

1 **Reflection in a High-Performance Sport Coach Education Program: A**
2 **Foucauldian Analysis of Coach Developers**

3
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5
6 **Abstract**

7 Reflection is a contested but taken-for-granted concept whose meaning shifts to
8 accommodate the interpretation and interests of those using the term. Subsequently,
9 there is limited understanding of the concept. The purpose of this paper was to consider
10 critically the discursive complexities of reflection and their articulation through coach
11 developers' practice. Data were collected from a National High-Performance coach
12 education program. Coach developers responsible for one-to-one support ($n = 8$) and
13 on-program support ($n = 3$) participated in the research. Semi-structured interviews
14 were conducted with coach developers and participant observations were undertaken
15 of a coach developer forum and program workshops ($n = 9$). Foucault's concepts;
16 power, discourse and discipline were used to examine data with critical depth. Analysis
17 explored 'Discourse of Reflection', 'Discipline, Power and Reflection' and 'Coach
18 Developers: Confession, 'Empowerment' and Reflection'. Humanistic ideas
19 constructed a discourse of reflection that was mobilized through coach confession.
20 Coach developer efforts to be 'critical' and 'learner centered' were embroiled with
21 intrinsic and subtle relations of power as 'empowering' intent exacerbated rather than
22 ameliorated its exercise. This paper makes visible a different destabilized and
23 problematized version of reflection, thus introducing an awkwardness into the fabric of
24 our experiences of reflection.

25 **Key Words:** Reflective Practice, Sport Coaching, Foucault, Power

26 **Introduction**

27 Reflection and reflective practice have become conspicuous parts of coach education
28 and the terms ensconced in the vocabulary of coach developers (Cushion, 2016;
29 Cushion, Griffiths & Armour, 2018). To be ‘reflective’ is seen as an essential part of
30 coach learning (e.g. Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009; Gallimore, Gilbert & Nater, 2014;
31 Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; 2006) and an examination of literature pertaining to coaching
32 and the reflective practitioner reveals the way in which the concept of reflection has
33 often taken center stage (Cushion, 2016). Reflection and reflective practice are
34 positioned as essential tools for coach developers looking to enhance professional
35 development (e.g. Culver & Trudel, 2006), link theory and practice (e.g. Douglas &
36 Carless, 2008; Irwin, Hanton & Kerwin, 2004), promote critical thinking (e.g. Knowles,
37 et al., 2001; Knowles et al., 2006; Taylor, Werthner, Culver & Callary, 2015), lead to
38 self-awareness and understanding (e.g. Cassidy et al., 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013),
39 empower coaches and athletes (e.g. Kidman 2005, Richards, Mascarenhas & Collins,
40 2009), and promote learning and enhanced practice (e.g. Cushion, Ford & Williams,
41 2012; Cropley, Miles & Peel, 2012; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Irwin et al., 2004).

42 Indeed, it is clear that coach developers should encourage coaches to question
43 their values, beliefs and ideas, and engage with a process to develop their knowledge
44 and make sense of their experiences (Cushion 2016; Fendler, 2003). However, as
45 Cushion (2016) argues, despite the significant work privileging reflective practice in
46 coaching, little interrogates these notions critically; instead reflection and reflective
47 practice are presented uncritically and accepted enthusiastically as ‘good’ for coaching
48 and coaches. Research has tended to sidestep these wider socio-cultural issues and
49 instead focused on ‘applying’ or developing reflection (e.g. Knowles et al., 2001;
50 Taylor et al., 2015; Trudel, Culver, & Werthner, 2013; inter-alia), or providing

51 expositions of a preferred theoretical approach (e.g. Cassidy et al., 2009; Cushion,
52 2006; Gilbert & Trudel, 2006; Trudel et al., 2013). This perspective is reinforced by
53 Cropley and Hanton (2011), who argue that coaching has preached the positives of
54 reflection, or ‘jumped on the bandwagon’ (Cropley et al., 2012, p. 2) without fully
55 appreciating the issues and problems facing coach developers aiming to cultivate
56 reflective practice. Specifically, relations of power and their role in constructing the
57 meaning of reflection and influencing how coach developer’s enable reflection has been
58 overlooked in existing work. Indeed, while guided reflection can offer much as an
59 empowering and emancipatory process (Johns, 1999), no research considers if coaching
60 culture, specifically coach development, accommodates this process or whether, as
61 Cushion (2016) argues, reflection slips into a mode of reinforcing existing practice and
62 power relations.

63 Despite their key role in formal coach education and coaches’ learning, Cushion
64 et al. (2018) argue that until very recently coach developers have remained largely
65 absent from coach education research; a body of work which is understandably coach-
66 centric. This means that the role of coach developers and their practice and influence
67 have been taken-for-granted, assumed, or simply rendered invisible. Indeed, while
68 reflection has been a central feature in coach education research (e.g. Cassidy, Potrac
69 & McKenzie, 2006; Knowles, Borrie & Telfer, 2005; Nelson & Cushion, 2006) coach
70 developers’ understanding, application, and overall contribution to this in practice has
71 yet to be examined. This is problematic because coach developers, like coaches
72 (Denison, Mills and Konoval, 2015), are enmeshed within relations of power-
73 knowledge. Indeed, they have a significant role in supporting reflection to achieve its
74 empowering intent through educating coaches to recognize and understand power-
75 knowledge relations and their consequences.

76 Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to consider critically the discursive
77 complexities of reflection and reflective practice and their articulation with and through
78 coach developer practice. Importantly, reflection and reflective practice are not benign
79 or neutral concepts. Thus, through a Foucauldian lens, we aimed to consider how power
80 operated and provide a critical analysis of the complexity of reflection with coach
81 developers in a high-performance coach development program. The significance of the
82 work, then, was as Foucault (1996) asserted “to reveal relations of power...to put them
83 back into the hands of those who exercise them” (p.144). Therefore, we undertook a
84 critical analysis of the complexity of coaching and reflective practices to enable the
85 unintended consequences of well-intended practices to be uncovered (Fendler, 2003)
86 because “power does not just prevent things happening, it also produces effects’
87 (Foucault, 1980, p. 59).

88 *Approaches in Coach Development*

89 The design and delivery of coach education and the work of coach developers,
90 including the use of reflection, will have an approach informed by underpinning and
91 sometimes implicit beliefs about learning (Cushion et al., 2018). One such approach
92 influencing coaching currently is a humanistic approach, based on humanistic
93 psychology (cf. Rogers, 1983) (Usher & Edwards, 2005). The rationale underpinning
94 the educational process and the role of the coach developer in a humanistic approach is
95 ‘learner-centered’. That is, where the learner is self-motivated and self-directed,
96 exercising individual agency and making their own authentic choices about self-
97 development and self-realization (Usher & Edwards, 1994; 2005). In this approach, the
98 coach developer is a guide and looks to make an ‘empowering’ contribution developing
99 autonomous learners to develop their subjectivity and identity. A key tenet of this
100 approach is it purports to be ‘power-free’ or attempts to democratize power (Foucault,

101 1975). Adopting this perspective, coach developers might maintain that they have little
102 or no power over others, or choice about how it is exercised (Brookfield, 2009). This
103 means that coaching and coach education is seen as a neutral, benign space where
104 reflection is a desirable activity to develop ‘better’ coaches who are ‘empowered’ or
105 made ‘autonomous’ (Cushion, 2016; Cushion & Jones, 2014; Denison et al., 2015).
106 However, coaching has dynamic, complex, and diffused networks of power relations
107 where reflection is in fact embedded in a persistent and resilient culture (Cushion, 2016;
108 Cushion & Jones, 2014).

