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# Coaching profession: acting as a coach.

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## **Coaching as a Profession: Acting as a Coach**

### **Abstract**

Through the adoption of a dramaturgical perspective, this chapter positions coaching as being somewhat akin to a theatrical social performance. From this standpoint, coaching work entails much more than the routine application of pre-packaged knowledge and methods. It also requires coaches to carefully consider (and reflect upon) their interactions with others, inclusive of how they manage and display various emotions within the coaching environment (Cassidy et al., 2016; Nelson, et al., 2014). In terms of its structure, the chapter begins by introducing the notion of dramaturgy. This background material is followed by an overview of the classic dramaturgical writings of Erving Goffman and Arlie Russell Hochschild. Here, we highlight some essential features of their respective theorising that can stimulate critical reflection upon the dramaturgical aspects of coaching (Cassidy et al., 2016). After the theoretical backdrop is presented, the focus then shifts to reviewing the (limited) available literature addressing how coaches engage in various acts of impression and emotion management to achieve their goals. In concluding the chapter, the main arguments are summarised and a number of 'key points' that coaches (and coach educators) may wish to critically reflect upon are presented.

## Introduction

“A great deal of the work of organisations - decision making, the transmission of information, the close co-ordination of physical tasks - is done face-to-face, requires being done in this way, and is vulnerable to face-to-face effects. Differently put...as agents of social organisations of any scale, from states to households, can be persuaded, cajoled, flattered, intimidated, or otherwise influenced by effects only achievable in face-to-face dealings” (Goffman, 1983, p. 3).

“What perhaps matters most then, is not exactly what the coach does, but how others perceive the impression given by the coach” (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2016, p. 99).

In recent years, scholars have progressively questioned the sanitised and unproblematic representations of coaching that have traditionally dominated the coaching literature and much coach education provision (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2016; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne, & Nelson, 2013; Potrac, Mallett, Greenough, & Nelson, 2017). By addressing some of the ways in which coaching is characterised by ideological diversity, poor co-ordination, and the potential for conflict between social actors (e.g., coaches, athletes, administrators, and parents, among others), this work highlights the limitations of viewing coaching as a linear activity that ought to be practiced only in relation to bio-scientific, technical and tactical knowledges (Cassidy et al., 2016; Jones & Wallace, 2005). Indeed, coaching has, instead, been increasingly positioned as a complex, social endeavour; one where coaches are engaged in a fluid and dynamic process of obtaining, maintaining, and advancing the trust, confidence and support of various situational stakeholders (Cassidy et al., 2016; Gale, Ives, Nelson, & Potrac, in press; Jones, 2019; Potrac et al., 2017). From this standpoint, coaches’ interactions and relationships with contextual stakeholders are seen to not only influence the space, resources and time afforded to them to implement their coaching philosophy, but also the working climate in which they seek to achieve their coaching goals (Cassidy et al., 2016; Thompson, Potrac & Jones, 2015). Rather than being straightforwardly generated, secured and advanced, the support coaches receive and the influence they have is arguably grounded in their dynamic relationships with others. That is,

they are dependent on how athletes, support staff, administrators, parents and sponsors experience, interpret, and evaluate the coach's choices and actions; all of which can change over time and from situation to situation (Cassidy, 2016; Jones, Potrac, Cushion & Ronglan, 2011; Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014).

Through the adoption of a dramaturgical perspective, this chapter positions coaching as being akin to a theatrical social performance; coaches perform individually and/or collectively in front of a scrutinising audience, who evaluate their actions in relation to the qualities and attributes that a coach claims and is expected to possess (Cassidy et al., 2016). Importantly, this audience evaluation shapes the nature of future interactions and engagements, the influence a coach has on others, and the ongoing treatment of the coach, as well as the ways a coach feels about his or her self in the role (Edgley, 2013; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004; Jones et al., 2011; Potrac et al., 2017). From this standpoint then, coaching work entails much more than the routine application of pre-packaged knowledge and methods. It also requires coaches to carefully consider (and reflect upon) their interactions with others, inclusive of how they manage and display various emotions within the coaching environment (Cassidy et al., 2016; Nelson, et al., 2014).

In terms of its structure, this chapter begins by briefly introducing the notion of dramaturgy. This background material is followed by an overview of the classic dramaturgical writings of Erving Goffman and Arlie Russell Hochschild. We do not provide an exhaustive overview of these works or their associated critiques. Instead, we highlight some essential features of their respective theorising that can stimulate critical reflection upon the dramaturgical aspects of coaching (Cassidy et al., 2016). After the theoretical backdrop is provided, the focus shifts to reviewing the limited available literature addressing how coaches engage in various acts of impression and emotion management to achieve their

goals. Finally, the chapter concludes by summarising the key arguments presented in this chapter.

