bourdieu, 1984). Together, this provided a basis for ideology critique.

Systematic observation

A systematic observation method has often been employed to identify the behaviours coaches use in practice (Cope et al., 2017). In this study, each coach was observed coaching on three separate occasions, resulting in 39 sessions being recorded in total. This equated to 2,584 minutes of footage (M = 66.26 minutes per session). On a monthly basis, the Head of Academy Coaching created a timetable of the observation schedule, which was sent via email to the researcher and all coaches. Each session was filmed using a digital video camera placed on a stationary tripod. Observations took place at two sites; an indoor arena (from a vantage point) and outdoor pitches (from a touchline). Each observed coach fitted a Bluetooth microphone. Each recorded session was analysed using a computerised version of the Coach Analysis Intervention System (CAIS; Cushion, Harvey, Muir, & Nelson, 2012). This particular system was used for a number of reasons, which were: a) that this system was the most recently validated systematic observation instrument in coaching, b) the research team being familiar with and trained in using the system, and c) its usage and therefore appropriateness for use with football coaches. Inter and intra observer reliability checks were performed on 15% of all data that was systematically coded, with the recommended 85% reliability threshold achieved (Cope et al., 2017).

Interpretive interviews

A semi-structured interview is a useful research method to help uncover personal interpretations of social situations (Nelson, Groom, & Potrac, 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). To accompany field notes and observations, coaches engaged in semi-structured interviews at two separate time points; the first occurring at the start of the season (across six weeks) and the second taking place after the third observation (across four weeks). This was dependent on coach availability. Within the first interview coaches were encouraged to detail their

previous athletic careers and early coaching experiences to enable us to interpret how this may have impacted their coaching behaviour. They were also asked to provide us their understanding of what they perceived to be the academy coaching philosophy.

After each coach had been observed three times, coaches were invited to take part in a second interview, which was based on their systematic observation data shared with them throughout the season. During this interview, coaches were encouraged to discuss their thoughts on their behavioural profile linked to the academy's philosophy. In this way, it offered participants a chance to also reflect on the research process (Smith & McGannon, 2018) and enabled us to consider further interpretation of the academy philosophy. All interviews took place at the main academy site and were transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

For the purpose of this study, the systematic observation data offered a reliable means of identifying actual coaches' behaviours (Cope et al., 2017), while the CAIS offered an established instrument in line with validation procedures (see Brewer & Jones, 2002). Analysis of the CAIS data took place on a descriptive level (Partington, Cushion, Cope, & Harvey, 2015). For example, this related to the frequency of coaches' primary (i.e. type) and secondary behaviours (i.e. timing and recipient) coded in line with operational definitions (see Cushion et al., 2012). Percentages were calculated by the following equation: frequency of individual behaviours divided by the total number of all coaching behaviours (Lacy & Darst, 1989). The quantitative data generated formed the basis of additional interpretive methodologies (i.e. interview questions) used to analyse these behaviours further (e.g. Partington & Cushion, 2013).

Analysis of the qualitative data was two-fold. First, thematic analysis was undertaken, which involved identifying and organizing patterns of meanings systematically across a data set, in relation to answering a particular research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). To ensure

data provided an accurate representation of the research question, a 'critical friend' (i.e. co-authors) were used at various stages of the research project (Smith & McGannon, 2018). The first stage involved co-developing the first interview guide, followed by dual attendance at five of the 13 initial interviews. Once data were collected, transcribed and coded following the process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012), the first and second authors familiarised themselves with the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This was not a systematic guide, however, and was often a reciprocal process to avoid ill management of data (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and identify theoretical concepts within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The development and interpretation of transcripts resulted from researchers challenging each other's 'worldviews' (Nelson et al., 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Such dialogue, for example, discussed the ideology/philosophy argument, alongside the impacts and interplay of agency and structure in elite developmental contexts. This then served as a lens through which to better understand the behavioural data.