109 *Mobilizing Foucault*

110 Drawing on Foucault’s work is useful as it helps us recognize more subtle forms of
111 power, “as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault,
112 1980, p. 119), where individuals who make up the social body are made by, and are the
113 primary vehicles of, power (Orlie, 1997). Indeed, Foucault (1998) understood power as
114 relations between people therefore omnipresent. Power is not an institution, a certain
115 strength or a possession, ‘it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical
116 situation in a particular society’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 93). Foucault (1980) states that
117 ‘relations of power cannot themselves be established, exercised, consolidated or
118 implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a
119 discourse’ (p. 93), which is a rule-governed, socio-historically situated language.
120 Discourse can refer to the written and unwritten rules that guide social practices and
121 help to produce and regulate the production of statements that correspondingly control
122 what can be understood and perceived, but at the same time, act to obscure (Foucault,
123 1972). In this sense, reflection can be considered a discourse that is embedded in and
124 related to other coaching discourses (e.g. coach education, coaching philosophy,
125 coaching practice) (Cushion, 2016). Foucault (1975) connected power and knowledge,

126 articulating that “power has a need for a certain form of knowledge...that the exercise
127 of power creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge...and, conversely,
128 knowledge constantly induces effects of power...It is not possible for power to be
129 exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power”
130 (Faubion, 2002, p. xv).

131 Foucault used the category of discipline to extend the perception of how modern
132 power operates to carefully construct and form subjectivities (Cole, Giardina, &
133 Andrews, 2004) through surveillance and self-surveillance (Foucault, 1977). Foucault
134 (1977) linked (self) surveillance to panopticism, a concept based on Jeremy Bentham’s
135 architectural figure the panopticon. According to Foucault (1977), the panoptic
136 mechanism arranges spatial unities through structures designed to induce a state of
137 conscious and permanent visibility. Importantly, this visibility is unverifiable; that is,
138 panopticism ensures that the subject does not know if or when they are being observed
139 (or listened to). Together, this surveillance ensures the automatic functioning of power.
140 Foucault (1977) identified these structures across institutions such as prisons, schools,
141 hospitals and factories. Indeed, all people, including coaches, are subject to surveillance
142 through a normalizing (self) gaze and are under real or imagined pressure to conform
143 to societal norms relating to their behavior (Denison, et al., 2015). Importantly, this
144 gaze has progressed from just observing behavior to include an interest in what people
145 *think* as well as what they do (Rolfe & Gardner, 2006).

146 Foucault (1977) identified three disciplinary mechanisms that operate through
147 this gaze: hierarchical judgement, spatial organization and examination. That is, bodies
148 and minds are never just trained, but are subjected to normative judgement or what
149 Foucault (1977) calls dividing practices. These practices produce and exclude
150 individuals, for example a coach developer may label a coach in line with the

151 conventions of the prevailing discourse thus classifying, disciplining, and normalizing
152 through social processes that they have little direct control over (Markula & Pringle,
153 2006). In coaching (Mills & Denison, 2018) and other related practice fields (Cotton,
154 2001; Rolfe & Gardner, 2006), an increasingly unnoticed operation of power that
155 supports dividing practices is confession that occurs in the presence of an authority,
156 such as a coach developer, who has the ability to judge, punish, forgive, console and
157 reconcile the confessor (Foucault, 1998). Mills and Denison (2018) have identified
158 athlete confession in coaching that acted to address ‘abnormality’ and so reinforce and
159 normalize whatever was ‘true’. However, research is yet to consider how such
160 disciplinary mechanisms may play out in coach education, specifically between coach
161 and coach developer.

162 Together, disciplinary matrices create ‘docile bodies’ controlled and regulated
163 where ‘training’ extends capacity and usefulness. While in one sense productive and
164 perhaps desirable, docility does not necessarily mean optimal performance or achieving
165 one’s potential (Denison, 2010). Docility can limit the development of skills and
166 qualities, such as problem solving, decision making, and understanding capacities and
167 capabilities (e.g. Denison, 2007; Gearity & Mills, 2013; Mills & Denison, 2013).
168 Indeed, docility can include the mind; as Cushion (2016) argued, concepts such as
169 reflection can construct ways of *thinking*, as well as *doing*. Put simply, coach
170 development that determines what coaches think, the techniques they use, and their
171 efficiency is likely to reproduce existing ideas to be productive within established
172 structures. This is not to say that some discourses and practices in coaching have not
173 changed, indeed, ‘new’ ideas are continually emerging and deemed possible, but this
174 notion is often illusory as change must be within what is deemed acceptable (Mills &
175 Denison, 2018). That is, discourses are produced and accumulated, they circulate and

176 function, thus establishing, consolidating, and implementing relations of power
177 (Foucault, 1980). In other words, power, through an overarching disciplinary
178 framework remains, and coaching carries an incomplete and naïve understanding of
179 this. Indeed, practitioners are often coerced into conforming to the dominant culture
180 and find it difficult, if not impossible, to ‘stand outside it and see it for what it is’ (Johns,
181 1999, p. 241). This ‘movement of power and the restrictions this places on coaches’
182 inventiveness can be problematic within a high-performance sport context where
183 innovativeness is paramount for advancing athletes’ performances’ (Mills & Denison,
184 2018, p. 298). Innovation has been considered an outcome of reflection and reflective
185 practice and a mark of coach development (cf. Trudel, Rodrique & Gilbert, 2016).
186 Therefore, coach development, in this context, needs to support coaches to achieve
187 more than productivity as a docile body. Indeed, there are calls for coaches to be able
188 to problematize their practice (e.g. Konoval, Denison & Mills, 2018) and coach
189 developers can play a central role in challenging existing discourse and practices,
190 surfacing contradictions in practice, and shining a light beyond the status quo to disturb
191 disciplinary practices, docility, and relations of power (Johns, 1999; Mills & Denison,
192 2018).

193 Indeed, while disciplinary practices are often taken-for-granted in coaching
194 (Denison, Mills and Jones, 2013) and have been associated with reflection, reflective
195 practice, and confession (Cushion, 2016; Fejes, 2008; Fendler, 2003; Mills & Denison,
196 2018), no research has considered the role and influence of coach developers in this
197 process. As a result, there remains no research that discusses critically or considers
198 reflection and reflective practice as, for example, practices of ‘subjectivity formation’
199 or as a disciplinary practice, nor connects this to the practices of coach developers. To
200 explore the extent of these issues, we draw on Foucault’s concepts to explain how

201 reflection has been operationalized and understood by coach developers in a high-
202 performance coach development program.

203 **Methodology**

204 *Background and context*

205 Under investigation was a high-performance coach education program delivered by a
206 National Sports Organization (NSO) in the United Kingdom. The program was
207 designed to be ‘beyond’ the Sport Governing Body (SGB) coach development. That is,
208 ‘more advanced’, offering unique opportunities and experiences for coaches from
209 multiple sports and the highest performance level. The NSO is a large national
210 organization with a presence in coach education and is organized in terms of multi-
211 departments, intra-organizational relationships, and distributed work arrangements.
212 The program, spread over a three-year period, involved residential workshops, one-to-
213 one coach development sessions, and in-situ visits to the coaches by coach developers.
214 The research reported here forms part of a larger twenty-four-month ethnographic study
215 that analyzed the delivery and impact of the coach education program on developing
216 reflection and reflective practice. This included the perspectives of the coach
217 developers, the coach learners, and the NSO in which the program was undertaken.
218 This paper focuses specifically on the coach developers and reports findings on their
219 understanding and supporting of reflection and reflective practice with their coaches (n
220 = 11) from the program. Eight coach developers were assigned to provide one-to-one
221 coaching and mentoring support. These coach developers met their coach(es) every
222 four-to-six weeks for a one-to-one session and provided distance support via email or
223 video-call in the interim. Three coach developers were responsible for on-program
224 support, and observed the coaches on residential workshops, and provided feedback.

