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## **Critically understanding and engaging with the (micro)political dimensions of coaches' work in an advanced undergraduate coaching course.**

Paul A. Potrac, Adam J. Nichol & Edward T. Hall

### **Chapter Objectives**

By the end of this chapter, the reader should be able to:

1. Articulate the need for coach education provision to move beyond rationalistic and unproblematic representations of coaches' working relationships with various contextual stakeholders (e.g., athletes, administrators, other coaches, and parents, among others).
2. Illustrate how features of Project Based Learning (PBL) and Social Inquiry (SI) might be integrated to help student coaches critically understand and engage with the (micro)political features of everyday organisational life.
3. Develop an educational strategy that engages with the (micro)political dimensions of coaches' work.

### **Brief Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, we provide an overview of 'why' and 'how' we have chosen to integrate elements of Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Social Inquiry (SI) to facilitate university student-coaches' active engagement with the (micro)political dimensions of coaching. Initially, we briefly define the concept of (micro)politics and outline why we believe this topic should occupy a more prominent place in coach education curricula than it has to date. We then introduce PBL and SI and describe how their combination has utility for enhancing the critical thinking and professional judgement of student-coaches. By way of a practical example, we describe how we have utilised this approach with student coaches in a final year undergraduate coaching module. While we believe that this hybrid approach has many merits, we, of course, recognise that this is not the 'best' or only way to examine this topic. Indeed, we acknowledge that educators might adopt a variety of educational approaches to enhance coaches' (micro)political literacy (e.g., critical task-based learning, problem-based learning, and (auto)biographical learning, among others) (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016; Kelchtermans & Ballett, 2002).

### **'Why' and 'How' We Explore the (Micro)Political Dimensions of Coaching**

According to Leftwich (2005, p. 107), (micro)politics is an "absolutely intrinsic, necessary and functional feature of our social existence". It is comprised of all the acts of interpersonal negotiation, conflict, and collaboration that occur whenever two or more people engage in any form collective activity. He suggested that (micro)politics consists of three key ingredients. These are a) people (who often have differing views, preferences and interests), b) resources (which are predominantly scarce and may be material or non-material in nature) and c) power (which is the potential for an individual or group to achieve a desired outcome) (Leftwich, 2005). Unfortunately, much coach education has traditionally ignored, and failed to prepare coaches for, how the coaching role entails developing relationships with a "diverse range of individuals (such as athletes, assistant coaches, parents, and administrators), who may not only bring different traditions and goals to the workplace, but who would also not hesitate to act on their beliefs if the opportunity arose to do so" (Potrac & Jones, 2009, p.

566). For us, facilitating critical thought about how relationships with various situational stakeholders may influence the time, space, and resources afforded to a coach and, indeed, the climate in which a coach operates, is crucial if we are to better help coach learners understand, and engage with, the communal and emotionally laden nature of their work (Potrac, Mallett, Greenough, & Nelson, 2017; Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014).

As researcher-teachers in a University setting, we believe it is important for student-coaches to actively explore and engage with the (micro)political dimensions of coaching. As such, we ask student-coaches in our class to engage in a number of interrelated and inquiry driven activities. These include:

- a. Generating data (observations and interviews) through field work with other coaches, athletes, parents, and club administrators in their chosen sport.
- b. Interpreting, their data using selected social theory and research.
- c. Critically considering the practical implications of this field work for their personal coaching practice, as well as coach education provision in their chosen sport more generally.

Our subscription to this way of teaching and learning has been influenced by several factors. These not only include our shared personal beliefs about actively engaging student-coaches in the learning process and the value we attach to using social theory and research to interpret and inform coaching practice, but also the feedback we have received from student-coaches regarding their desire to engage with practicing coaches and ‘real-world’ coaching issues. Our decision to employ this pedagogical approach was also informed by the strategic vision of our University, which prioritises the provision of research-rich learning and the development of professional praxis.

