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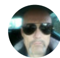
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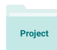
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'It's All About Getting Respect': The Coaching Behaviors of an Expert English Soccer Coach

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ABSTRACT *In light of the paucity of research addressing the critical concerns of social interaction at the micro level of the coaching process, this study aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of the coaching behaviours utilized by a top-level English football coach. A mixed-method approach was used to not only identify the pedagogical behaviours used by the subject in the practice environment, but to also generate an in-depth insight into the rationales that underpinned their use. Using the concepts of 'social role', 'power' and 'the presentation of the self' [E. Goffman (1959) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, Doubleday)] to analyse the data, it is suggested that the subject's coaching practice was influenced by his perceived need to establish a strong social bond between himself and his players; a bond founded on the players' respect for his professional knowledge and personal manner.*

Introduction

> Our social worlds offer no immunity to sport fields and gymnasia. Actions, beliefs, traditions and perspectives that define how we live in the world also define how we live and learn in sport. (Schempp, 1998)

In keeping with the words of Schempp above, scholars of coaching science (e.g. Jones, 2000; Lyle, 1999) have recently voiced the need for future inquiry into the coaching process to more adequately examine its essential social and cultural nature. However, despite the increasing recognition that coaching is vulnerable to differing contextual pressures and constraints (Cross, 1995; Potrac, 2000), we consider the sociological analysis of coaching practice to be a largely under-developed and under-researched area (see Jones, 2000; Potrac & Jones, 1999). In this respect, while many have cited the need to investigate the problems and realities of human interaction that are apparent within the coaching process (e.g. Abraham & Collins, 1998; Lyle, 1999; Potrac *et al.*, 2000b; Strean, 1995), there has been a paucity of actual research which relates coaching to the surrounding social world. This current state of affairs may be attributed to the increasingly product orientated view of coach education (Jones, 2000), which has tended to present coaching knowledge as an almost 'autonomous body of facts that is passed on through generations' (McKay *et al.*, 1990, p. 62). Indeed, coaching science has, to date, been largely underpinned by bio-scientific inquiry that has addressed the psychological, physiological, tactical and technical development of the athlete (Woodman, 1993).

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While such knowledge has undoubtedly contributed to improved athletic performance, it has tended to portray coaching as a 'knowable sequence' (Usher, 1998, p. 26) and coaches as 'merely technicians involved in the transfer of knowledge' (Macdonald & Tinning, 1995, p. 98). Such an approach has largely ignored the reality that much of a coach's work is linked to a wide range of significant others (such as athletes, managers, and colleagues) in a particular social and cultural context. As we have previously argued (see Jones, 2000; Potrac, 2000), coaches operate as social beings within a social environment, with the coaching process being inextricably linked to both the constraints and opportunities of human interaction. Indeed, Armour and Fernandez-Balboa (2000) have suggested that coaching is not only concerned with making a myriad of connections between subjects and methods, but also, and perhaps more importantly, connections between other persons and life in general. Thus, in order to more fully understand the holistic nature of the coaching process, we contend that research should focus on the social world of individual coaches and how they operate within given guidelines (see Jones, 2000; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Potrac *et al.*, 2000b). In this respect, it has been suggested that research should address individual coaches' interpretations of their experiences and the processes by which meanings and knowledge are used to guide actions, as such investigation could contribute towards the generation of theory that is faithful to the complex realities of sports coaching (Cote *et al.*, 1995a).

One particular feature of coaching which we believe could benefit from such a holistic mode of inquiry is the examination of the pedagogical strategies used by coaching practitioners within the practice environment (see Potrac *et al.*, 2000b). To date, the vast majority of such research has been carried out through the application of systematic observation systems that identify the instructional strategies of coaches through quantitative description (Bloom *et al.*, 1999; Darst *et al.*, 1989; Lacy & Goldston, 1990; among others). While such inquiry has provided valuable knowledge regarding the pedagogical styles utilized by coaching practitioners in training and competition, it has failed to offer an insight into the social and contextual factors that underlie, and impinge upon, coach behaviour (e.g. Cote *et al.*, 1995a; Kahan, 1999; Potrac *et al.*, 2000b). In discussing the contextual effects associated with coaching behaviour, van der Mars (1989) indicated that, in order to generate a deeper understanding of such behaviour, the quantitative data obtained from systematic observation instrumentation should be analysed 'in light of the situations in which they were observed' (p. 9). However, the available literature has largely ignored this notion (Kahan, 1999). Such a limitation is of great significance when it is considered in the context of recent discourse in coaching science, which has suggested that successful coaching practitioners are those who are capable of adapting their instructional behaviours to meet the unique demands of the local environment (Jones, 2000; Lyle, 1999; Potrac *et al.*, 2000b; Woodman, 1993). Consequently, it would appear that it is not only necessary to record the pedagogical styles of coaches, but to also reflect upon the appropriateness of such behaviours for developing desired outcomes in the quest to identify and understand effective coaching behaviour (Tinning, 1982).

In an attempt to begin to understand the socio-cultural dynamics of the instructional process, we have suggested that the systematic observation of coaches should be followed up by reflexive interviews and/or participant observation work (Potrac & Jones, 1999; Potrac *et al.*, 2000b). Such an approach, it has been widely argued (e.g. Gould *et al.*, 1987; Salmela *et al.*, 1993), not only enables a deeper understanding of the multifaceted interactions involved in the dynamic coaching process to occur, but also an awareness of the contexts in which coaches act, and the influence these contexts have upon their respective pedagogical strategies (Strean, 1998).

