Dangerous Liaisons:

Youth sport, citizenship and intergenerational mistrust

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Abstract

This paper reflects on and offers a critical analysis of the relationship between youth sport and citizenship development, in practice and in the UK policy context of sports coaching and physical education. While deploying data and insights from a recently completed research project[1] in England, which identified substantial tensions in intergenerational relationships in sport and coaching, the argument and analysis also invokes wider international concerns and more generally applicable implications for policy and practice. Drawing heuristically upon the philosophy of Dewey (2007 [1916]), it is recognised that the concept of citizenship as a form of social practice should seek to encourage the development of complementary traits and dispositions in young people. To develop socially and educationally thus entails engagement in meaningful social and cultural activity, of which one potentially significant component is participation in youth sport, both within and outside formal education. However, it is argued that any confident assumption that sporting and coaching contexts will necessarily foster positive traits and dispositions in young people should be considered dubious and misplaced. Deploying a Lacanian (1981) perspective to interpret our data, we contend that 'liaisons' and interactions between coaches and young people are often treated suspiciously, and regarded as potentially 'dangerous'.

Key words: Policy, sports coaching, Dewey, Lacan, risk.

Introduction

The argument that the practical learning that accrues from young people's
participation and experience in sport can facilitate the development of social
citizenship, fostering a positive sense of 'belonging', is both common and, in
principle, unexceptional. However, to assess the current reality of these
assumptions, it is essential to apply an awareness of the context of sports coaching
which goes beyond the simplistic. Evidence from recent ESRC-funded research
suggests that in many settings of youth sport activity the fostering of such positive
orientations cannot be taken as a given; indeed, in some senses the opposite
appears to be the case. Central to our concern is the argument that close interaction
between coaches and young people is often regarded dubious and dangerous. Thus,
contrary to the assumption that youth sport can usefully enhance social capital and
foster closer social and intergenerational ties and relations, we suggest such activity
and involvement may have a less positive influence, based on defensive rather than
shared and inclusive practice. The corollary is a form of social dislocation which may,
in fact, serve paradoxically to promote a culture of fear and intergenerational mistrust
(Garratt *et al*. 2012). On the basis of data and insights from *Hands off sports
coaching: the politics of touch* (Piper *et al*. 2012), which (as demonstrated later in the
paper) evidenced substantial coach anxiety and uncertainty about touch, abuse, and
safeguarding, and their implications for their experience and practice, and noting a
backdrop of pervasive and ubiquitous safeguarding and child protection policies (see
for example, CPSU 2003; 2006; 2012), we suggest that contemporary youth sport
policy and practice may be interpreted as antagonistic to the concept of citizenship
development. Most would accept that such positive development ideally represents
the embodiment of mutual trust rather than fear, of social and intergenerational

connection rather than disconnection, and the aspiration to socialise and enculturate wise, open, and confident young people into the world around them. Against such an aspiration, we suggest the current UK/English context of sport and coaching for children and young people may be judged as significantly deficient.

Background

On the basis of previous research and writing (e.g. Sandford *et al.* 2006; Green, 2006; Sandford *et al.* 2008; Garratt and Piper 2008a), the identification of a degree of wishful thinking around the positive impact of sport and coaching on young people's citizenship education and development may not be altogether surprising. The connection between sport and the production of good, healthy citizens has been increasingly problematized by recent research, which has questioned the assumed benefits of physical activity and youth sport in re-engaging disaffected youth and further promoting positive personal and social development (Armour and Sandford, 2013). Similarly, Coalter (2013) raises the concern that, in the UK, deeply entrenched antecedents of culture and social class may serve as impediments and structural barriers to participation, regardless of the optimism and positive intent for contemporary sports policy to engender social citizenship.

The steadfast belief in the positive value of sport has a long and chequered history, dating to the notion of the 'gentlemen amateur' among the Victorian elite. Then, following industrialisation, the concept of 'rational recreation' emerged as a variably inflected concern to better manage working class leisure time under middle class control (Holt, 1989). A seminal moment came through *Sport and the community,* when the Wolfenden committee drew on this early impetus to employ sport to

'promote the general welfare of the community' (CCPR, 1960). Yet further momentum was gained through the 'Sport for All'[2] campaign in the early 1970s. A powerful concept and seductive rhetorical device, this was employed to address the perceived cultural deficit of the 'recreationally disadvantaged', and further appropriated sport as part of the general fabric of social services and citizenship development (Coalter, 2007; DoE, 1975). It continued to dominate policy and practice throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s (Collins *et al.* 2012), reinforcing the social and political correspondence between the state, sport and civic culture (Coalter, 1998). It is now often employed as a means to justify the involvement of government in sport to solve social problems, variously linked over time to issues of inner-city decline, juvenile delinquency, and community cohesion and inclusion (Bailey *et al.* 2009; Bailey 2005; Houlihan, 1991).

