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Article

Lived experience and community sport coaching: A phenomenological investigation

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Abstract

Cote & Gilbert, (2009), have described coaching in the participation domain as the act of coaching participants that are less intensely engaged in sport than performance orientated athletes. This form of coaching is a popular activity occurring in community settings such as schools or sport clubs, and it is often undertaken with a broad range of social and health outcomes in mind. The experiences and practices of the large army of 'community coaches'[1] have been under explored in comparison to those of elite performance coaches who focus on competitive success and dominate much academic research. This study focuses on the little known world of the community coach. Drawing on the philosophy of phenomenologists such as Husserl, and in particular the methodology of Van Manen, (1990), the study explored the lived experiences of a single case study community coach. Derived from semi-structured interviews and in keeping with Van Manen's methodology, findings are presented in a narrative format. The narrative describes the 'lifeworld' of the coach and seeks to identify the 'essential features' of community coaching in this case. Specifically, the narrative illustrates a dichotomy in the lifeworld of the coach; between a frenetic practical delivery mode visible in the public arena and a 'hidden' largely unknown, private world used predominantly for planning and organising. For this case study coach, the essence of community coaching lay in two complementary activities; planning and then delivering fun based activities that achieved social, health and sporting outcomes. Additionally, interacting with others such as parents, carers, and teachers was identified as an essential feature of this coach's experience.

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[1] In this case, the community coach is employed on a full time basis by a state funded organisation to deliver sport coaching in schools and the wider community of an English town.

Introduction

Erickson, Cote, and Fraser-Thomas, (2007) and Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin, (2008) noted that both sport participation and coaching, take place in high pressure performance domain and also the less intense participation domain. In the participation domain, particularly when coaching is community based and publicly funded, the aims of much coaching activity focuses not only or even primarily on the development of sporting performance but on achieving a broad range of social outcomes. Social outcomes associated with such 'community coaching' are often related to public health issues such as combating obesity or addressing a myriad of social concerns including developing social capital (Gould & Carson, 2008; Griffiths & Armour, 2013). Indeed, UK government policy (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2012; Department of Culture, Media & Sport, 2010), European policy (European Commission, 2007; European Union, 2007) and the International Council for Coaching Excellence (2012) have all recognised and supported community coaching programmes that have the explicit aim of enhancing personal and community development. For clarification, in the UK, the term community coach may refer to those employed by organisations such as National Governing Bodies of Sport, Local Authorities, or School Partnerships in designated towns, cities, or counties.

Yet, despite a plethora of laudable aims attached to community coaching, the international coaching literature has often focused on competitive and elite sport from the performance domain. Examples of elite focused coaching literature include Duchesne's, Bloom's, and Sabiston's, (2011) study of US coaches, Williams' and Kendall's, (2007) review of the research needs of Australian coaches and Olusoga's, Butt's, Hays', and Maynard's, (2009) investigation of stress in UK coaches. Similarly much literature has studied 'expert' or

'effective' coaching, both of which tend to relate to elite sporting outcomes (Gilbert & Trudel, 2012; Nash & Sproule, 2011; Nash & Sproule, 2009).

Community coaches, on the other hand, are tasked with delivering complex social outcomes and it may be that these are regarded as too difficult to categorise using current performance 'models' approaches. For instance, Flett, Gould, Griffes, & Lauer, (2012) have acknowledged that much existing academic research in the field of sport coaching has a strong emphasis on elite competitive sport, and so has limited relevance for the very different context, practices and experiences of community coaches. This means that with notable exceptions such as the work of Hellison, (2003) in the US, Sandford, Armour, and Warmington, (2006) in the UK and Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin, (2005) in Canada, the extensive social enterprise that is undertaken by community sport coaches remains largely unknown in research terms.

It is worth noting that community coaching, by definition, involves working with a very broad range of community participants including disaffected, vulnerable, and underrepresented groups. Questions could be raised therefore, about the wisdom of exposing these potentially vulnerable groups to practitioners who are not working in an evidence-based framework, as there is very little research or literature available to inform the work that they do.

