

1 **A Bourdieusian analysis of cultural reproduction: Socialisation and the ‘hidden**
2 **curriculum’ in professional football.**

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1 **Abstract**

2 This paper draws on the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu to provide an
3 explanatory account of how socialisation and the hidden curriculum within coaching
4 practice contribute toward the formation of social identities and powerful schemes of
5 internalised dispositions. Drawing on a ten month ethnography within professional
6 football, the research found that day-to-day practice was ideologically laden and
7 served the production, reproduction and incorporation of socialised agents into the
8 prevailing 'legitimate' culture. The legitimacies embodied included respect for
9 authority, hierarchical awareness, control, obedience, collectivity, work ethic and
10 winning.

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12 **Keywords:** Bourdieu, coaching, hidden curriculum, reproduction, socialisation.

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1 **Introduction**

2 Although coaching is now considered a social practice, its related broad
3 discursive space remains largely silent and unexplored (Jones, Potrac, Cushion &
4 Ronglan, 2010). Instead, coaching continues to be largely viewed through a
5 functionalist lens as a benign and unproblematic activity, thus ignoring the
6 contribution that it makes to the production and reproduction of social structures.
7 Recently, however, scholars have increasingly argued that coaching is far from being
8 narrow or instrumental, nor does it operate in a neutral social and political vacuum.
9 Rather, coaching, as a de-limited field of practice, is a landscape that is imbued with
10 dominant values and common beliefs that appear natural and thus, are taken-for-
11 granted (e.g., Roderick, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Purdy, Jones, & Cassidy,
12 2009). In this respect, coaching can be defined as an ‘ideology’ (Fernandez-Balboa &
13 Muros, 2006) seen as arising in, with and from the culturally structured world
14 (Cushion, 2007). In turn, the precise culture and related discourse which house
15 coaching have been generally identified as autocratic, gendered and hierarchical
16 (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Purdy et al., 2009). Central to the creation and maintenance
17 of these current structures is the practice of socialisation; a “complex, interactive,
18 process of development” (Coakley, 2001, p. 82) where individuals learn to “adapt to a
19 given social system” (Eitzen & Sage, 1989, p. 77).

20 Coaching and learning to coach have been described as socialisation processes
21 akin to an ‘apprenticeship’ (Cushion, Jones & Armour, 2003). For practitioners, this
22 usually involves a long and reflexive course of action from observing and receiving
23 coaching as athletes, through being novice and assistant coaches (with individuals
24 engaging in structured and structuring practices throughout), to positions of head
25 coaches (Cushion et al., 2003). Generally, socialisation can take two forms, described

1 by Margolis and Romero (1998) as a ‘weak form’ and a ‘strong form’. The ‘weak
2 form’ defines and validates the professional role, and includes coverage of such topics
3 as methods, content, concerns and dispositions; “recognition of everything that
4 constitutes the existence of the ‘group’, its identity, its truth, and which the group
5 must reproduce in order to reproduce itself” (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 56). The ‘strong
6 form’ also works to reproduce, but is more concerned with reinforcing stratified and
7 unequal social relations and power structures, thus maintaining the status quo.
8 Importantly, in practice, these two forms are seldom, if ever, explicitly stated or
9 separated.

10 A major function of socialisation in coaching relates to the imparting of
11 enduring values and an ideology that guides behaviour in accordance with given
12 expectations. However, because much of the resultant learning is covert and
13 embedded within daily routine and practice, it is mis-recognised and becomes part of
14 a ‘hidden curriculum’ (Kirk, 1992; Margolis & Romero, 1998). Such a hidden
15 curriculum involves a “set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, norms of
16 behaviour and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational processes”
17 (Skelton, 1997, p. 188). At the same time, learning within and through coaching is
18 neither linear or unproblematic, making the social reality of coaching inherently
19 unstable (Skelton, 1997; Cushion & Jones, 2006).

20 Consequently, to understand the impact of coaching practice, there is a need to
21 recognise moments of learning, unlearning and re-learning ideas, norms and beliefs.
22 Indeed, Evans and Davies (2002) argue that deconstructing conventions and
23 problematising taken-for-granted assumptions helps us to understand how social
24 reality is organised, constrained and reproduced. Within the current context, this means

1 closely examining specific elements of coaching's implicit and explicit curriculum
2 and pedagogy.

3 Using an 'apprenticeship' model of coaching practice within a professional
4 football club as a case study, this paper offers an exploration of how a social group
5 can produce and reproduce a culture. It also examines the precise processes and
6 outcomes which Nash (2003) argues disposes those subject to socialisation to develop
7 the particular characteristics and actions of the dominant. In doing so, through use of a
8 Bourdieusian framework, inclusive of such notions as field, capital, practice and
9 habitus, the means by which coaching's hidden curriculum serves as a powerful
10 medium through which beliefs and values are embedded and transmitted is
11 interrogated.

12 The significance of such analysis lies in attempting an epistemological 'break'
13 (Robbins, 1998) from the dominant way that coaching is conceptualised in everyday
14 discourse¹; to develop a greater understanding of the activity's inherent complexity.
15 The value of the work also lies in examining how coaching as a social practice is
16 conceptualised in terms of structure and agency. In doing so, it attempts to shed some
17 light on why some coaches coach as they do, thus providing a more nuanced
18 understanding of contextual 'social geography' (Marsh, Keating, Eyre, Campbell &
19 McKenzie, 1996). Finally, by linking practical actions to social issues, the purpose of
20 the article extends to uncovering some of what Goffman (1974) describes as the
21 unstated rules by which interactions are governed, hence allowing coaches greater
22 opportunities to grasp, reflect upon, and improve agential practice (Jones, et al.,
23 2010).

¹ This discourse has a tendency to be utilitarian, driven by scientific functionalism that views coaching as an unproblematic process and therefore lacks any micro-political consciousness or social criticality.

