Sports Coaching Research

Context, Consequences, and Consciousness

Anthony Bush, Michael Silk,
David Andrews and Hugh Lauder

Sports Coaching Research
Context, Consequences, and Consciousness

**Anthony Bush, Michael Silk,
David Andrews and Hugh Lauder**

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK   LONDON

Sports Coaching Research

Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society

Contents

1 Introduction

> Nothing can exist as an element of knowledge if, on the one hand, it does not conform to a set of rules and constraints characteristic, for example, of a given type of scientific discourse in a given period, and if, on the other hand, it does not possess the effects of coercion or simply the incentives peculiar to what is scientifically validated or simply rational or simply generally accepted. (Foucault, 1997, p.52)

This book is a response to the growing consensus that sports coaching research "needs to extend its physical and intellectual boundaries" (Potrac et al., 2007, p.34). Indeed, despite considerable research from a number of theoretical and empirical perspectives, "it is arguable that sports coaching continues to lack a sound conceptual base" (Cushion et al., 2006, pp.83–84). The aim of this book is to contextualize the current 'moment' in which sports coaching research is undertaken, and then offer a directional purview of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological boundaries—the conceptual base—of a reconceptualized 'field' of sports coaching research.

This book is framed by a Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) approach. We mobilize a reconceptualized 'field' of sports coaching, building upon the evolutionary shift away from 'sport' as the sole, and privileged, focus of academic study in allied fields such as the sociology or psychology of sport. Rather, and embracing the nomenclature of physical cultural studies—which not only decenters sport and opens enquiry to a multitude of physical cultural forms, experiences, structures, and subjectivities, but also has clear communitarian, political, moral, and ethical concerns at its heart which we delineate through this text (Silk and Andrews, 2011)—we provide a critical, and hopefully challenging (and thus healthy) explication of sports coaching research and scholarship. In doing so, it is hoped that the progressive potential of a 'field in tension' (Silk and Andrews, 2011) can be realized, resulting in the evolution of a socially and culturally responsive, communitarian, justice-oriented agenda; in essence, an approach that can 'do coaching justice'.

In order to study and offer a reconceptualization of a discipline or 'field' such as sports coaching, we examine the workings of the discipline as it currently stands and is historically situated in an effort to develop a rigorous understanding of the ways that the discipline has, and continues, to traditionally operate (Kincheloe, 2001). To invoke and paraphrase Kincheloe (2001), scholarly activity in sports coaching operates in a power-saturated and regulatory manner, with disciplinarians having developed

a methodical, persistent, and well-coordinated process of knowledge production. Of course, these disciplinarians have exhibited genius within these domains and great triumphs of scholarly breakthrough that have resulted in improvements in the knowledge base of sports coaching; and our humble efforts clearly do not leave behind these insights and contributions. Indeed, they are the very basis from which we begin to (re)conceptualize the field; this book will thus work with extant sports coaching knowledges and thereby avoid any form of disciplinary parochialism and domination that delimits knowledge in, and indeed the (potential) impact of, the 'field'. In essence, through the text, we call for questions of disciplinarity—the consistent division between disciplinarians and interdisciplinarians[1]—not to detract from the efforts to understand and theorize the research bricolage in a reconceptualized 'field' of sports coaching and the multiple contributions that coaching can make to a more socially just world.

Deploying the theory and method of articulation (Hall, 1996b) and Foucault's (1969) genealogical method, we map out the critical history of the sports coaching present through consideration of the social forces that comprise our conjunctural moment (Grossberg, 2006) allowing the social construction of the discipline's knowledge bases, epistemologies, and knowledge production methodologies to be studied. Importantly, this genealogical context facilitates the exploration of the "discipline as a discursive system of regulatory power with its propensity to impound knowledge within arbitrary and exclusive boundaries" (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 684). By pursuing this dialectic of disciplinarity, it is envisaged that practitioners in the reconceptualized 'field'—the 'bricoleurs'—would develop a power literacy to better understand the nature and effects of the web of power relations that have shaped sports coaching's official research methodologies, and also the ways that these power dynamics have shaped the knowledge produced. In essence, this is a field in which sports coaching is understood with respect to the ways in which knowledges are *articulated* into a particular set of complex relationships that comprise the social context (Silk and Andrews, 2011). In doing so, the sports coaching 'bricoleur':