Authors such as Potrac, Jones, & Armour, (2002 P183) have for some time now, called for research to investigate "the problems and realities of human interaction that are apparent within the coaching process". Furthermore, Jones and Wallace (2005) argue that providing an understanding of the phenomenon that is coaching, is a valuable step towards informing practitioners about and for their work. Accordingly, this study seeks to contribute to the

existing body of knowledge by offering detailed insights into the practice of a community coach. The purpose of the study was not to prescribe or design a coaching programme that aids sporting performance or to recommend action for community coaches but instead to 'shine an analytical light' on the lived experiences of a single community coach. The coach in this case is employed on a full time basis by a state funded organisation. The coach is tasked with developing and delivering sport programmes in both the schools and the wider community of a designated town.

The paper provides findings from the case, in the form of a narrative account of the coach's experiences. The purpose of the narrative is to offer rich insights that can inform professional discussion, act as a coach-learning tool, and offer an artefact for debate. The obvious limitations of the single case study can also be regarded as its strengths, and this paradox is discussed as part of the phenomenological theoretical framework that guides the study.

Theoretical framework

A phenomenological approach guided this study. Gray (2009 p 28) describes phenomenology as a research method that;

> *"Emphasises inductive logic, seeks the opinions and subjective accounts and interpretations of participants, relies on qualitative data analysis, and is not so much concerned with generalisations to larger populations but with contextual description and analysis".*

While Gray, above, identified phenomenology as a method, it is important to note that since Edmund Husserl (1900/1973) provided the founding arguments for phenomenology, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Schutz amongst others have developed phenomenology through their philosophical work. Due to continued refinement, application and development of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, (1962 cited in Solomon, 2001 p318) argued that, *"Phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner of style or thinking"* rather than a research protocol to be replicated exactly. Thus, as Giorgi (2010) argues, it is important to provide readers with an account of the basic philosophical underpinnings that guided the phenomenological style adopted in this study.

This study utilises Husserl's original argument that directing consciousness towards a phenomenon can provide descriptive accounts of situated, individual cognitive experiences that reveal the essence of a phenomenon. Husserl also suggested that the essences of phenomena are distinct and universal (Laverty 2003). Perhaps Spiegelberg, (1994, p. 93) best summarises the Husserlian approach as an aspiration to study the "essential relationships in

phenomenon that can be understood independently of actual cases, empirical and experimental".

Husserl's focus on the universal properties of a phenomenon may suggest notions of reductionist, generalisable, and positivist science. Husserl's phenomenology is, however, radically different to the natural science approach. Specifically, phenomenological studies aspire to reach the essence of an intentional object through focusing on the subjective experiences of those who experience the phenomenon. Thus, the Husserlian focus on rigorous systematic procedures, while still crucial to the 'Human Science' ambition of phenomenology, is very different to the traditional natural science view. In traditional positivist science, researchers using scientific method are posited as those best placed to understand a phenomenon. In contrast, Phenomenology argues that it is those who have everyday experience of a phenomenon that are best placed to describe and provide insight into it (Heidegger 1927/2005). Miller & Cronin, (2013) citing Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethods posited a similar argument recently by suggesting that experiencing the commonplace natural occurrence is key to understanding a phenomenon such as coaching. Thus, it is concluded that subjective experiential accounts of the everydayness of a coaching are helpful in elucidating a view of coaching.

Subjective experiential accounts of phenomena such as coaching can provide rich descriptions of the essence of experience and the world, or 'lifeworld', in which it takes place. Providing an account of the lifeworld of community coaching is deemed a useful exercise because it can offer coach educators, academics, and policy makers a clear view of the complexities of the environment in which coaching take place. Similarly and moving beyond the early work of Husserl, Heidegger's (1927/2005) hermeneutic phenomenology

7

posits that understanding the lifeworld is fundamental to understanding a phenomenon. Thus, this study aimed to provide a rich and complete description of coaching experience and lifeworld through engaging in a series of in-depth and open-ended interviews.

Phenomenological approaches using in depth interviews have been used previously in sport-related research (Allen-Collinson & Hockey 2011; Brown & Payne 2009). This may reflect a desire to realise what Kerry and Armour (2000 p2) have described as the *'promise of phenomenology'* to help gain an understanding of the '*subjective knowledge…at the core of sport related inquiry*'. This is best illustrated by the corpus of work exploring movement and embodiment, which uses both phenomenological work from philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology as a method to explore subjective experience (Bailey & Pickard, 2010; Bell, 2011; Standal & Engelsrud, 2011; Light & Evans, 2013). The body of coaching literature in this research genre is, however, comparatively small and limited in scope. Notable studies include: Lundkvist, et al's.,(2012) account of burnout in elite coaches; Lorimor and Holland-Smith's, (2012) description of the motivation of an outdoor adventure coach; Gearity and Murray's (2011) examination of 'bad coaching' and Becker's (2009) study of athletes' experiences of 'great coaching'. Yet, even in these phenomenological accounts of coaching, the latter two studies focused on the lived experience of the athlete as opposed to the coach. It can be argued, therefore, that the 'promise of phenomenology' as a method for examining and understanding coaching as practice remains underdeveloped.