In other policy and practice contexts too, unrealistically positive messages around citizenship education have similarly been based on inadequate awareness of relevant social complexities, and of contested philosophical perspectives and concepts bearing on the integration of pedagogy, identity and voice in contexts of formal education (Garratt and Piper 2008b; Garratt and Piper 2010; Garratt 2011; Garratt and Piper 2012). A similar argument has been made in respect of the claimed Olympic legacies (Piper and Garratt 2013). Thus, in a sense, the following discussion around children's and young people's engagement with sport and coaching may be understood as part of a longer term project of elucidating the various meanings of, and tensions and omissions around citizenship education, and

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[2] The campaign: 'Sport for All' was developed in 1972 by the then GB Sports Council as a vehicle to encourage *all* members of the community to participate in sport and physical recreation. The underlying ideology and policy rhetoric, couched within a 'welfare state discourse', was intended as egalitarian and promised a broad range of social and community welfare benefits, relating to health, education and the arts (Houlihan and White, 2002: 24).

how inconvenient realities can constrain and impinge on the achievement of apparently self-evident, but not altogether realistic sports policy goals. Indeed, as Armour and Sandford remind us, despite 'enduring faith in the power of physical activity/sport engagement to build "character", facilitate young people's positive development and contribute to a social inclusion agenda, *the evidence base for such assertions is thin'* (2013: 87, emphasis added).

Taking this as our point of departure, this paper builds on previously rehearsed arguments to extend the critique of youth sport and sport development and its claim to engender social and educational change. Thus, we focus here on an arguably under-reported facet of interaction between coaches and young people, by examining the prevalent socio-psychoanalytical context of coaching relations, subsumed within a culture of fear and intergenerational mistrust, in order to challenge and debunk axioms commonly deployed in mainstream policy rhetoric in recent decades.

The contemporary policy context

Contemporary policy and research has focused on the value of sport as a vehicle to promote wider social and civic benefits for both individuals and society. The idea of one leading to the other is predicated on particular (we suggest erroneous) assumptions regarding the potential of youth sport to develop social capital, pro-social behaviour and citizenship. For example, Kay and Bradbury (2009) present an optimistic account of young people's participation in programmes of sport designed to encourage volunteering in developing social capital, participation, and civic engagement, and thus making a potentially worthwhile contribution to citizenship

development. Central to this thesis and the reported research which supports it is the presumed interaction and positive connection between young people and adult professionals and volunteers, including sports coaches, especially in terms of generating particular forms of 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital. These conceptual distinctions, and their heuristic application, are borrowed from the work of the communitarian theorist, Putnam (2000). Applying his terminology, it can be argued that bonding capital improves the connection between people 'like us' (for example connections within and between peer groups), while bridging capital enables closer social ties between different kinds of people (in this case, for example, young people and their coaches, teachers and other club members and sports professionals), with the overall effect of developing a more cohesive and trusting community and society. The facility with which Putnam's ideas can be used to underwrite and elaborate on the elision in policy and practice of sport and citizenship is indicative of the ubiquitous application of communitarian assumptions in recent rhetoric and policy around social integration and sport. A newspaper commentary on the success of both Team GB and the volunteer games-makers during the 2012 London Olympics, playing on Putnam's theme of 'bowling alone', is illustrative:

> These people are ... embodiments of deferred gratification ... self-denial and hard work ... They're the opposite of the gimme-now, look-at-me, celebrity B-list fame academy set we keep being told epitomises modern Britain. If it looks egotistical ... it's really a story of graft, and of group loyalty ... And if we take those two things ... then we have the glimpse of a different Britain ... If Britain's remarkable per-capita success at these Games teaches us anything, it's that when we bowl together, we bowl better. (Ashley 2012, n.p.)