Therefore, the data analysis followed abductive reasoning, which involved moving back and forth between induction and deduction, converting observations into theories before assessing those theories through action (Morgan, 2007). Again, this was not a singular event and involved many meetings between researchers during the course of data collection (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Despite the potential of exposing conflicting beliefs (Sparkes & Smith, 2014), such discussions offered a reflexive approach to data analysis (Smith & McGannon, 2018). This iterative process allowed new theory (i.e. Bourdieu) to be identified from the data (Patton, 2015) and positioned within a theoretical framework (see Townsend & Cushion, 2017).

Researcher reflexivity

Reflexivity is considered a cornerstone of rigorous, power-conscious coaching research (Townsend & Cushion, 2020). Researcher reflexivity occurred in two ways. The first was

during data analysis, as explained in the section above. The second was through an ongoing need to appreciate how data may have been shaped by the presence of the first author and second author during data collection. Through rapport developed with coaches (e.g. discussing mutual football connections), this level of social capital enabled the researcher's presence to become 'accepted' around the academy (Patton, 2015). This resulted in longer conversations being held with coaches before and after coaching sessions, and an increased interest from them regarding what 'was being found'[1].

Furthermore, the first author – as a neophyte coaching researcher - faced a number of issues affecting data collection and analysis. However, some of the main issues faced revolved around coach availability and coach resistance (i.e. confusion and reluctance when observing coaches), leaving the researcher questioning both the level of importance attached to the process, and their own position within the hierarchy – or on the peripheries - of the academy. This reflexive point is an important one when considering the openness of coaches to share insights and, in turn, the results obtained (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

[Insert Table 2 Here]

Results

Systematic observation

The behavioural profiles of the coaches in this study were similar to those found in other studies (i.e. Potrac, Jones, & Cushion, 2007; Partington & Cushion, 2013). For example, the most used coaching behaviours were direct management and instruction, although silence was found as the single most employed behaviour for nine of the 13 observed coaches (see

[1] The academy held their own in-house CPD, which at times focused on coaching behaviour. While we were not privy to the design or delivery of these, or the conversations that ensued, it is important to note in the context of this study and why the data may have presented itself in the ways found.

Table 2). However, silence was also the coaching behaviour with the largest variance between coaches (*SD* = 9.74%), with this even being the case between coaches of the same age group, i.e. Coach 10 (33.27%) and Coach 11 (13.59%). Further variances were discovered between coaches in terms of instruction, i.e. Coach 9 (8.87%) and Coach 11 (20.85%) and silence, i.e. Coach 13 (12.96%) and Coach 9 (40.83%). Questioning behaviours were less common and where these did occur, variances were found in coaches' questioning, i.e. 0.99% (Coach 11), 10.83% (Coach 6). The range in coaches' behavioural profiles perhaps demonstrated that there was no clear mechanism for understanding and operationalising the academy's philosophy related to coaches' behaviour. Through the qualitative interviews we were able to explore coaches' reasoning and justification of their behaviours, with three themes being constructed from the interview data: 1) Disseminating the academy 'philosophy', 2) interpretation of the academy 'philosophy', 3) impacts of prior socialisation experiences.

Interpretive interviews

Disseminating the academy 'philosophy'

The analysis highlighted not only the hierarchical methods of transmission, but epistemological gaps in terms of the academy's perceived philosophy within the EPPP and what was being transmitted. Indeed, it appeared senior coaches' ideological beliefs were being imposed on junior or part-time coaches, with the expectation they align their practices accordingly, rather than something that was co-created with their input: "It was done when I joined...it was put across strongly that's how we want to train the kids and how to play in the matches" (Coach 2), "in terms of the coaching language and some of the terms, I'm still getting used to that, but the playing philosophy has definitely been outlined to me" (Coach 1). These ideological beliefs then functioned as academy philosophy, with senior staff members reinforcing its 'top-down' nature:

> "We have regular meetings...we're involved in the actual process of the audit…me and [Coach 6] work very close with [Academy Manager]...he allows us to have that input…mine and [Coach 6] job is to ensure that filters right down" (Coach 13)