The purpose of this investigation was to utilize a mixed-method approach in an attempt to provide a more holistic understanding of the coaching behaviours of a top-level English football coach. In particular, the study sought to examine if, and how, the pedagogical strategies of the respondent practitioner were 'grounded in the dialectic tension between [individuals] and the worlds around them' (Schempp, 1993, p. 3). Consequently, in keeping with our earlier recommendations (Potrac *et al.*, 2000b), systematic observation and interpretive interview techniques were employed to not only identify the pedagogical strategies of an expert football coach within the practice environment, but to also investigate how such behaviours were influenced by social, contextual, experiential, and situational factors.

The significance of the work is grounded in a response to the recent call to more adequately examine 'in situ coaching behaviour and how it is related to specific role interpretations' (Lyle, 1999, p. 4). In this respect, it aims to somewhat address the many contextual factors which compromise the 'complex reality within which coaches work' (Cote *et al.*, 1995b, p. 2) and how they subsequently impact upon coaches' instructional behaviours in training sessions (Jones *et al.*, 2001). In developing upon our previous work (see Jones, 2000; Potrac *et al.*, 2000b), and that of Salmela *et al.* (1993), it is hoped that such a reality grounded 'bottom–up' approach can not only provide an insight into the factors that expert coaches believe explain their high levels of performance, but can also help to sensitise practitioners to recognize the need to understand the dynamics of the local situation, and act accordingly.

Method

The preliminary phase of the investigation involved the application of a systematic observation instrument to produce a quantitative description of the instructional behaviours emitted by the respondent coach within the practice environment. Building on this, the second stage focused on the utilization of interpretive interview techniques to examine the experiential, situational, and contextual factors that influenced and impinged upon the expert practitioner's instructional behaviour in training sessions. It was hoped that the blending of systematic observation and interpretive interview techniques would lead to the production of data whereby the qualitative findings explicated the meaning of the quantitative research (Jayaratne, 1993). Indeed, we anticipated that the fusion of research methods would more nearly focus on the totality of practitioners by illuminating the multifaceted micro level interactions that represent the everyday and complex reality of the dynamic coaching process (see Potrac *et al.*, 2000).

The Coach

Brian (a pseudonym) has obtained the highest level of football coaching certification made available by the English Football Association (FA), and has coached professionally for over 20 years. Previously, he enjoyed a lengthy career as a professional player in English football, where he enjoyed a moderate degree of competitive success. Throughout his playing career, Brian took a keen interest in coaching and so it was unsurprising that he embarked upon a new career as a coach when his playing days came to an end. During his time as a coach, Brian has been employed by several clubs at the various professional levels, including a two-year spell as a player-manager.

Setting

During the period of investigation, Brian was employed by a club in the Nationwide League Division 1, the second highest division of professional football in England. The club is located in a large urban centre, and, despite fierce competition from several other larger clubs, boasts home gates of approximately 18,000 spectators. While the club has enjoyed some notable successes on the field of play, it is currently regarded as a 'sleeping giant'. Indeed, club officials, staff, players and fans alike considered the club's membership to the Nationwide League Division 1 to be a sign of underachievement. During the season of investigation, Brian coached the team to promotion to the Carling Football Association Premier League, the pinnacle level of professional football in England.

Instruments

Instrument 1: Systematic Observation. The instrument employed for this aspect of the investigation was the Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI) (Lacy & Darst, 1984). The instrument was designed to collect information on the behaviours of coaches in the practice environment, and is based on the 10-category system devised by Tharp and Gallimore (1976) for the systematic observation of coaching behaviour within the teaching/coaching setting. The ASUOI has 14 behavioural categories (see Appendix 1 for a full list of categories and definitions), seven of which are directly related to the instructional process (i.e., 'pre-instruction', 'concurrent instruction', 'post-instruction', 'questioning', 'physical assistance', 'positive modelling', and 'negative modelling'). For a full description of the validity, reliability, and observer training procedures that were undertaken prior to the commencement of this investigation, see Appendix 2.

Phase of the Season. It has been recognized (Lacy & Darst, 1985; Potrac *et al.*, 1997) that coaching behaviour may alter during the course of a season principally in relation to the success of the team on the field of play. Thus, observations taken at a single phase of the season will only provide a 'snap shot' of a practitioner's coaching behaviour at a particular time (Lacy & Darst, 1985; Lacy & Goldston, 1990). By comparison, observations that are spread over the length of a playing season provide a better means for obtaining a more accurate account of a coach's pedagogical strategies (Kahan, 1999; Lacy & Darst, 1985). Consequently, in order to develop such a comprehensive description, Brian was observed three times during the early, mid, and late season phases, giving a total of nine observations.

Instrument 2: Interpretive Interviews. While quantitative methods have dominated the world of scientific inquiry, it has been widely recognized (I. Jones, 1997; Sparkes, 1992; Strean, 1998; among others) that qualitative methods lend themselves to research questions about which little is known, such as the chosen field of study, especially those which aim to increase the understanding of human behaviour. In order to gain a greater insight into Brian's pedagogical strategies, interpretive interviews were utilized to uncover the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and values that shaped his instructional behaviour within the practice environment. Such a perspective acknowledges that human actions are 'based on, or infused by, social meanings, intentions, motives, attitudes and beliefs' (R.L. Jones, 1997, p. 41), and is consequently concerned with understanding how people construct and continue to construct social reality, given their interests and purposes (Sparkes, 1992). In discussing the value of interpretive inquiry to developing our understanding of

coaching, Strean (1998), amongst others, has contended that such an approach enables researchers to obtain a deeper understanding of the complex interactions involved in such a dynamic process. Indeed, the need to utilize interpretive methods to explore the 'lifeworlds' of coaches also been highlighted as essential for generating an understanding of the experiential, social, and contextual factors, which impact upon the instructional process in sport (Potrac *et al.*, 2000a; Strean, 1998).