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2 **Theoretical framework: Bourdieu and coaching**

3 Bourdieu (2000, p. 50) insisted that in order to “encounter” rather than reassemble the
4 social, we should move close to the site of practice and production so that we may
5 complete ‘the sociological picture’ (Bourdieu 2004). Similarly, King (2009) argues
6 that while class issues and broad political and economic interests (i.e., the macro)
7 undoubtedly influence social practice, they cannot be understood without an
8 appreciation of practice itself (the micro) (King, 2009). It is a perspective which
9 asserts that differentiation within social fields is not always solely concerned with
10 macro issues and oppositions, and that an analysis of practice is flawed without an
11 understanding of social context and the positioning of individuals within ‘fields’
12 (Grenfell & James, 1998). A field, according to Bourdieu, is a social arena in which
13 individuals manoeuvre: it has its own logic and taken-for-granted structure of
14 necessity and relevance. The coaching field can be seen as a structured system of
15 social positions that define the situation for its occupants. In the context of a
16 professional football Academy, this is made up of the club, the coaches, the players,
17 the sport’s governing body and the league, all of whom influence the curriculum and
18 practices therein. The coaching field, however, “is also a field of struggles” (Bourdieu
19 & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101) where individuals (e.g., players and coaches) both
20 personally and collectively seek to safeguard and improve their own respective
21 positions.

22 Interconnected to the concept of field is that of habitus, a “system of durable
23 and transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 53) through which we perceive,
24 judge and act in the world (Wacquant, 1998). Ritzer (1996) argues that people are
25 seen as endowed with a habitus or what he perceives as a series of internalized

1 schemes, through which they produce, perceive and evaluate their practices. Habitus
2 is acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings
3 via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities (Wacquant, 1995;
4 Bourdieu, 1989). Practice is believed to shape habitus, while habitus, in turn, serves to
5 unify and generate practice. Brown (2005) argues that practice is a central dynamic of
6 social production, while Hunter (2004) goes on to suggest that culture is embodied
7 and reproduced in day-to-day activities by the interactions of field and habitus
8 through social structures and agents. Therefore, day-to-day life (social interaction,
9 social behaviour) is considered to be produced by the interaction of agent and
10 structure, making practice neither objectively determined nor the product of free will
11 (Ritzer, 1996).

12 Bourdieu also considered practice to involve a blend between the conscious and
13 the unconscious, the intended and the unintended. Practice, therefore, becomes
14 'second nature'; a point illustrated through the sporting metaphor of developing 'a feel
15 for the game'. Importantly, it is practice that mediates between habitus and the social
16 world: "On the one hand it is through practice that the habitus is created; on the other,
17 it is as a result of practice that the social world is created" (Bourdieu, cited in
18 Wacquant, 1989, p. 42). This means that activities like coaching are likely to
19 reproduce and legitimise certain orientations of oneself that gradually stabilise into
20 schemes of disposition or habitus. Hence, the coaching process (and all it entails) can
21 be viewed as a central generative site of a distinctive habitus that has the power to
22 shape the consciousness (Bottero, 2009). Coaching thus, like education, is a
23 productive locus of a particular habitus (Brown, 2005) that gives rise to "patterns of
24 thought which makes what he (sic.) thinks thinkable for him in the particular form in
25 which it is thought" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p.194).

1 According to Hunter (2004), the key to the functioning of any social space
2 (e.g., a football club) is the concept of capital. Capital is, in effect, a form of power
3 (Ritzer, 1996) and can occur in a number of forms: economic (that which can be
4 directly converted to money), cultural (such as educational credentials), social (such
5 as social position and connections), symbolic (honour and prestige) and physical (the
6 development of bodies in ways recognised as having value) (Shilling, 1997).
7 Individuals within the coaching field are considered to be continuously striving to
8 maximise their particular capital, with their respective social positions being charted
9 by the volume of capital afforded to them (Calhoun, 1995). This adds a temporal
10 dimension, as the distribution of capital can change over time. Similar to other social
11 locations, groups within coaching possess real and symbolic capital, and actively
12 pursue strategies to improve and transmit their ‘power’. For example, in professional
13 football, as Cushion and Jones (2006) have illustrated, social, cultural, symbolic and
14 physical capital all contribute to the formal and informal social hierarchy for coaches
15 and players. Here, social capital can be accumulated from one’s position on the
16 coaching or playing staff, cultural capital from qualifications and experience, while
17 symbolic capital may come from personal prestige or renown. Bourdieu and
18 Passerson (1977) described symbolic capital as a cultural arbitrary system of
19 meanings; that is, what is valued in the field is determined by the dominant power
20 group.

21 To compliment the theoretical framework already discussed, two additional
22 Bourdieuan concepts are relevant in this case. Doxa is the formation and perpetuation
23 of the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the ‘objective’ world (Throop & Murphy, 2002).
24 That is, socially and culturally constituted ways of perceiving, evaluating and
25 behaving become accepted as unquestioned and self-evident; i.e., ‘natural’ (Bourdieu,

1 1977). Everett (2002) contends that where doxa or common-sense produces unequal
2 distributions of capital and a legitimation of the forms and production of capital,
3 symbolic violence will be found. Symbolic violence then, is an act of misrecognition
4 exerted on a complicit social agent through the order of things, the logic of practice
5 (Everett, 2002). Although the nature of coaching in professional sport may present
6 itself as ‘self-evident and universal’, the coaching process can actually be viewed as a
7 doxic structure and a site of symbolic violence (see Cushion & Jones, 2006).

8

9 **Method and context**

10 Twenty-four players and five coaches participated in a season long (August to May,
11 10 months) ethnography conducted at Albion Football Club (pseudonym). The
12 players were from the two senior youth teams at the club (under 18s and under 16s),
13 and were a combination of full-time (n=20) and contracted school-boy players (n=4)
14 looking to secure full-time professional player status. The coaches included the
15 Academy Manager (Andy), his three full-time assistants (Pete, Greg, Dean) and a
16 part-time assistant (Bob) who worked evenings, weekends and during school holidays
17 (all coaches have been given pseudonyms). Albion was a medium sized Premiership
18 (highest professional football division in England and Wales) football club. The Club
19 was ambitious and keen to develop its ‘home-grown’ talent and, as such, had invested
20 considerably through facilities and staffing in the youth Academy².

21 Data were collected within an ethnographic framework that included
22 participant observation and interviewing (Patton, 1990). This approach enabled an

² Every professional football club in England and Wales has a centre for developing youth players. These are known as Academies or Centres of Excellence. School-boys are contracted to an Academy typically from the age of 9 and train part-time. At age 16, boys are offered full-time ‘scholarships’ that lead, for the successful players, to full-time professional contracts.