The pervasive presence and interconnection of communitarian concepts in this policy area is exemplified in the policy document: *Creating a sporting habit for life* (DCMS 2012). It argues that when volunteers and competitors are brought together through sport, it is the motivation to volunteer that precedes the focus on sport. Hence sport does not provide social capital *per se*, which already exists in the virtue and primary act of volunteering, but offers a forum through which such volunteering is usefully directed and exercised.

In a cognate critique, Coalter (2007b) draws attention to the malign influence of social capital as a symptom, as we would argue, of the misalignment of the 'interaction order', where particular groups that are not 'like us' are constrained in the presentational context of face-to-face interactions, treated as 'outsiders' and excluded from community membership. Paradoxically, in practice such an argument is used to underpin the value and introduction of sport as a vehicle for broad and sustainable social development in disadvantaged (and often working-class) communities (Kidd 2008, p. 370). Conveying a spectral resonance with the foreshadowed concept of 'rational recreation', recent policy persists with arguments along these lines, for instance:

> Sport England will … work with the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust to expand their Get on Track programme which will place at least 2,000 youngsters on the very margins of our society into sports projects that *also teach them vital life skills*.(DCMS 2012, p. 13, emphasis added)

In fact there is very little empirical evidence to support such claims, which are treated as self-evident, being derived directly from the conceptual frameworks in which they were developed, and the way in which particular authors chose to see and present the world. Thus, we question whether Kay and Bradbury's (2009) findings that sport based intervention and volunteering can lead to: 'skills development'; 'improved social awareness and relationships' (p. 132); the development of 'human capital', 'social interaction' and 'connectedness' (p. 136) between young people and members within their community; and 'a greater sense of altruism and citizenship' (p. 136) are altogether plausible and realistic. Moreover, because young people tend not to engage in sport for the benefit of socially appropriated ends, but simply for their own personal enjoyment, the idea of assembling projects to develop citizenship through sport-related volunteering is both contradictory and at odds with the moral purpose of acting in accordance with one's own free will. To be coerced or otherwise incentivised into volunteering defeats the object of the act itself, which is to move independently on the impulse of what is socially just, appropriate, and morally worthwhile.

This argument casts a significant shadow on earlier work which tended to elide and conflate volunteering in youth sport with the development of pro-social behaviour and improved citizenship (Eley and Kirk, 2002). Moreover, as Coalter (2007b) notes, paradoxically those most likely to participate in sport are young people from more privileged socio-economic groups and hence not those for whom social policies seeking to connect sport and citizenship are normally explicitly intended. Green (2012, p. 2) argues that the relationship between physical education, youth sport, and lifelong participation is complex and cannot be reduced to an 'open and shut

case of causality', while Haycock and Smith (2011) emphasise the significance of deeply ingrained sporting habituses and capitals during childhood, and employ these ideas to explain significant differences in participation rates in leisure sport across the life course. Thus we argue that, while social capital may accrue from participation in sport, it is not always 'the result of intentional investments aimed at future benefits' but rather 'the unintentional consequences of instrumental, normative and/or expressive actions' (Seippel 2006, p. 171) achieved through sporting activity.

Curiously, in the face of such counter-evidence and critique, the emphasis of contemporary policy remains ever-optimistic: sport is conceived as a panacea. For example, for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, part of the strategy to enhance participation in sport across the life course is to continue to improve links between schools and community sports clubs. Thus:

> We want to ensure that there are as many opportunities as possible for young people to play sport both inside and outside of school. To do this we will strengthen the relationship between clubs and schools, further education colleges and universities – creating a new network of school and community club links – involving every school and a wide range of sports which are most attractive to young people across the country … NGBs, together with local partners, will create a new satellite club on a school setting, linked to an existing community 'hub' club, and run by coaches and volunteers from that hub club. By being located on a school site, the satellite club is within easy reach of young people, but is distinct from school PE as it is run by community volunteers. (DCMS 2012, p. 7)

The role of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) is seen as instrumental in the process and ambition to ensure that 'sports deliver increased participation for both youth and adults alike' (*ibid,* p. 9). However, it may be argued that this seductive rhetoric is not couched in the ethical discourse of 'good will', voluntarism, or social capital theory inspired by a morality based on collaboration. Rather, first and foremost, it is a performative exercise, mirroring an 'idealised version of capitalism … based on competition, achievement, efficiency, technology and meritocracy' (Jackson and Andrews 2012, p. 263). Indicative of this, simultaneously competitive and punitive, policy in relation to youth sport and also leisure sport across the life course is driven by top-down, externally imposed outcomes:

> Each Whole Sport Plan will include ambitious objectives to ensure that sports deliver increased participation for both youth and adults alike. We will also institute a new performance management regime, with a strict payment-by-results system. For sports that don't deliver on their ambitions, there will be clear financial sanctions; for those that are delivering well, they will be able to access more funds in order to expand their good work. The principle of review and reward will be built into the system – so if a NGB fails to meet its contracted objectives, the funding withheld will then be accessible to other groups which can offer strong business cases for increasing participation. (DCMS 2012, p. 9)

The idea and implementation of reward and payment by result, and the associated threat of sanction and removal of privilege, matches the bid-and-targets-driven

approach to defining and realising policy goals which pervades contemporary social and educational provision. As such, it appears in tension with the view expressed elsewhere that 'Sport England will make sure that any non-profit making community group or organisation which can help young people build a sporting habit for life has the chance to bid for funding' (DCMS 2012, p. 14). Nevertheless, much like the punitive framework of the Ofsted[3] inspection in the context and controlled regime of school performance (which has transformed teaching into a highly disciplined and frequently audited profession), sports NGBs are now increasingly constrained by a similar dubious performativity, potentially serving to undermine the intrinsic value of, and connection between, youth sport and citizenship.

Such accounts identify and highlight the assumed positive relationship and benefits of youth sport in citizenship development as both empirically and conceptually problematic. We suggest such doubts are significantly reinforced by the outcomes of the *Hands off sports coaching: the politics of touch* project (Piper *et al*. 2011; 2012; 2013), which suggest a counterproductive culture of fear and intergenerational mistrust between adults and young people involved in youth sport (of which, more later). Contemporary sport policy has tended to overlook these interactional complexities and socio-psychoanalytic factors, as well as the important intersection of social and structural constraints on participation rates in leisure sport. Thus, we suggest that policy for youth sport is unlikely to make a substantial impact on character and citizenship development without taking appropriate account of the social, cultural, and habitual characteristics of participation *in situ.*

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[3] Ofsted is the acronym for the Office for Standards in Education, which operates as the definitive inspection framework for schools in England. It is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England, first recognised under the 1992 Education Act.

Dewey: youth sport, citizenship, and social practice

In principle, participation in youth sport and progressive citizenship awareness have in common the ability to foster democratic participation as part of the gradual unfolding and expansion of social and cultural experience. According to the social-philosopher and pragmatist, John Dewey (2007 [1916]), every idea, value and social institution originates in practical circumstances:

> As a matter of fact every individual has grown up, and always must grow up, in a social medium. His [sic] responses grow intelligent, or gain meaning, simply because he lives and acts in a medium of accepted meanings and values ... Through social intercourse, through sharing in the activities embodying beliefs, he gradually acquires a mind of his own. (p. 217)

This pragmatic perspective (in which possible variations in the significance of to 'grow intelligent, or gain meaning' are ignored, while the positive qualities of the 'social medium' are assumed) is congruent with the work of Harvey *et al* (2011), which includes a cogent case for the development of 'sport education' as a means to promote ethical conduct and responsibility within and beyond sport. Significantly for the current discussion, they contend that for sport to make a valuable contribution in an ethical sense it must be designed to do so, and hence be intentionally planned. In this respect, sport education is presented as a way of developing practical *literacy*, which entails the development of desirable ethical traits and characteristics. Indeed, as Dewey (2007 [1916]) might suggest, habituation and practice are significant, for 'moral virtue is like an art ... the experienced practitioner is better than a man who has theoretical knowledge but no practical experience …' (p. 259). Accordingly, there

is a vital connection between knowledge and activity, for 'every act, by the principle of habit, modifies disposition' (p. 260), producing complementary traits and characteristics.