Procedure

Phase 1: Systematic Observation. Brian was observed three times during each phase of the season. Each observation consisted of three 15-minute periods with a 5-minute break between segments. The total amount of time coded from each practice session was 45 minutes, giving a total of 405 minutes. Interval recording procedures were utilized (van der Mars, 1989). In keeping with existing systematic observation research (e.g. Bloom *et al.*, 1999; Lacy & Goldston, 1990), observations took place during 'typical' practice sessions (i.e. no practice matches). In this respect, data collection was done at representative times during the work out (i.e. drills, attack versus defence, phases of play). No data were collected during the conditioning segments of the training sessions. The precise content and nature of each coaching session were established with Brian in advance of the session, so that a timetable for observation could be developed. The data were collected by the principal researcher (trained observer) standing on, or near enough, the practice pitch to accurately record Brian's behaviours. Live behaviour recording procedures were used as Brian requested that his coaching sessions not be videotaped. In order to minimize observer drift, inter-observer and intra-observer reliability tests, as mentioned earlier, were carried out at the beginning and end of each phase of the season. The tests exceeded the 85% criterion (van der Mars, 1989) on all occasions.

Phase 2: Interpretive Interviews. Brian was formally interviewed twice at the end of the season of investigation. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes each. The interview process began with general information about the purpose of the project and then focused on background and demographic issues (Cote *et al.*, 1995a). Following these introductory queries, open-ended questions were utilized to elucidate the experiential, contextual and situational factors that Brian perceived to influence and impinge upon his instructional behaviour in the practice environment. The interviews were broadly semi-structured in nature, as while an interview guide provided the topics to be investigated, any new ones that emerged during the course of the discussions were explored and probed. Such an approach not only allowed the full and systematic collection of information from Brian, but also allowed freedom in the sequencing of questions and in the amount of time and attention given to the different topics covered (Patton, 1980; Robson, 1995). Furthermore, such flexibility was needed during the interview process, as any restrictions placed on Brian would have narrowed the scope of the interviews and interfered with the process of elucidation (Reitman-Olson & Biolsi, 1991).

The interviews were 'reflexive' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) in nature, in that Brian was invited to explore certain themes with the interviewer (Sparkes & Templin, 1992). In this way, the insider's perspective remained at the heart of the interviews, with the respondent's reasons, meanings and interpretations for involving himself in certain coaching behaviours being significant. In this respect, Sparkes and Templin (1992, p.

121) have asserted that 'such a perspective is of great importance in any attempt to explain why people act in certain ways rather than others'.

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim in order to ensure a complete and accurate record of the data obtained. In addition, notes were taken in relation to the context in which Brian's account was expressed, as Locke (1989) has recognized that the contextual subtleties of behaviour and expression are often vital keys to understanding. Following meticulous analysis of the data, the interview transcripts were checked by Brian for confirmation of accuracy, not only from the viewpoint of words spoken, but more importantly to elicit the meaning of what was expressed (Stake, 1995). Sparkes (1992) has recommended that researchers discuss their interpretations of events with those involved in the study, as agreements and disagreements in themselves provide a rich source of data that is pertinent to the researcher's analysis and ongoing interpretation. Thus, Brian's interview transcripts were checked by and discussed with him in a final meeting to ensure the accuracy of interpretation. In this respect, taking the findings back to the field was not seen as a test of truth but an opportunity for reflexive elaboration (Sparkes, 1989).

Data Analysis

Analysis of the Systematic Observation Data. In order to produce a detailed description of Brian's coaching behaviour, each behaviour category as reflected in the ASUOI was computed into the total number of intervals and a percentage of the total intervals observed. Within this context however, Lacy and Darst (1989) indicated that the 'use of first name category' is not an independent one, in that it must be used in combination with another behaviour; thus with the inclusion of the instances of first name occurrence, the coder decreases the percentages of all other behaviours and distorts their values. Consequently, when calculating the percentage of each behavioural category, the total of each category was divided by the total number of independent behaviours, excluding the use of the first name category. The percentage of behaviours accompanied by the 'use of the first name' was considered separately from the percentages calculated in the other behaviour categories. This was achieved by dividing the number of first names coded by the total number of independent behaviours, which gave the percentage of independent behaviours accompanied by a first name (Lacy & Darst, 1989).

Analysis of the Interpretive Interview Data. The interview transcripts were subject to inductive analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The objective here was to separate the interview transcripts into segments that represented the situational, experiential and contextual explanations for the pedagogical behaviours that Brian utilized. This process initially involved dividing the text into appropriate pieces of information called meaning units (Tesch, 1990). Once this step had been completed, common features between meaning units were identified. This procedure, referred to as creating categories, involved collating meaning units and organizing them into distinct groupings that were known as properties (Cote *et al.*, 1993). Following this step, the data analyses proceeded to a higher level of interpretation, which consisted of comparing properties to organize them into larger and more embracing categories (Cote *et al.*, 1995a). This step of the analysis was not much different from the creation of properties except that it was done at a higher and more abstract level of analysis. During this inductive process, 'analytical memos' were used to outline 'preliminary and tentative connections to various theoretical concepts' that might explain the issues arising from Brian's story (Sparkes, 2000, p. 18).

Furthermore, in keeping with the 'cyclic process' outlined by Sparkes (2000, p. 18), the 'analytical memos' and coding from the initial interview helped the authors to identify the topics that were probed in the second interview.

Wolcott (1994) contended that the process of interpretation 'transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begins to probe what is being made of them' (p. 36). In the context of this investigation, the interpretation involved the reconstruction of Brian's biography and the factors that underpinned his coaching behaviour (Sparkes, 2000). Toward this end, an 'analytic abstraction', which highlighted the processes that influenced Brian's coaching behaviour and the different theories that related to them, was produced (Sparkes, 2000). In this respect, the interpretation was informed and shaped by the sociological concepts of 'role', 'power', and 'social interaction'.