1 insight into the varying and evolving coaching process at the club. Observations were
2 conducted over periods ranging from two to four days per week during the season in
3 question, and varied in length between two hours to all day depending on the schedule
4 of games and training. At the end of the season, a series of in-depth interviews were
5 conducted with the five coaches, while two focus group interviews (4 players per
6 group) were carried out with a random sample of the academy players. The design
7 enabled a valuable linking of the focus groups to individual interviewing and
8 participant observation (Morgan, 1988). In doing so, it provided differential layers of
9 collaborative evidence or ‘triangulation’ (Miller & Glassner, 1997). Such
10 triangulation was used to increase understanding, but was no guarantee of ‘validity’
11 (Silverman, 1993). Rather, it was used to assist in the building of evidence for key
12 claims (and evidence denying key claims), and to deepen understanding of different
13 aspects of an issue (Cain & Finch, 1981; Seale, 1999). Like the methods themselves,
14 these processes were not considered tests of ‘truth’, but as further opportunities for
15 reflexive elaboration on the unfolding findings (Bloor, 1997).

16 The subsequent data analysis was grounded both conceptually in the ideas and
17 objectives informing the research, and empirically from the information collected..
18 Specifically, the analytic process involved three overlapping phases, each with
19 increasing levels of abstraction. First, data from the field notes and interviews were
20 inductively examined and organised. This built a system of themes representing the
21 coaching process within an active, unfolding context. Second, the classification of
22 themes was used to produce an ordered descriptive account of the experiences of the
23 coaches and players. This was done to gain an insight into their structured and
24 structuring practices, and to outline the characteristics of dispositions that were
25 developed and developing. Although these descriptions highlighted the various

1 relationships and processes under study, they did not capture the complexity of the
2 socialisation process. Consequently, a third level of analysis was employed to situate
3 the data within a theoretical framework (as already discussed) (Bourdieu &
4 Wacquant, 1996) that enabled a move from concrete description to abstraction. Doing
5 so, increased the understanding of the relationship between the social actors and
6 structures under study, and how they interacted to produce and reproduce coaching
7 discourse and culture. Importantly, the use of a theoretical framework was not a rigid
8 prejudgment as to how to read the data (correctly), but a process of supporting
9 analysis and interpretation.

10

11 **Results and discussion**

12 *Recognising socialisation and the hidden curriculum*

13 The relationships within the coaching field, between the club, the culture, the actors,
14 practice, and the socialisation process was a complex one. The coaches were keen to
15 develop ‘competent workers’ equipped with the skills to do the ‘job’, but they also
16 wanted the players to acquire the values, ideology and cultural capital required of the
17 wider field. Such an interpretation stretches far beyond a functionalist ‘performance
18 gains’ view of coaching, demonstrating what Bourdieu (1986) insists is fundamental
19 cultural reproduction. The Club, in turn, was clearly concerned with producing a
20 steady stream of players from the Academy to support and supplement the needs of
21 the first team and reserves; (e.g., Dean: “Our goal is producing players for the first
22 team”). For the coaches meanwhile, to develop a professional footballer involved the
23 construction of a particular identity, an appropriate habitus, and depended on a
24 number of processes. These processes required more than simply the acquisition of
25 knowledge and skills associated with the game, but also included learning the values

1 and perspectives of the Club and professional football in general. The coaches saw
2 their work then, as related to getting the players to ‘fit’ within professional football or,
3 put another way, to merge habitus and field. In the words of Greg (youth team coach):

4 “Yeah techniques, we do all that, but the main job is to try and get them (the
5 players) to understand their role as footballers. To give them everything a player
6 has got, you know, on and off the pitch to fit within a football environment”.

7

8 Despite such clear statements, this purpose was never given direct attention or
9 recognition in the planning, organization or delivery of sessions. Neither was it to be
10 found in the Academy’s published curriculum. Rather, the messages imparted in
11 relation to this value development were both covert (planned but unstated) and hidden
12 (unplanned and unrecognized) (Bain, 1990). Such messages then were communicated
13 as a ‘hidden curriculum’, a socialisation of practice passed on unconsciously through
14 the routine activities of the Club. Hence, while the coaching was overt and formal,
15 possessing a well-developed and reasonably fixed daily timetable, the accompanying
16 underlying socialisation process had no given time frame and no rational plan.
17 Subsequently, the discursive space around the overall coaching programme was not
18 experienced as a given set of functional relations. Instead, it was a vehicle for the
19 transmission of a powerful doxic hidden curriculum defining acceptable practice
20 within the context of the field, and consolidating the social differentiation constructed
21 by some agents to impose dominance over others.

22

23 *Routines, ritual and work ethic*

24 Whilst the substance or specific focus of individual sessions changed during the
25 season, the routine between the coaches, players and the Club remained remarkably
26 consistent. In this case, the coaching was highly structured and ordered, while the

1 players had to learn what Nutt and Clarke (2002) described as the rules and
2 regulations of particular activities, or those pertaining to specific behaviour.

3 Illustrating this, each day at the training ground followed a predictable format.
4 Training sessions for the Academy players commenced between 10.15am and
5 10.30am, and finished between 12.30pm and 1.30pm. Every session would start with
6 the same ‘drill’. Greg (youth team coach) would often join in to 'formalise' the start of
7 the morning’s ‘work’. The following data not only illuminate the ‘routine’ of the
8 training activities, but also give an indication of the legitimacies of the field as
9 embedded within coaching practice; namely, professional and game related
10 expectations (work ethic), and the consequence of poor performance. They serve to
11 illustrate some of the pervasive doxa that the hidden curriculum conveyed, and with
12 it, the complexity of the coaching process. The data also give a flavour of the
13 conventions of coaching practice at Albion, and the seemingly common sense
14 approaches that were routinely employed; approaches that both organised and
15 constrained the participants’ social reality:

16 The players organise themselves into a circle, two of them try to intercept the ball
17 being passed around the edge. As he walks towards the players Greg calls: “Last
18 person on someone’s back”. The players rush around looking for a partner. The
19 last pair to do so go into the middle of the circle. Greg sets the rules of the game.
20 “One touch, try for 20 passes”. The players begin passing the ball around the
21 circle. The pair who allows the most number of passes gets the punishment, in
22 this case 10, 10, 10 (sit ups, press ups, and burpees).
23 “Threes!” Greg shouts and the players try to get into groups of three. The last
24 again begin in the middle of the circle. The first group win the ball quickly, as do
25 the second. Greg is unhappy: “Get down the fuckin’ lot of you, 10 press ups,
26 fuckin’ game tomorrow!”
27 Greg changes the rules to allow two touches of the ball. The game starts again,
28 and a player plays the ball with only one touch. Again Greg is unhappy; “Get
29 down J, concentrate, game on tomorrow”.
30 “Have a stretch boys” signals the end of this round. The players stretch in silence.
31 Greg starts the next round, calls out the number of each pass as it is made; “Lets
32 get lively boys, game on tomorrow!”
33 The game ends The players snake off as instructed around the pitch, doing
34 various exercises as they go. The players stop and sit and stretch, Greg walks

1 among them speaking, giving advice about tomorrow's game; "Back four, clear
2 and push out".
3 "Get your success on the right hand side".
4 "Get your success on the left hand side".
5
6 The players walk over. Greg divides them into two groups facing each other
7 about ten yards apart.
8 "Pass the ball and follow, one touch pass",
9 "Nice little set up for your mate",
10 The passing is mixed.
11 "'A', two gone astray already",
12 "Change of pace, 'R', that means quicker".
13 The passing still is mixed in quality;
14 "Going sloppy, c'mon, it's only a ten yard ball".
15 "Ah 'A', sloppy son",
16 "Hold it there! 10 press ups, not fuckin' good enough".
17 The players do their 'punishment' and resume passing.
18 The complexity of the practice is developed. The players are not responding well
19 causing the practice to breakdown.
20 Greg, frowning, remarks; "Not got going yet today".
21 Two players mess up. Greg responds "organise you two, fucking shambles."
22 The practice is developed once more. This time three players are involved.
23 'B' one of the first year Academy players keeps getting it wrong.
24 Greg holds his head "we'll keep doing it until 'B' gets it right".
25 'B' completes a correct play, to ironic cheers. He gets another attempt correct and
26 Greg shouts; "2 right, must be a fluke", the group are now concentrated on 'B's
27 attempts.
28 Again, Greg shouts; "fuckin' look at 'B' that's three on the trot".
29 Greg is now playing in the game. 'A' plays the ball out and gives it away, the
30 opposition score as a result. Greg, again annoyed, shouts at 'A'; "We've been
31 playing two fuckin' hours, its 2-2 and it's the cup final...you might not think like
32 that but someone might!"
33
34 Such patterns of practice and behaviour were routinely repeated throughout the
35 season. As Skelton (1997) argues, implicit socialisation messages, although created
36 by the various actors within the context, take on the appearance of normality through
37 their daily production and reproduction. In this sense, the players experienced a
38 continuous process of socialisation that served to knit together social legitimacies.
39 These legitimacies included respect for authority, hierarchical awareness, control,
40 obedience, collectivity, work ethic and winning. The social context thus, ensured the
41 development of a set of practical competencies, giving both players and coaches a
42 "sense of the position one occupies in the social space" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 235).

1 Jenkins (1992) argued that this renders individuals largely incapable of perceiving
2 their social reality in all of its arbitrariness, as anything other than the way things are;
3 a doxic experience (Bourdieu, 1990). For example, the staff, professional players, and
4 Academy players at Albion were physically positioned and defined through their own
5 clearly marked areas within the club (i.e., the dressing room, the dining area, and the
6 training and game pitches). That is, although the training pitches were allocated daily,
7 the Academy players were always given a pitch last depending on the needs and
8 desires of the professionals. The Academy players and teams never trained or played
9 on the ‘stadium pitch’; a space that was used for reserve team fixtures and first team
10 training, and clearly symbolised the ‘next level’.

11 In addition, Academy players were presented with individual squad numbers and
12 personalised items of kit. The kit clearly distinguished the Academy players from
13 both the professionals and ‘trialists’³ who each wore a different colour; as did the
14 coaching staff whose kit carried their initials rather than a number. The coaches’ and
15 professionals’ kit, whilst distinguishable, adhered more closely to the general club
16 colours, whereas Academy players’ and trialists’ kit provided a stark contrast. Whilst
17 symbols have multiple meanings and are multi-vocal (Turner, 1967), the simple idea
18 of different colours and of ‘squad numbers’ and ‘initials’ offered a constant, highly
19 visible tangible symbol of achievement and status (see also Light 1999). This
20 differentiation of players was entirely taken for granted, and carried onto the pitch.
21 Simply waiting for training to begin each day would demonstrate what Bourdieu
22 (1990) describes as “the practical experience of the familiar universe” (p.20). Here,
23 player’s demonstrated their ‘understanding’ of their position in the field, as these data
24 illustrate:

³ A trialist was a player at the Academy ‘on trial’ attempting to win a contract with the Club.

1 The players are out on the field without supervision. They are in groups of 4 and 5.
2 Some stand around, some are passing a ball to one another. There is occasional
3 laughter. There is one trialist with the group, who practises alone. Today, five
4 professionals have joined the Academy group. They stand separately, and pass a
5 ball amongst themselves. Andy and Greg walk over and watch an improvised
6 'circle keep-ball' take shape. The professionals do not join in. Andy interrupts the
7 players and divides the group into two. The five 'pro's' and those who did not play
8 on Saturday go off and warm up alone. Greg takes the balance for a warm-up.
9 They represent the starting 11 from last Saturday's game.

10 The practice finishes and Greg sends the players to get a goal. The signed
11 professionals sit on the floor as their contracted status means that they don't have
12 to do 'jobs'. The trialist starts to walk after the group and then drops behind them
13 and sits down but not with the pro's.

