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Investigating policy enactment in community sport coaching: directions for future research

Ben Ives [a,b], Dawn Penney[c], Jimmy O'Gorman[d], Adam J. Nichol[e], Paul Potrac[e] and Lee Nelson[d]

[a]Institute of Sport, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK; [b]Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Musculoskeletal Science and Sports Medicine Research Centre, Faculty of Science & Engineering, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK; [c]School of Education, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia; [d]Department of Sport and Physical Activity, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK; [e]The Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK

ABSTRACT

This article calls for a sophisticated investigation of policy enactment in sport-related environments, with community sport coaching used as an example case. Emphasis is placed on the need for in-depth empirical research into and theorisation of: 1) political skills involved in the enactment of policy; 2) emotion management when enacting policy; 3) performative and fabricated aspects of policy enactment; and 4) impacts of policy enactment for the health and wellbeing of workers. In doing so, this article challenges scholars to move beyond the study of policy actor types and to develop more nuanced understandings of the political, economic, organisational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal forces influencing those involved in policy enactment. It is hoped that this article will encourage original and high-quality research into how sport, physical activity, and physical education policies are enacted by its workforce and provide a stimulus for professional learning about policy work across sporting communities.

Introduction

While policy enactment has garnered significant academic attention in educational settings (e.g. Ball, 1993, Ball et al., 2012, Evans et al., 2019), there is still much to be learned about how organisations and workers translate, interpret, reinvent, and enact policy in sport-related environments (Hammond et al., 2020, O'Gorman et al., 2021, Penney & Alfrey, 2022). Indeed, it is our position that the enactment of policy in sporting contexts remains under-investigated and under-theorised. This article therefore

offers empirical and theoretical ideas to help scholars conduct original and high-quality research into how sport, physical activity, and physical education policies are enacted by their respective workforces. Specifically, this article calls for a more sophisticated application of Stephen Ball and colleagues' (e.g. Ball, 1993, Ball et al., 2012) theorisation of policy enactment and proposes additional heuristic frameworks (e.g. Goffman, 1959, 1974, Harris, 2015, Hartley et al., 2015, Thoits, 2011) to help researchers better consider how workers interpret, experience, and deal with the multiple, and sometimes contradictory, demands of their policy work (e.g. unrelenting flood of initiatives, changes, and reforms). This is achieved via consideration of policy enactment in community sport coaching work as an example case. In doing so, this article makes an original contribution to scholarship concerned with policy enactment in sporting contexts by calling for research that addresses how personal, intra-, inter-, and extra-organisational forces a) shape the use of various, strategic practices and b) impact the health and wellbeing of the community sport coaching workforce.

From policy implementation to policy enactment

The investigation of sport policy is not new, with a growing body of research evaluating "how well" policies are realised in practice (Chen, 2018). Much of this work has, however, continued to position policy as a linear process in which policy is developed in one arena and then passed down to others for implementation (Penney et al., 2022). It has focused on opposing theoretical, empirical, and methodological ideas centred on the value of either top-down or bottom-up schools of thought (Hupe, 2014). Stephen Ball and colleagues' (Ball, 1993, Ball et al., 2012), in the context of education, have challenged the value and appropriateness of such functionalist representations of the policy process. They argued that policies are *enacted* rather than *implemented* and that these enactments encompass acts of interpretation, translation, practice, and performance, which "take place in many moments, in various sites, in diverse forms, in many combinations and interplays [and] bring together contextual, historic, and psychosocial dynamics into a relation with texts and imperatives to produce actions and activities that are policy" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 71).

In response to these observations, researchers in sport, physical activity, and physical education have started to examine how organisations and workers enact, rather than implement, policy. For example, Penney and Alfrey (2022) used Ball's writings to reimagine the policy process in physical education contexts. They noted that "the (re-) conceptualisations of policy processes and relations" progressively developed through Ball's research centring on enactment, have "largely rendered the language of policy *making* and *implementation* as dated if not entirely redundant" (p. 3 *original*

emphasis). Reference to enactment is thus integral to changing perceptions of *who* is involved in policy, in *what ways*, under *what conditions*, and in various contexts. It also challenges what we understand policy to be. Enactment foregrounds process and argues that policy remains in a constant state of re-negotiation through the actions and interactions of the many individuals who are invested, implicated, and impacted in and by policy (Penney & Alfrey, 2022).