Methods

Reflecting the different styles of phenomenology such as pure, hermeneutic and existentialist, a wide range of phenomenological procedures have been described in the literature (Dowling,

2007). Though these procedures are grounded in the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, they seek to provide practical recommendations to enable the application of phenomenology as a research method. Accordingly, phenomenology as method has been used extensively in practice areas such as nursing (Crotty, 1996; Zichi Cohen, et al., 2000; Munhall, 2012).

Perhaps the most commonly used phenomenological methods are those of Giorgi, (1975); Smith and Osborn, (2008), and Van Manen, (1984). These methods reflect the different philosophical foundations of phenomenology. For instance Giorgi's (1975) method, through its strict protocol that emphasises rigor and reliability, is strongly influenced by Husserlian phenomenology (Giorgi, 2000). In contrast, Smith and Osborn's Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (2008) is hermeneutic in nature and provides an idiographic, flexible framework that embraces the researcher throughout the process. Attempting to replicate the best of both Giorgi's method and IPA, although acknowledging that it is also possible to achieve neither, this study used Van Manen's (1984) 'human science for an action sensitive pedagogy' methodology.

The Van Manen approach is an alternative view of science that does not seek to hypothesise and test theories that will inform practice. Instead, Van Manen's methodology aims to provide insight and understanding by exploring practice. This is in keeping with the argument made thus far that an informed understanding of community coaching in practice would be helpful, given the high ambitions for this form of practice in realising broad social outcomes. Specifically Van Manen's (1990 p 18) methodology, consistent with the call for narrative and revealing everydayness, aims to tell "the most captivating stories, exactly those which help us

to understand better what is most common, most taken-for-granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly?"

Data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness

This study used Van Manen's four-stage method of data collection:

1. **The researcher turned towards the phenomenon of interest.**

This involved considering the phenomenon, formulating a question and addressing trustworthiness by identifying assumptions and presuppositions through the process of creating a reflexive account (see below). Note that this is not quite the bracketing 'epoche' process of Husserl (1913/1982) which would represent an attempt to 'eliminate' the researcher's personal bias. Instead, it represents an attempt to acknowledge and *manage* bias.

2. **The researcher investigated the experience as it is lived.**

Three reflective, semi-structured, and in-depth conversations with a single community coach across a six-month period were undertaken. The subject was chosen as he had substantial lived experience of the phenomenon in question; community coaching. Due to the use of a single case, claims of generalisability from the findings are modest and are confined internally to the views of the coach and externally through the natural attitude of readers. Indeed, more in keeping with the phenomenology of Heidegger than Husserl's universal essence concept mentioned above, it is important to acknowledge the temporal and idiographic nature of lived experience. This is not to suggest that there is no merit in the study of a single coach. Conversely, it is contended that there is much to value in detailed representations of lived experience that allow readers to critique and reflect upon their own practice. Cole and Knowles, (2001, p. 11) emphasise the value of single case studies by

stating that; "*every in-depth exploration of an individual life in context, brings us that much closer to understanding the complexities of lives in communities"*. This is particularly relevant in this study as the single case allowed for in depth exploration of the coach, context, and relevant environments during interviews.

Interviews were collaborative in nature (Kvale, 2007). Questions focused on the lifeworld, everydayness, and sensory information such as:

- 'Who is present when you are coaching?'
- 'What is a typical coaching session'?
- 'What does it sound like when you are coaching?'

3. The researcher reflected on the essential properties of a phenomenon

Following each interview, the researcher identified themes through holistic reading and rereading of transcripts while also revisiting the reflective account to consider and manage bias. Once the lead researcher identified themes from the text, horizontalism and free imagination were used to filter incidental and essential themes (Van Manen, 1990). Horizontalism considered themes across different coaching episodes and this addressed internal generalisability. For instance, during an account of one coaching experience, the community coach described 'organising privately hired buses to transport children during holiday activities'. While organising transport for children is a feature of the coach's experience for some holiday activities, the coach did not describe that feature in different contexts such as during weekly school and local youth club sessions.