### **What is Dramaturgy?**

Originally a theatrical term, dramaturgy refers to the ways in which actors (and other theatrical professionals) stage and adapt performances and texts to best communicate a work's meanings to an audience (Schulman, 2017). Rather than focusing on imaginary characters and fictional texts, those adopting a dramaturgical perspective in sociology are primarily concerned with examining nonfiction performances (Schulman, 2017). That is, how "people stage performances in real life" (Schulman, 2017, p. 5). Here, specific attention is given to social actors' appearances (i.e., dress and other features that identify the actor's role, status or condition), manner (i.e., the actor's attitude towards a role and how they are playing the role- being haughty, meek or aggressive among others), the use of props (objects that are used to support a desired image in the eyes of others), and the staging of activity (the physical layout and other background items) (Scott, 2015).

According to Schulman (2017), dramaturgical inquiry has much to offer to our understanding of social life, both theoretically and practically. For example, he eloquently argued that this perspective can allow us to: (a) understand 'how 'and 'why' we might judge others based on their appearances and performances; (b) become more aware of how our sense of self may arise and stand out in our engagements with others; (c) be a more thoughtful people watcher, and; (d) appreciate the many social influences on how we and others act and responsively treat each other. Importantly, for us at least, Schulman (2017) also suggested two further benefits to the dramaturgical study of everyday life. The first is concerned with how dramaturgical frameworks can help us critically consider how people (such as coaches) use various impression management tactics as they attempt to exercise

influence and power on and through others (e.g., athletes, support staff, administrators, parents) in everyday social and organisational life. Indeed, he believes dramaturgical inquiry allows us to document and consider the various ways in which people attempt to influence the thoughts, feelings and actions of others and, relatedly, the consequences of these efforts. He also suggested that our individual skill set stands to benefit from being able to incorporate dramaturgical knowledge into everyday lives. In the context of sport coaching, these arguments resonate strongly with us, especially in terms providing a meaningful vocabulary for helping coaches to understand and develop the ‘soft’ (i.e., being able to make people feel valued, being seen to be trustworthy) and ‘hard’ (e.g., dealing with pressure or resistance from others) interpersonal skills that are increasingly recognised as an important feature of coaches’ efforts to successfully influence the thoughts, feelings and actions of others (Potrac, 2019).

### **Theoretical Framework: The Dramaturgical Theorising of Erving Goffman and Arlie Russell Hochschild**

The theoretical framework deployed in this chapter is principally informed by the respective works of Erving Goffman (1959, 1969a, 1969b) and Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983, 1997, 2000, 2003). Goffman is widely lauded as the leading exponent of dramaturgical theorising in sociology. In particular, his text addressing the *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959) is recognised as making a ground-breaking contribution to our understanding of how, in the quest to fulfil societal and organisational expectations, individuals frequently “play roles, negotiate situations, and to a larger extent are forced to be actors” (Marsh, Keating, Eyre, Campbell, & McKenzie, 1996, p. 73; Jones et al., 2011). In this book, Goffman’s nuanced analysis of everyday social life provided rich empirical and conceptual insights into how individuals and groups seek to present themselves to others, the

tactics they utilise in an attempt to manage the impressions they give off, and, relatedly, protect or advance the version of the self that is exhibited to others (Cassidy et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2011). At the heart of Goffman's dramaturgical writings is the view that individuals are not completely free to choose the version of the self that they wish to have others accept (Jones et al., 2011). Rather, they are obliged to "define themselves in congruence with the statuses, roles, and relationships that they are accorded by the social order" (Brannaman, 2000; p. xlvi). Importantly, however, he argued that our thoughts, actions and feelings are not entirely determined by society. We are not the passive recipients of socialisation. We are, instead, able to manipulate social encounters and situations strategically, especially in terms of the impression that others form of us. Here, Goffman eloquently noted:

"an individual does not...merely go about his [sic] business. He goes about constrained to sustain a viable image of himself in the eyes of others. Some local circumstances always reflect upon him, and since these experiences will reflect upon him, and since these circumstances will vary unexpectedly and constantly, footwork or rather self-work, will be continuously necessary" (Goffman, 1971, p. 185).