Ball and colleagues' theorisation of how schools and teachers "do" educational policy has generated concepts that seek to bring to fore the fluidity and adhockery of policy, the influence of multifaceted policy contexts, and the complex discursive and power-relations at play in policy work and positionings of various policy actors (Ball, 1993, Ball et al., 2012). These policy actor types include, for example: a) policy narrators and translators, who give meaning to policy in particular contexts through guidance or statements outlining implications and the actions that are, or are not, possible within the bounds of policy; b) policy enthusiasts who model enactment in their own practice and who are advocates and influencers; c) policy entrepreneurs who creatively explore the opportunities that policy presents; d) policy critics who pursue ways to resist policy directions and/or imperatives; e) policy transactors whose policy work centres on mechanisms, systems, and investments to monitor, facilitate, and report on enactment; and f) policy receivers who seek guidance and direction and are often focused on compliance in responding to policy (Ball et al., 2012). Research by Penney and colleagues has usefully served to demonstrate the utility of Ball's concepts for understanding how physical education teacher educators (Lambert & Penney, 2020), physical education teachers (Wilkinson et al., 2021), and coaches (Hammond et al., 2020) variously adopt multiple and hybrid policy actor positions when enacting policy.

Policy enactment in community sport coaching: moving beyond policy actor types

While additional research into policy actor types is warranted and necessary, in this article we encourage those interested in the investigation of sport, physical activity, and physical education policy to extend their analytical gaze beyond this consideration. We argue that researchers need to consider how policy actors (e.g. senior managers, middle managers, and coaches) strategically navigate their policy work in response to political, economic, organisational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal influences. Research also needs to take better account of the impacts of policy work on the health and wellbeing of its workforce. In the current article, these arguments are presented in relation to the study of community sport coaching. However, we believe that the empirical and theoretical ideas

proposed hold utility for the study of policy enactment across performance, community, and educational contexts. The decision to formulate our writings around community sport coaching was driven by the importance state agencies have placed on this workforce to address policy objectives and societal concerns relating to physical and mental wellbeing, as well as individual, community, economic, and social development (Smith et al., 2022). However, the level of scholarly attention devoted to community sport coaching has yet to match the significance policy makers have attached to this workforce. We hope this article will therefore encourage the field to rectify this position.

The lack of academic inquiry dedicated to policy enactment in community sport coaching can perhaps be explained by the fact that many practitioners and coaching scholars do not readily associate everyday coaching practice with matters of policy (Penney et al., 2022). Invariably, policy tends to be regarded as something distinct from the act of coaching itself. In this article we contest this position. We contend that workers in the field of community sport coaching are not merely the subjects or recipients *of* policy, they are active players *in* policy, shaping the meanings and experiences of policy in these settings. It is also important to recognise that these workers, like all social actors involved in the enactment of policy, have aspirations, hopes, fears, and worries and are bound up in networks of relations that are influenced by economic and social forces, institutions, people and interests, and, sometimes, pure chance (Ball et al., 2012, Ives et al., 2016). In this sense, the ways in which policies become interpreted, translated, reconstructed, and enacted by the community sport coaching workforce, are directly connected to local resources – material or human – broader social forces, employment trends and conditions, job satisfaction, coach education and training programmes, and life outside of work. Unfortunately, scholars have yet to adequately consider and fully explore these realities.

To inspire concerted scholarly activity to help redress this situation, our article proposes four distinct but overlapping areas we feel are worthy of empirical and theoretical attention. Following this extended introduction, we discuss the macro- and micro-political contexts in which community sport coaching work takes place and argue the need to investigate if, how, when, why, and under which circumstances policy actors deploy political skills. Subsequently, we explore the emotional features of policy work in this context, inviting scholars to investigate how practitioners manage their own and others' emotions. The article then progresses to discuss the performative nature of community sport coaching policy work and calls for inquiry into how the workforce might use impression management and deceptive impression management strategies. Finally, the article makes a case for detailed inquiry into the potential health and wellbeing impacts of policy

work for the community sport coaching workforce. Across each of these sections, we take stock of existing empirical knowledge, consider research from other occupational settings, and introduce social theory to inspire new lines of academic inquiry and associated sense making. The article ends with a brief conclusion, which summarises the key arguments and reaffirms our call for original, high-quality, and impactful research into the enactment of policy in sport, physical activity, and physical education contexts.