While in a sense these points are sound and carry weight, we contend that research tending to focus on sport in isolation, either as an ethical contract in 'which implicit agreement exists between teacher and students about appropriate behaviour in physical education' (Harvey *et al*. 2011, p. 14), or otherwise via pedagogical interventions designed to provide 'young people with experiences of ethical conduct' through 'wholehearted participation' (p. 2), risks missing the point. In fact, the axis on which ethical development turns is constructed and influenced by the social and cultural characteristics of sport as a situated practice, where such complexities and notions of *belonging* are ontologically relevant, indeed vital, to the status and construction of identity and citizenship (Piper and Garratt 2004; Osler and Starkey, 2005). If the characteristics of a given situated practice have become less than benign, to such an extent that the assumptions on which interaction is based are in a sense toxic (as can be argued in this case), then these processes may not be so positive as is commonly assumed. Put simply, our contention is that defensive practices observed between coaches and young people, related to concerns around touch and abuse, are corollaries of a culture of intergenerational fear and mistrust and an escalating and disproportionate paranoia around risk and protection. This social context is supportive of social dislocation rather than pro-social behaviour or enhanced social citizenship.

Research and philosophical approach

In what follows, we draw upon the experience of sports coaches and PE teachers, reported during the aforementioned ESRC-funded research project (Piper *et al*. 2012[4]). This qualitative research focussed particularly on three sports - football, swimming, and paddle-sport - but included interviews in some other contexts (eg rugby union and gymnastics) so that more generalised outcomes could be achieved. Over 50 interviews were conducted with coaches (this included at least 10 for each of the three sports, representing, for example, a range of age, experience, performance levels, employment status, and gender), and a further 10 with PE teachers from a range of contexts and at different stages of their career. There was also a group interview for each of the three sports including different coaches to those referred to above. A number of coaching and teaching sessions were observed (three for each of the three main sports). Towards the end of the process, further discursive interviews were conducted with managers (at least one for each of the three sports), administrators (at least one from the relevant major NGBs), and policy makers responsible for both specific sports and sporting provision more generally, including oversight of child protection and safeguarding. Project outcomes and implications will continue to be developed and disseminated (see Piper *et al*. 2011, 2012, 2013; Garratt *et al*. 2012), and are the source of underlying otherwise unreferenced points and arguments in the remainder of this paper. The research focussed on the issue of touch, conceived as a discursive practice with wider implications and reverberations (e.g. giving lifts, texting). It indicated that coaching situations within the context of youth sport can, and often do, involve coaching and interpersonal practice which can only have the effect of socialising young people into unhelpful orientations towards, and relations with, adults working with them *in loco*

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parentis, about whom they are encouraged to be suspicious and mistrusting. In an important sense, in sport as elsewhere, intergenerational relationships have been rendered toxic, with each side enjoined to regard the other as potentially dangerous. The powerful discourse of child protection and safeguarding has pervaded organised sport and coaching to such an extent that the coach is conceived as a source of risk, essentially a stranger and thus subsumed by the powerful (if misleading) slogan 'stranger-danger'. The foregrounding of a particular (regulation and guideline-rich) regime of child protection has had a significant effect on coaching practice and culture. This is illustrated by the reported experience of many 10 year olds (and their parents) whose first contact with the coaches at a new soccer club (which many may envisage as an occasion of excitement and anticipation) is a presentation on child protection, with its implicit message that people who want to coach children are not to be trusted.

Internalising this message, many coaches regretfully reported adopting a self-defensive approach to working with young people, prompted by an awareness of the damage done by any suspicion or misapplied allegation of abuse or abusive intent. They monitor each other, but also police themselves, with the effect of leading them to doubt their own motives. The dominant safeguarding discourse, with its encouragement to operate as if the worst-case scenario is actually the case, and an essentially dehumanised model of the adult (i.e. predator) and the child (i.e. victim), conveys a particular model of interpersonal relations and intergenerational relationships predicated on fear and mistrust . There is no sound reason to think that more abuse occurs in sport than in any other social context, and every reason to

think there is less than in families, yet the adult coach has been constructed as a dangerous individual (Taylor *et al* forthcoming).

Summary outcomes such as these suggest that, no matter how cogent and cohesive the relationship of youth sport and citizenship may *appear* at the level of policy, there is a danger that *actual* relationships between young people and *in loco parentis* adults will be undermined by a pervasive culture of fear and mistrust. The research demonstrated compelling evidence, in a variety of contexts of youth sport in the school and the wider community, of intergenerational mistrust rather than any marked sense of social belonging, of dislocation and insecurity among coaches, and of pedagogy and practice in which interpersonal relations are stunted and constrained rather than positively enabled and fostered.