For Goffman (1959) then, face-to-face interaction plays a pivotal role in our efforts to influence how others think about and experience our actions, intentions, and, indeed, competency.

Schulman (2017) draws our attention to six key principles that underpin Goffman's dramaturgical theorising. These are:

- People are performers who use impression management to convey a persona or sense of who they are to others.
- People work in teams and collectively express the characteristics of social situations.
- People perform in different social spaces referred to as regions of performance.
- People prioritise giving credible performances.

- People avoid communicating ‘out of character’ and taking any actions that could contradict the requirements of a performance and spoil it.
- When people produce ‘spoiled’ (e.g., failure to demonstrate the characteristics and attributes associated with a social role or position) performances or someone spoils their performances, they try to repair any damage by engaging in curative steps.

For Goffman (1959), performance incorporates “all the activity of an individual that occurs during a period marked by his [sic] continuous presence before a set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (p. 32). In essence, Goffman (1959) argued that our performances matter. They are pivotal in our attempts to navigate the social landscape and achieve our desired goals, as they influence how we connect, bond and generally get along (or not) with others (Jones et al., 2004). Our performances come with no guarantees in terms of their outcomes or influence on others, however. Here, Goffman (1959) distinguished between calculated impressions and secondary impressions. While the former refers to an impression of the self that an individual purposefully seeks to convey to others, the latter is concerned with the impression that the individual leaves in the mind of these others (Schulman, 2017). This may or may not include the calculated impression that an individual sought to create (Leary, 1995; Schulman, 2017).

Related to the notion of performance is Goffman’s concept of ‘front’. This refers to “that part of an individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the social situation for those who observe performance” (Goffman, 1959, p, 22). For Goffman (1959), the front is comprised of the appearance, manner, props and setting that were introduced in the previous subsection on dramaturgy. In constructing and managing a particular front, an individual may be required to consistently exhibit and instantaneously demonstrate the attributes that he or she claims for the front during interaction with others in

order maintain it (Cassidy et al., 2016). In illustrating the front in action, Goffman (1959, p. 30) gave the example of a baseball umpire:

[i]f a baseball umpire is to give the impression that he [sic] is sure of his judgement, he must forgo the moment of thought which might make him sure of his judgement. He must give an instantaneous decision so that the audience will be sure of his judgement.

Goffman's dramaturgical framework also addresses the regions in which our social performances occur. He labelled these the front and back regions (or stages). The front region is the label give to the place where our performances occur. In coaching, for example, this could be the training ground or the meeting room, among other settings. In the front region, the actors seek to present an idealised image of themselves to an audience whilst simultaneously seeking to conceal aspects that might discredit the impression they are seeking to give off. The back region, in contrast, refers to the place or places where they can step out of character and, to some degree, relax or drop the front that is presented in the front region. It is also the setting where actors can plan, rehearse, and reflect upon their performances. Importantly, the audience is normally not allowed access to the back region.

Goffman (1959) recognised that performances are not just conducted by individuals; They are also staged by groups or teams. For Goffman (1959, p. 85), a performance team refers to "any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine" that seeks to create a desired and unified team impression (Scott, 2015). This concept has considerable utility for sports coaching, especially as many coaches are required to create and sustain performances with, and for, collaborators (e.g., head coach, assistant coaches, and support staff), as well as for their audience (e.g., athletes, parents, and administrators) (Schulman, 2017). According to Goffman (1959), actors engaged in team performances strive to avoid incidents, which are "unexpected events that disrupt the version of reality fostered by the participants and make the performance grind to an embarrassing halt" (Scott, 2015, p. 88). These can include unmeant gestures (i.e., an actor gives off a contradictory impression),

inopportune intrusions (i.e., when an audience member catches a performer out of character in the back region), faux pas (i.e., when a performer unthinkingly endangers the image that the group wishes to project) and causing a scene (i.e., a performer explicitly challenges the consensus projected by the team) (Scott, 2015).