### **The Essentials of Our Approach: Combining Elements of PBL and SI**

Like others in this book, we have increasingly recognised the value of utilising PBL in our work with student-coaches. For us, PBL’s main strength is its focus on asking learners to individually and collectively engage with disciplinary knowledge and ideas and then apply them to ‘real-world’ issues (Richards & Ressler, 2016; Thomas, 2000). Other benefits associated with this form of learning include a) increasing student motivation and interest in learning, b) a greater retention of learning in comparison to traditional curricula, c) increasing group processing, metacognitive, collaboration and communication skills, and d) enhancing student-coaches’ ability to critically reflect on theory, practice and their various intersections (Richards & Ressler, 2016).

There are five key elements of PBL that underpin our inquiry-driven approach to learning in our course. Briefly, these are:

- a. Projects are central, not peripheral to a course or module.
- b. Projects forge a connection between activities and the underlying conceptual knowledge being taught.
- c. Projects involve learners in constructive investigation and help them develop new skills and insights.
- d. Projects are student-driven and provide some autonomy in, and responsibility for, both the creation and the undertaking of the project.

- e. Projects involve a feeling of authenticity in that they address issues and problems that reflect the everyday demands of practice or are important to the development of a community.

For further detail on using PBL with student-coaches, we encourage you to engage with Chapter XX in this book, as well as the insightful work of Richards and Ressler (2016).

Alongside recognising the value of PBL, we have also increasingly explored the utility of SI in our work as coach educators. SI is primarily concerned with the exploration of the essential social, cultural and interpersonal dimensions of human life (Hill, 1994; Keown, 1998). This includes, for example, issues pertaining to human behaviour, social arrangements, and different modes of political, social, and economic organisation (Wood, 2013). At the heart of SI is the desire to help learners understand human behaviour and exercise responsible citizenship through the in-depth study of various behaviours, relationships, and social issues; inclusive of the ways in which these may vary across time, space, and individual circumstance (Stanford University, 2019). As part of the SI approach, learners are encouraged to engage in a number of activities. These include:

- a. Asking questions and examining relevant issues through the gathering of various forms of qualitative and quantitative data.
- b. Exploring people's perspectives, actions, and values.
- c. Reflecting on and evaluating why people think, feel and act as they do.
- d. Developing ideas, suggestions, and responses to any identified issues.

In terms of its potential benefits, SI provides a vehicle for integrating learning, inquiry, conceptual understanding, critical thinking and also provides a platform for supporting lifelong learning. These are outcomes that we feel are important for those learning about and 'doing' coaching. Indeed, for us at least, it is essential that student-coaches continue to critically reflect upon, refine, and develop a number of social competencies. These include their personal and interpersonal skills, the ability to read people and situations, and, relatedly, being able to build alignment and alliances with others in the coaching environment (Hartley, 2017; Potrac, 2019).

While SI can be undertaken in many ways, we have found the following chain of logic to be very useful when thinking about how we might utilise SI with student-coaches on our course (Ministry of Education, 2008). Specifically:

- a. **Focus of Learning:** This initial stage entails identifying the questions or issues that we can ask about the topic in hand (e.g., the (micro)political dimensions of coaches' work).
- b. **Concepts and Conceptual Understanding:** This phase is primarily concerned with reviewing pertinent literature, identifying key theoretical ideas and concepts, and, importantly, understanding them.
- c. **Generating Data:** Here, the focus is on considering what type of data needs to be generated from whom and how this could be achieved. This includes mapping the network of social relationships within a selected sport club or organisation and undertaking any necessary pilot work (e.g., interviews, focus groups, observations, among others).
- d. **Exploring Values and Perspectives:** The focus of this phase of data gathering and analysis is on exploring the values and perspectives of various relevant people

identified in the mapping exercise above (e.g., coaches, athletes, parents, club administrators). Specifically, the emphasis is on examining ‘what matters’ to these individuals and groups, ‘why’, as well as ‘how’ they have come to think and feel in particular ways.