In the proceeding analysis we adopt a broadly Lacanian perspective to examine aspects of coaches' discourse and interaction. Lacan's (1981; 1982) notion of the Borromean knot provides a propitious metaphor, denoting a confluence of concepts to explain how the 'real', 'imaginary' and 'symbolic' orders position individuals (in this case coaches) in relation to inhabited professional contexts (of which, more below). The account is positioned within a radical-hermeneutic frame, in which we deconstructively apply the contextual, cultural and identity-related assumptions and beliefs of our-selves to the process of analysis and interpretation. The outcome is not the revelation of 'truth' in the data (which cannot exist apart from our analysis), but rather the employment of language to construct the data in a relevant and meaningful way (Garratt, 2013). In the Heideggerian (1978) sense, we thus analyse

through our sense of *Being* in the world, part of our ontological make-up and disposition to produce knowledge as interpretation, plausible yet inevitably partial.

The value of Lacan's (1981) 'Borromean knot' metaphor is its ability to explain ambivalence and assist our understanding of the inner-tensions experienced by coaches in their plight to *be*: themselves, conscientious professionals and moral agents intent on doing the 'right thing'. The 'real', 'imaginary' and 'symbolic' orders are not fixed but act upon each other in negative and incommensurable ways. Rather than supporting resolution, they promote psychological tension, trauma and disruption within the 'mental life' of coaches, affecting and influencing their disposition to act. Put simply, the 'imaginary order' appeals to the 'person I imagine myself to be'; the 'symbolic order' represents the 'person I am supposed to be', according to cultural norms and societal expectations of 'good coaching'; and the 'real' is the surplus, or that which resists being symbolized. Paradoxically, 'the real' is the most elusive and unrealisable of the three orders, here suggesting an image of the coaching world as an idealised figment, both present and absent, infinitely deferred and beyond the reach of even the 'good coach'. The 'imaginary' and 'symbolic' exist in perpetual tension to produce an irreducible difference between 'expected' and 'obtained' forms of pleasure (*jouissance)* (Lacan 1982). This has particular resonance with coaches who appear to want to do one thing, while doing another, with such tensions emerging recursively in a culture of fear and intergenerational mistrust. It is these issues and concerns that we now address.

Data and Analysis

Across all three sports, there was repeated and compelling evidence of coaches seeking to displace 'risk' and 'good sense' – in the Lacanian (1981) sense the 'imaginary order'- by constructing themselves in ways which, at least psychologically, appeared 'safe' and hence 'responsible', thus complying with the 'symbolic' and 'real':

> But yeah, you just have to make sure everything's done in view and there's like … it's really drilled into you in swimming that you can't like touch them, you can't … like even if you want to support their head, like you can't just have a hand under their head, and you definitely can't have one underneath their tummy or underneath their back. You should have either holding on to like their armbands or you should hold the side of their head with both of your hands, is what you're told [laugh]. (Lesley, canoeing and swimming coach)

Here, Foucault's metaphor of 'drilling' is a further helpful aid to interpretation, for it implies being 'bored' into, producing an abrasion or message of repeated blows, where the 'drill' of the message is both a metonym for, and means of correct training (Foucault 1977), lest the coach be corrupted. In Lacanian (1981) terms, the ambivalence is also striking. 'Good sense' exhibited in the statement 'even if you want to support their head' is apparently displaced by the risk-averse stance that 'you can't just have a hand under their head', and you 'definitely can't have one underneath their tummy …'. The implication is that the coach can be understood as operating discursively within the space of abjection, where the abject is that which 'beseeches, worries and fascinates desire' (Kristeva 1982, p. 1). Specifically, the abject is the 'good sense' that the coach wilfully excludes in order to construct a

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'safe' and legitimate identity, aligning with the 'symbolic' and 'real' (Lacan 1981).