Furthermore, the researcher engaged in a process of free imagination, which involves considering the identified structures and imagining the nature and existence of a phenomenon without them. Indeed, through free imagination, it is possible to imagine community coaching taking place in local environments such as playgrounds and parks without organised transport. Thus, through horizontalism and free imagination, organising transport was deemed an incidental rather than essential theme. Essential themes derived from the text were woven into a narrative through the writing up process.

4. The researcher viewed writing up as a process

Serving as findings and discussion, the researchers produced a narrative that aimed to provide a concrete account that can bring readers into the world of the community coach. Phenomenologists such as Van Manen, (1984) have argued that situating research in rich description of environments and storied accounts of character through narrative can help readers to connect research with practice. This is particularly pertinent for coaching where researchers have been urged to embrace narrative because coaches are themselves "active storytellers" (Douglas & Carless, 2008 p. 36).

Limitations

During the writing of the narrative, the lead researcher spent time reflecting while the second researcher took the role of critical friend. This allowed opportunities for linking theory to practice. Of course, this process embeds the researchers in the data analysis process. As is commonplace in the phenomenological approach adopted, the knowledge and experience brought by the researchers was viewed as a positive feature of the research. This is in keeping with luminaries such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Schutz, who advocated interpretative approaches that benefit from researcher involvement (Spiegelberg, 1994). Paradoxically,

however, this may also be a perceived as a weakness. For instance, it is at odds with Husserl's phenomenological reduction (1913/1982) which, suggests researchers should suspend their beliefs during phenomenological studies to enable phenomena to reveal themselves.

In the interests of credibility, the lead researcher is explicitly embedded throughout the narrative. The second researcher is present also – although to a lesser extent. This acts as a reminder of researcher influence and it is important to aid readers in evaluating this influence. As directed by Van Manen (1990) reflexive vignettes that aim to *manage* researcher bias are included below.

Reflexive Vignette

Colum is a 33-year-old male. My 'twitter' profile portrays me as a '*lecturer, researcher, coach, who is interested in all things sport and education*'. Those two terms; sport and education, summarise my professional interests. When considering the value of community coaching, I experience tension. I value sport as a positive influence on young peoples' physical, social, and psychological development. I have however, seen short term, disorganised and 'pointless' sessions/programmes delivered to young people with little realistic chance of a meaningful impact. Thus, I occasionally experience pessimistic and sceptical thoughts about the claims that sports coaching can deliver positive and sustainable outcomes. As a lecturer at a higher education institution, I have not worked directly in the practice field of community coaching for some time but I am now tasked with educating future coaches. This short narrative helps to explain the focus of the research question that I sought to address: What are the lived experiences of a current community coach?

Kathy is a female who is of an age where age is not freely divulged. This gives the game away. When the lead researcher came to me as a doctoral student and proposed this study, I was immediately curious. My research interest lies in participation level sport and in education, and in the contribution that qualitative research methods can make to our understanding of effective practice. While I have an interest in rigorous and original research from all paradigms, I have a particular interest in case studies and narrative methods, probably because those are the kinds of research studies that really engage me as a reader. I have also been involved in phenomenological studies in the past, and have long felt that the method has the potential to be used more widely. As this study progresses, therefore, both the research questions/data and the evolution of the method are of interest.

Participant and Settings

John currently works as a full time community coach for a local sport development organisation[2] in England. John works in a small town with a population of less than 50,000. Unemployment and deprivation are high in parts of the town although strategies to address this have been in place since the 1990's. John's main role is to coach target groups, such as children from low-income areas, athletes with disabilities and schoolchildren. A professional sports club, with a community focus, previously employed John in a similar role for six years. In addition, John has completed periods of voluntary coaching in community settings and has substantial 'lived experience' of community coaching. He has a level two football coaching qualification and a degree in Sport Studies from a UK Higher Education institution. John

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[2] This is a state funded organisation with responsibility for developing sport and physical activity in a given town or borough.

provided informed participant consent for the study. The University of Birmingham Ethics

Committee provided ethical approval for the study of John's lived experience.