14
15 Respect for authority was reinforced through daily interaction, with the different
16 social positions recognised and afforded status through how they were referred to. For
17 example, the Academy players could refer to the Academy staff by their first name or
18 nickname (usually an abbreviated surname or adding an 'ey' to the surname).
19 Whereas, the senior Academy coach Greg, Andy (Head of the Academy) and the
20 reserve team coach were referred to strictly by name alone. The first team manager
21 was referred to by all as 'Gaffer', in appreciation of his position of authority and their
22 deference to him. Furthermore, Academy players were never allowed to 'answer
23 back' any staff; as these data illustrate:

24 Greg questions a player about a decision he has made during a practice and
25 suddenly shouts: "So why do you fucking answer back?"
26 Before the player has a chance to answer.
27 "I couldn't give a fucking shit! Too many of you are fucking answering the
28 staff back. Pack it in now or else you can fuck right off and I couldn't give a
29 shit. We aren't that fucking good, and I have been saying it all along, to
30 answer him back, me back, the physio back. Right!..
31
32 Andy: "It's unforgivable to speak back to any of the staff, it's just a
33 fucking.....I don't care who you are, if you do, you won't be at this football
34 club".
35

36 Through day-to-day practice, the players developed a "hierarchical awareness" (Sabo
37 & Panepinto, 1990, p.121) or what Chodorow (1978) referred to as a positional
38 identity; a "submission to order" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54) that provided a practical and
39 taken-for-granted acceptance of their conditions of existence. This was further
40 reinforced by the Academy players being addressed in terms of their inferiority. They
41 were known to the staff only as 'boys' or 'kids'; a reminder not only of their youth
42 but also of their subordinate position. For example;

1
2 Andy: “That kid at the back, he’s 19, what’s that doing for his development?
3 The Club have bought him, he’s fuckin’ useless, not his fault mind you. I’ve
4 asked, as he’s still a kid, if he can join in with us”.
5
6 The ball goes out for a corner and Greg sets up to practise corners. During one of
7 the practices Greg says that the players not selected should pay attention; “you
8 boys in orange, this could be you tomorrow” (Greg).
9

10 Over time, the practices and dispositions conveyed about being a footballer and
11 the football world, though originally learned as part of a conscious process, were
12 remembered as a habitual response. This learning of the logic and culture of the field
13 was incorporated bodily, a “habitus-inspired ‘map’ of embodied action” (Shilling,
14 2004, p.75), with the habitus operating as an internalisation of structures. Thus, the
15 routinised work at Albion produced a ritualised and standardised culture, a doxa that
16 became viewed as common sense by all involved. Indeed, the daily organisation of
17 the Academy and the coaches’ actions within it were viewed as legitimate, while the
18 players carried an awareness and the marks of their social positions; what Bourdieu
19 termed as “knowing one’s place and staying there” (1977, p. 82). Engagement in this
20 process ensured that the culture was confirmed and reinforced, with the players linked
21 to the culture through the latter’s editing or filtering of their everyday experience. In
22 the following excerpts, the coaches describe the ritual nature of the training, through
23 the repetition and reinforcement of coaching content:

24 Andy: “We’ve done our closing down, we’ve done our keep-ball. We
25 know what we have to do to win the game. We have a game plan; I know
26 and you know what our jobs are. I know if we stay on our feet, if the back
27 four stay together we’ll win the game. I know, if we stop crosses we’ll
28 win the game. We all know how we’re gonna win the game. We know
29 and you know”.
30

31 Andy: “We use Monday to Friday to take on board information; that is all
32 Monday to Friday is. Just get it learnt, learn to get the technique better.
33 Get the pattern right. We don’t do things just for the sake of doing them.
34 You know what we will be doing next week. You know planning, I mean

1 Monday and Tuesday you know, Wednesday off...Thursday, Friday, you
2 know...then Saturday is payday.

3
4 The constant messages, from how and where to dress, eat, train, play and behave,
5 given to the players at Albion reinforced conformity through constraining ritual.
6 Hence, the training sessions and games, and their continual reproduction, were an
7 affirmation of the existing regime and, therefore, a containment of choice.

8 *Repetition, control and embodying culture*

9 The interpretation of coaching practice as a process of socialization through the
10 relationship between player, coach and club has strong parallels with the work of both
11 Bourdieu and Foucault (Guilianotti, 1999). Using Foucault (1979), the hidden
12 curriculum within coaching can refer to a disciplinary practice which reduced the
13 players to docility. Certainly, the environment at Albion, as already described, moved
14 the players from 'routine' relations to the confined social space of professional
15 football. This restricted space was experienced on a day-to-day basis, and assumed
16 within the coaching at the Club. For example, the players were given little autonomy
17 and, despite their obvious heterogeneity, were treated by the staff as members of an
18 undifferentiated group. The restriction of individuality was evident around the Club,
19 with players commonly moving en masse from one activity to the next. Individual
20 action was conducted only under specific instruction; for example, the daily 'jobs'
21 (moving equipment, filling water bottles) or rehabilitation from injury. Alongside a
22 curtailment of individuality came a lack of privacy exchanged for the communal
23 experiences: changing, showering, and eating. Consequently, few opportunities
24 existed for personal escape from the group or coach supervision. Furthermore, the
25 players had no input into, or choice about, their given daily routine. The coaches
26 decided what training the players did, and how long that training lasted. For example:

1 The coaches decide that today the players will undergo fitness testing. The players
2 complete the bleep test and go for a jog around the pitch with Greg. They then do
3 an individual sprint test. Andy and Greg observe. At the end, the players are sent
4 for another jog; Andy and Greg check the sprint scores. The players ready
5 themselves for another bout of tests, but Andy looks at his watch and announces
6 that they should take lunch.

7
8 While the players engage in the circle keep-ball, Andy and Greg discuss the day's
9 training, principally whether the players need to do 'patterns of play'. They decide
10 that the session will end with patterns of play.

11
12 During the season, team-selection and game tactics were also entirely in the hands
13 of the coaching staff. Any consultation with the players was limited to coach-led team
14 'talks', with perfunctory requests for player input juxtaposed against a discourse of 'no
15 answering back'. The control exercised by the coaches resulted in the players being
16 denied all decision-making about their professional experience and, whilst within the
17 confines of the Club, their social experience. Similarly, whilst not under direct control
18 of the Club, time-off was subject to staff guidance. This control was legitimated by
19 the coaches through frequent reminders that players should, 'look after themselves'
20 and 'look after the nuts and bolts' through correct diet and adequate rest. This was
21 particularly emphasised prior to matches:

22 Andy: "Prepare properly, and it's good food, early night. You know, hard work
23 tomorrow not play time."

24 Andy: "Don't go out on the piss. We did on Wednesday because we'd just won the
25 game, but not on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday".