Thus the symbolic representation of what the 'good coach' is supposed to be is

safeguarded; in practice this is specified in a plethora of guidance documents and

proscription-prescription rich codes of practice. The tension is palpable: the 'good

coach' is torn between what she aspires to *be,* and what she is required to *do*. In

Lacanian (1982) terms the seductive aura of the figment or object of desire (to

behave instinctively and do what comes naturally as a coach) is inevitably

disappointed, producing an unsatisfactory and irreducible tension between

'*jouisance* expected' and '*jouisance* obtained'; satisfaction and pleasure are

tantalizingly frustrated. Crucially, the example illustrates how ostensibly 'normal',

instinctive human behaviour, doing the thing one 'imagines' as

acceptable/professional conduct (in this case, morally appropriate 'touch') is

displaced by the cultural order of the 'symbolic'. The result is that both coaches and

young people may be encouraged to interact in ways that produce alienation, where

'liaisons' of 'touch' and physical contact are regarded suspiciously.

Another canoeing coach, Kathy, recalled:

> on our river sessions that we run on a Sunday, children come and it's that
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> physical thing of getting them fitted into a boat. And very often, they'll be
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> sitting in the boat and, you know, they can't touch the pedals. So if you're in a
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> rush, you may not always say well pop out and I'll fix it for you. And you
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> certainly don't wanna be seen to have your hands down in and around. So
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> there is that sort of general, am I doing it right, is this okay? Or, mostly they're

with another adult, but nine times out of 10, that adult doesn't know how to fix … the pedals either. So yeah, it's … that's an issue.

The notion and ambivalence of abjection and alignment in these quotes was exhibited in all three sports, where the coach avoided physical contact with the 'other' in order to protect themselves from themselves, from the potential misunderstanding or criticism of others, or even from wilful false allegation. This type of avoidance, a displacement of the 'imaginary' in tension with the 'symbolic', is a product of the symptom of desire, an enigma of desire to *be,* configuring the practice of the coach and simultaneously producing fear and mistrust of self and 'other'. We suggest such interaction is inimical to developing pro-social relations and social capital, as it renders intergenerational relationships toxic, with the potential for social dislocation through abjection. Indeed, touch was increasingly seen as something to be avoided:

Um there are some times when kinaesthetic learning approaches are quite important for when people aren't quite grasping things, but in that situation, you've normally got a paddle that you can touch, or a boat that you can touch, as opposed to physical contact with that person. (Darren, canoeing coach)

This cautious aversion had implications for the level of emotional or pastoral support offered by the coach to the children and young people in their care:

So you know, and it is difficult then sometimes because you want…you don't want them to sort of appear to be too close to you, yeah? But on the other

hand, you wanna give them that sort of … sort of, you know, feeling of
reassurance, where they can … if they want that bit of comfort. (Yvonne,
football coach)

It also had a limiting effect on the more technical and performance oriented aspects
of the coach's practice:

[You] want to possibly put a player in a specific position. And you can do the
… you know, the guided discovery, and you do the question and answers, but
sometimes you physically think right, I'm just gonna put you where I want you.
But you find it sort of uncomfortable that, because of the way society is today,
you know, even at our level. (David, football coach)

This reference to 'the way society is today' is significant. From the point of view
suggested by Dewey (2007 [1916]), society is the very space within which coaches
come to experience their art in a meaningful way. Society runs both in and through
coaching and the contexts in which it occurs, for it is the ubiquity of the social, of
experience and practice, which ensures prevailing continuity. As Dewey notes:

since democracy stands in principle for free interchange, for social continuity,
it must develop a theory of knowledge which sees in knowledge the method
by which one experience is made available in giving direction and meaning to
another (p. 252).

However, our data and interpretation suggests that, far from the idea of free interchange, coaches are constantly policed by a politics of surveillance of self and 'other' (Foucault 1977; 1988). Thus, even when the 'imaginary' order (Lacan 1981) of the coach - 'I would like to be' - is psychologically engaged, the move to act is often wilfully repressed. For example, the will to 'give them that sort of … you know, feeling of reassurance' (Yvonne) or the purposive 'I'm just gonna put you where I want you' (David) is a symptom of repressed desire that concedes pleasure (*jouissance*) to an irreducible 'lack' entailing discomfort. The corollary in terms of the conceptual framework developed by Dewey (2007 [1916]) is that this psychological displacement is the *modus operandi* through which the future direction and continuity of coaching is encouraged to progress. In such circumstances, there is reason to doubt whether the assumed positive potential for citizenship education arising from young people's experience of sport will be realised.