Findings and Discussion

The lifeworld

When I first met John, I drove through the town to meet him at his office. The office is in a grand Georgian building with spacious lawns in front. I was impressed with the unusual facility of free parking. I presume this is due to the abundance of space and lack of demand in the town. Interestingly, the reception is a modern, bright area that could be located in any number of public and private institutions. My experience suggests that modern schools, colleges, hospitals, and large businesses have similar receptions but I am not sure how many of these exist within this particular town. John is in his late twenties and my impressions upon meeting him are of an athletic looking man dressed in a tracksuit. As we meet, he tells me we are leaving the reception and heading to a meeting room in the sport office.

We walk through a couple of busy and modern open plan offices, then down a few grey corridors with original brickwork exposed and eventually through an iron gate and down an original stone stairway into the basement. The basement is noticeably colder than the reception. The meeting room is quiet, contains a mixture of furniture, and has sporting images on the wall. The office is almost hidden; it is clearly out of the way, and has a very different feel to the busy modern open plan offices above ground. John ushers me in and I perceive that he likes his 'den'. I think I would too. It clearly provides a quiet place to think and is his territory. We are the only ones there, and to an extent, the secluded location somewhat justifies and symbolises the research question; what does it mean to be a community coach in the UK today?

Essential theme 1: Time spent planning and then delivering, "goes hand in hand".

I asked John about his line manager. He splits the question into 'his boss' and the 'big

bosses'. I focus on the big boss, sensing that there may be something bubbling under the

surface. John explains how the bosses:

> don't get to see as much as what we do out in the community as they would like. They are
> very busy but when they do get to see the work of the community coaches, it has always
> been positive feedback. …..They say wow, that's brilliant, thanks for that! We are just doing
> our job there; we do that every day. The big boss sees it at one weekend event and says; oh
> you've organised that really well. He doesn't see *everything* that goes into one day.

When I explored what John meant by 'everything' he reeled off a list of administration-based

tasks: health and safety, marketing, finance, medical forms, contact details and much more.

The answer told me more about John's job than his boss and this pleased me as it provided

information on the community-coaching role. Session plans, six-week programmes, schemes

of work, health and safety policies, and national curricula are all critical documents for John.

He also emphasised that this level of administration and organisation is a key part of the

community coach's role:

> making sure that everything is planned out and organised. Now if there are any teething
> problems with that, then obviously we have to sort it out. ……..It's on our head basically, to
> make sure that everything is organised.

Following this answer, John once again reiterated the organisation aspect of the process

including booking venues, confirmation emails, and considering costs. I wondered why John

reiterated the organisational tasks. These are clearly important and central to his role. They

are also a largely unrecognised part of his role. He highlighted this by summing up

conversations that he has with friends and new acquaintances:

> "You work in sport, you do this?" and I'm like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," and then I tell them what I
> do. They're like, "Oh, you work in an office! What do you do there then? Do you send
> emails?" "Yeah, of course I do" and you know, I think that there's a misconception that

> people think, oh you look sporty, so you must be out doing practical all the time and there's nothing more to your job.

I sympathised with the perception, that coaches just play games; kick a ball about. Then I reflected on coach education. I posed a question to myself: does education and training equip community coaches with the organisational skills necessary for the role. Does coach education and literature reinforce the perception of coaching as an 'on the field' activity?

Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, and Russell, (1995), previously identified organisation as a key part of the coach's role in their coaching model. Therein, it was argued that mental models based on coaches' knowledge, values, and beliefs, informed practice during organisational tasks. In a follow up article, Cote and Salmela, (1996) described organisational tasks as those primarily focused on planning training, monitoring physical activity and working with others such as athletes, parents, and assistants. For the high performance coaches interviewed in that study, the practice of organising training along physiological lines is consistent with much of the literature such as Bompa and Haff, (2009) that encourages planning based on the bio-scientific principles of athlete performance. When considering the literature on planning beyond that of the periodised physical training, Lyle (2010, p. 86) declares, "There is an absolute dearth of literature examining the planning process in coaching in any rigorous or conceptual way". Denison, (2010) further reinforces this view by arguing that coach planning is much more complex than manipulating physiological variables and thus it remains over simplified and under problematised.

As I sat in the meeting room away from the other professionals in the building and the world outside, I could not help but think that for aspiring coaches, coach educators, participants, parents, and employers, the organisational aspect of community coaching may currently be a

case of 'out of sight, out of mind'. Given the clear importance of planning in the community coaching process outlined by John, this area is worthy of further exploration.