To prevent these incidents from happening (as much as is possible), Goffman (1959) conceptualised three defensive attributes and strategies that individuals and groups could draw upon. These are dramaturgical loyalty, dramaturgical discipline, and dramaturgical circumspection. Dramaturgical loyalty refers to the moral obligation that a performer has to not betray the shared secrets of the team (e.g., the planning of their show, the backstage realities, and their off-stage identities) (Scott, 2015). Dramaturgical discipline, meanwhile, concerns “an actor’s careful management of their personal front so as to appear nonchalant, while concealing the extensive work that they are doing to create this very impression” (Scott, 2015, p. 88). Dramaturgical discipline, then, entails an actor remembering and positively executing their role in the group’s performance, managing their own verbal and non-verbal communication, carefully monitoring the team’s performance as a whole, and having the presence of mind to prevent any incidents from occurring (Scott, 2015). Finally, dramaturgical circumspection refers to the “exercise of prudence, care, and honesty” in the staging of a team performance (Goffman, 1959, p. 212). This includes putting measures in place to avoid or minimise any anticipated incidents and preparing for likely contingencies (Scott, 2015). Dramaturgical circumspection can be exercised in a variety of ways. This can, for example, include a head coach limiting the number of assistant coaches and support staff and selecting only those whom he or she trusts. This could be done to “minimise the risk of any [team] member acting improperly, embarrassingly or treacherously” (Scott, 2015, p. 89). Another action may be the use of straightforward and well-rehearsed scripts that minimise the possibility of a performer “fluffing their lines and blowing the team’s cover” (Scott, 2015, p.

213). For example, an assistant coach contradicting or appearing confused when relaying agreed messages, which were prepared in the back region with the head coach, to athletes in a team meeting.

Influenced by the dramaturgical writings of Goffman, Hochschild's (1983, 1997, 2000, 2003) theorising charts the interplay between impression management, social interaction and emotion (Potrac & Marshall, 2011). Indeed, in her now classic text, *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild illuminated the relationship in the workplace between the emotions that an individual may feel and those that are acted out for the benefit of others, inclusive of the consequences of such performances. At the heart of her work are the concepts of emotion management and emotional labour, surface acting and deep acting, and feeling rules and display rules. For Hochschild (2000, p. 7), emotion management is concerned with how a social actor seeks to manage their emotions and "create publicly observable facial and bodily display" for the consumption of others. She argued that, as a consequence of our socialisation experiences, we learn what emotions are appropriate or inappropriate in particular social settings and situations. The failure to demonstrate to others the emotions that are expected in a particular circumstance can negatively impact upon their evaluation of us and, importantly, the ways in which they responsively treat us (Potrac & Marshall, 2011). Relatedly, emotional labour refers to the emotion work that a social actor is expected to engage in within the workplace. Indeed, Hochschild (1983, p. 7) defined emotional labour as that which:

...requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others [such as] the sense of being cared for in a convivial safe place. This kind of labour calls for communication of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality...Emotional labour is sold for a wage and, therefore, has exchange value.

Arguably, emotional labour takes on greater significance and impact in today's service-oriented society than at any other point in history. For example, in the USA, we can think of a

collegiate coach ‘smiling’ and ‘reassuring’ prospective athletes (and their parents) that the coach and university will take good care of them. Here, the coach suppresses a more authentic interaction and emotions related to their knowledge of impending harms (e.g., physical injury or pressures to prioritise sport over schooling) to reap the benefit of getting the athlete to attend their university. Similarly, female coaches breaking barriers in male dominant sports may exchange their emotional labour for some other benefits. These might include an increased salary, acceptance into traditionally exclusionary settings, or a promotion in title or rank.

Hochschild’s work (1983, 2000) also highlighted how emotion management and emotional labour are framed by socially constructed (and reconstructed) feeling and display rules. Here, display rules refer to when and how particular overt expressions of emotion should occur. For example, a coach may expect to put on a ‘happy’ and ‘enthusiastic face’ in order to sustain a social encounter (e.g., a pre-season meeting with the parents of players) as the display rules he or she learnt through their socialisation experiences suggest that they ought to demonstrate positivity in this situation to others (Turner & Stets, 2005; Cassidy et al., 2016). On the other hand, feeling rules address the specific emotions that an individual (e.g., a coach) should experience in a particular situation (e.g., joy following significantly improved athlete performance) and also their duration (i.e., momentarily or more longer lasting). Here, Hochschild (2000, p. 180) noted:

...acts of emotion management are not only simply private acts; they are used in exchanges under the guidance of feeling rules. Feeling rules are standards used in emotion conversations to determine what is rightly owed in the currency of feeling. Through them, we tell what is ‘due’ in each relation, each role. We pay tribute to each other in the currency of managing the act. In interaction, we pay, overpay, underpay, play with paying, acknowledge our due, pretend to pay, or acknowledge what is emotionally due to another person.