Policy enactment, macropolitics, micropolitics, and political action

Researchers have charted how workers in the field of community sport coaching have been affected by the political, economic, and policy climate within which they find themselves (Smith et al., 2022). They argue that community sport coaching work is impacted by a broadening policy landscape, with sport-based initiatives being increasingly identified and used as a vehicle to address a range of non-sporting policy concerns in addition to increasing physical activity levels among underrepresented groups. This has diversified the role of the community coach and requires them to work with a range of organisations and stakeholders, including those in public health, crime, and law and order. Researchers have also explained how workers in community sport coaching are not immune to neoliberal political and economic trends (Coakley, 2022, Ives et al., 2021, Smith et al., 2022), which (Coakley, 2021, p. 14) describes as an "interrelated set of ideas and beliefs organised around a commitment to free markets, political deregulation, privatisation, the pursuit of individual self-interest, and competitive reward structures that are assumed to inspire individual success leading to economic prosperity". In the United Kingdom, for example, the election of the 1997 Labour Government witnessed the introduction of a modernisation agenda, continued by consecutive offices, which delivered a more extensive range of technologies of government (Houlihan & Green, 2009). These included performance management techniques, target-setting, as well as audits and inspections linked to the funding of sport schemes (Houlihan & Green, 2009).

Since the 1970s there has also been a general shift in many Western nations towards precarious and insecure employment relations "in which employees bear the risks of work (as opposed to businesses or the government) and receive limited social benefits and statutory protections from the point of view of the worker" (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018, p. 1). In the context of sport and physical education, Kirk (2020) has argued that neoliberal practices have steadily wormed their way into employment settings meaning that, for many, work is now temporary, insecure, poorly paid, and sporadic. The knock-on effect of such precarity is that workers' everyday lives, including community sport coaches, are unstable, insecure, and uncertain

(Kirk, 2020). Community sport coaching in many countries, then, "often takes place within a highly pressurised, politicised, and precarious policy context [. . .] with tightly 'controlled' targets set by central government in the background" (Smith et al., 2022, p. 19).

Against this macropolitical backdrop, practitioners in community sport coaching find themselves working in cooperation and/or conflict with a range of key contextual stakeholders, both inside and outside their organisations, who are driven by differing aspirations, goals, preferences, roles, and responsibilities. The role of micropolitics therefore is an inescapable and generalised part of working life for these individuals (Potrac et al., 2022). For clarity, we term micropolitics as:

> The use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with a motivation to use power and influence and/or to protect. [. . .] Both co-operative and conflicting actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics [while] the macro and the micro frequently interact. (Blase, 1991, p. 11)

Importantly, and as the above quotation demonstrates, micropolitics should not be considered separate from macropolitics. Rather, there is a symbiotic relationship between those personal, intra-, inter-, and extra-organisational mechanisms within which community sport coaching work takes place (Ives et al., 2021). For example, researchers have suggested that this precarious and political occupational space may further amplify sport coaches' experience of vulnerability (Corsby et al., 2022, Potrac & Jones, 2009). Drawing on Kelchtermans (2009) theorisation of structural vulnerability in education, Ives et al. (2016) described how vulnerability for community sport coaches stemmed from: 1) not being in control of the environments in which they work (quality control systems, insecure employment, policy demands); 2) being unable to fully prove or guarantee the effectiveness of their choices and actions; and 3) occupying a position in which their decisions can always be challenged or questioned by others. In order to cope with such working conditions, community sport coaches have been found to engage in various micropolitical actions, including impression management, emotional labour, remedial work, and expression games to appear credible and professionally proficient, assess the trustworthiness of others, reconcile relationships following conflict, and to facilitate productive interactions and relationships (Gale et al., 2019, 2023, Ives et al., 2021). These micropolitical practices constituted a response to multifaceted threats to the workers' professional identities, such as coping with insecure employment conditions and audit-driven performance management techniques, as well as a more general determination to maintain individual pride.