> . . . becomes an expert on the relationships connecting cultural context, meaning making, power, and oppression within disciplinary boundaries. Their rigorous understanding of these dynamics possibly makes them more aware of the influence of such factors on the everyday practices of the discipline than those who have traditionally operated as scholars within the discipline. (Kincheloe, 2001, p.684)

Such an understanding of the boundaries, constraints and possibilities of ones academic field is of course in many respects liberating; yet, in and of itself, however is not enough. Rather, through the methodological approach that runs through the text, we work not just to delineate these disciplinary power structures and prestige hierarchies but to provide insights into

what a de-blinkered field *might* (not *ought* to) look like. In essence, with and through articulation, "we engage the concrete in order to change it, that is, to *rearticulate* it" (Slack, 1996, p.114, emphasis added). This is of course, an unfinished project and not one that will be tidied up within the confines of this provocative text. Yet we hope it is a project others will engage with, challenge, contest, revise, and 'play with' in an effort to 'do coaching justice'.

By putting our collective heads above the disciplinary parapets, we of course risk being deemed as brave by some or foolish by others—it is likely that both are, in differential ways, appropriate. Indeed, through the book, and in arguing for theoretical and methodological approaches that tend to center on social justice, ethics, morality, communities, exposing power relations—approaches that tend to favor qualitative, localized, and community based methodologies as opposed to the gold standard of scientific enquiry, evidence—we are perhaps more foolish than brave given the political and economic context of such approaches within corporatized, McDonaldized, higher education institutions (see e.g. Giroux, 2009; Hayes and Wynard, 2002; Ritzer, 2002). St. Pierre and Roulston (2006, p.674) argue that the politics of this historical 'moment' have qualitative researchers concerned that qualitative inquiry is under siege and that some in positions of power have either never heard or choose now to ignore the victory narrative of the paradigm wars of the 1980s. This victory narrative is one in which qualitative inquiry cleared a space for itself and became legitimate. The 'moment,' termed our 'proto-fascist present' (Giroux, 2005) or the 'pernicious present' (Silk and Andrews, 2011), means that qualitative research exists in a time of global uncertainty (Denzin et al., 2006) where government agencies are attempting to regulate scientific enquiry by defining what counts as 'good' science (Denzin et al., 2006). 'Good' science is based on the desire for research that is replicable, generalizable, empirical, and experimental, which results in 'scientifically-based research' (SBR) or evidence-based research (EBR) being heralded as the gold standard for research practices.[2]

The 'moment' is shaped by the dominant political and ideological form of capitalist globalization—neoliberalism—which due to the global hegemony of this mode of rationality, has become omnipresent and a commonsense of the times (Brenner and Theodore, 2002a; Peck and Tickell, 2002). Neoliberalism is *everywhere* and has been referred to as a "new religion" (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.381) and through the adoption of the neoliberal policy agenda, the contemporary higher education system is a 'locality' in a globalized world that demonstrates subservience to commercialization, vocationalization, privatization, militarization, marketization and managerialism. This rise in 'corporate power' (Giroux, 1999), 'governmentality' (Olssen and Peters, 2005), an 'audit culture' (Frith, 2001), and 'profit-driven instrumental rationality'—McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2004)—has impacted on the core functions of universities and the academic community. It is

within this context, we argue that sports coaching research has become part of an episteme guided by the controlling yardstick of profit, knowledge instrumentalization, and a climate of responsibility which has diverted academe from broader public good towards narrow specialties (Dimitriadis, 2006; Giroux, 1999). However, we assert that the sports coaching knowledges can, and should, be far more than a handmaiden for a neoliberal, corporate and high-performance agenda. Sports coaching knowledges have the potential to be meaningful, have important social, political and economic impacts that contribute towards socially just societal goals—scholarly activity in the 'field' of sports coaching could be characterized by a more productive vision in which Universities encourage *creative* effort and the formation of multidisciplinary groupings, and which result in the formation of inventive problem nets, research programs and ideas (Barnett, 2000a); in other words an environment conducive for meaningful investigation in the reconceptualized 'field'.

Chapter 2 of the book offers what Lawrence Grossberg (2006) has termed a critical history of the present through consideration of the social forces that comprise our conjunctural moment. It explicates the rise and adoption of neoliberalism, from its genealogy as a strategic political response to the global recession in the late fifties, to its global hegemonic omnipresence of current times. Although seen as a 'commonsense of the times' (Peck and Tickell, 2002), by invoking and deploying Lauder et al. (2006), the *success* of the market economy is critiqued in order to highlight the issues with the corporate capitalist 'fairytale' of neoliberalism (Giroux, 2005). Once the oppositional mobilization has been mapped, the impact of neoliberalism on the higher education sector in the United Kingdom is unpicked, using historical 'moments' to frame the discussion. Ending with the recent white paper, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011), the current 'moment' of capitalist order dominant in the 'locality' of the higher education system is presented.