This was supported further by other full-time coaches, who alluded to their first-hand access during the methods of establishment and communication:

> "We occasionally have meetings with senior coaches where someone will put on a presentation and then we'll discuss it, it's not really about the presentation, it's more the discussion it starts" (Coach 11)

> "I'm allowed to step out of my goalkeeper frame a little bit…saying my opinions to [Academy Manager]…he accepts and listens…We have good debates about tactics, players, opinions…He's the boss and we go with what he says…but he hears out what we have to say" (Coach 12)

What was clear was that only full-time coaches seemed to have an ability to shape the academy's philosophy, which then filtered down to part-time coaches. This added a further layer of interpretation, as part-time coaches learned about the academy coaching philosophy through a variety of indirect methods (e.g. observations and discussions) with full-time, senior coaches and receiving feedback on their coaching:

> "If I've got any questions, the full-time members of staff are happy to answer any questions that I've got…I prefer that to anything that's programmed" (Coach 1)

> "I'm coming to sessions whenever I'm available to observe senior coaches…to be as familiar with the philosophy as possible…[Coach 13] being out there with me, asking questions…to coaches who are more experienced and here full-time" (Coach 5)

> "I've found the opportunities very valuable where the senior staff come down and spend time with us on the pitch during sessions...asking questions…maybe slightly changing things, asking why we've done certain things that way or the other" (Coach 7)

Given these methods of transmission, it is worth questioning the extent to which the academy's perceived 'philosophy' reflected an ideological intent, that is, it was shaped by senior, full-time coaches reflective of their habitus as opposed to the EPPP. Then, the

expectation was for it to be received and interpreted by coaches lower down in the status hierarchy:

> "It's the topic of our philosophy around everything that we do…what we're delivering is what they want at the top" (Coach 6).

Interpretation of the academy 'philosophy'

Perhaps due to the methods of transmission outlined in the previous section, the data revealed a level of ambiguity in coaches' articulations of the academy philosophy. For example, coaches tended to allude to the *playing* principles of the club, with these interpretations of 'philosophy' relating to the coaches' understanding of how their teams were expected to play, for example "play out from the back" (Coach 2), "attacking football" (Coach 5), "possession-based approach" (Coach 6), "play through the thirds" (Coach 7) were terms used by coaches. It was only when coaches were shown the academy philosophy statements and asked to explain their understanding of these that coaches offered their interpretation of how they were expected to coach players:

> "I coach the under-10's…trying to let them make mistakes, manage mistakes, make decisions...they've gotta make decisions…obviously they still need that technical input too" (Coach 1)

> "I think in this age group it should be more about guided discovery...I don't really wanna give them the answers… 'cos on Saturdays we aren't there to give them the answer" (Coach 7)

> "My primary target is to get players to a level where they can have a career in Football…and create a certain level of performance on a Saturday so they don't lose confidence" (Coach 10)

As these data suggest, the academy philosophy offered few specific suggestions for how coaches 'should' behave, with coaches drawing on 'buzz words' that have become popularised in coaching and highlighted a disjuncture between what was instituted and what was translated among the coaches.

Impacts of prior socialisation experiences

The third theme related to how coaches' prior socialisation experiences served as a filter through which they interpreted the academy's coaching philosophy. In particular, coaches referred to their playing careers (see Table 1) and how these influenced their coaching behaviours, as underlined by one senior coach: "I think a lot has been through my coaches…who I've worked with or under…the bulk of my knowledge comes from personal experiences" (Coach 10). In the absence of a well-articulated academy coaching philosophy, it seemed coaches 'cherry-picked' aspects of their prior socialisation to make sense of how the academy was asking them to coach (Cushion & Partington, 2016):