- e. Considering Responses and Decisions: This phase of data generation and analysis is concerned with exploring the decisions, actions, and feelings of the participants and the various consequences of their choices and ways of behaving.
- f. Reflecting and Evaluating: This activity occurs throughout the process of inquiry and is concerned with enriching the quality of the knowledge and understandings developed through the process of SI, inclusive of the depth of data obtained and critical thinking about the topic in question.
- g. So What?: Here, the emphasis is on identifying what has been learned in and through the process of SI (e.g., the key findings, theoretical interpretations and insights, and the personal development of student-coaches) and their application to the student-coaches’ coaching practice and ongoing learning.
- h. Now What?: This final sequence is concerned with thinking about what they might do next. For us, this often entails asking student-coaches to develop a coach education resource that is based on the findings and analysis of their project. For some of our student-coaches, this also includes identifying topics and questions that they would like to explore in the future, either formally (i.e., further study/higher degree) or informally.

For us, there are many synergies between PBL and SI and, as a consequence, we believe their integration has much to offer in terms of providing a rich and creative platform for actively engaging student-coaches in the process of learning that is both inquiry driven and clearly connected to relevant real world issues and topics. In the module described in more detail in the next section, we have sought to enact these core elements in a variety of ways. Firstly, the module content, which focuses on the (micro)political and emotionally laden nature of coaching work, is directly tied to the project work that the student-coaches are asked to undertake (Potrac, Smith, & Nelson, 2017). Indeed, the assessment requires student-coaches to explore these issues through an in-depth study of coaches’, parents’, athletes’ and club administrators’ experiences in a sporting context of their choice (e.g., community, development and/or performance setting).

Secondly, during the various taught sessions (e.g., lectures, seminars, practical sessions and tutorials) that comprise the module, student-coaches engage with the key theoretical concepts related to:

- a. The (micro)political nature of organisational life.
- b. Individual and collective impression management strategies.
- c. Interpersonal (dis)trust
- d. Emotions and emotion management.

While the concept of (micro)politics was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, it is perhaps useful to briefly introduce the other key concepts listed above. Individual and collective impression management refers to the how individuals or groups seek to present themselves to others (Goffman, 1959). This includes, for example, considering how coaches may attempt to purposefully control the impression they give off to others and, relatedly, the kinds of actions that they may or may not engage in to protect and advance the version of the self exhibited to these others (see Cassidy et al., 2015). Trust is the glue “upon which all

social relationships [and shared endeavours] ultimately depend” (Ronglan, 2011, p. 155) and is concerned with an individual believing (or not) that another individual will take his or her interests into account when making a decision or will not intentionally harm their interests. In our module, the coverage of interpersonal trust focuses on the ways in which a coach may demonstrate their trustworthiness to others, as well as considering what might cause others to distrust a coach (and vice-versa) inclusive of the associated consequences (Gale, Ives, Nelson & Potrac, in press; Ward, 2019). Finally, we draw on literature addressing the emotional dimensions of coaching work. This includes considering the emotions that may be experienced (e.g., joy, pride, anger, guilt and shame, among others) by a coach and how these emotions are generated in and through a coach’s relationships with others, as well as when, how and why a coach may choose or feel obliged to variously show, hide or manufacture emotions for their own or others’ benefit (Hochschild, 2000; Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne, Allanson, Gale & Marshall, 2012; Potrac & Marshall, 2011). Importantly, these concepts provide the theoretical underpinnings for the student-coaches’ project work. As a teaching team, we provide an overview of the above material. However, student-coaches are not only required to explore these topics in their chosen context, but they also have to undertake further related literature searches and reading to inform their work.

Thirdly, although we provide a broad overview of the assessment requirements and the specific criteria that will be used to evaluate their submissions, student-coaches are encouraged to define the specific focus or foci of their projects and are also responsible for contacting and communicating with the ‘gatekeepers’ to their chosen coaching context and those who wish to participate in the project (i.e., coaches, athletes, parents, club administrators). Finally, to increase the authenticity of the project, student-coaches are challenged to:

- a. Describe the issues and dilemmas they identified in their chosen coaching context and, relatedly, outline the advice they would subsequently give to coaches.
- b. Critically review the place of knowledge regarding (micro)politics, (dis)trust, impression management and emotion management in the formal coach education provision offered by the National Governing Body (NGB) of their chosen sport.
- c. Suggest when, where and how these topics could be productively explored as part of formal coach education programmes in their chosen sport.