225 **Participants**

226 The eight coach developers responsible for one-to-one support had executive coaching
227 accreditation. The NSO selected three coach developers for each high-performance
228 sport coach, who then assigned one coach developer to work with for the duration of
229 the program. The participants were selected using criterion-based purposeful sampling
230 (Patton, 2002). Criteria considered their experiences and involvement in the program,
231 which were conducive with achieving the aims of the research. Following Cushion et
232 al. (2018), each participant is described individually (identified by pseudonyms) in
233 Table 1.0, incorporating words from their own initial narratives; this allows each to
234 “highlight critical episodes and events...providing insight into their understanding”
235 (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.69) of their experience and approach to reflection,
236 coaching and coach development. This detail shows that reflection had been
237 conceptualized in lots of different ways and that coach developers operated without a
238 consistent underpinning.

Participant Details: One-to-One Coach Developers

Janet ‘I was an elite athlete... I went to the Olympics, I graduated with a sports science degree, as an elite athlete I also did my PhD’. Janet’s work with the NSO started ‘10 years ago...it has been a natural progression delivering projects and the one-to-one mentoring role’. Janet identified reflection as ‘using your own brain to learn from the experiences that you’ve been through’.

Georgia A former high-performance athlete who has worked in the training and development sector of a corporate business for 16 years. Georgia explained ‘I have been coaching now for 20 years and I am also a coaching supervisor, so I support coach developers. Georgia described reflection as ‘that ability to think about practice...it is like with the plan-do-review cycle... you are able to get insight that influences how you do it next time...you are not only learning about the situation but you are reflecting on and refining your beliefs and how you see the world’.

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- Rebecca* An organization development consultant who specializes in organizational behavior and leadership. Rebecca has 20 years experience and is the managing director of her own business. Previously, she held a chief executive position in business. She has a master's degree and coaching certification. Rebecca explained that 'reflective practice is about raising self-awareness by noticing what I thought, felt and the sensations I experienced in relation to myself, the other and the situation and that for me is how I would define it [reflective practice]'.
- Emma* Has spent '20 years working on leadership development particularly starting with leadership assessment [e.g.] psychometric assessment using psychometric tools, personality tools' with businesses and individuals...to identify their high potential pool, MD [Managing Director] successors, senior functional head successors [and] future CEO's [Chief Executives]'. Emma has executive coaching accreditation and a master's degree. Emma described an example of a reflective practice conversation she might have with a high-performance coach after a championships 'to get people [coaches] to stop and think, so "what have I learnt about myself and who I am as a head coach, or a leader of coaches, and what can I do with that learning, what have I learnt about my program, what have I learnt about my athletes and my other coaches and how I can use that information going forward'.
- Isla* 'My background is sports science, MPhil, exercise physiology...I was an international sport coach [and] an international performer'. Isla has had roles within sport-related publicly funded organizations and the private sector, 'eventually I became a full-time consultant, trained up got the qualification in business coaching and since then have done business coaching, leadership development, but have always kept sport clients...I was passionate about coaching coaches...and then qualifications came along and it became an industry'. Isla described reflection as 'bringing into consciousness what's going on and attempting to make sense of it historically, in the moment for the future'.
- Sophie* Has been the managing director of her own company, which specializes in executive leadership coaching, for over 10 years. Sophie works with both private and public sector businesses and organizations offering executive coaching. She has a master's degree and published work focused on executive coaching. Sophie described reflection as the process of 'shifting someone and getting them off the transactional, because they often give you the performance, but if nothing is changing and everything is stuck in this groove you can't get better... "can we just get off this" and go way below takes people courage'.
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<i>Poppy</i>	<i>Has been CEO for a business that specializes in ‘change’ through executive coaching and leadership development for 25 years. She has worked with the NSO for 11 years; ‘I see my role as supporting these coaches on their learning and development journey...as trying to help bring some thread or glue to the program through the dialogue...primarily focused on the learning goals that we both identify and that immerse through the program’. Poppy went on to talk about her role in relation to influencing how reflection is perceived and practiced ‘If I can try to instill that it is about the reflection process and not getting to the end it may allow coaches to focus on the ‘in the moment’, it doesn’t come to a natural end’.</i>
<i>Claire</i>	<i>Has been the director of a business which specializes in executive coaching, coach supervision and training for 14 years. Ahead of this, Claire ran her own independent consultancy business for 20 years. She has a master’s degree and is an accredited coaching supervisor. She explained her view on reflection through an example ‘I would start with “so tell me where you have got to with your thinking about this [coaching issue], because clearly you have been thinking about it”. There’s your reflection’.</i>

239 Table 1.0. Participant Details; One-to-One Coach Developers

240 The three on-program coach developers were all male and worked for the NSO.
 241 Similarly, these participants are now described individually (identified by pseudonyms)
 242 in Table 2.0 incorporating words from their own narratives.

Participant Details: On-Program Coach Developers

<i>Will</i>	<i>Was a high-performance athlete and is currently a sport coach in a high-performance youth context. ‘I manage the coach development team, I set the strategy for our plans about how we go about developing coaches for the system to support the vision for medal winning success’. Will described reflection as ‘the ability to critically appraise activity or action with a view to learning from that critical thinking and thought process in order to apply that learning in the future context. I think it [reflection] can then be delivered pre, during, post activity, I think the skill is knowing how to use those reflections to adapt practice and shape future practice. During data collection, Will moved from a role involving in-situ coach support visits and workshop delivery to this strategic position.</i>
<i>Tim</i>	<i>Was responsible for organizing and coordinating the high-performance coach education workshops. During data collection Tim also provided</i>

some in-situ support to the coaches, he led tasks at workshops and provided coaches with individual written feedback. Tim believes that 'some people aren't maximizing the potential they've got in making the most of their experiences...it's important to understand...what's gone well or not and why and how they learn from it in the future'. In building on this, Tim described reflection as 'looking back at what happened, and at your part in it...what happened and why...and what did I do or didn't do, and can I learn from it'.

Alan Participated in the early stages of data collection. Alan led residential workshops, supported coaches in-situ and provided feedback. He expressed that it is important 'to try and work out the best way to get effective reflective practice for different individuals' and described reflection as 'as looking back to plan forwards'.

243 Table 2.0: Participant Details; On-Program Coach Developers

244 ***Research Design and Procedures***

245 On receiving institutional ethical approval, data were collected during the two-year
246 ethnography using participant observation and interviewing (Hammersley & Atkinson,
247 2007). To capture how the coach developers understood and supported reflection and
248 reflective practice, data collection had three phases:

249 Phase 1: Participant observation of coach education workshops ran throughout data
250 collection. This included observations of nine coach education residential workshops,
251 each running for two-to-three days and a half-day coach developer forum. The coach
252 developer forum focused on identifying key themes relating to 'topics', 'successes' and
253 'challenges' experienced in the one-to-one sessions. The fifth residential workshop was
254 also attended by the one-to-one coach developers; they supported group discussions
255 with coaches during on-program tasks. During each observation, lecture style sessions,
256 group work, and practical activities were observed. Fieldnotes were made throughout
257 these observations and included descriptive detail and key information such as the
258 location, who was present, what social interaction occurred, and what activities took
259 place (Bryman, 2016; Cushion, 2014).