Taking inspiration from Goffman’s theorising, Hochschild (1983, 2000) suggested that we engage in a certain amount of acting when hiding and displaying our emotions to

others. Indeed, she argued that a social actor can engage in surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting refers to a social actor's desire to deceive others in terms of the emotions that they are feeling without trying to deceive him or herself about their true feelings (Cassidy et al., 2016). For example, a coach may wish to be seen to engage with a parent in a calm and diplomatic manner whilst really feeling intensely angry at that parent's behaviour or comments. Surface acting is, then, concerned with how an individual manages their body language and paraverbal communication (i.e., pitch, pace) to convince others of the emotion that they are experiencing, which can include the 'put on' smile, the 'fake laugh', "the posed shrug, [and] the controlled sigh" (Hochschild, 2000, p. 35). Deep acting focuses on the "conscious mental action" that an individual may use to believe in the emotion that he or she wishes to express to others (Hochschild, 2000, p. 36). In drawing upon the work of the renowned theatre director and method actor, Constantin Stanislavski, she examined how an individual's public display of emotion can sometimes be a "natural result of working on the feeling; the actor does not try to seem happy or sad but rather expresses spontaneously a real feeling that is self-induced" (Hochschild, 2000, p. 35). When engaging in deep acting, social actors can utilise two principal strategies or resources. The first involves training memories or imaginations to believe the emotions being experienced. For example, a coach may transfer memories of emotions from a past situation to a current one. Equally, a coach may use exhortations, which refer to the efforts he or she might make to feel particular emotions (e.g., "I psyched myself up for the budget meeting with the administrators" or "I mustered up some gratitude for the players' efforts even though I was deeply disappointed with the outcome of today's game") (Cassidy et al., 2016; Hochschild, 2000; Potrac & Marshall, 2011).

While Hochschild's research predominantly addressed how individuals variously manage (e.g., hide, show, manipulate) emotions in their relations with others, other scholars

(e.g., Lois, 2003, Lumsden & Black, 2017; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991) have sought to extend upon her ground-breaking theorising by also examining how the management of emotions is also a group project. Indeed, Charmaz, Harris, and Irvine (2019, p. 135) suggested that “managing one’s own emotions is frequently a means to shape what an audience feels”. For example, a coach may carefully use tone and facial expressions to convey concern and urgency, yet optimism, in a half-time team talk to athletes who are behind in an important match. In this situation, a coach could, arguably, be engaging in three forms of emotion management simultaneously: a) surface acting, by pretending to be more calm or confident than he or she is; b) deep acting, by changing his or her own thoughts in an attempt to create a real feeling of calm rather than a façade; and c) interpersonal emotion management, by trying to judiciously calibrate the athletes’ thoughts and emotions (Charmaz et al., 2019). Importantly, Charmaz et al. (2019) also highlighted how interpersonal emotion management can be undertaken in an adversarial, as well as a collaborative fashion. Indeed, two or more people might not agree (implicitly or explicitly) on the desired emotion and the means of generating them (Charmaz et al., 2019). In some circumstances, people may knowingly resist efforts to shape their own or others’ emotions. For example, an athlete who is disappointed at not being selected for a starting position on a team may want to dwell on their anger and disappointment, engage in disruptive behaviour, and may not react positively to the coach’s consoling words and advice (Charmaz et al., 2019).

### **The Coach as Social Performer: Some Dramaturgical Insights from the Literature**

While Goffman and Hochschild never conducted their research in a sports coaching context, a small group of scholars have drawn upon (and continue to utilise) their theoretical insights to examine the impression (and emotion) management strategies of coaches (Cassidy et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2011; Potrac, 2019). Such work has investigated what coaches do,

when, how, why, and to what cost and/or benefit. For example, scholars have begun to address the emotional demands and challenges that coaches face in their everyday practice. Here, for example, Nelson et al., (2014) used Hochschild's concepts to examine the emotion management and emotional labour of a semi-professional football coach. In this study, the coach described how he tried to manage the outward expression of his emotions according to the display rules that he considered to be dominant (or normal) in his sporting subculture. Specifically, he articulated how he had to suppress the emotions he felt in his interactions with players and supporters and, instead, engage in surface acting. For example, in his work with the players he noted:

Last night I didn't feel too good, going to a training session...So you're thinking, "I don't fancy this tonight". However, I can't show that to the players...I have to put an act on (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 475).

Similarly, in terms of engaging with the club's supporters, the coach in the study explained that, although he disliked having to interact with certain supporters in the clubhouse after matches, he knew his employer expected him to attend these gatherings and present himself as a 'polite', 'engaging' and 'upbeat' coach, who was genuinely interested in their thoughts and views. In his own words:

It's just a nightmare. You get frustrated and you also get angry. You want to turn round to them and say, "What have you done? What level have you played at? What qualifications have you got? But you know you can't (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 477).