While the abovementioned studies have offered useful early insights, future research should endeavour to provide a more sophisticated understanding of the interconnections between, and impact of, the macropolitical context in which community sport coaching work is enacted and the set of capabilities – skills, knowledge, judgement, and behaviours – that these workers need. This should include: a) the identification of which political skills they use and in relation to which working others; b) the regularity of their application; c) how these skills are deployed as part of their work; d) which personal, intra-, inter-, and extra-organisational generative forces inform their use; e) how practitioners acquire these skills, including the extent to which formal coach education and in-house training adequately contributed to their development; and f) differences between the political skill levels of workers in this context and how these facilitate and/or constrain attempts to achieve personal, organisational, and policy objectives. When addressing these issues, researchers would also do well to consider how intersectionality (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, social class, etc.) influence the contextual reading and performative responses of social actors in these community sport coaching settings.

To extend knowledge in this area, we encourage scholars to draw on, and learn from, published research within the field of organisational management, which has repeatedly demonstrated how acting politically is important for workplace success. Within this body of literature, political acts have been variously termed: "political skill" (Ferris et al., 2005), "political savvy" (Chao et al., 1994), "political acumen" (Perrewé & Nelson, 2004), "political nouse" (Baddeley & James, 1990), "socio-political intelligence" (Burke and Stashevsky, 2006), "political sensitivity" (Vredenburgh & Maurer, 1984), and "political astuteness" (Hartley et al., 2015). As an initial starting point for researching and understanding political acts in community sport coaching contexts, Nelson et al. (2022) have suggested that Ferris et al.'s (2005) political skill framework might prove valuable. According to Ferris et al. (2005, p. 7), political skill refers to how workers use four distinct but interrelated social sensibilities (social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, apparent sincerity) "to understand others at work and to use that knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal or organisational objectives". Relatedly, Potrac et al. (2022) highlight the potential utility of Hartley's political astuteness framework, which is concerned with how workers deploy "political skills in situations involving diverse and sometimes competing interests and stakeholders, in order to create sufficient alignment of interests and/or consent in order to achieve outcomes" (Hartley et al., 2015, p. 24). For Hartley, political astuteness comprises five dimensions: 1) strategic direction and scanning; 2) building alignment and alliances; 3) reading people and situations; 4) interpersonal skills; and 5) personal skills. The frameworks of Ferris and Hartley, as well as

other organisational management scholars (e.g. Burke and Stashevsky, 2006, Perrewé & Nelson, 2004), could potentially be used individually or in conjunction to generate a more comprehensive understanding of if, how, why, and under which circumstances workers in community sport coaching act politically when doing policy work.

Policy enactment, emotion norms, and emotion management

Like Ball et al. (2012, p. 8), we are of the opinion that "policies are suffused with emotions and with psychosocial tensions" and that they "can threaten or disrupt self-worth, purpose, and identity" as well as "enthuse or depress anger". However, notwithstanding some notable exceptions (e.g. Ives et al., 2016, Ives et al., 2022, Potrac et al., 2017, Scott-Bell et al., 2021), emotion remains a largely under-researched component of policy enactment, including in community sport coaching work. To redress this situation, we urge academics to pay more direct attention to the phenomenon of emotion norms, how they are socially (re)learned or revised over time, and how they shape the feelings, expressions, practices, and evaluations of community sport workers when enacting policy. When conducting such research, scholars may wish to draw upon the work of Harris (2015) who stated that emotion norms are usually learned via two types of rule reminders, namely direct socialisation (i.e. where others explicitly tell individuals what the rules are) and indirect socialisation (i.e. where individuals merely infer how to act and feel in particular situations by observing the behaviour of other people). Harris (2015) also explained how individuals are taught to follow emotion norms through the course of their daily interactions, or else face the risk of formal and/or informal sanctioning. Groups, organisations, and whole industries thus have the capacity to shape, change, or even control workers' dispositions or beliefs so that they are inclined to experience and/or display emotions that are in-line with their dominant norms, policies, values, and ambitions. Scholars concerned with policy enactment in community sport coaching have yet to adequately consider and explore these realities.