> "I've learnt quite a lot from stuff throughout my career…you pick little bits you enjoy and what can be worked on" (Coach 8)
>
> "learning under different managers how to go about things, how to treat players, how not to treat players, how to put on sessions which are simple but effective" (Coach 9)
>
> "I've seen good coaches and bad coaches, hopefully I've picked up some of the good stuff and continue to do that…putting to one side the stuff I think is not so good" (Coach 11)

The above examples indicated that individual experience directly influenced coaches' behaviour, as opposed to the academy philosophy, where experience and history held more weight than instituted 'new' approaches. When questioned on personal ideological beliefs, senior coaches demonstrated a level of both rejection and acceptance when met with the academy's philosophy:

> "I don't have a guideline for it… it's just something I've done for the last 10 years" (Coach 3)
>
> "I was quick to adapt those ideas without any conflict…I didn't sort of fight against them" (Coach 6)

Together, these data highlight the various ways the academy philosophy was received by coaches, highlighting mixed understandings, ambiguity, and a level of interpretation that was heavily influenced by the coaches' experience and backgrounds in the game. The individuality of prior socialisation, current position and its impact on interpreting the academy philosophy were reflected in the transmission process, with part-time coaches speaking of their confusion regarding what was expected of them:

> "I understand the basic principles of what the club wants, they change what they want…sometimes it's about letting the kids play, making their own decisions…sometimes they want us to be onto them…help them out…the actual words they use…I understand all of that, it's how they actually want it delivering I'm a bit unsure about" (Coach 2)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential for (mis)alignment and disjuncture between coaches' personal ideologies, or theories *of* coaching, and the coaching 'philosophy' espoused by the football academy for which they worked through employing a mixed methodology. Findings from the study suggested coaches had difficulty defining what the academy referred to as their 'philosophy' (Cushion & Partington, 2016; Partington & Campbell, 2020). By extending the work of Cushion and Partington (2016), we view the term coaching 'ideology' as a more accurate means to describe what has almost exclusively been understood as coaching 'philosophy', both by the academy under study and in previous research. Cushion and Partington (2016) argued while coaches identify with the idea of a coaching 'philosophy' it is often not reflective of true 'philosophical' thought. Here, the data suggests that coaches were invested in the concept of a coaching 'philosophy'- illustrating the process of illusio. However, our analysis suggests that academy 'philosophy' instead reflected a social system of beliefs, structures and practices, that is, an ideology, that was to varying extents influential in shaping coaches' knowledge. The academy ideology was

embedded in coaches' discourse and, depending on the social position of the coach, open to interpretation and influence. This resulted in the transmission of the ideology through day-to-day communications, observations and the social weight of adhering to 'what the club wants'.

Furthermore, the data illustrated how the coaches' accumulation of various forms of capital inhibited their access to and alignment with the club's coaching ideology. For example, due to their position within the status hierarchy, combined with their coaching background (see Table 1) some coaches were able to influence the practices of those coaches perceived to hold less capital (see Theme 1). Previous studies in sports coaching (e.g., Townsend & Cushion, 2017) have highlighted how reputation 'in the game' can be a powerful source of symbolic capital, providing some coaches with more influence than others in shaping coaching knowledge. In the present study, the social environment of the coaching academy provided an uncertain terrain for the collective development of habitus, with the ideology functioning as an expression of the senior coaches' collective habitus (Leeder & Cushion, 2019; Sawiuk et al., 2018). The behavioural data support these claims, with senior coaches employing higher percentages of instruction (i.e. Coach 11) and the least time spent silent (i.e. Coach 13) (see Table 2), re-enforcing the top-down nature of the academy ideology being disseminated amongst coaches (see Theme 1). The expression and dissemination of the academy ideology can be understood as a symbolic exchange in which coaches (i.e. Coach 1, 5, 7) who were perceived to hold less social capital (i.e. part-time) became aware of the academy ideology through a submission to order (Bourdieu, 1990a). This was achieved through the exercising of symbolic capital in on and off-field discussions (see Theme 1), during which the holder (i.e. senior coaches) "[has] obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition" (Bourdieu, 1989, p.23). This aligns with previous sports coaching research, in which coach educators have been found to actively

impose personal ideologies upon coaches (Cushion et al., 2019), and further reinforces the culture of reproduction that some football academies can perpetuate.