These extracts clearly illustrate Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour in action; the coach recognised that a particular display and management of emotion in his coaching role was expected by his employers.

The long-term engagement in emotional labour was not easy for the coach in this study. Indeed, he articulated how he ultimately felt the need to take a break from his coaching work, as he became fatigued by the perceived need to engage in inauthentic behaviours and emotional displays. He also revealed how a reduction in his emotional stamina led to a

situation where his credibility and sincerity were questioned by others in the club environment. In his own words:

I think, especially with adults, you gradually get found out, and there is only so much you can do before the players start realising (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 478).

It is also important to recognise that engaging in emotional labour is not always a negative activity for coaches. Potrac and Marshall (2011), for example, considered how emotion work (both intra and interpersonally) can also provide coaches with a sense of challenge, satisfaction and excitement. In illustrating this point, a track and field coach noted:

Overall, I feel that the emotional labour I invest in my coaching offers many positives. I coach through choice, because I enjoy it. While coaching does come with an emotional cost, it is also hugely rewarding. By engaging in emotional labour, I am able to support athletes more effectively, to help them achieve their goals and competitive ambitions. The reward is seeing this happen, in watching those you work with enjoy their training, growing in confidence and ability. For many of the athletes I work with, they desperately want to succeed. This brings with it a high emotional cost to me as a coach, in managing their emotions and expectations. However, it also brings with it a huge feeling of satisfaction in a job well done when they do achieve (Potrac & Marshall, 2011, p. 66).

Goffman's (1959) notions of dramaturgical circumspection and dramaturgical discipline have been used to examine how individual coaches' seek to construct, maintain, and advance the image of themselves that they give off to the scrutinising audiences in their respective coaching environments (e.g., athletes, other coaches, support staff, and administrators). In relation to dramaturgical discipline, Jones et al.'s (2004) study of coaching practice in elite sport highlighted that, while coaches are often intellectually and emotionally committed to their working role, they conscientiously seek to avoid "unmeant gestures when performing it" (Goffman, 1959, p. 217). For example, one coach noted:

You've got to think on your feet. Whereas if you start bawling or saying, "Where is so and so?" [using a panicky voice], you're not being professional. You can make a joke out of it and throw your notes down, "Come on let's piss off to the pub". You make light of it, but you try to show that you're not bothered; you're in control and know what you are doing. You've got to adapt, think on your feet and have things in your mind, first reserve, second reserve type of thing, which isn't easy, but it has to be done.

As the beginning of this chapter alluded to, the scenes, roles, actions and emotions presented thus far show a reality of coaching far from sanitised or unproblematic. For us, it is important that coaches understand that these social norms and interaction rules were built up over time, vary across contexts, and that a coach's engagement with them can lead to an array of positive or negative effects. Indeed, the value of the dramaturgical perspective lies in its potential to help coaches see that the social world is not simply 'natural' or 'just the way things are'. Instead, it can enable them to critically develop their knowledge of, and practical engagement with, the socio-political terrains in which their work as coaches is embedded (Potrac, 2019).

In reflecting the comments above, another coach highlighted how his understanding of subcultural expectations led him to attach great store to his social competencies and interactions with others. For example, in order to successfully navigate his coaching workplace, the coach emphasised the need to appear knowledgeable when interacting with athletes in training sessions and team meetings. In his own words:

Football players will test you. I find that when you go to a new club...they will test you to see if you know. They usually pump you with questions. They'll say they've never done that before, and if I can't say why I want it done that way, if I can't give a good reason, then I've got trouble. You can't afford to lose the players. If they have no respect for your coaching ability, then you've had it, you've lost respect and the coaching sessions become difficult. So, you've got to know your subject; it is the most important thing. You can get away with being a bit quiet or a bit noisy, but if you don't know your subject then you have real problems (Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002, p. 192).

The fear of being stigmatised by players and assistant coaches was also the subject of Jones' (2006) autoethnography, which examined the relationship between his own dysfluency and the front that he attempted to project to others. Following a problematic experience of giving a pre-game team talk he documented the following:

Maybe nobody noticed, maybe it wasn't that bad of a stumble? Of course it was, what an idiot I must have looked. Why me? And, why just then? I could come clean about it, maybe the players would respect that?...Thoughts about 'coming out' continue to pervade my mind. It's the struggle between who I am and who I want to be.