Societal influences, however, do not always produce norm compliance. As Elder-Vass (2010, p. 126) has previously noted, while the "social institution may produce a tendency to comply with the relevant norm", because individual behaviour is "multiply determined, other causal factors – such as other conflicting normative motivations, the belief that a norm could be transgressed without being detected, or strong emotional drives" – may lead to social actors exercising agency, creativity, and autonomy. It is therefore also important to examine if, when, how, why, and under which circumstances workers in community sport coaching do not conform to emotion norms, as well as the consequences of such behaviour (Nichol et al., 2023). When conducting such research, scholars may find it helpful to draw upon

the work of Charmaz et al. (2019) who suggested that an individual can commit emotional deviance in at least five different ways (i.e. type, intensity, duration, timing, and placing). These authors further state that individuals may commit emotional deviance for a variety of reasons, including, for example: a) entering a new situation and being ignorant of the rules; b) prior socialisation that differs from the expectations of current situation; c) knowing and wanting to conform to emotion norms, but not being able to do so; d) disagreeing with the morality or wisdom of an emotion norm; f) mental illness; and g) to validate their deviant feelings and persuade others to pursue social change.

The concept of emotion norms also raises important questions for how policy actors "work on" their emotions to conform to emotion norms and wider social-political pressures, impress audiences, and/or accomplish other goals. Previous research has largely drawn on Hochschild's (2012) theorisation of emotion norms, surface acting, and deep acting to demonstrate how sport workers manage their emotional experiences and displays in line with occupational expectations (e.g. Ives et al., 2022, Magill et al., 2017, Nelson et al., 2013). While we certainly see value in continued applications of Hochschild's theorisation, we also encourage scholars to make use of additional sensemaking frameworks to enable more nuanced understandings of policy workers' emotion management strategies. For example, Harris (2015) contended that social actors use up to five different surface acting strategies to control how they appear to feel during interactions with others. They may strategically select their wording, tone of voice, facial expressions, bodily gestures, and/or clothing. Harris also stated individuals attempt to change the emotions that they experience via three different deep acting techniques, namely 1) bodily deep acting, 2) expressive deep acting, and 3) cognitive deep acting. In addition to the writing of Harris, researchers might also consider the work of Thoits (1990), who suggested that people perform emotion management by changing cognitive or behavioural (or both) components of their subjective emotional experience. That is, a social actor can target situational cues, physiological sensations, expressive behaviours, and/ or emotion labels.

Another area that remains significantly under-researched and under-theorised is how policy actors in community sport coaching manage the emotions of other stakeholders in the policy process, including participants, parents/carers, funders, external partners, line managers, colleagues, among others. One way to redress this situation would be to draw upon the theoretical ideas of Thoits (1996) who suggested that leaders can deliberately manipulate group members' feelings through several interpersonal strategies. These include: a) managing their own emotions and emotional displays in order to shape how members feel and act; b) using props to incite certain feeling states in other stakeholders; c) individual or group enactments which

encourage members to talk about their thoughts and feelings with leaders and/or other members; d) deliberate provocations to generate strong emotional (often negative) reactions in members; e) physical-effort techniques to heighten members' physiological arousal and stimulate desirable emotional states; f) comforting members; and g) encouraging group supportive acts to generate social acceptance, understanding, and positive emotional states.

Existing research within the field of sport coaching indicates that emotion management may incite both positive (such as when one's emotional performance improves the lives of others) and negative outcomes (including emotional exhaustion and feeling negative about oneself and work) (Potrac & Marshall, 2011). An agenda for future research, therefore, would be to (more directly) examine the relationship between emotion management and wellbeing among policy actors in community sport coaching. We anticipate that competent emotion management, as determined by actual appraisals (i.e. direct feedback from others), reflected appraisals (i.e. individuals' perception of how they think others' view them), or both, are likely to foster positive subjective wellbeing because one's identity has been confirmed or verified (cf. Burke & Cerven, 2019). Whereas emotion management failure will likely undermine one's identity and sense of wellbeing. We would also encourage researchers to examine if, how, and why different frequencies, durations, and types of emotion management have differing consequences for the health and wellbeing of the community sport coaching workforce (cf. Thoits, 1996).