The senior coaches were also tasked with duties of defending the field's doxic order, such as implementing the academy ideology (see Theme 1). The aim then was for part-time coaches to reproduce the academy's ideology uncritically and autonomously, internalising the field's doxa subconsciously and reinforcing the very structure that limited their position within the field (Bourdieu, 1990a). Aligning practices accordingly with the doxa were likely to be positively sanctioned, whereas failure to conform to the desired practices may have resulted in rejection and exclusion from the social space (field) that coaches were looking to occupy (Cushion et al., 2003). The transmission of accepted ways to coach and aligning with dominant ideologies is a consistent finding across coaching research, particularly in sites where coaches are hierarchically structured. For example, mentors embody a group habitus to be imposed on and reproduced by mentees in alignment with the field's doxa (e.g. Leeder & Cushion, 2019), with one study reporting coach interactions were used as forms of social control - implementing a rigid institutional agenda - rather than to address pedagogical concerns (Sawiuk et al., 2018).

As a result, it can be reasonably argued that the academy's ideology was actually a distillation of senior coaches' ideological beliefs through symbolic violence. Symbolic violence refers to the imposition of meaning on dominated groups, and is secured by collective misrecognition, in which it is wielded invisibly and without the recognition of the receiver (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Previous research in developmental contexts have illustrated how symbolic violence is exerted through coaching practice (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2006, 2012). However, this study goes further in suggesting that symbolic violence provided the framework for the development of coaches' knowledge. In this study, symbolic violence performed a pedagogic function (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), imposing collective

ideology on the group to ensure adherence by those with pedagogic authority (i.e. the senior coaches).

This pedagogic action served as the mechanism for the daily (re)production of practices, where the junior coaches were disposed from the outset "to recognise the legitimacy of the information transmitted" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 21) from the senior coaches and thus internalised these messages. In so doing, taken-for-granted, that is, doxic principles about 'how to coach' and expected behaviours were embedded in the social environment of the academy. In their accumulation and exercising of symbolic capital the senior coaches (i.e. Coach 13) were viewed as 'gatekeepers' of knowledge and central to other coaches' (i.e. Coach 5) future success at the academy due to 'status' acquired during prior and ongoing socialisation in the 'game' (see Theme 1).

Furthermore, the study illustrates the processes by which an instituted coaching ideology interacts with, and is permeable to, the structure of the field and habitus. Despite suggestions during interviews on the impact of prior socialisation, the behavioural data demonstrated a level of acceptance consensus regarding how junior coaches' practices were based on or impacted by senior coaches' ideological beliefs (i.e. Coach 13; see Table 2). A fundamental socialisation process for coaches is their experiences as players (Cushion et al. 2003), as it is during this time coaches develop a sense of what it is to 'be' a coach (see Theme 3). Indeed, habitus has been suggested to perpetuate itself into the future by previous exposure in similarly structured practices (Bourdieu, 1990a), for example coaches (i.e. Coach 13) aligning the practices they deliver with the coaching they have received. This perpetuation of personal dispositions has been reported in previous sports coaching studies in the practices of football coaches who work in elite youth contexts (Cushion & Jones, 2006, 2012) and coach educators who support these coaches (Cushion et al., 2019). In this study, it was senior coaches' ideologies that had become ingrained according to the conditions

inscribed in their habitus. As such, the academy philosophy became a form of ideology entrenched – to varying degrees - into the more junior coaches through immersion in the coaching culture.