260 Phase 2: Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with one-to-one (*n*
261 = 6) and on-program (*n* = 3) coach developers from month 9 to 12. These interviews
262 were conducted face-to-face (*n* = 4), by video-call (*n* = 3) and phone call (*n* = 2) and
263 ranged from 41 minutes to 75 minutes; the average was 56 minutes. Following Smith
264 and Sparkes (2017), the interviews invited coach developers to tell stories about their
265 practice. This enabled them to explain the meanings they constructed from their
266 experiences and describe their perspectives and behaviors in relation to reflection; in
267 their one-to-one sessions, their individual methods or tools for reflection, their
268 perceptions of what reflection meant and how their individual context influenced their
269 reflective practice support. This focused on understanding *what* the coach developers
270 did and *why*, and *how* they constructed their work, role, and reflection.

271 Phase 3: Individual interviews conducted face-to-face (*n* = 1) and by video (*n* = 6)
272 with one-to-one coach developers were conducted in month 21 and ranged from 30 to
273 60 minutes. By this stage, two one-to-one coach developers had left the program and
274 one did not respond to the invite for a second interview. These interviews revisited data
275 from phase one and two, with a view to considering how reflection was understood at
276 this later stage and whether this had changed or remained same. This meant one-to-one
277 coach developers had an opportunity to consider their previous comments and offer
278 further insight (Smith & Sparkes, 2017). Taken together, the coach developers
279 contributed four times to the data collected.

280 ***Data Analysis***

281 Data analysis included inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven)
282 approaches, supported by the application of social theory, to identify both manifest
283 (explicit) and latent (underlying) meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The interviews
284 were transcribed verbatim and the workshops as full-field notes. Initially, a form of

285 thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of meaning in the data (Clarke & Braun,
286 2017). Within this, initial coding reduced the data, then the codes were collated based
287 on their similarity. For example, initial codes identified through coach developer
288 interview data included: ‘open-minded’, ‘flexible’, ‘coach-led’, ‘coach-centered’, ‘non-
289 directive’ and ‘supportive’. These were then grouped as ‘coach-centered’. Examples
290 from the raw data were stored alongside the collated codes for future reference; for
291 instance, ‘coach centered’ data examples included: ‘it is about them and their
292 learning...the sessions are about them and how the sessions can help them and shape
293 their learning, it is not something I want to do for them or direct them towards’. In line
294 with Braun and Clarke (2013), comparisons between the participants and conceptual
295 and empirical reflection literature, in both coaching and more broadly in teaching and
296 adult learning, were then explored. This form of thematic analysis provided what Braun
297 and Clarke (2006) described as ‘a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data’ (p.
298 78). Clarke and Braun (2017) explained that thematic analysis can be applied across a
299 range of theoretical perspectives. In this research, deductive analysis applied Foucault’s
300 concepts. This situated data within a theoretical framework enabling a move from
301 concrete description to abstraction while retaining a constant grounding in the data (cf.
302 Cushion et al., 2018). Together, this iterative process of meaning making worked to
303 explain data with critical depth. In following Clarke and Braun’s (2017) final stage of
304 analysis, this is now presented through a discussion of three themes; ‘Discourse of
305 Reflection, ‘Discipline, Power and Reflection’ and ‘Coach Developers: Confession,
306 ‘Empowerment’ and Reflection’.

307 **Analysis and Discussion**

308 ***Discourse of Reflection***

309 For Foucault (1972), reality is constituted through discourse, a rule-governed, socio-
310 historically situated language “practices that systematically form the objects of which
311 they speak” (p.49) that “position subjectivities” (p. 182). A dominant discourse
312 comprises a particular language and a distinctive view where some things are regarded
313 as inherently more important than others (Brookfield 2009). In this case, reflection and
314 reflective practices were seen as an important and essential part of the coach education
315 program, a ‘golden thread’ running throughout, and a specific aspect that the coach
316 developers were expected to lead. As a result, a discourse of reflection was constructed
317 that comprised of a particular language *of* and *for* reflection, as well as distinctive and
318 dominant views *about* reflection. Such views positioned reflection as being about
319 facilitating learning through the discussing and solving of coaching ‘problems’:

320 Interviews:

321 Janet: I would say firstly it’s about you which is fairly
322 obvious...I come very much from a view where I would like
323 to help you solve your problems by asking questions by
324 maybe sharing experiences but, sometimes telling, but not
325 often, so it is about using you in the real world to develop
326 you rather than anything else.

327 Poppy: It is usually related to a goal and or learning
328 objective, but there can be random things come up, that you
329 know, I never know what it is that someone wants to talk to
330 me about.

331 In addition, reflection and, therefore, learning were grounded in using the knowledge
332 that the coaches already had. Importantly, reflection on the program was a process that
333 involved making coaches’ knowledge visible for scrutiny and assessment. In this
334 example, the coach developer asks coaches for topics that will inform group reflection
335 time (‘white space’).

336 Fieldnotes

337 Residential Workshop:

338 The coach developer refers to the flip chart paper, he asks for
339 topics the coaches wish to discuss during their ‘white space’
340 time later today.

341 Tim: “This time it is your time to drive the real content of it,
342 and what we are really trying to do always is to protect some
343 of that time for you to hold the floor and get whatever it is
344 that you want to get out of the time in the room...an
345 opportunity to bring to life some of your topics...we have
346 got 37 minutes, so we are going to have seven minutes
347 writing down anything you could talk about and then half an
348 hour within which you can pick one or two and then go into
349 as much detail as you want and then we can address the rest
350 over the next couple of days...I am going to write them up
351 on this flip-chart paper”.

352 Coach - Harry: “A thought around the project, I am
353 fascinated to know whether program do share male – female
354 ways of operating, how integrated it is and has anyone tried
355 it? Linked in with that, is there is a massive push with the
356 questioning approach in coaching, and balance of that over
357 the ‘tell’...I am curious as to how that is in other sports right
358 now and what people’s thoughts and feelings are towards
359 that”.

360 ...The group select gender to discuss further. They begin to
361 share their thoughts - the focus is on what has worked for
362 them and their experiences which are put forward alongside
363 sport specific examples.

364 Furthermore, these data illustrate a typical discursive pattern, where the discourse
365 included value judgements made by coach developers about the ‘nature’, and quality
366 of, reflection. In addition, something of the normalizing aspect of reflection discourse
367 is revealed, where, for example, reflection was about ‘you’, and the importance of
368 seeing the ‘value’ in doing reflection. Indeed, within the program, all the coach
369 developers privileged reflection and reflective practice and presented it uncritically and
370 enthusiastically, as ‘good’ for their coaches and high-performance coaching (cf.
371 Cushion, 2016).

372 A discourse also includes rules for judging what are good or bad, acceptable or
373 inappropriate contributions and procedures. This meant that, to enable reflection, a
374 series of ‘good’ and ‘acceptable’ pedagogic practices were espoused and practiced by

375 the coach developers. These included one-to-one reflection sessions to facilitate
376 ‘learning conversations’, individual and group discussion and feedback in allocated
377 ‘white space’ or ‘reflection time’ on residential workshops.

378 Importantly, these practices were underpinned by humanistic ideas of learner-
379 centeredness, empowerment, and self-direction:

380 Interviews:

381 Janet: It’s about you.

382 Isla: Let’s talk about what’s going on for you.

383 Emma: It’s about learning to learn...[and] managing
384 yourself... Sometimes, awareness is change, it can be
385 transformative.