### **Using Elements of PBL and SI to Develop (Micro)Political Literacy in a Final Year Undergraduate Coaching Module**

In this section, we describe our approach to using critical PBL and SI in terms of our module’s aims and assessment requirements. Specifically, we elucidate the roles and responsibilities for us as tutors and the student-coaches, the delivery of key taught content, and how student-coaches typically undertake the assessed project work.

#### Aim of the module

The undergraduate module is delivered in a traditional format (e.g., face-to-face lectures, seminars, tutorials and practical sessions) across the whole of the student-coaches’ final year of study. Our overarching aim, which is set out in a module outline document, is to support the development of critical skills related to (micro)political literacy (e.g., the ability to effectively ‘read’ and understand issues of power and interests within the coaching context) and (micro)political action (e.g., the ability to establish, safeguard, advance or restore desired

working conditions within the coaching context). More specifically, we seek to stimulate student-coaches' sociological imaginations, to become critically aware of the interconnectedness of their own professional interests and experiences, and the wider networks of social relations, organisations and institutions of which they are part. For instance, attention is drawn to examples of coaches being competitive, calculating, and uncaring towards each other as they act in accordance with their own motivations and ambitions, such as to achieve job security (e.g., Potrac et al., 2013). Indeed, we expect that through their learning during the module, the student-coach will come to recognise how workplace opportunities and career trajectories may be vulnerable to the competing ideologies, goals and interests of other contextual stakeholders (e.g., athletes, administrators, other coaches, and parents etc.). Similarly, we challenge the student-coaches to critically consider how they might seek to obtain the trust and 'buy-in' of various others that comprise their chosen coaching settings.

The driving questions arising from these aims and intended to promote curiosity, inquiry and engagement are:

- a. How do the interests of different contextual stakeholders influence the support and resources the coach is afforded to undertake their work and the climate they work in?
- b. How can the coach manage others' impressions of themselves to generate the working conditions necessary and desirable to perform their work productively and in a positive atmosphere?

### Module Assessment

Student-coaches are assessed via a project comprising three related components: an essay (worth 40% of the overall grade), a presentation (worth 30%), and a viva (an oral examination; worth 30%). Although these are submitted separately, they are interlinked, with each successive component intended to inform subsequent thinking and content.

Component One, the essay, requires each student-coach to undertake inquiry in a coaching context of their choosing, responding to the driving questions identified above. Data gathering takes place in the field, through observations and interviews, in order to establish who the key stakeholders are (e.g., athletes, administrators, other coaches, and parents), map their relationships, and understand the choices, values, interests and motives that these stakeholders bring to the coaching context. At this stage of the assessment as a whole, the purpose is to develop a (micro)political picture of the unique working environment, incorporating the networks of social actors, their circumstances, and their (micro)political interactions. Each essay must include analysis and interpretation of the gathered data, judiciously deploying the concepts and theory of (micro)politics to develop a 'reality-grounded', critical discussion of the sociocultural environment under investigation. This requires student-coaches to comprehend the implications of stakeholders' interests for the working climate and for the coach's ability to properly perform their work. Thus, through their own exploration and inquiry, student-coaches are challenged to recognise the contested, negotiated character of coaching, and to be sensitive to how the above relates to tensions, conflict, struggles or rivalries, and also to collaboration, co-operation and coalition within the working environment. Importantly, aside from having the topic to be studied defined by tutors, in line with the combined elements of PBL and SI informing our work on this module, each student-coach is expected to take responsibility for all parts of the process including organising their access to an appropriate coaching context, generating data to respond to the



driving questions of the module, and analysing these data in response to the assessment brief and marking scheme.

Component Two, the presentation, further develops the initial analysis of the (micro)political landscape of the coaching context from Component One by turning attention to the problems and tensions evident in how the coach could manage their micro-relations with other stakeholders. Here, each student-coach needs to draw upon research, concepts, and theory in order to address and iteratively interpret their findings from Component One. Specifically, they must propose, explain and justify recommendations for the coach's (micro)political action; actions which respond to interpretations of the challenges and opportunities identified in their prior essay. The purpose of these proposals is to consider how the coach could generate more desirable working conditions and advance the necessary professional support, space, time and resources to carry out their work. Specific strategies for interacting with different groups of stakeholders need to be identified, and the interconnections of these varied networks of stakeholders and their implications for the coach's working climate should be critically considered. Each student-coach's discussion of these recommendations should include consideration of the potential consequences (intended and unintended) of the coach's (inter)actions, and how these may contribute to the emergent constraints and opportunities of their ongoing (inter)actions.