Initially, Brian's coaching behaviour was understood in relation to the concept of social role. Traditionally, role theory has examined how social roles develop and evolve from the expectations of others (Shaw, 1981). Recent discussion, however, has focused on the impact of, and the relationship between, structure and agency on the formation and development of social roles. In this regard, the structuralist approach to role theory has emphasised the constraining and determining features of such roles. From this perspective, when an individual successfully takes up an occupational role he or she is meeting the demands or expectation of the social structure through the process of 'role-playing'. By comparison, the interactionist approach, which disagrees with 'the determinism implied by the structural definition' (Callero, 1994, p. 229), suggests that individuals have much greater independence in the characterization and function of their social role or roles. Specifically, the interactionist stance emphasizes that individuals are involved in the process of 'role-making' as opposed to 'role-playing' (Callero, 1994; Raffel, 1998).

The second analytical framework used was that of 'social power'. In this regard, 'social power' has been defined as 'a relationship between agents, the outcome of which is determined by agents' access to relevant resources and their use of appropriate strategies in specific conditions of struggle with other agents' (Hargreaves, 1986, p. 3). In drawing upon the work of Hardy (1995), we have suggested that such a definition of power needs to be accepted in coaching research if we are to go beyond a superficial examination of its workings to explore the hidden ways in which it operates and shapes the lives of those who exercise it and are subject to it (see Jones *et al.*, 2001). In this respect, we have emphasised that practitioners must be sensitive to the various forms of power and resistance expressed within coach-athlete relationships if effective coaching is to be achieved.

The final framing device is the dramaturgical theory outlined in Goffman's (1959) classic text, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. In this regard, Goffman (1959) utilized micro level analysis to explore the details of individual identity, group relations, the impact of environment, and the movement and interactive meaning of information (Branhart, 1994). Indeed, he examined how, through the process of 'dramatic realization' (Goffman, 1959, p. 30), a social actor, in order to present a compelling 'front', is forced to both fulfil the duties of the social role and communicate the activities and characteristics of the role to other people in a consistent manner. In this respect, Goffman's perspective enables us to examine how people produce recognizable and convincing performances for others (Williams, 1998).

TABLE 1. The pedagogical behaviours utilized by Brian in the practice environment

Behaviour	Total behaviours	% of coded behaviours
Use of first name*	552*	13.10*
Pre-instruction	476	11.29
Concurrent instruction	849	20.14
Post instruction	1101	26.10
Questioning	125	2.97
Physical assistance	0	0
Positive modelling	124	2.95
Negative modelling	17	0.40
Hustle	110	2.60
Praise	468	11.10
Scold	14	0.33
Management	308	7.30
Uncodable	69	1.64
Silence	556	13.19
Total	4218	100.00

* Denotes number and percentages of behaviours accompanied by 'use of the first name'.

Results and Discussion

The data obtained from the systematic observation are presented in tabular format; this data represent 'what' behaviours Brian utilized in his practice. After the main findings from the systematic observation phase are highlighted, the interpretive interview data are used in an attempt to explicate the quantitative information thus generating an understanding of 'why' particular coaching behaviours were used by Brian. Here, the data and the analytical framework are interwoven in the quest to not only capture 'the richness and indeterminacy' of Brian's experiences as a top-level football coach, but to also increase our understanding of the complex nature of sports coaching (Carter, 1993, p. 3).

The Quantitative Description of Brian's Coaching Behaviours

As illustrated in Table 1, a total of 4218 behaviours were recorded from Brian during the period under study. The behaviours considered related to instruction (i.e. 'pre-instruction', 'concurrent instruction', 'post-instruction', 'questioning', 'physical assistance', 'positive modelling', and 'negative modelling') (Lacy & Darst, 1989) unsurprisingly accounted for nearly two-thirds of all the coded behaviours (63.85%). Further analysis of the instructional behaviours revealed that the categories of 'pre-instruction', 'concurrent instruction', and 'post-instruction' represented 57.53% of all the recorded behavioural intervals, while the categories of 'physical assistance', 'positive modelling', and 'negative modelling' accounted for only 6.32% of all behaviours. In addition, the data indicated a substantial 'praise to scold' ratio (approximately 33:1). While 'praise' represented 11.10% of the total coded behaviours, 'scold' accounted for only 0.33%. Furthermore, the data revealed that 'silence' represented 13.19% of the total coded behaviours, while 'management' accounted for 7.30%. Finally, the data illustrated that 'hustle' and 'uncodable' (this category included dealing with injuries, communicating with assistant

coaches, and joking with the players) represented 2.60% and 1.64% of the total coded behaviours, respectively.

On Brian's Use of 'Instruction'

'Instruction', Control and Accountability. Given the high frequency of instructional behaviours noted in the systematic observation phase of the study, it was unsurprising that Brian ascribed great importance to the role of such behaviours in his coaching. In this respect, he indicated that the purpose of the instructional process was twofold: the development of successful teams and the improvement of individual players. However, Brian placed particular emphasis upon team development, as he believed his job security to be positively correlated to the success, or indeed the lack of it, of the team in competitive fixtures. Consequently, it could be argued that the observed high levels of instruction reflected Brian's desire to be in control of developing team strategy and tactics on the training ground. Moreover, in explaining such high levels himself, Brian also outlined how he believed professional football players respond most effectively to coaches who make them fully aware of their role within the team framework. In this respect, Brian indicated that the high levels of instruction emanated from his desire to clearly outline player roles, and to develop their understanding of them during training sessions. In his own words:

> Instruction is an important thing; they've [the players] got to be told what is expected of them in any particular system that you are playing. My job then is to make sure that when they [the players] go out on a Saturday they are clear about their individual jobs within the wider team framework, give them rope to express themselves but let them know the importance of organization. They need to know their organization and they need to know their options when they receive the ball. They need to know how to defend and what each other are expected to do so there is a concrete base to fall back on. The only thing you can do is give them a basic organization, so if everything else goes wrong, they've at least got an organization to fall back on. I would say that is the main priority of the first team coach … The manager doesn't want to hear me telling him how 'so and so's' touch has improved if we are losing every week.