386 Poppy: I never know what someone wants to talk to me
387 about.

388 These ideas not only produced concrete coach developer practices, but were also a
389 discursive production of meaning and objects on the program – reflective thought and
390 reflective practice – that construed reflection as desirable and also constituted
391 subjectivities. These discursive formations created the conditions of possibility for the
392 shaping of coaches’ behavior by the discourse of reflection. In other words, the
393 discourse shaped and fostered coaches to become the ‘reflective coach’, who was
394 ‘empowered’ by reflecting continuously to improve their practice and themselves (cf.
395 Cotton, 2001; Cushion, 2016; Usher & Edwards, 2005). As the examples below show,
396 this resulted in coaches who internalized this reflection discourse and therefore
397 construed reflection as both a desirable and entirely positive activity:

398 Interviews:

399 Coach - Mike: Shaping that [understanding of self-] through
400 the coach developer has been invaluable for me...just
401 opening up the discussion to where you thought you were
402 and where you feel you are now.

403 Coach - Wayne: I have got somebody [coach developer] who
404 helps me and that’s the single most thing that I will get out of

405 it...she just challenges and gets you thinking and thinking
406 about listening and how you ask questions, I would say that
407 would be biggest influence.

408 These coach data show the strong sense of recitation and repetition of the humanistic
409 reflection discourse where the coaches believed that ‘you’ were taking control of ‘your’
410 learning. On the surface then, reflection construed in this positive and ‘learner-
411 centered’ way appeared to avoid the reproduction of power, what Foucault (1977)
412 describes as the “temporary inversion of power relations” (p. 26). But the discourse
413 served to constitute the coaches as subjects. That is, they accepted the legitimacy of
414 coach developer practices and the truth of the meanings they invoked – that they were
415 ‘empowered’. However, Foucault states that power produces discourses and
416 knowledges – the couplet power-knowledge indicates that “power produces
417 knowledge” and that “power and knowledge directly imply one another” (p. 27). Hence,
418 coach educator practices around reflection remained subject to power-knowledge
419 formations and gave certain subjectivities significance. Indeed, according to Foucault,
420 (1980) “relations of power cannot themselves be established without the production,
421 accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse” (p.93). Hence, reflection and
422 the coach developer’s practice were conditional upon, and a condition of, the exercise
423 of power. Practices that were considered participatory and power free were, in fact,
424 subject to subtle forms of power – disciplinary power.

425 *Discipline, Power and Reflection*

426 Foucault’s (1977) model for the functioning of modern power is the Panopticon, where
427 everyone is “caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers”
428 (p. 201), and the category of discipline extends notions of how power operates (Cole et
429 al., 2004). Discipline refers to a technology (a technique as well as knowledge) that
430 shapes and produces individuals through techniques of surveillance and self-

431 surveillance that reverberate through social and individual bodies (Foucault, 1977).
432 Disciplinary matrices create ‘docile bodies’ and minds “that may be subjected, used,
433 transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). Importantly, in this case what
434 counted as *improved* was shaped and supervised by the coach developers and the
435 organization. The implication being that coaching ‘expertise’ becomes not a matter of
436 what the coach can do or knows (c.f. Gilbert & Côté, 2013), but through reflection an
437 articulation of the way coaches see, think and even feel, and the socialized meaning
438 ascribed to this (Gilbert, 2001). Thus, the ‘effective’ coach, who by ‘reflection’
439 develops their abilities, is a function of the production of institutionalized and
440 discursive bodies. Crucially, this was in contrast to the program’s intentions that
441 focused on supporting critical thinking and novel coaching practices. Thus, attempts to
442 develop coaches ‘differently’ are implemented without understanding how disciplinary
443 power is present, active, and often unseen in all places and all of the time (Denison et
444 al., 2015).

445 Foucault’s (1977) disciplinary mechanisms; gaze, hierarchical judgement,
446 spatial organization, and examination, were in operation on the program, and therefore
447 reflection can be considered usefully as techniques of disciplinary power. First, the
448 coach developers, as discussed earlier, utilized a range of ‘pedagogical practices’ within
449 the program that was highly organized in terms of time and space, and particularly for
450 the coaches to engage with reflection. These dividing practices produced various coach
451 groups for facilitated ‘reflective practice’ where division for example by ‘experience’,
452 ‘coachability’, or ‘type of learner’ had productive power to demarcate, circulate, and
453 differentiate. Dividing practices are forces of normalization that produce and exclude,
454 as the coach developers were able to utilize “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that
455 makes it possible to qualify and classify” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184).

456 These practices also subjected the coaches to surveillance and self-surveillance,
457 fashioning a panoptical discourse of control. For example, the discussion circle was
458 reified on the program as democratic and learner centred and used frequently for
459 facilitated reflection. However, this was a situation in which scrutiny and surveillance
460 by the coach developers and by other coaches was dramatically heightened; a situation
461 in which actions were carefully watched by the “judges of normality” (Foucault, 1977,
462 p. 304). These judges (coach developers) were positioned hierarchically as experts and
463 monitored the extent to which the coaches were participating and ‘reflecting’ in an
464 appropriate manner. Coach educators, as judges of normality, overtly established the
465 criteria for participation to operationalize the norm’s rule of conduct. For the coaches,
466 there was the unspoken knowledge that a lack of participation or saying the ‘wrong
467 thing’ would be evident. Importantly, such normalizing gaze was not recognized; as
468 Mills and Denison (2018) describe, it operated innocently and discreetly, through
469 reflection on the program. The examples below demonstrate that coaches were
470 classified as a certain type of learner or subject. The coaches in their efforts to be a
471 ‘reflective practitioner’ were examined and measured against an idealized ‘normal
472 reflective coach’. This norm held that there was a particular type (e.g. informed,
473 thoughtful, insightful) and quality (e.g. sophisticated, intelligent, with depth) of
474 reflection undertaken. Reflection performances were judged through the products of
475 the coaches’ reflection, and the coaches’ displayed abilities as reflective practitioners:

476 Interviews:

477 Isla: Her reflections are broader; she is in a different system
478 and culture that is evoking emotional responses...because the
479 playing field that she is on is much broader when she comes
480 to reflect, she is either being guided or is reflecting on
481 different things now

482 Janet: I would say he is very reflective, how conscious he is;
483 we probably haven't gone there as much as we could have
484 done.

485 Claire: He is in a very different place to some of them [other
486 coaches on the program], he is very self-aware, astute and
487 motivated, he uses; in a good way in my opinion, the whole
488 experience of the programme. If something doesn't land for
489 him, he shrugs and says, 'I don't see how I can apply it',
490 anything that does land for him he really applies so I think
491 that is very grown up demonstrating discernment.

492 The coach developers worked in terms of these ideas of the normal, making them
493 concrete and substantial to shape and produce coaches as reflective coaches; hence,
494 coach developers and coach education became a 'subtle and persuasive exercise of
495 power' (Cushion, 2016; Gilbert, 2001, p. 200). Through the program, the coaches
496 became enfolded in a discursive matrix of practices that constituted their 'learning
497 needs' and helped define their path for self-development. This process was an effect of
498 power because as data have shown, the coaches accepted the legitimacy of reflection,
499 the need for reflection for their development, and were positioned as a particular kind
500 of reflective coach. Importantly, power was not recognized as it was cloaked in what
501 Usher and Edwards (2005) describe as the esoteric of objective knowledge (in the form
502 of the coach developer), and because the coaches had internalized the humanistic
503 discourse of personal empowerment. The apparently liberating and progressive use of
504 reflective practice was a power-knowledge formation intertwining expertise and
505 personal empowerment "displacing the need for active containment and overt
506 oppression" (Usher & Edwards, 2005, p. 401).