Together, the analysis illustrates a disjuncture between the demands of the field, and coaches' embodied dispositions towards 'good' coaching, which Bourdieu (1990a) describes as hysteresis. Coaching ideologies are rarely imposed uniformly, and the data from junior coaches demonstrated an outward resistance to change (Bourdieu, 1977). The academy, therefore, was a site in which networks of power were crucial in shaping junior coaches' actions. For example, coaches seemed to attach value to others' (i.e. Coach 13, Theme 1) or personal (i.e. Coach 11, Theme 3) professional playing experience, thus positioning learning from more experienced coaches as the primary source of coaching knowledge and limiting the potential or capacity for instituted coaching ideologies to influence change.

As such, the data illustrated a trend of continuity rather than change which closely resembles models of cultural reproduction observed in previous coaching research (Townsend & Cushion, 2017), where received wisdom and tradition are culturally-valued. However, this study goes further in highlighting the social mechanisms that sustain models of cultural reproduction in coaching, and in particular the power of senior coaches in shaping how coaches should act within an academy system.

The field's doxa (i.e. academy ideology) was comprised of common-sense, tacit ideals to sustain and legitimise practices. However, in this study, senior coaches did not outwardly express any consequences for misalignments, suggesting that the academy imposed a (weak) form of symbolic violence that performed a pedagogic function, that is, providing a framework for coaches to 'learn' the correct way of coaching. In other words, this was more of a 'felt' coercion by senior coaches, as opposed to an explicit 'you must do this'. Such was the influence of habitus that the academy 'philosophy' was continually subject to

interpretation (see Theme 2), with senior coaches' personal dispositions acting as a 'filter' (see Theme 3) which proved strong and ultimately prevailing. It is worth questioning, therefore, the extent to which the academy ideology can be displaced, and the mechanisms required to ensure collective acceptance to an instituted coaching approach.

Conclusion and Implications

This study extended previous research by identifying how an academy football club's coaching 'philosophy' was understood, interpreted and practiced by the academy's coaches. The analysis overwhelmingly demonstrates that what was instituted by the academy as a coaching 'philosophy' instead resembled ideology. According to the volume of type and capital held, coaches shaped and distilled the academy ideology according to their own personal preferences, and communicated the ideology to other members of the academy through day-to-day language and practice. As such, coaches' knowledge and behaviour represented an accumulation of social history, convention and ideology, where one's position in the social hierarchy determined the level of autonomy and influence over 'how to coach'. These findings raise serious questions about the extent to which coaches are supported to apply instituted coaching philosophies in practice, and we support calls made from coaching scholars (i.e. Cushion & Partington, 2016) for coaching philosophy to be repositioned as part of formal coach education as more than a list of statements that describe coaches' intentions for practice. Formal coach education needs to help coaches think philosophically by asking questions of them that enables the exploration of their axiological and ethical values, and ontological and epistemological beliefs (see Partington & Campbell, 2020). Coaches should then be challenged to identify where these philosophies exist in practice and how they know this is so. In this way then, coaching philosophy and coaching practice becomes an iterative process of moving back and forth between the two in the quest for greater alignment.

A responsibility in bringing greater conceptual clarity also lie at the local, club level,

as ultimately, this is where coaching philosophy is enacted. Clubs could do this by providing forums where coaches' individual beliefs, biases and assumptions are recognised, shared and positively challenged without judgement made regarding 'best' practices. Such an approach would also help coaches to reflect critically on the judgements and values which form the basis for beliefs about coaching practice. However, we appreciate this is a challenging task requiring the redistribution of power between senior academy coaches, often as the gatekeepers of working practices, and other coaches. This means coaches with more perceived capital engage with coaches through dialogue where individual coaches' voices are listened, respected, and then responded to through the development of a co-constructed club coaching philosophy (Cope, Cushion, Harvey & Partington, 2020). Likewise, we as researchers could contribute in catering future studies to counteract the previous shortcomings of systematic observation research. That is, for example, integrating coach interventions to facilitate field change. We accept that such a repositioning of the field is far from straightforward, given academy football clubs are a breeding ground for unequal power relations (Cushion & Jones, 2006, 2012). Nonetheless, the integration of more equitable practices seems necessary if there is to be a greater alignment between club 'philosophy' and individual coaches' ideologies.

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