Such a finding is consistent with the earlier work of Eitzen and Sage (1989), who suggested that responsibility for the outcome of team performance is a notable determinant in understanding a coach's desire to be in control of his or her respective athletes and coaching situations. In this respect, they further contended that such accountability often results in coaches seizing control of decisions such as which athletes will play, the roles they will undertake, and the tactics the team will adopt; strategies that also reflect Brian's practice. Furthermore, his outlook regarding the importance of competitive success is also in keeping with Sage's (Eitzen & Sage, 1989) discussion of the concept of 'organizational socialization', whereby coaches are inculcated with shared understandings regarding the ideology and critical aspects of the occupation. In short, he outlined how such a process enabled coaches to understand and interpret everyday events related to the job by highlighting 'how we do things and what matters around here' (Eitzen & Sage, 1989, p. 87). In this respect, Brian were very clear in understanding that his primary function as a top-level football coach was to develop successful teams, while the

improvement of individual players' technique and decision making abilities were secondary concerns.

Instruction as a Form of 'Social Power'. Whether coaching the 'team' or 'individuals', Brian believed that there were certain criteria that had to be fulfilled for the instructional process to have any chance of success and be a worthwhile experience for players. Chief among these was that a coach must not only possess an extensive knowledge of football, but must also be seen to demonstrate this knowledge by his or her players. In this respect, Brian described how players would expose any shortcomings in this department, and that such happenings would seriously strain a coach's working relationship with the players. Indeed, failure to demonstrate such knowledge, and to transmit it in a way that had direct application to match situations, were regarded by Brian as the 'cardinal sins' of professional football coaching. Consequently, the high levels instructional behaviours demonstrated could be regarded as a conscious effort by Brian's to portray his 'knowledge of the game'. In Brian's own words;

> Football players will test you. I find, that when you go to a new club … they will test you to see if you know. They usually pump you with questions. They'll say they've never done that before, and if I can't say why I want it done that way, if I can't give a good reason, then I've got trouble. You can't afford to lose players. If they have no respect for your coaching ability then you've had it, you've lost respect and coaching sessions become very difficult. So, you've got to know your subject; it is the most important thing. You can get away with being a bit quiet or a bit noisy, but if you don't know your subject then you have real problems.

Brian's outlook in this regard may be attributable to the ensuing power relationship that existed between him and his players (Borrie, 1996). In relation to sports coaching, power can be regarded as the capacity to affect desired outcomes by significantly affecting another or others (Lukes, 1993). In the context of this study, the issue of power was highlighted in Brian's discussion of the necessity for a coach to gain the respect of his or her charges. The power of a coach, or 'respect' as it was termed by Brian, was seen to fluctuate in accordance with the expertise demonstrated by the coach on the training ground. Here, Brian's 'story' suggests that while the occupation of the social role of the coach afforded him a degree of 'legitimate power' (Raven, 1983), this source of power was in itself perceived as insufficient for him to gain the full confidence of his players. 'Legitimate power', a component of Raven's (1983) classic six-part topology, is defined as the power that derives solely from a person's position within a particular social structure or organization and not because of any other special qualities a person may posses (Slack, 1997). However, in order to keep or enhance the initial power he received by virtue of his role, Brian spoke of the need to prove his knowledge and expertise on the training ground if he was to gain the full respect of his players.

In this regard, Brian suggested that the acquisition and demonstration of 'informational power' (Raven, 1983) was essential for a coach to gain the respect of his or her players. 'Informational power' is determined by the information, or logical argument, that a coach can present to the athlete in order to influence a change in behaviour. Consequently, it could be suggested that the high levels of instruction observed during this study represented Brian's efforts to prove his knowledge and expertise to his charges, in an attempt to sustain or enhance his power over them.

Furthermore, Brian's occasional use of 'modelling' behaviours could be understood in terms of the concept of 'expert power', which Slack (1997) defined as power that 'accrues to a person because of the special knowledge or skill she [sic] possesses' (p. 181). In this regard, Brian mentioned the value of occasionally using short, sharp demonstrations ('positive modelling' and 'negative modelling'). He noted:

> I think you get a little bit of respect for that as well. People think he can actually do it and has done it. I think that's a big point, especially with professional players. The ability to demonstrate in front of professional footballers I think brings you a few 'brownie points'. And I think you need all the help you can get.

Given the high skill level of his players, he felt that frequent demonstrations were not appropriate. However, he indicated that he used demonstrations from time-to-time as a means to not only illustrate the message that he wished to convey, but to also further increase the respect and standing given to him as a coach by the players. Furthermore, he noted that demonstrations should be of a high quality, as failure in this regard was perceived as leading to a loss of respect from the players. Such a finding is consistent with Shetty's (1978) notion that types of power are not discrete and may overlap; thus 'the possession of one type of power can affect the extent and effectiveness of other types' of power (p. 177). For example, in the context of this study, the high levels of instructional behaviours utilized by Brian could be regarded as an attempt to strengthen his respective 'legitimate power' through the use and further development of his 'informational power' and 'expert power' bases.

The concept of power may also explain the relatively low incidence of 'questioning' behaviour employed by Brian during the season of investigation. In this respect, and in keeping with the work of Liukkonen *et al.* (1996) in youth football, Brian largely adopted an authoritarian style of delivery where the players had little input into the decision-making process. Brian attributed this approach to the fact that he was very keen to ensure that he was not perceived as being indecisive and lacking in knowledge, as he felt that his players would have little confidence in a coach who was asking them for solutions to problems encountered on the field of play. Indeed, it could be suggested that such behaviour was regarded as not only having a detrimental effect upon his 'informational power' and 'expert power', but also, and ultimately, upon his 'legitimate power'. Brian's outlook in this regard is in keeping with the work of Coakley (1982) who noted that coaches, who are perceived as allowing the suggestions of other people to influence them, might be interpreted by players as lacking expertise or being weak. In further developing upon this view, Coakley (1982) contented that unsuccessful attempts by coaches to innovate and experiment can threaten or lead to the loss of jobs. Consequently, in keeping with Brian's outlook in this regard, he suggested that when their accountability for team performance is high, coaches tend to adopt the safer notion of prescription (Coakley, 1982).