507 *Coach Developers: Confession, 'Empowerment', & Reflection*

508 Dividing practices and examination include processes of confession and self-
509 examination, which act to constitute the self through revealing and marking what is
510 'known' (Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 2001). Through reflective practice as self-

511 examination, the coaches became what Usher et al. (2001) describe as active
512 accomplices in their own self-formation. Indeed, a key premise of the coach developers
513 and the purpose of reflection on the program was that existing knowledge needed to be
514 made visible. According to Foucault (1998), verbalization has become a central method
515 of knowing through which people make themselves visible to themselves and others.
516 Hence, through reflection, coaches contributed their knowledge through verbalization
517 – they confessed to others (Cotton, 2001; Fejes, 2011; Foucault, 1991). Indeed, the
518 program engendered an “obligation to confess” (Cotton, 2001; Foucault, 1991, p. 60;
519 Rolfe & Gardner, 2006) and coach developers positioned the coaches as being in need
520 of confessing, acting to ‘guide’ and facilitate the confessional that brought forth the
521 coaches’ personal histories:

522 Interview:

523 Poppy: It is about the coach talking about themselves or a
524 situation they have found themselves in and about me asking
525 questions and it is usually questions about both ‘how’s it
526 been?’, ‘how’s it felt?’ ‘what were you thinking, what are you
527 thinking now, how do you want to move this forward?’ Those
528 types of questions.

529 Fieldnotes

530 Residential Workshop:

531 Will is leading a reconnect task, this includes a brief outline
532 detailing what is to come over the next couple of days and
533 relates to objectives and the value of the workshop.

534 Will: “Tomorrow is really around this collaborative learning
535 and bringing you guys together and learning and sharing from
536 each other, we are going to talk about developing some of our
537 inquisitive skills in order to then notice what we hear, what
538 feel and what we see in different environments in order to then
539 ask good questions of each other about why we do what we
540 do”.

541 Interview:

542 Tim: Understanding what being a self-regulated learner is
543 and the impact of that on reflection...[also] reflection

544 through the guide of [one-to-one coach developer sessions],
545 so trying to work with them to get the coach to be self-reliant
546 - to reflect.

547 The coach developers, then, through reflection, acted to make knowledge visible and
548 coaches disclosed themselves, sharing their personal histories for interpretation
549 (Foucault, 1978). This meant knowledge could be objectified and made visible for
550 scrutiny and assessment on the program. This process constituted the coaches as
551 ‘reflective practitioners’ (Fejes, 2011, 2013; Gilbert, 2001) and is demonstrated here
552 with data from a residential workshop:

553 Fieldnotes

554 Residential Workshop:

555 Will: I am going to ask you, if you are okay with it, is to just
556 share one thing that you really want to bring to the group. I
557 am going to ask Tim to record them, and then I think we
558 have personal and collective responsibility to make sure that
559 we bring those things. Shall we go around [the group], Stuart
560 if you don’t mind starting us off give us one example of
561 something you really want to bring to the group, Tim will
562 write them down.

563 Coach – Stuart: One of my many objectives I have discussed
564 with my coach developer is to try different styles of
565 leadership.

566 Will: That is great for us [coach developers] to know because
567 as observers, or people who are capturing through our own
568 notes, what we are seeing and hearing, we can start to feed
569 that back in about what we notice.

570 Will highlights that the group have started to reconnect:

571 Will: “So, you have started to be very open, you have started
572 to share as a group and share trust, in terms of what you will
573 do with that information keep it within the four walls. But
574 moving into how do we give feedback and have courageous
575 conversations (workshop topics) I would like you to think
576 about, in your head ‘if I could change one thing about the
577 group it would be...?’ and give that feedback to the group.
578 Have a think about what this group doesn’t do well now and
579 give them your feedback on that”.

580 The group are given 30 seconds to think quietly.

581 Will: “Ok, I am going to select one person to go and then
582 they are going to select another person and they are going to
583 go”.

584 The coaches proceed to talk about their own weaknesses and
585 things the group could do better. For example:

586 Coach - Richard: “I need to give the group more time”.

587 Coach - Daniel: “We don’t get feedback from each other
588 enough”.

589 Coach - Ben: “We don’t communicate in between
590 residential enough”.

591 Will responded positively “ok brilliant”.

592 These data could be considered a typical discursive pattern from the program where the
593 type of relationship between coach developer and the coaches meant that the process
594 was driven by the developers while the coach’s directed their confessions, in part, to
595 ‘real’ and more powerful others (Foucault, 1998). Importantly, this type of discussion
596 task was quintessential of the program and reified as coach led and learner centered.
597 However, following Foucault, such practices were contrived situations that meant the
598 possibility of surveillance was again heightened dramatically – “Tim to record them”,
599 “Tim will write them down”. While certainly creating “different discursive
600 possibilities” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 91), these tasks nonetheless served to simply
601 reconfigure the regulation of the coaches who were subject to the “immediate scrutiny
602 and surveillance of their peers” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 91), as well as the coach
603 developers. This activity could be interpreted as performance theatre, a situation in
604 which the coaches’ actions were carefully watched by the coach developers as the
605 “judges of normality” (Foucault, 1977, p. 304). Coach developers, in this example Will,
606 monitored the extent to which the coaches were participating and contributing in a
607 suitable manner, intervening to select coaches “to go”, thus suggesting an unexpressed
608 norm of what constituted a good discussion.

609 Interestingly, at the beginning of the discussion/sharing session, Will asks the
610 coaches “if you are ok with it”. This seems a perfunctory attempt to gain consent as
611 there was the unspoken knowledge that a lack of participation or a poorly articulated
612 coach contribution would be judged. In this case, the coach, Fran, is quick to correct
613 herself during a reflective discussion about a task:

614 Fieldnotes

615 Residential Workshop:

616 External Expert: What are your reflections from yesterday,
617 what have you learned or taken away from last night’s
618 session?... Fran what about you? Have you taken anything
619 away?

620 Coach - Fran: No

621 *Laughter*

622 Coach - Fran: Sorry I didn’t mean for that to sound...the task
623 got me thinking about communication.

624 Coaches’ resistance or refusal to take part in such prescribed reflective strategies
625 would be seen as unacceptable and ‘unprofessional’ and the coach considered as the
626 ‘wrong kind of learner’ or not being engaged, as these examples suggest:

627 Interviews:

628 Tim: The scenario (at the residential workshop) with George
629 (coach); he was getting cheesed off with that guy - he saw it
630 as ‘I’m right he’s wrong, I’d bin him off if I was working
631 with him’. Not, ‘why is he acting like this?’, ‘what am I
632 doing to impact on that, what can I do to get the most out of
633 him?’. He was just like; ‘he’s gone’. Now for me that is just
634 showing a lack of willingness, or emotions not letting him, to
635 reflect on why that is.

636 Tim: Richard (Coach) didn’t engage whatsoever in the
637 discussion and we didn’t challenge him and say; ‘you
638 weren’t comfortable were you, and that’s why you
639 [disengaged], you weren’t happy were you?’.