Component Three, the viva, is concerned with the virtues of (micro)political knowledge for informing coach education and professional development provision. Student-coaches are required to present a critical review of a National Governing Body coach education qualification, which is linked to the coaching context studied in Component One and Two. Using documentary analysis, and, perhaps, drawing upon their own experiences as a participant on the coaching qualification, the critique should concern how (micro)political issues and knowledge are currently presented (or omitted) within mainstream coach education. In response to their critique, each student-coach is required to outline how (micro)political literacy (knowledge and action) could be more usefully situated within the coach education programme, including proposing their own ideas for activities, resources and/or questions that could be incorporated to enhance the emotional and political dimensions of coaches' professional preparation and development. Additionally, based upon their learning in the module, student-coaches are asked to identify (micro)political topics and dilemmas of personal interest that they would like to explore through further study and/or in their own practice, and to discuss how these may be beneficial to their continuing development, workplace opportunities and career trajectories as coaches.

The assessed project is introduced and explained in detail during the first week of the module, and student-coaches are encouraged to begin their fieldwork as soon as possible. We have found this has a number of benefits, including:

- a. Ensuring each student-coach is sufficiently familiar with their coaching context,
- b. Giving them time to explore every aspect of the module's content and assessment components in depth,
- c. Increasing opportunities for tutors to facilitate peer-to-peer student-coach reflections about emergent concerns and interests
- d. Promoting iterative and increasingly critical sensemaking, where student-coaches revisit the focus of learning with more developed and alternative conceptual frameworks to support interpretation and understanding.

## Supporting Student-Coach Learning

Our shared constructivist assumptions about learning inform a pedagogical approach in which knowledge, rather than being considered an external object, is produced through active interpretive processes as people make sense of their experiences in the social world (Stewart, 2013). Thus, instead of viewing teaching as a form of conditioning, in which we would convey information through extensive direct instruction and expect passive reception by student-coaches in return, we believe that learning occurs through interaction, negotiation and collaboration. In other words, we see our roles as facilitators of learning, promoting the active participation of student-coaches in a community of learners, to make connections between tasks and activities we have designed to be authentic and meaningful and their lived experiences, backgrounds and personal values. Moreover, because the project is central, not peripheral to this module, we have designed the tutor-led activities (outlined below) so that student-coaches develop new skills and insights that enable them to engage fully with the assessment requirements.

Reflecting the focus of the module, our facilitatory approach recognises that student-coaches' engagement and learning are mediated by their emotional and personal connections to others (e.g., peers, tutors, coaches, among others). Consequently, our teaching practices emphasise peer interaction and collaboration in which we encourage student-coaches to relate their learning with us to their experiences as coaches and athletes outside of university. The planning of lectures, for instance, includes identifying material to actively promote involvement, as well as ensuring there is sufficient time for previous experiences and knowledge to be shared, and for these to be discussed and reflected upon by student-coaches. For example, we have shown clips from *Remember the Titans*, a biographical sport drama, set in South-Eastern America during the 1970s. The movie focuses on the experiences and interactions of an African-American working with a mixed-race high school team in the first playing season following racial integration. In small groups, the student-coaches are then asked to discuss examples from the film, as well as from their own experiences, and make links to the theoretical concepts we have introduced. Here, the focus is on the stakeholders (e.g., the school board; white and black players, parents, and coaches, among others) choices, values, interests and motives and, importantly, how these impinge upon the work and experiences of the coach. As tutors, we can then responsively elaborate explanations of the concepts we introduce in lectures, drawing upon the student-coaches' own examples and experiences as well as those identified in the film.