Chapter 3 illuminates the impact that neoliberalism has had on the core functions of universities and the academic community. It maps out how the theory of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004)—based on the analysis of the changing relations between higher education institutions and society—best describes how universities have actively positioned themselves *in* the new economy and are driving corporate dispositions. The resultant 'academic revolution' (Etzkowitz et al., 1998) in higher education has led to a commodification of teaching and research activities; in essence, a shift towards corporate principles of efficiency, accountability, and profit maximization, and away from social responsibility. Further, we draw upon Max Weber's notion of 'iron cage' and George Ritzer's updating of this view to the ubiquitous 'Golden Arches' to frame the bureaucratic and commercially rationalized efficiencies—termed McDonaldization—that has crept out of the fast-food franchise and into all aspects of life, including the public

university. In doing so, we will frame how McDonaldization—a metaphor that speaks to a set of principles of profit-driven instrumental rationality—has contributed to a particular understanding and way of doing 'science' within [Mc]universities. Although knowledge has been instrumentalized and academics' work hyper-professionalized (Dimitriadis, 2006; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004), this context does afford possibilities of new networks for socially productive purposes and a diversification of higher education knowledges (David, 2007; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2006; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). Thus, the corporatization of the higher education system can be seen to be an *opportunity* for scholars to mobilize a critical pedagogy to empower the powerless and to transform social inequalities and injustices within the context of neoliberal influences (Barnett, 2000a; McLaren, 2003).

Building on the previous chapters that illuminated the influence of neo-liberal ideology on higher education policy in tandem with the impact that this has had on scholarly activity, Chapter 4 situates the 'theme field' of sports coaching research within the wider context of the critical academy study of sport. As sport policy occupies a contested space with the same ideological influences as those located in higher education, this chapter maps the impact this has had on sports policy, and then situates this within a global context. The importance that is placed on sport by nation states and global associations *must* be mapped out to fully appreciate the conjunctural history of the sports coaching present. Then, locating this within higher education, academia, and sport, the rise of sports coaching as an academic endeavor, the current sports coaching landscape, and the *influence* of sports coaching research is mapped. As a result, there is a need to overcome the invisible networks of prestige afforded to the 'elders' or 'gate-keepers' of sports coaching knowledge that prevail over a one-dimensional, evidence-based portrait of sports coaching, and evolve the field in order to gain a fuller understanding of its complexity and contribute to wider social issues. In doing so, the evolution of sports coaching knowledge becomes "attuned to dynamic relationships connecting individuals, their contexts, and their activities instead of focusing on these separate entities in isolation from one another" (Kincheloe, 2001, p.689).

Chapter 5 provides a brief genealogy of cultural studies and its widespread and often superficial appropriation by sport-focused scholars. Cultural studies of sport can be considered a critical and contextually-driven intellectual project prefigured on furthering the understanding of the politics of contemporary sport culture. At the definitional core is the intellectual practice and praxis of 'radical contextualism' (Grossberg, 2010), and within this chapter, we unpick what this means by drawing on the work of Stuart Hall. Following this, we map the marked physical culturalization of the sociology of sport and the move towards a *physical* cultural studies (PCS); a position that has encouraged some critical scholars to question the value of the term sport, as a descriptor of their intellectual focus

and practice. We identify the three main characteristics of PCS scholarship; the ontological complexity and interrelatedness of physical culture, radical contextualism, and, the assumption that societies are fundamentally divided along hierarchically ordered lines of differentiation (i.e. those based on class, ethnic, gender, ability, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms), as realized through the operations of power and power relations within the social formation. PCS therefore is motivated by a commitment to social change and to produce the type of knowledge through which it would be in a position to intervene into the broader social world, and *make a difference.*