640 Alan: Most people at this level are continual learners and you
641 have to reflect to continue learning.

642 Importantly, reflection and reflection practices, as already suggested, were
643 intimately entwined with humanistic discourses of empowerment that emphasized the
644 need for the coaches to talk and know the truth about themselves. The premise being
645 that the more the coaches developed an ‘authentic understanding of self’, the more
646 ‘power’ they would accrue and be able to learn according to their own perceived needs.
647 At face value, such learner centeredness can be empowering, creating what Foucault
648 (1998) calls ‘active’ knowing subjects. Indeed, coach developers asked questions about
649 what had happened, how the coach was feeling, their thoughts and beliefs during and
650 after the coaching experience, and their ideas for future action. Such questions
651 demonstrate the latency principle of confession (Mills & Denison, 2018), as they
652 promoted ‘looking into yourself’ and ‘finding your true self’ to enable the emergence
653 of self-knowledge (Usher & Edwards, 1994). For example:

654 Interviews:

655 Isla: ‘I am wondering why, I am wondering what went on for
656 you there, I am interested in what you’re feeling now as you
657 talk to me about this, what is going on for you now’.

658 Rebecca: Why is possibly a bit critical, the ‘why’ is the most
659 critical of all beginnings of questions.

660 Interviewer: So, how would you?

661 Rebecca: So, ‘I notice...’ and ‘I wonder...’ ‘what that’s
662 about...’. If you think, kids ask the most ‘why’ questions...
663 ‘why’ is a penetrating, quite a provocative question... Well
664 you usually ask a ‘why’ question because in your world you
665 don’t get that - you know morally, educationally, spiritually,
666 whatever it is, ‘why did you do it that way?’ You’re really
667 curious because it is not the way you would have done it.

668 At the same time, however, issues of power were not recognized by coach developers
669 or coaches because reflection was viewed as a neutral process that could enable
670 effective action while remaining disconnected from power (cf. Usher & Edwards,

671 1994). Indeed, the coach developers were at pains to distance themselves from these
672 issues and viewed the process as entirely neutral, for example:

673 Interviews:

674 Isla: ...reflect on what is going on for you...you're not
675 giving them your solution you are just reflecting on it for
676 yourself.... So that then takes away judgement, so 'this is
677 what is happening for me when I am listening to your
678 problem'.

679 Rebecca: If I apply a lens to myself around being better it
680 would be an inquiry lens, full stop no judgment...If I speak
681 to people about self-inquiry [instead of critical inquiry] they
682 are much more open to what might happen next...because
683 who is the judge of right and wrong really?

684 However, reflection on the program functioned as regulation through self-regulation
685 and was disciplining through self-discipline, a process that may have felt and seemed
686 empowering to the participants, but was within a regime where power was never absent.
687 The 'self-reflective coach' does not overcome power relations; instead the individual
688 governs themselves within relations of power (Nicolli & Fejes, 2008). For as Denison
689 et al. (2015) describe, Foucault (1995) argues that in regimes [programs] where
690 individuals [coaches] believe they need to be 'empowered' by another [coach
691 developer] to learn and know more about themselves they are actually becoming
692 'disempowered' in the very process of 'self-empowerment'. That is, "as individual
693 subjects, there is no transcendental position from which we can become 'empowered';
694 there are only particular discursive positions within power/knowledge formations that
695 we can occupy (Edwards & Usher, 1994)" (Denison et al., 2015, p. 7). Hence,
696 empowering intent became submerged in the authority and authoritative actions of the
697 coach developer as confessor acting to bring out more and more dimensions of the
698 coaches, expanding the space for intervention and 'development', but also space for the
699 exercise of power. Thus, making the coaches increasingly visible to normalizing

700 judgements about the processes of reflection, as well as the quality of the knowledge
701 generated, and reinforcing surveillance and coach self-surveillance. In response,
702 coaches had little choice other than to ‘correct’ their thoughts or behaviors in line with
703 the developers’ therapy (Mills & Denison, 2018), as Fran demonstrated earlier “sorry I
704 didn’t mean for that to sound...the task got me thinking about communication”. Micro
705 techniques related to reflection were used, such as debriefing sessions, journal writing,
706 and shared reflective narratives with the group where coaches had to write and talk
707 about their activity. Despite the coach developers’ intentions, this was not a liberating,
708 critical process, but acted to produce outcomes that constrained the coaches in what
709 might be considered valid knowledge. In this example, coach developers explained that
710 ‘the content will be driven by you [coaches] as a cohort’, but then guided coaches to
711 coach developer and program topics, such as managing meetings:

712 Fieldnotes

713 Residential Workshop:

714 Coaches picture stories reflection task

715 Coaches talk through ‘where they are now’.

716 Discussion/Questions following Fran’s presentation:

717 Coach - Daniel: Where do you get your energy from?

718 Coach - Fran: Championships I like that bit, I am ‘do-er’, I
719 am not keen on the meetings...I was coaching and leading all
720 at once I learned that doesn’t work and it is hard to not to
721 ‘tell’ [people what to do]. I am highly sceptical, and I don’t
722 trust easy, so it’s a bit of a dilemma for me because I have to
723 give responsibility. I didn’t realise but apparently, I am
724 [sceptical], so now I know how, I know my role, so I had a
725 problem.

726 Will: So, you are brilliant at championships and that is where
727 you get your energy, if you can run brilliant meetings,
728 something [External Expert] talked about, what are you
729 thinking about that?

730 In addition, these micro techniques were a further mechanism that allowed coaches'
731 thinking to become visible to others, and once in the public sphere could be subjected
732 to interpretation and judgment (Cotton, 2001). Importantly, surveillance requires a
733 degree of visibility to be maintained (Gilbert, 2001); individuals must be aware and
734 committed to act upon its effects, as was the case on the program:

735 Interviews:

736 Coach - Ben: I think that we need a way where when you
737 reflect there is some stuff that you could share rather than be
738 it like 'that's mine I don't want to share it with people'.

739 Coach - Daniel: I find reflecting in a group quite good...
740 actually talking that [coaching issues] through as a group is
741 probably the most powerful...I mean a lot of it is about self
742 and developing you, but I get so much from the other
743 coaches. The knowledge of how people do various things in
744 their sport I find really really useful.

745 Coach - Harry: The more you work with someone like a
746 coach developer, who asks you the right questions...you
747 naturally start to ask the right questions yourself...in the last
748 12 months...the questions I think to myself about are at a
749 higher level.

750 Through inciting the self to act upon the self through reflective practice, the individual
751 coaches became self-managing. This ensured that between contact with the developers
752 and program residentials, the individual coach could confront their 'weaknesses' and
753 act upon them. Coaches were thus guided to recognize the 'limitations' of their practice
754 and through reflection a modification of behavior was expected (Cassidy et al., 2009;
755 Fejes, 2011; Gilbert & Côté, 2013). Indeed, behavior change was the desire of all
756 involved and the objectives and purpose of the coach education program:

757 Fieldnotes

758 Residential Workshop:

759 Will addressing the coaches: "What we are ultimately trying
760 to get to here is behavior change for you and your athletes or
761 players"

762 Interview:
763 Will: We need to continue to focus on how they [coaches]
764 have made sense of what they have just heard and bring that
765 to life in their own environment so that they have reference
766 point and they also have something tangible where ‘I can see
767 how I am going to apply this in my environment and this is
768 worthwhile and therefore I am going to actively try and
769 change me or an athlete’s behavior in order to get a different
770 outcome’

771 Therefore, through reflection, coach subjectivity was not determined but became
772 elicited, fostered, and shaped (Fejes, 2008, 2013; Foucault, 2007) in a situation of
773 ‘freedom’ (Fejes, 2013), where the individual coach made choices based on reflection
774 (i.e. governed the self).