'Instruction' and Fulfilling Player Expectations. The high levels of instructional behaviours emitted by Brian in this study could also be explained in terms of Goffman's classical text, which addressed the 'presentation of the self in everyday life' (Goffman, 1959). Central to Goffman's argument was the notion that individuals are not entirely determined by social forces insofar as they are able to strategically manipulate social situations and other's impressions of themselves (Branaman, 2000). In this respect, he noted that the self is 'a kind of player in a ritual game who copes honourably,

dishonourably, diplomatically or undiplomatically, with the judgemental contingencies of the situation' (Goffman, 1967, p. 31). However, he also emphasized that individuals are not able to freely choose the images of self that they would have others accept, 'but rather are constrained to define themselves in congruence with the statuses, roles, and relationships that they are accorded by the social order' (Branaman, 2000, p. xlvii). In short, he viewed interaction as a performance that is shaped by environment and audience, and is constructed to provide others with impressions that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor (Goffman, 1959).

From Goffman's (1959) perspective, it could be suggested that the various behaviours utilized by Brian in this study represented an attempt to construct an idealized image of himself as a coaching practitioner in the eyes of his 'audience', the players. Indeed, the high levels of instruction emitted by Brian may reflect Goffman's (1959) contention that the 'individual [coach] … whose capacity to experience pride and shame motivates him or her [to] not only perform for others, but to also take precautions against embarrassment' (Branaman, 2000, p. xlviii). Thus, it could be contended that Brian's use of instruction during training sessions was a deliberate effort on his behalf to ensure he was not viewed as lacking coaching knowledge and expertise in the eyes of his respective players. Hence, his use of instructional behaviours could be considered as an attempt to affirm the existing social order (Goffman, 1959). In further drawing upon the work of Goffman (1959), it could be contended that to gain the respect of players, it is not enough for a coaching practitioner to 'possess the required attributes' but he or she must also 'sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto' (Goffman, 1959, p. 75). A coach thus must not only possess expansive knowledge of his or her particular sport, but must convey this knowledge in a manner deemed appropriate by his or her players and employers. Consequently, the high levels of instructional behaviours observed may reflect Brian's desire to engineer 'a convincing impression that these standards [were] being realized' (Goffman, 1959, p. 252).

Perhaps the most significant issue that arose in Brian's discussion of his instructional behaviour was the nature of the relationship that he wished to develop between himself and his players. Here, he felt that, if he was to succeed as a coach, he needed to be regarded as easily approachable and must be able to relate to his players both as footballers and, more importantly, as people. In further elaborating upon this notion, Brian emphasized the need to become aware of the particular traits and requirements of his players when giving instruction. He suggested that such an understanding allowed him to tailor his interactional strategies in a way that enabled him to more effectively gain their confidence, respect, and loyalty:

> You need to get to know them and their individualities; what they like doing, what they don't like doing. You've also got to be approachable enough so that they can come up to you for a quiet word. If you've got the air of a sergeant major, where, if they come and said look 'I don't understand that', and you say 'well why weren't you listening you idiot', then they wouldn't come again. So it's important that they feel the door is always open so they can come and talk to me about anything that is interfering with their game or is not quite happening on the pitch and can't work out why.

The notion that Brian 'engineered' his behaviour to fit the requirements of his players and the coaching environment can be linked to the earlier discussion that addressed the power relationship that existed between Brian and his players. Throughout the interview process, he emphasized the need to behave in a way that generated respect from his

players. For example, Brian's perceptions that football players easily 'lose concentration', like to be worked' and 'don't really want to be kept stop-starting' had a notable impact upon his coaching delivery. Here, Brian noted that his desire to keep players actively involved in a specific task or exercise necessitated the use of concise instruction at all times, as 'it only takes one or two to start fidgeting and mucking around with a ball and you've lost them [the players]'. Accordingly, when summarizing his use of instruction, Brian noted that, whether it is 'pre-instruction' 'concurrent instruction' or 'post-instruction', it should be concise, specific, and kept simple:

> Make a point, make it quick, and then get out and start the exercise again … Basically, while it is very important as a coach to get your message across, you need to make sure that you hold the players' concentration. I've played under coaches who talked for too long and lost the players' attention.

In this regard, Brian appeared to be behaving in a way that he perceived the players both expected and wanted. Indeed, Brian appeared to be continuously involved in the process of 'proving himself' to his players. Such a notion is in keeping with the work of Tauber (1985), who has indicated that 'power is something in the hands of the person on whom power is being wielded, not in the hands of the presumed power wielder' (p. 7), the coach, in the case of this study. He further added that 'people [athletes] … must consent to power being used on them before such power can be effective' (Tauber, 1985, p. 7), a concept that Nyberg (1981) described as power over power. In a similar vein, Dunning (1986) has also argued that as long as a participant in a social encounter has a function, and a value, then they are not entirely powerless. Accordingly, it could be suggested that a coach has to construct a front, or image, in the eyes of his or her respective players that results in their consenting to, and accepting, his or her power. It would appear from the findings of this study, that Brain might have used high levels of instruction to construct a credible image of himself in the eyes of his players in order to secure the consent of the players to exercise power over them. Indeed, it could be suggested that the image Brian wished to construct aimed to not only get the best out of his players, but to also reinforce and/or strengthen his existing 'legitimate power' in their eyes. Goffman (1959) described these demands as such:

> We know that in service organizations practitioners who may otherwise be sincere are forced to delude their customers because their customers show a heartfelt desire for it … these are cynical performances whose audiences will not allow them to be sincere. (p. 18)

On Brian's Use of 'Praise' and 'Scold'

'Praise', Productivity and Relationship Building. When discussing his apparent high 'praise' to 'scold' ratio, Brian was keen to emphasise the significance he attached to creating a 'positive' learning environment in order to get the best out of his players. In this respect, he voiced support for the notion that players respond to coaches who told them positive things. Hence, Brian regarded 'praise' as a valuable tool that he could utilize to enhance the confidence levels and self-efficacy of his players. Specifically, he believed that praise offered the means by which he could persuade players to believe in their ability as individuals and collectively as a team. In his own words:

> Players by and large want to be praised. Most people see them as spoilt overpaid whatevers. I see them every day, most of them are insecure, and most

> of them are frightened to death 5 minutes before they go out for a game. So you've really got to be encouraging them Monday to Friday. You've got to tell them that they are good players, try and bring out the good points … make them feel good about themselves … I'm trying to boost the players' egos a little bit, trying to make them feel good about themselves. I think it's all part of coaching. Plenty of encouragement always, whether you're a professional football player or a young kid, you need plenty of encouragement.

The high levels of 'praise' behaviour utilized by Brian could also be explained in terms of the power dynamics that exist between player and coach. In this respect, Benfarri *et al.* (1986) noted that the method and style of the transmission of knowledge is critical in forming the recipient's perception of it. Specifically, they noted that 'advice given in an authoritarian manner will be seen as a put down' (p. 14). Accordingly, the high use of 'praise' observed in this study could be regarded as an alternative strategy utilized by Brian to increase his 'legitimate power'. Indeed, he perceived that such behaviour not only enhanced the self-confidence levels of his players, but was also invaluable in reinforcing desired player behaviour. However, while Brian spoke of the value of 'praise' in maintaining the enthusiasm and self-confidence of his players, he was almost contradictory when he emphasized the need not to give praise too cheaply or when it was unwarranted. In particular, he perceived that the unjustifiable use of 'praise' might have a negative impact upon the learning process, as its use would be devalued if the players perceived it to be too readily available. In this respect, Brian's use of 'praise' was far in excess of the levels reported in the available systematic observation literature (e.g. Bloom *et al.*, 1999; Lacy & Darst, 1985; among others). However, when discussing this aspect of his coaching style, he considered that the success enjoyed by his relatively young and inexperienced team during the season of investigation was partly due to the positive environment he attempted to generate on the training field. In addition, he considered the 'praise' given during training sessions to be both fully justifiable, and desired by his players.

Brian's belief that praise 'should only be given when it is deserved' can be partly explained by Benfarri *et al.*'s (1986) discussion of the effective use of 'reward power'. 'Reward' power is defined as the power that comes from one person's control over another's rewards' (Slack, 1997, p. 181). Specifically, they suggested that the magnitude of 'reward power' is dependent upon the recipient's meaning of such behaviour. In the context of this study, it could be suggested that Brian's convictions regarding the importance of not giving praise undeservedly or cheaply represented an awareness on his behalf to maintain the value of such a reward in the eyes of his players. Such a notion is in line with the earlier work of Tauber (1985) in education, which has suggested that 'the key to effective use of "reward power" is to be able to tell how much of which reward, delivered how frequently and for how long a time is best for each student' (p. 5).

'Scold' and Maintaining Positive Working Relationships. It came as no surprise that Brian considered the scolding of players on the training ground to be far from desirable. While Brian acknowledged that it was occasionally necessary to 'lay down the law' or to give a player 'a kick up the arse from time to time' during sessions, the practice of berating poor performance in front of the whole group was seen as totally unproductive. In explaining this belief, Brian stated that the possible damage that could be done to a coach–player relationship by bawling-out a player in public far outweighed the short-

term benefit of making 'you feel better for a bit'. In particular, he contended that the overuse of 'bollockings' resulted in a perceived loss of respect for the coach and, consequently, a decline in the receptiveness of the players to the former's instruction and advice. Instead, Brian indicated that a quiet word after training with individual players was more appropriate 'than making a big thing of it and having the player not talk to you for a couple of days'. The overarching message from Brian on this issue was: why publicly berate a player and damage a relationship when you're going to need him tomorrow?

In further utilizing Raven's (1983) work on power, the 'scold' behaviour used within the context of this study could be regarded as 'coercive power'. 'Coercive power' is defined as power that derives from the ability of one person to punish another (Slack, 1997). In keeping with the findings of this study, 'coercive power' is often regarded as 'dysfunctional because it alienates people and builds up resentment' (Slack, 1997, p. 181). Indeed, Brian appeared to concur with such a notion when he warned that the frequent utilization of this behaviour would negatively impact upon the respect that a coach gained from his or her players. Brian not only questioned the value of such behaviour in guiding players towards established learning outcomes, but also perceived its use to lead to a deterioration in coach–player relationships. Such a deterioration would inevitably affect desired coaching and performance goals.

Finally, Brian's use of 'praise' and 'scold' behaviours could also be understood in terms of 'referent' power, which can be defined as athletes' identification with the coach and their desire to be like him/her (Tauber, 1985). By comparison to 'legitimate' power, which is based upon position, 'referent' power is personal, with the person, not the position, being respected (Jones *et al.*, 2001). In this respect, Tauber (1985) has suggested that such power wielders are seen to possess desirable personal characteristics, with many 'charges' willing to accept their power in order to become more like them. Consequently, the high 'praise to scold' ratio observed in Brian's coaching could represent a conscious effort by him to establish a social bond with his players that was not only founded on their respect for his professional knowledge but also his personal manner. As a consequence, it would appear that the power of a coach might be further enhanced if athletes believed in him or her as a person as well as a professional.