PCS—albeit a relatively embryonic and constantly morphing project—has largely overlooked sports coaching as a site of inquiry; something this book seeks to address. Chapter 6 delineates an 'inconvenient truth': in order to challenge the epistemological hierarchy that privileges positivist, quantitative, predictive ways of knowing (Andrews, 2008), the 'field' of sports coaching fundamentally needs to embrace a fresh *modus operandi*. After critiquing the evangelical status afforded to evidence-based research (EBR), we develop a line of thinking that embraces a physical cultural studies (PCS) sensibility to frame the ontological, epistemological, and axiological praxis underpinning the reconceptualized 'field' of sports coaching research. In doing so, the commitment of PCS to progressive social change locates the reconceptualized 'field' as a 'performative pedagogy' (Giroux, 2001) with an underlying intent based on a 'moral ethic' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005a). The chapter also considers how best to focus and magnify events of inquiry, and discusses the expansive and flexible methodological toolbox available to practitioners in the reconceptualized 'field'. The concept of the researcher-as-methodological bricoleur (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005b) is deployed, and we explicate that the ontological, epistemological, and methodological advances *must* be accompanied by similar advances in expression and (re)presentation (Amis and Silk, 2008). In this reconceptualized 'field', building upon the work of sports coaching scholars such as Jones (2009; 2007; 2006), we explore new territories of expression, arguing that the reconceptualized 'field' considers democratizing writing practices and moves beyond persuasive fictions (Sparkes, 1995) or 'classic' forms of representations in the production of more self-conscious texts.

While a conclusion is offered in Chapter 7, we are at pains to point out that our conclusion, rather ironically, does not signifying any form of end point. Rather, it marks the beginning of a project concerned with the progressive potential of a 'field in tension' (Silk and Andrews, 2011). In this coda, we return to the impreciseness, limiting, and somewhat misleading terms 'sport' and 'coaching'. In so doing, and through holding together the potentialities of sports coaching as it articulates and contests a physical cultural studies sensibility, we tentatively propose a new nomenclature for the 'field' of sports coaching. We call for practitioners working in the reconceptualized 'field'—the *bricoleurs*—to challenge the corporate dispositions

that are driving academics' work, to become 'border intellectuals' (Giroux, 1995), and use the monikers of multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and intellectual integration to guide their scholarly activity. Of course, we fully recognize the limits of such a clarion call—not least the disciplinary demarcations of Departments, of research excellence panels (such as the REF in the UK), of tenure/promotion committees, of graduate programs, of journals and of scholarly 'elders'. Yet, in 'doing coaching justice', academics need to escape from their ascribed label and dispositions of neo-liberal subjects, and instead of focusing on survival as being an *individual* responsibility—survival (of the field, of meaningful, productive and impactful knowledge, of a legitimate field) in the current 'moment' should be viewed in terms of *social* responsibility (Dimitriadis, 2006).

2 Towards a Corporate Culture in Higher Education

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to *create* and *preserve* an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (Harvey, 2005, p.2, emphasis added)

INTRODUCTION

Giroux (2004a) suggests that we are living in dangerous times in which a new type of society is emerging unlike anything we have seen in the past. These dangerous times are shaped by the evolution of the liberal capitalist order that, in turn, frames the subjective and material experience of our current moment. This 'moment'—referred to as the 'proto-fascist present' (Giroux, 2005a) or the 'pernicious present' (Silk and Andrews, 2011)—is symbolized by a society in which symbolic capital and political power reinforce each other through a public pedagogy produced by a concentrated media, which has become a cheerleading section for dominant elites and corporate ruling interests (Giroux, 2004a). The consequence of this is a society which is "increasingly marked by a poverty of critical public discourse, thus making it more difficult for young people and adults to appropriate a critical language outside of the market that would allow them to translate private problems into public concerns or to relate public issues to private considerations. This is also a social order that seems incapable of questioning itself, just as it wages war against the poor, youth, women, people of colour, and the elderly" (Giroux, 2004a, pp.206–207).

This chapter aims to frame the climate/context in society and higher education. In order to locate the current social and economic context, this chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will trace the emergence and ascendancy of neoliberalism in which the market is seen as delivering prosperity and social justice with the wider framework of economic globalization. Section two will deploy the work of Lauder et al. (2006) to challenge the assumption that prosperity, democracy and social justice can be delivered by a market economy. Section three will chart the development of the dominant discourse(s) surrounding the evolution of the liberal capitalist order prevalent in higher education in the United

Kingdom. This genealogy will specifically look at the period of time from the Black Paper produced by Cox and Dyson in 1969 for the Conservative government led by Edward Heath[1]—aimed at dealing with the problem of universities and falling standards—through the developments proposed by 'New' Labour in their third term in office under the premiership of Gordon Brown, to the recent White Paper, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011) that places students as consumers at the heart of the system. It will illuminate the key players, policy initiatives, and ideological assumptions that have contributed to the development of the 'corporate culture' (Giroux, 1999) in higher education over that period of time.

THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM

Before proceeding it is important to emphasize that although neoliberalism promulgates the unitary logic of the market as a universal cure it is in fact variegated in character with its ideology and implementation in policy have quite different forms in different countries. Undoubtedly, the powerful family resemblances necessitate conceptualizations that "must be attentive to *both* the local peculiarities *and* the generic features of neoliberalism" (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.388).

The dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was the dramatic moment that assigned communism to the archives of world history and offered vindication that a market economy was the only way to deliver prosperity, democracy and social justice (Brown and Lauder, 2001). It is events dating back ten years prior to this moment that future historians may well view as the crossroads in the world's social and economic history (Harvey, 2005). Harvey (2005) cites Deng Xiaoping's steps towards the liberalization of the communist-ruled economy in China in 1978, Paul Volcker taking command at the U.S. Federal reserve in 1979, Margaret Thatcher being elected Prime Minister of Britain in 1979, and Ronald Reagan being elected as President of the U.S. in 1980 as the epicenters from which "revolutionary impulses seemingly spread and reverberated to remake the world around us in a totally different image" (p.1). It was the late 1970s that saw the shift[2] as neoliberalism moved from the philosophical project and abstract intellectualism of Hayek[3] (1933; 1941; 1944; 1948; 1952; 1960; 1973; 1976; 1979, 1988) and Friedman[4] (1948; 1953; 1956; 1959; 1963; 1982) to the state-authored restructuring projects of Thatcher and Reagan.

Hall (1983, p.19)[5] explains that although Margaret Thatcher gave the swing to the right "a powerful impetus and a distinctive personal stamp." However, when properly analyzed the deeper movement has a much longer trajectory. Hall (1983) writes that economic decline in Britain dates back at least a century, yet this was not inevitable. It is worth noting the post-war context that was the precursor to Thatcherism:

> The 1945 Labour Government, under the impact of war and the radicalisation of the working class, carried through a series of major structural changes including nationalisation, the welfare state and full employment. At the same time, it sought to restore Britain's international position in the context of the new post-war situation. This involved the maintenance of the Empire and its legacy together with a major international military and financial role for Britain. The key here was the relationship with the United States, which, given the weaknesses of other western powers and the onset of the cold war, was seeking a special relationship with Britain. (Jacques, 1983, p.40)

The fifties[6] saw a period of rapid economic growth, rising living standards, full employment, and relative social stability. However by the late fifties this picture of social harmony was being undermined by the first cracks in the Cold War, the rapid growth of Britain's competitors, a reduction in traditional imperial markets, and a growing concern about the economy. It is important to emphasize that as welfare state provision increased for workers and families, so there was a squeeze on profitability. This was a fundamental problem for both Britain and the United States (Brenner and Theodore, 2002a). Hence, if capitalism was to overcome this Keynesian form of social democracy, there was a need for a strategic political response to the "declining profitability of traditional mass-production industries and the crisis of Keynesian welfare policies" (Brenner and Theodore, 2002a, p.350).

Successive changes in government[7] prior to Margaret Thatcher being elected Prime Minister of Britain in 1979, served only to emphasize that "the new dawn of the fifties had only been a temporary interregnum" (Jacques, 1983, p.41). The 'modernist' approach of Wilson's labour government, the 'laissez-faire' conceptions of economic and industrial policy[8] of Heath's conservative government, and the 'working class quiescence' of the returning labour government in 1974 did nothing to halt the relative decline of Britain. In describing the 'decay' of British society, the adverse economic environment, and the transition to the Thatcher government, Bleaney (1983) maps the emergence of a new direction in economic management:

> Public services were cut back to make room for tax cuts, but private incomes were controlled (or at least meant to be) by an endless succession of incomes policies. Labour, once it became 'the natural party of government' in Harold Wilson's famous phrase, had almost inadvertently become the main bulwark of an unsatisfactory status quo. Meanwhile the Conservatives, under the leadership of Mrs. Thatcher since 1975, had developed a coherent and strident political challenge ... they argued the whole drift of British society since around 1960 (or even before) had been for the worse, and that economic revival required radical changes which would reverse that drift. In particular, drastic