775 **Implications – developing ‘counter-practice’**

776 Foucault (1991a) argued that analysis should not generate advice, guidelines, or
777 instruction as to what is to be done, seeking instead to unsettle what is taken-for-
778 granted, rather than produce recipes for action. Therefore, rather than lead to
779 suggestions for improvement in policy and practice or offer solutions to problems, our
780 idea here was to make visible to coach education ‘policy makers’ and coach developers,
781 and coaches ‘on the ground’, a different, destabilized and problematised version of
782 reflection. The purpose, in this case, was to destabilise things about reflection that are
783 currently and ordinarily taken-for-granted; to introduce awkwardness into the fabric of
784 our experiences of reflection by making coach developer and coach narratives ‘stutter’
785 (Nicoll & Fejes, 2008; Rose, 1999).

786 This approach is in direct contrast to a significant body of research that presents
787 and perpetuates particular discourses of reflection that currently fail to recognize
788 relations of power – power that is not acknowledged in everyday policy making and
789 practices of coach developers, coach education, or research into it. These discourses (as
790 the data in this case suggest) position reflection as an individual, asocial, ahistorical

791 process within a “dominant psychologism and...humanistic discourse” (Cushion, 2016,
792 p. 2). Such discourses have become reified and confirmed through repeated social
793 practices; embedded in coaching to assume what Foucault (1980a) calls a status of truth
794 (e.g. Huntley et al., 2014; Knowles et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2015) (Cushion, 2016).
795 The outcome of which has meant that reflection in coaching has retained a ‘seductive
796 appeal’ that has often deflected critical thought (Fendler, 2003, p. 22).

797 While the developers and coaches positioned reflection as free from power,
798 Foucault helps ‘read’ reflection alternatively as a mechanism of power where
799 individuals (shaping subjectivity) are governed and govern themselves within relations
800 of power. Thus, the research enables us to see how generalized narrations of reflection
801 as power ‘neutral’ and ‘empowering’ can be misguided. Moreover, the research shows
802 that attempts by coach developers, through the coach education program, to be ‘critical’
803 and ‘learner centred’ are embroiled with intrinsic relations of power, and the stated
804 intention of being ‘neutral’ and ‘empowering’ may in fact exacerbate rather than
805 ameliorate the workings of power (cf. Nicoll & Fejes, 2008). An implication therefore
806 lies in not accepting passively ‘what we do’, but as Foucault (1980) suggests,
807 emancipating local discursivities and subjugated knowledges to “render them...capable
808 of opposition and of struggle against hegemonic discourses” (p.85). In other words, to
809 consider critically the discursive complexities of reflection and reflective practice and
810 go some way to challenge notions of reflection portrayed repeatedly in coaching as an
811 unbiased and objective process that occurs in a politically neutral environment
812 (Cushion, 2016).

813 By focusing on the how and what of power, we have been able to take a critical
814 attitude towards, and to question present understandings of, coach developer practice
815 and reflection by making visible how power operates. Revealing, what Johns (1999)

816 describes as, a shadowy world of surveillance where reflection practices extract and
817 objectify confession and subject coaches to the powerful gaze of others, thus ensuring
818 coach conformity to a received ideal image of coaching and practice, as well as of
819 reflection itself. Importantly, and as Foucault reminds us, such “critique doesn’t have
820 to be the premise of deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It
821 should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is”
822 (1991a, p. 84). In other words, this research contributes to a ‘practical critique’ in the
823 form of transgression (Foucault, 1991b, p.45), or what Biesta (1998b, 2008) has called
824 counter-practice. Thinking in terms of counter-practice helps resist the temptation to
825 ‘fix’ policy or practice. Instead, the critical work of counter-practice consists of
826 showing that the ‘way things are’ is only one (limited) possibility (Biesta, 2008). This
827 tiny, but significant, step is crucial as it opens up the possibility for coaches and coach
828 developers “of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think” (Foucault,
829 1991b, p. 46).

830 Counter-practice helps show that coach developers *can* play a crucial role in
831 helping reflection fulfil its developmental and empowering potential. Acting as a
832 ‘guide’, developers can help coaches to ask deep questions about self, relating the self-
833 to-the-self and rooting out taken-for-granted or ‘natural’ conflict and contradiction
834 (Johns, 1999). This could enable coaches to see the constraints on achieving desirable
835 practice within particular situations (Denison et al., 2015). Such an approach acts in
836 opposition to a process of surveillance that currently considers self in comparison with
837 a normalized other and where contradictions and conflict are rationalized against a
838 norm. Hence counter-practice shows that the differences between such practices can be
839 identified and empower coach developers. However, this does not position coach
840 developers ‘outside’ power, or indeed offer a ‘better’ way. Rather, it supports them to

841 see the culture and power relations they are in and prepares them to work within them.
842 This provides opportunities for different ways of doing and being and can provide
843 support for coach developers and coaches resisting or refusing particular subjectivities
844 or subject positions (and also adopting particular subjectivities or subject positions).
845 This requires judgement and as Fendler (2003) argues to maintain a “skeptical and
846 critical attitude about what we do” and examine the role of reflection to avoid it
847 becoming a “normalizing technology that reproduces assumptions” (p. 23). Therefore,
848 whether coaches and coach educators accept particular subjectivities or subject
849 positions is, at the end of the day, up to them. This research therefore encourages coach
850 developers to not only consider what they do to construct reflection’s meaning and
851 support reflective practice and why, but also what this meaning and what their practice
852 *does* to coaches and relations of power (Foucault, 1965). Coach developers cannot be
853 an ‘enlightened guide’ (Rolfe & Gardner, 2006, p. 595) if they themselves are not
854 enlightened and this research helps make visible that there is at least some choice.

855 **Conclusion**

856 The purpose of this paper was to consider critically the discursive complexities of
857 reflection and reflective practice in high performance coach developers’ support.
858 Foucauldian analysis problematized the seemingly unproblematic, shining a light on
859 power relations omnipresent in reflective practice support. Similarly to Mills and
860 Denison (2013; 2018), the research did not intend to be critical of the methods coach
861 developers employed, but rather the operations of power that formed methods
862 representing reflection. Indeed, analysis highlighted the unintended consequences of
863 the coach developers’ well-intended actions. Practically, the coach developers
864 supported reflection and reflective practice through questioning, observing, and
865 providing feedback, but this also fostered in the coaches an ‘obligation-to-confess’.

866 Reflective practice was underpinned by a humanistic discourse, that dominated both
867 the one-to-one sessions and coach education workshops. Together this approach to
868 reflection was viewed unproblematically as ‘good’ for coaches.

869 However, coach developers as reflective or ‘critical friends’ served to reinforce
870 practitioners’ self-surveillance and arguably contributed to the construction of docile
871 and competent workers (Foucault, 1977). Importantly, this was the opposite of the
872 coach developers’ and program’s intentions that focused on supporting critical
873 thinking, innovation, and creativity. Instead, reflection in this form constructed
874 coaches, unintentionally, as people who disclosed and affirmed their identity in terms
875 of categories reflective of existing assumptions about coach education for high
876 performance coaching and coaches, such as ‘highly-practical’, ‘learning from other
877 coaches’ and ‘self-regulated learners’. This could authenticate and promote certain
878 ways of thinking about and being a coach, while potentially dismissing others and
879 possibilities for thinking outside existing categories, as coaches are silenced by the
880 dominant discourse (Cushion, 2016; Cushion & Partington, 2014; Fendler, 2003).

881 Importantly, this exercise of power became subtle and persuasive through
882 humanistic discourses of the developers that fostered notions of ‘empowerment’.
883 Therefore, power had not been removed, but reconfigured, and resulted in a growing
884 tension between the coach developer’s role to support, but also to judge. These findings
885 suggested that coach developers cannot be detached from power as all negotiations,
886 including those connected to reflection, are always within systems of domination
887 (Foucault, 1982). It is therefore dangerous for power to be overlooked.

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