26
27 The degree of intervention and control experienced by players was manifest in
28 intense and rigid discipline during training, which was itself subject to scrutiny and
29 examination by 'experts'; i.e., the coaches (Foucault, 1977; Guilianotti, 1999). Skelton
30 (1997) argues that the hidden curriculum can be seen as a disciplinary practice,
31 objectifying all, who, in turn, accept an institutional definition of themselves as
32 docile, dominated beings; a scenario clearly played out by the players though the
33 coaching at Albion. As Fenandez-Balboa (1993) states, the 'hidden curriculum'

1 shapes and mediates not only values, but also experiences and practices. In this case,
2 the social grammar that the players were subjected to at Albion was characterised by
3 isolation, intervention and control. Hence, the socialization process acted to guard the
4 players from differential association (Bottero, 2009). In doing so, it protected the
5 habitus from “crisis and critical challenge by providing a milieu to which it is as pre-
6 adapted as possible” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 61). The enforced social similarity
7 experienced by the players ensured that practices were shared in common, and
8 unreflectively taken-for-granted (Bottero, 2009). This served an important purpose in
9 the socialization process, as actors (in this instance the players) isolated in a social
10 space are more likely to be seen as ‘the same’ which, allied to the proximity of
11 conditions, translates into durable linkages between them (Bourdieu 1985; Bottero,
12 2009). Such experience has a particular weight for individuals in shaping dispositions
13 because, it institutes a “relative irreversibility” in the orientation of the embodied
14 subject to the social world, as new experiences or challenges are “at every moment
15 perceived through the categories already constricted by prior experiences” (Bourdieu,
16 1992, p. 133). Therefore, actions remain “within the limits of the embodied
17 sedimentation of the social structures which produced it” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 19).

18 For Shilling (1997), the body is an unfinished article that develops in conjunction with
19 various social forces. Because of its ‘unfinishedness’, acts of labour (for example,
20 undertaking training sessions and games) are required to turn the body into a social
21 entity, which inevitably influence how people develop. In the context under study,
22 through day-to-day activity and routine, the hidden curriculum proved an important
23 mechanism in enabling the attitudes and norms espoused by the coaches to become
24 embodied by the players. As touched upon earlier, the body of a professional
25 footballer is also a bearer of symbolic value. Indeed, Wacquant (1992) suggests that

1 performers "appropriate through progressive impregnation a set of bodily and mental
2 dispositions that are so intimately interwoven, they erase the distinction between the
3 physical and the spiritual" (p.224). Similarly, football skills emerge from a "bio-
4 psycho-sociological complex of body techniques" (Loy, Andrews, & Rinehart, 1993,
5 p.72). At Albion, such a process was evident in the routines that transmitted
6 themselves by way of direct embodiment to a mastery of the fundamental corporeal,
7 visual and mental schemata required of a professional football player (Wacquant,
8 1992).

9 The coaching process, similar to Brown's (2005) interpretation of physical
10 education, would appear a good example of a de-limited field of production that exists
11 to perpetuate the supply and demand cycle of valued cultural goods that, in this case,
12 are embodied. For the coaches at Albion, the sessions over which they exercised
13 considerable control were the practical tools for maintaining this supply and demand
14 (i.e., producing professional football players); an activity which, in turn, served to
15 further reinforce and legitimate their practices. As Dean described it:

16 "Week in and week out we aim to improve them as players; their techniques and
17 understanding, the physiological side, so they become better educated and better
18 players. It's also about representing themselves as professional footballers.
19 Ultimately the club is accountable for how those boys became professional
20 footballers here or at other clubs".

21
22
23 Such language-in-use usefully demonstrates a transformation of the subject 'the
24 player' to an object, the 'pro' (the professional), within the coaching discourse.
25 Coaching thus, moves from an end in itself, developing the player, to a means towards
26 other ends, supplying professional footballers to the field. It is, of course, important
27 not to paint the players within the study as over-determined passive receivers of
28 covert or cryptic messages (Skelton, 1997). Social life is never so clear-cut. Rather, as
29 Giddens (1984) suggests, the individual actor is not completely helpless at the mercy

1 of social forces in this process: "Structural constraints do not operate independently of
2 the motives and reasons that agents have for what they do" (Giddens, 1984, p. 181).
3 No doubt at Albion, the players still possessed widely differing amounts of social
4 power and cultural capital, comprising differing degrees of choice. However, the
5 players' goals, predisposed through the habitus, aligned with subjective structures at
6 Albion and resulted in their complicity; they just wanted to become professionals, a
7 view expressed with enthusiasm (see also Cushion & Jones, 2006):

8 M: "I just wanna get into the first team, to get a better contract"

9 S: "I wanna become a pro, play well in the reserves, score goals, do well in the
10 reserves"

11 T: "To become a better player each day, to become a professional"
12 (Focus Group)

13 Consequently, in pursuit of their own goals, the players engaged in social practices
14 that contributed to the maintenance of the existing culture and helped to reproduce it
15 (Cushion & Jones, 2006). In so doing, they sustained on-going relationships of power
16 and inequality in a struggle for capital. As has been described, those in power, the
17 coaches, controlled the players, who behaved with submissiveness and docility, thus
18 being complicit in their domination; an essential element of symbolic violence
19 (discussed in a later section; see also Cushion & Jones, 2006).

20 *Winning and becoming a 'pro'*

21 The players are sitting outside, gathered around a wall chart. Greg and Andy are
22 standing. Andy says: "All the staff here have equal authority, anyone talks back
23 when they are asked to do something, they will be gone that day. I don't care
24 how good a player they are, they will be gone". Silence from the players, Andy
25 draws the players' attention to the chart. I think I would give us about 5 out of
26 10 so far, is that about right?" None of the players respond. "Greg's about right
27 when he says we aren't that good yet. Looking at this, there are games that we
28 should have won, and the goals that we have conceded are down to individual
29 mistakes. Full back letting the ball go across the goal, goalkeeper not attacking
30 the ball... You E, leaving the game with twenty minutes to go. I'm fining you
31 £15, by the way, double the next time it happens. I'd have thought that looking
32 at this goal scoring record you'd have stayed watching the game, working out
33 where you could have scored. We need players to be reliable. N, the only
34 reliable thing about you is that when you get the ball it will be a goal kick.