Seminars emphasise student-coach group discussion, as well as the application and analysis of skills and knowledge introduced in lectures and generated through related practical sessions, independent study and personal experience. The focus is very much on encouraging the sharing of ideas, consideration of alternatives, development of planning and reflecting skills, and understanding relationships between theory and practice. These regularly include preparatory and/or follow-up tasks to support engagement with the learning process. For instance, we often ask student-coaches to have reviewed and made notes on two or three identified source materials (e.g., journal articles; book chapters, videos etc.) in preparation for seminar tasks. These tasks vary, but examples include: a) comparing their notes on research findings in small groups in response to prompts (e.g., 'Before reading this I'd not thought of...'; 'These findings are similar/different to...'; 'I think future research needs to look more closely at...' etc.), b) presenting reports on different case studies of coaching practice, c) identifying quotes or sections from a video that best connect with their own experiences of the topic, d) developing and then sharing their own short, evocative narratives about personal

coaching experiences stimulated by exemplar texts (e.g., Potrac et al., 2013; Jones, 2006; Hall & Gray, 2016), and e) identifying concepts or terminology encountered in the source material that need further clarification, and then researching working definitions of these things. A popular activity among student-coaches is to debate alternative courses of action that the coach of an amateur women's soccer team featured in Potrac, Mallett, Greenough and Nelson's (2017) paper could have taken in response to the unfolding (micro)political dilemmas and challenges he encountered. This debate links well to a follow-up task (itself closely related to the assessment task) where student coaches are asked to collate evidence of the potential practical implications of the debated (micro)political action for the coach's working climate.

Practical sessions enable student-coaches to experience different roles connected to the planning, enactment and review of coaching practice. This form of taught activity, along with the others discussed here, sessions of which are spread throughout the year-long module, also allows us as tutors to judge what the student-coaches have progressively learnt, and how capably they can discuss, write about and embody this knowledge in their practice. Importantly, in this module, the definitional boundaries of coaching encompass more than that which happens on the court or pitch, by the pool or track, or in the gym. Consequently, we use role-playing tasks to draw attention to themes including (micro)political literacy, (micro)political action and impression management in different situations and with different stakeholders. Example scenarios we ask student-coaches to act out include: a), imagine you are a newly appointed director of coaching in a professional youth academy environment - deliver a briefing to parents and field questions from the audience about your vision and ethos for the organisation, b) your team have just been relegated from their league - as a coaching staff member present your review to the board of directors, and c) as head coach you want to add a new assistant coach to your established staff - hold a meeting with your current assistants to discuss the issue. Other roles (e.g., parents, assistant coaches etc.) in the scenarios are also fulfilled by student-coaches, who are encouraged to consider how and why different stakeholders might think, feel and act as the scenarios unfold. Finally, a further group of student-coaches act as coach mentors. Their role is to offer theoretical interpretations and insights into the observed action, and to suggest alternative choices and ways of behaving that could generate different consequences for the coach.

Tutorials are small-group or individual meetings with a tutor. These are intended as a relaxed forum in which student-coaches can develop confidence in exploring different ways to approach material, generating evidence for their ideas, and sustaining their arguments. Tutorials provide a valuable opportunity for us as tutors to offer feedback to student-coaches on prepared work and their developing understanding of topics, as well as to share personal, research and real-world examples that help them to understand the practical application of concepts and theory. Although tutorials are typically less structured than other taught activities and more responsive to individual student-coach needs, a valued small-group tutorial activity is reviewing video footage together that student-coaches capture in their fieldwork for Component One of the assessment portfolio. Student-coaches present their initial interpretations of the footage in the light of relevant theory, which tutors probe and challenge. Through activities such as this, we believe student-coaches learn to evaluate evidence independently, to question existing knowledge and beliefs, and to identify where their reading, learning and research might go next.

Each of the above means of supporting student-coach learning are intended to be underpinned and enhanced by extensive independent study. This includes tutor-suggested reading,

research and information gathering (e.g., via the module's reading list), as well as student-coaches' self-directed learning in relation to the topics of the module and assessment requirements. Here, tutorials are again useful for negotiating goals and reviewing progress with student-coaches, and for sign-posting them to resources that may extend their learning.