Policy enactment, performativity, and fabrications

Building on the above discussions, we also encourage scholars to more explicitly investigate the relationship between politics, performativity, and fabrications. Consistent with Ball's (2000, 2003) analysis of policy reforms in educational settings, community sport coaches have been found to use a range of strategies to actively respond to the political, policy, and employment context within which their work is located. For example, the work of Ives et al. (2021) reported how community sport coaches offered participants rewards in exchange for their attendance, prioritised the attainment of contact details and completed registers, delivered sport and physical activities that deviated from the original scheme of work to optimise engagement, and managed their bodily and emotional displays when interacting with participants. These practitioners hoped that these actions would allow them to meet organisational expectations and therefore help to safeguard current and future employment. The precarious nature of sport work has also been found to shape wider workplace relations and interactions. For example, Gale et al.

(2019) reported how perceived precarity led workers to take a cautious approach to trusting others in the workplace, reserving their trust for those individuals whose decisions and actions encapsulated and supported the achievement of their own workplace interests. The practitioners in this study also explained how they implemented various strategies to assess the intentions, motives, and actions of colleagues. The workers' decisions to (dis)trust co-workers also shaped the regularity and substance of their interactions with these individuals both inside and outside of the workplace.

While the above studies did not overtly set out to investigate the use of fabrications by practitioners in sporting workplaces, they certainly point towards their application. In-keeping with Ball (2000, p. 8), who argues that "the fabrications that organisations (and individuals) produce [...] are informed by the priorities, constraints, and climate set by the policy environment", there may be occasions where policy workers individually and/or collectively perform fabricated versions of themselves when enacting sport, physical activity, and physical education policy. Future investigations should therefore seek to investigate the types of workplace deception that community sport coaches deploy, how they dramaturgically perform these deceptive acts in situ, as well as those personal, intra-, inter-, and extra-organisational variables that inform their uses. Researchers are also encouraged to examine the relationships between contractual status, perceived levels of precarity, and regularity of workplace deception, as well as the similarities and differences between the deceptive practices of individuals and organisations operating within and between the public, private, and third sectors when enacting policy work.

It is our belief that the dramaturgical theorisation of Erving Goffman (1959, 1974) presents another useful framework for researching the deceptive practices of policy workers. In Frame Analysis, Goffman (1974, p. 83) defined fabrications as "the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more will be induced to have false beliefs about what is going on". Future inquiry would do well to better understand those fabrications that policy actors in community sport coaching use in their enactment of policy. Such analyses should acknowledge that performances are not only individual endeavours but are often staged by groups of individuals comprising what Goffman (1959) terms performance teams. It might also be prudent to explore the various types of secrets that practitioners individually and collectively maintain as part of their policy work through fabricated performances. For example, Goffman (1959) identified five types of secrets that actors use during social interactions: 1) dark secrets; 2) strategic secrets; 3) inside secrets; 4) entrusted secrets; and 5) free secrets. To date, researchers have yet to give explicit consideration towards what secrets workers keep when enacting sport-related policy, who they

individually and/or collectively conceal these secrets from and why, how they attempt to maintain these secrets from identified others, and what generative forces influence their desire to keep these secrets.

While some fabrication attempts will likely dupe their intended target(s) and achieve desired outcomes, it is important to recognise that not all deception attempts will prove successful. Colleagues will, on occasions, identify that another is trying to deceive them. Consideration should therefore be given towards how and why policy actors choose to call out known deceptions or leave them unchallenged, and what the potential (intended and unintended) consequences of doing so are (Gale et al., 2019, Nichol et al., 2023). With regards to the latter, scholars might usefully draw on the work of Shulman (2019) to better understand unchallenged deceptions. According to Shulman's (2019) analyses, unchallenged deception might be explained by: 1) conformity; 2) power inequalities; 3) relationship maintenance; 4) burden of proof issues; and 5) individual ambitions. To date, research has failed to explore potential applications of this sensitising framework when analysing policy enactment in sport-related contexts. If the field is to develop a comprehensive understanding of workplace performances and fabrications in policy work, it would seem important that inquiry not only investigates successful but unsuccessful deception attempts, associated benefits and costs, as well as political, inter- and intra-organisational, interpersonal, and personal influences.