Politically, maybe I should forsake attempts to cover up, yet the fear of social ridicule and rejection is too strong. Sensitivity is not easily found in football dressing rooms (Jones, 2006, p. 1016).

With regard to dramaturgical circumspection, the literature has highlighted the importance that coaches in elite sport attach to the meticulous planning and preparation that they undertook in the back region. On one level, this planning focused on the techniques, strategies and tactics to be learned or practiced. One coach, for example, noted:

I have to show how tiny movements give clues to the man in possession. You see, a difference of only 3 inches can be significant, as it's that much closer or further away from the defender, and I have to make sure the players know how much difference that really makes to the execution of a move. I also have to know exactly how I'm going to present that [to the players] (Jones et al., 2004, p. 569).

The work of Potrac and Jones (2009) has provided some initial insights into how coaches' planning can extend beyond techniques and tactics to include their interactions with particular individuals. Specifically, this study illustrated how the participant coach gave considerable attention to how he managed conflict with a senior player, who was resistant to the coach's programme and methods. In this respect, the coach was concerned that the player's derogatory comments might lead to the coach's employers questioning his credibility as the team's head coach. In his own words:

I knew David was pretty close to the Chairman, so I had to be pretty careful in terms of how I dealt with him...I started setting things up in training so that he'd fail. He just didn't have the technical ability or the speed to play in the position he wanted, so I decided to exploit that. We'd set up some patterns of play and the players would be working hard and every time he'd be in the wrong place, make a bad pass, or have a crap touch. After a couple of sessions, I began to hear complaints from the players about him. His status within the group changed and he became more and more isolated (Potrac & Jones, 2009, p. 569).

The coach also described how he formed a performance team with several senior players, whom he trusted and had personally recruited to the club, to further limit with the potential incidents that David might cause. Here, he noted:

I [also] spoke [privately] to the [senior] boys about what was happening. I suggested that maybe the players should get together and tell David that they weren't happy with his attitude and performance, which might be more meaningful than if I did it.

So, they started letting David know they weren't happy with him and soon the other players began to join in. In the end, I think that played a large part in why David left the club... It also looked better for me because I wasn't seen [by the Chairman] as the person who was throwing out an established player (Potrac & Jones, 2009, p. 570).

In this example, it is clear that the coach sought to control the problematic situation with David. He did this in multiple ways. Firstly, he maintained a desired 'front' in the eyes of the chairman by not aggressively challenging David's behaviour or being seen to treat David unfairly; happenings that would have constituted incidents that the coach believed would have spoiled his identity in the club setting. Secondly, he designed practices that resulted in David's identity being spoiled, instead. This primarily occurred through the other players' negative reactions to David's technical and physical limitations being exposed on the training ground. Finally, he recruited allies (the senior players), who he worked with in the back region to orchestrate further negative reactions towards David from the players in the front region.

The limited available coaching literature (e.g., Jones et al., 2004; Potrac & Jones, 2009) has also highlighted how coaches' engagement in dramaturgical circumspection includes being seen to visibly care about athlete learning and well-being. Specifically, this literature has indicated that, in order to create an idealised image of themselves in the eyes of athletes, they provide additional coaching sessions and feedback, produce and share learning resources, and take an interest in the athletes' lives outside of sport. In this respect, one former elite coach noted:

You're actually showing them you care, and whilst you show them that you think about them and the other side of life, you stand to gain a great deal in terms of your working relationship with them (Jones et al., 2004, p. 158).

Here, the coach's discussion highlighted how this was not just caring for caring's sake, but was, instead, tied to two important benefits. These included: a) the perceived athletic performance gains that caring practice contributed to; b) athletes' support for, confidence in, and compliance towards the coaches' agenda and 'personality', and relatedly; c) a coach's

efforts to develop, maintain and advance a positive reputation in an industry characterised by insecure employment and a surplus of (coaching) labour (Potrac et al., 2013). Arguably, caring practice is, for some coaches, firmly embedded within the everyday socio-political realities of their working relationships with others.