### **Personal Reflection and Wishful Thinking**

Our work on this module is, more often than not, hugely rewarding. This is especially so when we witness the 'lightbulb moment' of student-coaches recognising the value that social theory can have for them as coaches. That said, we feel it is important to acknowledge that not all student-coaches welcome the view that coaching can be a problematic, contested and emotionally demanding activity and/or the suggestion that there are no absolutely guaranteed 'solutions' to the (micro)political dilemmas that they may encounter in practice. In exploring these issues with student-coaches (often for the first time), we frequently find that they have been exposed to various (and contradictory) ontological assumptions about, and representations of, coaching inside and outside of the university setting. We have been fortunate at being able to include guest talks from some practicing coaches in our module that focus on the political challenges of their work and the strategies that they utilise to achieve desired ends. For some student-coaches (but not all), such interventions have led them to critically question their subscription to an overly straightforward and functional view of coaching practice. However, it is not a panacea.

As such, we believe more can and ought to be done. Indeed, our wish is that academics in the social science and bioscience disciplines and coach educators can find some common ground regarding the essential nature of coaching. For us, at least, this is that coaching is an inherently communal, political and interactive activity in which both the biosciences and the social sciences have important roles to play in terms of enhancing coaching practice. In the University setting, for example, there is perhaps much to gain from structuring courses so that the knowledges that student-coaches need to draw upon are not taught in isolation from each other (e.g., physiology, motor learning, sociology, psychology, among others). Instead, we need to find ways of integrating these knowledges so that student-coaches better understand how they are inextricably entwined in their efforts to positively influence the learning, performances, and experiences of athletes, as well as develop, sustain and advance their relationships with a variety of other situational stakeholders (e.g., parents, administrators, other coaches). Similarly, it would also be helpful if the notion of politics was constructively engaged with in coach education provision more generally. For us, (micro)politics is often viewed or presented in a negative or pathological way. That is, it is something that ought to be avoided or is practiced only by egotistical and Machiavellian individuals (Potrac et al., 2013). Instead, coach education could learn much from recent work and initiatives in the disciplines of leadership, management and education, which has increasingly advocated for, and considered how, the political astuteness of teachers, headteachers, managers, and senior leaders could be developed and ethically utilised in everyday practice (Close, 2013; Hartley, 2017).

### **Activities for Coach Education**

1. Critically review the content of your own coach education curricula. To what extent do they consider and prepare coaches for the (micro)political and emotional challenges that they may encounter as an everyday part of their work? Would you like

to make any changes to the curricula? If so, what changes would you like to make and why?

2. Consider the coaches that you are working with. What are the likely or possible dilemmas and challenges that they may encounter in their working relationships with others (e.g., athletes, parents, club administrators) and you as a coach educator? Can you identify a topic or issue where PBL and/or SI could be deployed to develop the (micro)political literacy and interactional strategies of these coaches? What topic, issue or relationship(s) would you address? How might you structure the learning of the coaches?

### **Additional Resources**

The following chapters and articles provide some insight into the (micro)political and emotional dimensions of coaching:

Cassidy, T., Jones, R., & Potrac, P. (2015). *Understanding sports coaching: The social, cultural and pedagogical foundations of coaching practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge. [See chapters 4, 6 and 7]

Gale, L., Ives, B., Nelson, L., & Potrac, P. (in press). Trust in community sports work: Tales from the 'Shop Floor'. *Sociology of Sport Journal*.

Jones, R., Armour, K., & Potrac, P. (2004). *Sports coaching cultures: From practice to theory*. London: Routledge.

Nelson, L., Potrac, P., Gilbourne, D., Allanson, A., Gale, L. & Marshall, P. (2014). Thinking, feeling, acting: The case of a semi-professional soccer coach. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19(1), 19-40.

Potrac, P., & Jones, R. (2009). Micro-political workings in semi-professional football coaching. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 26, 557-577.

Potrac, P., Jones, R., Gilbourne, D., & Nelson, L. (2013). Handshakes, BBQs, and bullets: A tale of self-interest and regret in football coaching. *Sports Coaching Review*, 1(2), 79-92.

Potrac, P., Mallett, C., Greenough, K., & Nelson, L. (2017) Passion and paranoia: An embodied tale of emotion, identity, and pathos in sports coaching. *Sports Coaching Review*, 6(2), 142-161.

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