1 Individual mistakes and unreliable players get managers the sack. We want you
2 to follow instructions; G, I tell you to pass the ball forward and right in front of
3 me you pass it back twice. Why? What does it say about you as players that you
4 want to buck the system? I might not be very good at anything but I am reliable.
5 If I turn around and say that I'll do what I want or Greg does, we get the sack. I
6 don't have to stay and watch the game, I could go with 20 minutes left, get in
7 my Mercedes and go to Paris for the weekend and not come back until Monday.
8 What would you think of that!?" The players say nothing.

9
10 Andy: "Saturday is payday. I can get people contracts at this club, more if you
11 are winning than if you're not. Take it from me that it is the truth. You can get
12 more if you win. All this crap it doesn't matter about winning is just that, crap".
13

14 It is possible to juxtapose these excerpts against the stated objectives of the Football
15 Association's Charter for Quality (1998) that defines the criteria for granting an
16 Academy licence to clubs. The Charter places great emphasis on the needs of players:

17 "The Charter for Quality places the needs of the performer at the centre of
18 all recommendations...The programme of activities should be organised
19 in the best interests of the players' technical, educational, academic and
20 social welfare...Academy Directors will also be mindful of the impact of
21 the programme on educational and social development" (Football
22 Association, 1998, p.1-7).

23 This suggests a developmental approach where the goal of the coaching programme is
24 to improve the players. On the surface, the Academy at Albion promoted such an
25 approach. It was a view also expressed in a newspaper column written by Andy, who
26 described the Academy at Albion as starting to address the issue of player
27 development seriously. Despite the espoused notions of the Academy programme
28 having a 'player-centred' and developmental philosophy, deeper probing and
29 observation revealed a different picture. Certainly the pre-occupation with team
30 success overshadowed the players' broader development, a feeling shared by the

1 players who recognised that the desire to win displayed by the coaches was not linked
2 to their (i.e., the players) development.

3 T: "Andy just worries about winning"
4 A: "Yeah, they're not bothered about bringing players on, They treat the
5 Academy like a first team"
6 M: "Yeah, first team"
7 S: "You look at teams like, Town, they put their youngsters into the Youth
8 Team to bring them on a bit. Whereas with them (the coaches at Albion) it's
9 not about bringing young players on it's about the result. Get the best result
10 you can"
11

12 Here, the concept of 'winning' and being 'winners' emerged as the most pervasive
13 and consistent of the socialisation 'legitimacies'. Indeed, winning was enforced in all
14 aspects of the coaching practice, although as an objective, it was never formally stated
15 in terms of the Academy's aims. Thus, sessions and games became significant
16 socialising forces shaping the development of the players' habitus. Lessons on
17 winning and losing were repeatedly drawn and integrated into training sessions. For
18 example:

19 Andy addresses the players before a training session: "First thing the reserve team
20 coach said this morning was "good result", didn't even see us play and wasn't
21 bothered. We are in the winning business, that's the mentality that we have to
22 adopt".

23
24 Greg: "This morning, short and sharp, get last week out of the system. Not enough
25 people wanted to win the game on Wednesday night. Not many people mentioned
26 passing or shooting, just that not enough people wanted to win the game".

27
28 Greg: "Get our minds on this game tomorrow. Who wants to win that fuckin'
29 game tomorrow. I know Andy does, I know I do. Let's have that mentality".

30
31 Andy: "I mean, it really is what we are paid to do now. That is the truth of it.
32 Saturday is about winning. No more no less, it is about winning".
33

34 Although the pressure to win at Albion was not always expressed in such overt terms,
35 it would manifest itself constantly through the coaches' desire for players to 'be first'
36 or to 'win your individual battles'. Andy and Greg consistently espoused the need for

1 individual players to be winners, mentally and physically, in an attempt to inculcate
2 what they clearly saw as desirable professional values. Winning and competitiveness
3 were key characteristics of distinction, not just against opposing teams but also within
4 the group (as obviously related to the awarding of individual contracts); attributes and
5 achievements which would enable an individual to stand out or rather stand above
6 others in the field (Reay, 2004). This was a message clearly received by the players
7 who constantly manoeuvred to improve their positions... 'S': "If I make them feel
8 like crap, it will affect their game, then no threat. Its dog- eat-dog really, you've got to
9 look after yourself"....Such a situation echoes the belief of Kraus (2002), that
10 institutions are often organized on an antagonistic basis in which hierarchies are
11 constructed on conflict.

12 The discourse of winning expressed through the hidden curriculum was
13 illustrative of "powerful ideological work, suggesting a necessary, rather than
14 contingent, relationship" (Kirk, 1992, p.44). Hence, even though results had no direct
15 bearing on if Academy players achieved professional status, such discourse had both
16 social and political consequences, as the resulting beliefs became unquestioned and
17 taken for granted (Kirk, 1992). These messages, through the hidden curriculum,
18 became self-fulfilling, developing player dispositions and served to legitimise the
19 existing coaching process (Cushion & Jones, 2006). The players, in turn, became
20 convinced that success on the field would enhance their positions in the field and
21 subsequent career progression.

22 *Coaching, socialisation and symbolic violence*

23 The socialisation process and hidden curriculum at Albion were illustrative of an
24 apparatus of control that maintained a particular social order; a set of relations of
25 production and exercise of power often without power being felt (Jenks, 1993).

1 Similarly, symbolic violence is the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning
2 (culture) in a way that ensures that such systems are experienced as legitimate
3 (Jenkins, 1992). For symbolic violence to occur, recipients must be complicit within
4 the process (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this study, the players attended the Club
5 each day and took part in the coaching practices set out. As Bourdieu put it, "one is
6 only hooked if one is in the pool" (1984b, p.89).