Policy enactment and wellbeing

Building on the above argument, greater academic attention should also be given to the health and wellbeing impacts of policy enactment, as there is a paucity of inquiry in this topic area. Some research centred on community sport coaches has begun to examine the impact of enacting government-aligned community sport policy on their wellbeing, albeit indirectly, through the micropolitical investigation of workplace relations (Gale et al., 2019, 2023, Ives et al., 2021). For example, coaches have reported how insecure employment conditions, alongside societal demands for financially and materially visible success, can result in a range of psychological, emotional, and relational issues, and, in some cases, lead to attrition (Ives et al., 2021). A survey conducted by Smith et al. (2020) also reported that a significant proportion of community sport coaches have, and continue to, experience sector-related mental illness. Amid public health challenges in supporting coaches, it is suggested that there is a need for interventions which address the diverse sources of key stressors inside or outside of their organisation. These include the constraints associated with balancing other work and family commitments and negotiating the pressures exerted from significant others. The networks of relations community sport coaches are

enmeshed within whilst grappling with the enactment of policy would therefore seem important in shaping their health and wellbeing in work and non-work contexts.

In addressing these issues, scholars might usefully respond to Nelson's (2017) call for the utilisation of Thoits' (2011) discussion of seven mechanisms through which the number and nature of social ties in a person's network shapes their wellbeing. Principally focused on the positive influence of social ties on physical and mental health, the stresses and strains of relationships which can often negate ameliorative effects of social support provisions are also acknowledged. For community sport coaches, such ties may consist of work and non-work connections to people in primary and secondary groups. Through the application of Thoits' (2011) theorisation, scholars could seek to investigate if the wellbeing of community sport coaches is positively and/or negatively influenced through the mechanisms of: 1) social influence/social comparison; 2) social control; 3) behavioural guidance, purpose, and meaning; 4) sense of control or mastery; 5) self-esteem; 6) belonging and companionship; and 7) perceived social support. Thoits' (2011) work certainly presents one potentially useful sensitising framework for advancing investigations in this topic area by encouraging researchers to give greater consideration towards how working and non-working social networks impact the wellbeing of coaches (Nelson, 2017).

Scholars should also seek to investigate how the highly pressurised, politicised, and precarious policy and employment landscape impacts the mental and physical health and wellbeing of its workforce. As previously discussed, there has been a rise in what has been termed insecure and precarious work in many Western nations. Here, scholars could utilise the work of Kalleberg and colleagues to make sense of the employment conditions of community sport coaches and subsequent impacts on their wellbeing. To this end, Kalleberg (2009) encouraged social scientists to understand how the changes in employment relations which have brought about the upsurge in precarious work, variously impact on workers, their families, and societies. For example, Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) noted adverse impacts on workers and their social lives in non-work domains, which include impacts on individual health and wellbeing, economic (in) security, and family formation. However, to date, there has been limited consideration given towards how flexible employment relations in private, public, and third sectors as well as low-pay, low benefit, temporary zero-hour contract sports work, impact the wellbeing of practitioners, including community sport coaches (Ives et al., 2021, Roderick et al., 2017).

Interestingly, research in other occupational settings has started to identify links between insecure and precarious work and the mental health and wellbeing of those individuals in the workforces that enact such work (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). Generally, precarious workers have been noted

to express mutually shared experiences of anger, anomie, anxiety, and alienation. Increased overall employment insecurity in labour markets is associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Mai et al., 2023, Utzet et al., 2016), increased anxiety at home, delayed household formation, and greater social isolation (Lewchuk, 2017). Indeed, Lewchuk (2017) demonstrated workers categorised as in precarious employment were: 1) significantly more likely to report that their general and mental health was less than very good compared to those in secure employment and 2) more than twice as likely to report anxiety about their employment relationship interfering with personal and family life, and negatively impacting on their social relations. For the younger workers in the sample, there was also evidence that they were significantly more likely to delay forming relationships and having children. This is pertinent, as recent estimates in the UK place 600,000 coaches in the 18–24 years old age bracket, the majority of whom coach in community contexts (UK Coaching, 2020).