Conclusion

Through the sociological analysis of the pedagogical strategies of a top-level English football coach, this study aimed to generate a more holistic understanding of coaching behaviour than has previously been achieved. While recognizing the limited scope of a single study design, perhaps the most significant finding to evolve from this investigation is the apparent interdependent relationship that exists between the concepts of social role, interaction, and power in the context of top-level football coaching. While the above concepts have, for the most part, been examined separately in order to aid the analysis, it is contended that social role, power, and self-presentation are, in the context of Brian's coaching behaviour at least, inextricably inter-linked.

In this regard, the findings of this study suggested that Brian's coaching practice is heavily influenced by his desire to fulfil perceived expectations of his role as a top-level English football coach. In order to achieve this ambition, it would appear that Brian, through his pedagogical behaviour, consciously attempts to create an idealized image (Goffman, 1959) of himself in the eyes of his players. Indeed, through his skilful use of instruction, demonstration, praise and scold, Brian attempts to create a social bond

between himself and his players that is not only based upon their respect for him as a competent and knowledgeable professional, but also as a person. It would appear that the strength of this bond determines the extent to which Brian considers himself to be adequately fulfilling the demands of his role as a top-level football coach.

Finally, given the existing paucity of literature addressing coaching practice from a sociological perspective, it is hoped that this study will serve as a precursor for future inquiry. In this respect, we believe that such inquiry is capable of making a valuable contribution to existing coach education programmes by providing a more critical understanding of the complexity of the coaching process (see Jones *et al.*, 2001).

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Appendix 1. The Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI)

The behaviour categories of the ASUOI are defined as follows (Lacy & Darst, 1989):

1. *Use of the first name*: Using the first name or nick name when speaking directly to a player, for example, 'Nice pass, Steve' or 'Jonesy, that was a poor tackle'.
2. *Pre-instruction*: Initial information given to player(s) preceding the desired action to be executed. It explains how to execute a skill, play, strategy, and so forth associated with the sport.
3. *Concurrent instruction*: Cues or reminders given during the actual execution of the skill or play.
4. *Post-instruction*: Correction, re-explanation, or instructional feedback given after the execution of the skill or play.
5. *Questioning*: Any question to player(s) concerning strategies, techniques, assignments, and so forth associated with the sport, for example, 'What is your role on defensive corners?' or 'What is the correct technique for taking a throw-in?'
6. *Physical assistance*: Physically moving the player's body to the proper position or through the correct range of a motion of a skill, for example, guiding the player's foot through the movement of a chipped pass in football.
7. *Positive modelling*: A demonstration of the correct performance of a skill or playing technique.
8. *Negative modelling*: A demonstration of the incorrect performance of a skill or playing technique.
9. *Hustle*: Verbal statements intended to intensify the efforts of the player(s), for example, 'Run it out, run it out' or 'Push yourself, push yourself'.
10. *Praise*: Verbal or non-verbal compliments, statements, or signs of acceptance, for example, 'Great goal' or a thumbs-up sign.
11. *Scold*: Verbal or non-verbal behaviours of displeasure, for example, 'That was a terrible effort' or scowling.
12. *Management*: Verbal or non-verbal behaviours related to the organizational details of practice sessions not referring to strategies or fundamentals of the sport, for example, setting out cones or 'Get into teams of five'.
13. *Uncodable*: Any behaviour that cannot be seen or heard, or does not fit into the above categories, for example, checking injuries, joking with players, being absent from the practice setting, or talking with bystanders.
14. *Silence*: Periods of time when the subject is not talking, for example, when listening to a player, or monitoring activities.

Appendix 2. Reliability, Validity, and Observer Training Procedures

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

To confirm existing assumptions relating to the validity and reliability of the ASUOI (see Lacy & Darst, 1989), a pilot study was carried out to determine the suitability of utilizing the instrument within the context of this study. The pilot work was conducted on a top-level semi-professional football coach and five top-level coaches in English women's football (Vangucci *et al.*, 1998), all of whom had the same qualifications as the subject in the main investigation. Specifically, 45 minutes of 18 consecutive training sessions were observed to examine whether any additional categories needed to be added to the current instrument, or if the existing ones were appropriate for the purpose of this investigation. In this respect, the study revealed that no new behaviours needed to be added to the existing ASUOI, and that the existing categories were relevant. Furthermore, in keeping with the recommendations of Brewer and Jones (2001), five top-level football coaches were

also invited to provide written feedback about the behavioural categories of the ASUOI, both in terms of the definitions for each classification and of their relevance (i.e. are any behaviours erroneously omitted or included). The resultant feedback from the panel of coaches indicated that they agreed that the behavioural categories were adequately comprehensive and reflective of coaching behaviours in football. Consequently, it was concluded that the ASUOI allowed for the reliable gathering of valid descriptive-analytic data concerning the instructional behaviours emitted by top-level football coaching practitioners during practice sessions.

Observer Training

The primary researcher was trained by a recognized expert in live behavioural recording in accordance with the specifications outlined by Darst *et al.* (1989). The training involved learning the behavioural classifications of the instrument, practising to successfully code identified behaviours specific to the instrument, obtaining initial practice by coding videotaped sessions and reflecting upon the obtained results until proficient, and finally, undertaking live practice observations within the environment to be studied (Brewer & Jones, 2001; Darst *et al.*, 1989). The training procedure was deemed complete when there was a consistent minimum of 85% inter-observer agreement (van der Mars, 1989) between the trainee and a researcher expert in the use of the ASUOI. Furthermore, prior to beginning the data collection, the intra-observer reliability of both the instrument and the primary researcher was established in order to minimize measurement error (Brewer & Jones, 2001; Thomas & Nelson, 1996). Both inter- and intra-observer reliability tests exceeded the 85% criterion (van der Mars, 1989) on all occasions.

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