While coaches can take various actions to build, maintain and advance their respective ‘fronts’, there are occasions when things do not go according to the script or plan. One strategy that coaches have described they use to handle such disruptions is self-deprecating humour (Jones et al., 2004). Specifically, coaches have suggested that such humour can be used proactively to build a working consensus with others or as a reactive strategy to dampen the implications of potentially discrediting events (e.g., Jones et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2011; Ronglan & Aggerholm, 2014). With regard to the latter, it has been suggested that such humour can limit the ‘fall-out’ from performance disruptions by lessening the expectation of leader infallibility (Cassidy et al., 2016); it can be used as a tool to lessen or prevent the spoiling of a coaching identity. Humour then has the potential to locate incidents within the normative range of behaviour. Finally, it was also suggested that humour can help a coach display his or her ‘human side’, which can foster the development of productive working relationships with others. In a coach’s own words:

I use self-irony; reveal weaknesses and show ‘human traits’, in a way. The players chuckle when I ask for help to handle technical gadgets that the players know everything about. It’s important to be able to laugh at oneself and to be relaxed regarding one’s own limitations. Self-importance really doesn’t work in Norwegian culture (Ronglan & Aggerholm, 2014 p. 41).

### **Practical Implications**

Rather than provide prescriptions regarding what coaches should and should not do, we instead invite coaches to reflect on the questions below using the theoretical concepts and literature utilised in this chapter.

Within a sporting context of your choice, consider the following questions:

- What do you consider to be the expectations of coaches' behaviours and interactions in your chosen setting? How do people respond when they consider a coach to have met, exceeded, or not fulfil these expectations? What consequences might this have for a coach's on-going relationships with others (e.g., athletes, other coaches, administrators, among others)? How do these expectations develop in society and how did you learn them?
- Who are the situational stakeholders that you will need to achieve the confidence of, and support from, as a coach? In seeking to develop and maintain a credible coaching front, what interactional strategies will you use? What will you do or not do and what does this say about your character? In situations where you are trying to affect others and control the outcome of an interaction, what ethical principles or values are involved?
- What display rules and feeling rules are dominant in your sport setting? How do others react if these norms are contravened? What emotions will you show or hide in your chosen setting? To whom and to what extent? When? How? Why?
- How will you present yourself to others in this setting? What will you consider and do in terms of your appearance and manner, use of props (i.e., coaching equipment and learning resources for athletes) and staging of the physical setting (e.g., how a team meeting room is organised or laid out)?
- How will your reading of this chapter influence your planning activities individually and/or with your co-coaches? What will you do differently? Why? What will you avoid doing? Why?

### **Key Points**

We encourage coaches (and other readers) to consider the following key points:

- (a) To recognise the importance of everyday interaction in coaching. It is through your interactions that you generate connections with others, gain their support, and determine the influence that you are able to exert. The failure to connect with others or live up to their expectations can significantly impact the support you receive, the influence you have, and the atmosphere in which you strive to achieve your coaching goals.
- (b) We believe that dramaturgical theorising provides important ideas that coaches can think and act with. For example, coaches can benefit from giving careful consideration to the ‘front’ or ‘image’ of themselves that they wish to create in the eyes of significant others (e.g., athletes, parents, administrators, support staff, among others). This includes reflecting on our manner (inclusive of the emotions we show) and appearance, our use of coaching props and the staging of the coaching environment, as well as the micro-dynamics of our individual and team performances as coaches. Such critical knowledge is not normally included in coach education provision but is essential to our efforts to ‘professionalise’ coaching.
- (c) As a field, we need to develop a more detailed and nuanced body of knowledge addressing the ways in which coaches are both tacticians and targets of influence. Indeed, there is much more to learn in terms of how coaches seek to influence others towards desired outcomes, as well as how coaches are, themselves, the subject of others’ attempts to influence and navigate the sometimes problematic aspects of joint action (Grills & Prus, 2018; Potrac, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have sought to consider some of the dramaturgical features of coaching work. Whilst we are unable to explore ‘all’ of their dimensions, we hope that the integration of some of Goffman’s (1959) and Hochschild’s (1983, 2000) theorising with pertinent coaching literature, will contribute to increasing the readers’ understanding of, and engagement with, the interactive and emotionally laden challenges that are an inherent feature of coaching. For us, coaching is “an obligation driven social activity” (Jones et al., 2011, p. 26) that requires coaches (individually and collectively) to consciously plan for and critically reflect upon how they present themselves and their ideas, choices, actions and emotions to others (Cassidy et al., 2016). Developing and maintaining an idealised image in the eyes of a scrutinising audience is not an easy task; it is an embodied and dynamic challenge that requires us to consider how we feel and make others feel” with our achievements inextricably linked to the quality of our social engagements and practices (Cassidy et al., 2016, p. 99). We certainly believe that such issues warrant consideration in coach certification and development programmes (Potrac, Nicholl, & Hall, in press).

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