Community sport coaching is located between the interstices of overlapping social policy issues and political agendas. For example, a number of national governments have implemented a wave of austerity-driven policies in response to the global financial crisis of 2008. In the UK, austerity measures have led to an increased reliance on third sector organisations to provide high-quality services and to fill the gaps left by central government (Morgan, 2013, Mori et al., 2023). Many community coaches therefore work for public or third sector organisations on programmes aimed at tackling crime, promoting educational gain, or improving the mental and physical health of a variety of population groups (Mansfield et al., 2018, Smith et al., 2022, Smith et al., 2020). Such characteristics fragment and divide the workforce to a greater extent than more established professions. As such, the individual and collective labour market power of community sport coaches may be viewed as relatively weak, despite being championed as workers with the capacity to remedy various social issues through their work (Jeanes et al., 2019). This potentially exposes community sport coaches to greater levels of vulnerability, instability, and insecurity than other occupations (Ives et al., 2021). Research has failed to appropriately consider the effects of such government-led austerity policies on community sport coaches' engagement with and enactment of policy, as well as the related impacts on wellbeing.

Despite this, much community sport coaching work may be considered virtuous in seeking to achieve outcomes that contribute to social good. Whilst limited in scope, there is evidence of positive mental health and wellbeing benefits of employment when workers deem their employment to be productive and meaningful and where positive social interactions generate feelings of being welcomed, respected, and supported (Modini et al., 2016). Scholars may wish to consider here then, the extent to which working

on projects where community coaches enact policy leading to positive social outcomes may induce satisfaction and positive wellbeing outcomes among workers, despite the prevailing working conditions in which they find themselves. Connected to this is the growing trend for self-employed coaches working in community contexts. Self-employment has been associated with predominantly negative, particularly physical illbeing effects, but also positive aspects such as happiness and enjoyment (Bencsik & Chuluun, 2021). For example, work on entrepreneurs indicates high levels of job control, satisfaction, and high job demand which is associated with higher levels of eudaimonic (i.e. hedonic) wellbeing despite the self-employed often earning less than their employed peers, working longer hours, and experiencing more stress and higher job demands (Binder & Blankenberg, 2020). There is clearly a need to better understand how the perceived desirability of employment contracts, working conditions, and occupational relations positively as well as negatively impact the wellbeing of those individuals responsible for enacting community sport coaching work.

Conclusion

In this article we have called for a more sophisticated investigation of the enactment of sport, physical activity, and physical education policy. While existing literature addressing those types of actors involved in the enactment of policy was identified as being a necessary and important first step in the investigation of policy enactment, we have argued the need to extend our empirical and analytical gaze beyond these features to develop a more complete understanding of how policy is enacted and experienced. Specifically, we encouraged scholars to investigate those political skills that actors use when enacting policy, the management of one's own and others' emotions, the performative features of policy work and associated utilisation of fabrications, as well as the impacts of policy enactment for workers' wellbeing. While paradigmatic and methodological issues are beyond the scope of this paper, we recommend that researchers harness a diverse range of (multiple) qualitative methods of data collection to explore the issues outlined. This should not only include the use of traditional approaches (e.g. participant observation, interviews, surveys and documentation analysis), but also less utilised data collection methods, such as journals and diaries, autobiographies, visual, mobile methods, and media and digital data (McGannon et al., 2021). This is not to suggest that these lines of inquiry represent the only aspects of policy enactment that require scholarly attention. Space does not permit us to identify and discuss every feature of policy work requiring greater social analysis. Finally, while the study of policy enactment in community sport coaching was the particular focus

of this article, we believe that the directions for research proposed could (and perhaps should) be usefully applied to the investigation of policy enactment across community sport, performance sport, and physical educational settings. As such, this article makes an original contribution to how we conceptualise, investigate, and theorise policy work.

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ORCID

Ben Ives ⓘ http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7262-0693

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