Essential theme 2: Time spent working with community entities

In contrast to the organisational aspect, the delivery aspect of John's role occurs in full public view. Thus, while John's lifeworld involves quiet individual planning, it also involves busy, chaotic delivery with lots of social interaction:

> I tell you, that practical half an hour just goes by and you just can't comprehend what happens in that time. …
>
> like I say when there is twenty odd of them and one is asking for a high five, you try and do everything at once and it can get quite manic!

Through imaginative variation, it is deemed that interacting with other entities is essential to John's community coach role. Community entities are participants, but also volunteers, parents, teachers, carers, and private sector organisations. Through working with others during both planning and delivering, John ensures the success and sustainability of his community coaching outcomes. For instance, although challenging, out of school sessions are, over time and through training, delegated to volunteers:

> It is quite volunteer based and getting the volunteers to get that session across on quite a low budget is what we really need. If you're lucky enough to find that, you know you are on to a winner.

Adults during school sessions are similarly a factor to consider for John. In fact, school-based sessions are delivered not just for the benefit of the participants but also for the teachers in attendance:

> When I speak to teachers in the schools I go into and do the PE lessons, they're always writing down the sessions and asking 'How do you do that?.. These are really good…Can I write them down?'

> I think at Primary school level, it's not just the children it's the teachers as well because some of the teachers don't have any sort of sport experience or background at all really. They will ask questions about sessions; how do you do this?.....You will get questions like that, cause they're not used to coming out and being in a session with 20 kids and getting them sorted out within a sporting area.

John uses his expertise to train, coordinate, and manage the other entities in his 'lifeworld', such as volunteers, carers, and teachers. It is through his experience and education that John has learned how to work with the community to ensure that sessions are primarily fun but also ensure social outcomes are achieved, albeit implicitly. For John, achieving social outcomes through fun physical activity is certainly the ambition of community coaching;

> make sure that the kids have as much fun as possible, and also learn something ……I mean it's not specifically a teaching environment. So fun is the first thing that we promote. But I myself and my other colleagues like to make it a little bit of a learning experience as well, because for me that's what sports' all about. …..you've got to learn something, you know.

> I have started up a disability sport session with people with learning disabilities and it's a first time anything has really been done with that sort of clientele ……. Socially they don't really meet to many other people by the end of the six week period that we did it they were going around high fiving people, feeling part of a team and for me that's a win.

Amongst teachers, volunteers, carers and most parents, John's professional knowledge and presentation (tracksuit, clipboard) identifies him as a professional with knowledge and expertise to achieve the wide social outcomes that are expected of his role. John's identity as a coach is rooted in the ambition to achieve outcomes such as those identified above through fun activities. He illustrates this through a description of 'babysitting'. This is a term, the lead researcher recognises from his experiences of community coaching and it is akin to the entertainment of children who have little ambition or motivation to attend sessions but may do so out of a parental need for low cost childcare. John perceives this part of his role as a challenge, but he embraces it.

I cannot help but think that this type of work raises issues of professional identity. It must be frustrating to find that some parents send children to sessions simply to avail themselves of low cost childcare. Thus, engaging in 'babysitting' is accepted as part of John's job but both ethical and practical questions could be raised about whether it is an authentic existence for John as a community coach. Interestingly, a recent out of school trip to a private provider sport programme, created some conflict in identity for John. He felt his identity as a community coach might not have been fully recognised by the private provider;

> They only view us, you know, looking after the kids and you know, bringing them to their session. So they probably don't see us as sport professionals because they don't get to see us deliver.

Furthermore, John used his knowledge to evaluate the private providers session and was critical of their performance, suggesting that only 'babysitting' took place;

> Now obviously we get to see them deliver and see what they do. The thing I didn't agree with was they (children) didn't learn anything. Now, I know it is an out of school programme, so it's all about fun. The majority of the kids there were enjoying …. but I do think they were leaning to what the kids wanted, and maybe not what was best for them.

The so-called 'babysitting' experiences chimed with Colum's vignette. The conflict between authentic community coaching for John and babysitting is an interesting one. Sartre (see Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) argues that there are dualistic views of phenomena. For example our view of a given phenomenon, is also accompanied by an infinite amount of views of that phenomenon 'for others'. Accordingly, while John views community coaching as a play-based experience concerned with achieving sustainable social and sporting outcomes, others may view the phenomenon of community coaching differently. In this instance, parents may view community coaching as more akin to entertainment or low cost childcare. It is therefore important that coaches establish a professional space where

practitioners can clearly exercise and articulate their purpose, expertise, and professional boundaries to others.