7 The process of symbolic violence involves engagement in pedagogic action, which
8 Bourdieu described as a mechanism for reproducing the seemingly arbitrary culture of
9 a field and the interests of the dominant group. Pedagogic action involves the agents,
10 in this case the players and coaches, experiencing a process of 'misrecognition': that
11 is, "where power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are, but in the
12 form that renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder" (Bourdieu & Passeron,
13 1977, p.xiii). It is this legitimacy that obscures the power relations that permit the
14 imposition to be successful (Jenkins, 1992). Symbolic violence reinforces the position
15 of those in power and obscures what they are doing. It is a form of intimidation that,
16 when displayed, is not aware that it is intimidation, with the intimidating person
17 denying any intent to intimidate (Bourdieu, 1991). Similarly, the coaches' discourse at
18 Albion was understood as being in the interests of the players; as a motivational tool.

19 "I pushed him and pushed him, it could have made him or broke him, and at the
20 moment it has made him. He's sorted himself out, and decided 'I am going to get
21 through this'. He's come through and I like that. It would have been easy for him
22 to go back home and say 'fuckin don't like him'. Not because of what I've said to
23 him. I suppose you could relate the two but he brought himself through, he made
24 that decision to stick at it" (Greg).

25

26 For successful pedagogic action to occur, pedagogic authority is required.
27 Pedagogic authority is the arbitrary power to act, (mis)recognised by its practitioners
28 and recipients as legitimate. The pedagogic action evidenced in this study (that is, the

1 coaching) was experienced by the players as neutral or even positively valued as a
2 means of helping them reach their ultimate goal of being professional footballers.
3 Such action was embodied by Greg and Andy, both former professional players who,
4 although treated with a degree of indifference by the players, were nonetheless
5 respected for having 'done something' in the professional game. For example:

6 Interviewer: What are you looking for in a coach?

7 J: "I liked him because of who he is, what he is. Been there and done it"

8 N: "Yeah...someone who's played before, who knows what it's like, definitely gets
9 more respect"

10 R: "Someone who knows what they're talking about. Obviously, someone who can
11 do what they're saying"

12

13 The Club then, acted as an agent that, through its coaches, exercised pedagogic action.
14 For the players, the Academy and its coaches sat at the apex of their social and
15 cultural hierarchy, and acted as the gatekeeper(s) to professional contracts.

16 Pedagogic action is achieved through pedagogic work, which was described
17 as:

18 "A process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce a desirable
19 training, i.e. *habitus*, the producer of internalisation of the principles of cultural
20 arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after pedagogic action has ceased"

21 (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 31).

22 The long-term function of pedagogic work evidenced at Albion was, at the very least,
23 the production of dispositions that generated correct responses to the symbolic stimuli
24 that emanated from the Club and its coaches, the agents endowed with pedagogic
25 authority (Jenkins, 1992). At Albion, the Club sought, through symbolic violence, to
26 impose its language, meanings, symbolic system and culture on the players, thus
27 reproducing existing power relations. The training of players was thus accepted as
28 legitimate, while the created culture added its own force to the existing power

1 relations. The players' desire to succeed in the field ensured the misrecognition of the
2 activity, with the culture being experienced as an axiom; players and coaches no
3 longer questioned "why?"

4
5 **Conclusions and implications for practice**

6 Coaching research has been led by behavioural educational approaches and
7 psychological conceptions. Such perspectives typically view coaching through an
8 individual functionalist lens as a benign and unproblematic activity, or an entirely
9 positive endeavour, while the context is simply accepted as the physical location and
10 the setting for practice (Cushion, 2010); a situation into which the individual is
11 dropped. Conceiving coaching as “the mere aggregate of individual strategies” makes
12 it impossible to account for its “resilience as well as for the apparent objective
13 arrangements that these strategies perpetuate or challenge” (Bourdieu & Wacquant,
14 1992, p. 9-10). Indeed, a purely objective explanatory representation of coaching in
15 football captures a ‘co-ordinated system’ driven by ‘common purpose’, but succeeds
16 only in “destroying part of the reality it claims to grasp” (Bourdieu & Wacquant,
17 1992, p. 8); namely the social and historical. Such a representation is as subjective
18 and politically motivated as any, as it obscures the idea that symbolic systems are
19 social products that constitute interactive relations. Using Bourdieu’s concepts, this
20 research was undertaken from a more critical perspective, where coaching is viewed
21 as a complex activity in a structured and structuring social world. The findings draw
22 attention to what Swartz (1997) calls the social conditions of struggle that shape
23 cultural production.

24 Embedded within the practices evident at Albion were a series of material and
25 symbolic ‘legitimations’ around rituals, language, and notions of difference.
26 However, because they had no rational plan, the curriculum related to them was both

1 covert and hidden, with the socialisation tactics in use not being matched to pre-
2 determined outcomes. Rather, the practice witnessed constituted a ‘common sense’ or
3 tacitly accepted ideals (Guilianotti, 2005); of things that “go without saying”
4 (Bourdieu, 1993, p.51). Through them, the culture of the Club, its rituals and
5 traditions were as much responsible for the players’ learning as were the coaches’
6 actions.

7 Similarly, through the process and experience of training sessions and games,
8 a certain habitus was developed at Albion. This was related to much more than the
9 technical and tactical know-how or the ‘movements, reactions, and postures’ needed to
10 play football (Light, 1999). Rather, the players’ learning took place within a loaded
11 culture, which was more concerned with local (coach driven) objectives such as
12 winning, than any official central directive. These messages were passed to the
13 players through the daily (re) production of practice, to the extent that they became
14 accepted as legitimate. Thus, beliefs and behaviours came to be unquestioned, the
15 ‘way things were’.

16 The findings also demonstrate further that coaching reflects the interplay of
17 the personal, institutional and the cultural. The challenge for researchers, coaches and
18 athletes then, is to engage with this doxa of coaching, thereby increasing awareness of
19 the (often constraining) discourses that currently inform practice. To overcome
20 elements of firmly embedded culture, coaches need to understand how their practice
21 is shaped to either facilitate or constrain player development, and their own
22 effectiveness. Such aspects need to be considered to help reconfigure the field, and to
23 reconstruct ‘better’ forms of coaching. We hope this paper, by making elements of the
24 implicit and taken-for-granted within coaching explicit, has gone some way toward
25 this end.

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