Conclusion

In summary it has been argued that, in a sport and coaching context which is deeply penetrated by anxiety and disquiet related to child abuse and protection, coaches have in effect been exiled from themselves, losing an automatic sense of purpose, identity and belonging. In the psychoanalytic sense, such tensions bring the 'imaginary', 'symbolic' and 'real' into unending negotiation. As a result, the experience which many young people (and coaches) have of sport is unconducive to the encouragement of social citizenship. One element of mature citizenship is the ability to consider and assess risk in an appropriate and proportionate way, and this characteristic has been deleted from the coaching and youth sport context, replaced

by disproportionate risk aversion and self-protection (masquerading as child protection).

Intergenerational interactions in which the malevolent intent of the other is tacitly assumed are clearly unhelpful in promoting 'bridging' capital as referred to earlier, with its potential to produce a more positive and trusting community and society, and hence a type of citizenship to be aspired to. In contesting the current mainstream discourse, there are alternatives to be considered, requiring the fostering of coaching environments featuring interpersonal trust, open-ness, and practical wisdom. Crucially, it is possible to be serious about protecting children and young people without acting as if, and encouraging them to believe, that all adults willing to work with and support them are best regarded as sources of danger. Young people who internalise this assumption through their experience of sport, rather than recognising the benevolent motivation underlying the huge majority of coaching activity, cannot be said to have received a positive input to their citizenship education. With these issues in mind, we suggest that future policy and practice requires significant revision and reconfiguration, exercised from the top down. Guidance and training on safeguarding and child protection provided to sporting organisations and NGBs should encourage and support coaches in a positive engagement with the tensions and complexities inherent in policy and practice, as discussed in this paper. This will involve a fundamental shift away from simplistic and fear-based discourse, premised on misconceptions of risk, and consequently disproportionate responses. For coach preparation to incorporate and embrace purposeful interaction, engagement with exemplars of contextual ambivalence, contradictory discourses, and notions of psychological uncertainty, should facilitate the development of wise, open and

confident coaches, professionals who are pedagogically self-assured and able to model and lead the development of positive, trusting intergenerational relationships, pro-social behaviour and enhanced social citizenship. If long held ideas about the development of young people have real credibility, we would expect to see a positive effect on their characteristics as people and citizens. Indeed, this might constitute an original and significant contribution to the field!

Finally, extending discussion beyond the context of interaction in the coaching context, even if intergenerational trust was more common, and benevolent motivation was more readily acknowledged, sport is not always the most morally reputable vehicle through which to nurture citizenship. As Jackson and Andrews note, the celebrity of sport has displaced its innocence; it is now 'linked to wider social structures, processes and power relations within the global economy' (2012, p. 263). In effect, sport has been rendered merely another commodity of western capitalism:

> Sport is a rare (if not the sole) example of a career or profession where people are actively recruited from one country to another … within the increasingly free market economy of sport, we have seen the emergence of athletic mercenaries seeking to capitalise on the highest bidder for their services, raising important questions about the nature and flexibility of national identity and citizenship. At its extreme, there have been cases of entire teams of athletes effectively being sold from one country to another. In one case of what famed Cuban Olympic star Alberto Juantarino [sic] describes as 'sporting prostitution' (Hopps 2004), the oil-rich nation of Qatar

bought members of the Bulgarian weightlifting team in preparation for the

2000 Olympics, with many of the new Qatarians assuming Arabic names.

(Jackson and Andrews 2012, p. 264)

On such evidence, we suggest that, beyond the issues discussed above in relation

to youth and grassroots sport, and their much-vaunted potential to develop 'bonding'

and 'bridging' capital and to enhance pro-social relations in the spirit of

communitarianism , the discourse of elite sport - presented as the embodiment of

virtue, a supreme ethical framework on which basis the cascading of youth sport,

civic culture, identity and nationhood are readily affirmed - is a mere chimera and

fabrication. On balance, and recognising the argument of Flint and Peim (2012), as it

applies to sport, 'ethics, like ontology … is a matter of production: it is essentially

"art", to be composed, driven by its power to enhance life' (p. 50), there are good

grounds to doubt the virtue and transferable utility of youth sport as a grounding for

civic culture and citizenship. In the absence of a realistic awareness of the

contradictory and complex social contexts which sport in general, youth sport, and

citizenship development all inhabit, much recent and current policy seems likely to

prove to be mere rhetoric.

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