Through a specific example, Smith, Flower, & Larkin, (2009) outline a further dimension to Sartre's dualistic view of phenomena; 'in itself' and 'in others'. Specifically they posit that Sartre, expecting to see a friend, enters a café. Without his friend and 'in itself', the café is strange and certain aspects take more prominence. Thus, without an 'other' the café is interpreted differently than if the other is present. Similarly, in John's case, the phenomenon of community coaching is clearly different 'in others' i.e. when private providers, teachers, or parents are present;

> [During] football and afterschool basketball, the parents can come and watch and obviously you have a group of parents there watching your session. It can feel a little intrusive on what you're doing. Cause really they are judging you from the outside and all the .....There is that little bit of pressure ...... You don't get that sort of pressure at work in the office.

For Kathy, John's account of feeling pressure in front of an audience was reminiscent of the work of Goffman. Specifically, recent coaching literature (Jones, Potrac, Cushion, Ronglan, & Davey, 2011) drawing on Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor, has compared coaches to actors. The representation of coaches as 'players', delivering a performance in front of an audience, appears to resonate with John's account of delivering sessions in the presence of parents. In addition, John's planning takes place in the hidden meeting room which is consistent with Goffman's metaphorical 'back stage region'. Thus as we call on coaches to develop a professional space for their practice, coaches must also consider the audience's needs.

Sometime later, I walked out of the meeting room, and up the stairs. This brought me out of the bowels of the building, down the corridor and into the open plan offices. As I went through reception, back into the daylight, I could not help but conclude that the planning

work of community coaches, which takes place 'behind the scenes' may not be as recognised and appreciated as it should be.

This thought reinforced the benefit of phenomenology as a method of studying coaches' experiences. Given the proliferation of media coverage and literature concerned with elite coaching, perhaps there is a need to continue to describe the experiences of community coaches as they live them. This is not just to ensure that the community coach is valued but also to ensure that potential and active coaches, coach educators, parents, fellow professionals, and employers fully understand the role. Ultimately and in turn, this may benefit the participants in community coaching programmes.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to present a descriptive and insightful account of the lived experience of community coaching. The study used phenomenology as a framework because it offered the opportunity to facilitate an understanding of the experience and lifeworld of the coach as the coach 'lived' it. Van Manen's, (1990) flexible yet systematic methodology was used to provide a narrative of John's lived experiences. The narrative revealed a dichotomy in John's lifeworld. In echoes of Goffman, the quiet 'meeting room' used for planning which symbolises the hidden aspects of John's organisational role is in contrast to the frenetic public practical sessions which is in view of the public (teachers, volunteers and parents). This is coherent with Goffman's back and front stage regions.

The narrative provided an insight into the essence of community coaching; such that for John, the essential act of community coaching is spending time both organising and then delivering physical activity programmes. The relationship between these two acts, which can occur in different environments, is both symbiotic and dependent as the goal of both is the implicit development of social and to a lesser extent sport skills amongst participants through fun based physical activity. Supporting the work of Denison, (2010) it is argued that a thorough understanding of the organisational aspects of community coaching could aid practitioners and educators alike.

A second essential theme from the narrative revealed that others; primarily participants but also parents, teachers, carers and private providers are fundamental to community coaching. The relationship between the community coach and others is a complex issue, which raises questions regarding professional identity, status, and recognition. Drawing on the work of Sartre, the dualistic view of phenomenon, 'for itself-for others' and 'in itself –in others', was

discussed in relation to John's 'babysitting' experience. This discussion revealed that community coaches might need to establish and communicate professional boundaries and expertise with service users and other professionals. Key to this may be revealing the hidden world where planning and professional practice takes place.

Upon reviewing the narrative, John commented;

> It is important that coaches have that organisation side to their work, probably a lot of what is said in the narrative but having that infrastructure in place is a massive part of being a good coach, a good teacher. That you get out into the community and interact with other professionals, parents, and anyone else that you need to interact with also. So, I think that is a very important part and they both go hand in hand. If you have not got that organisational part of your job then you don't have the good practical.

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