

Running title: The learning cultures of informal self-organised action sports: implications for youth coaching

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Abstract

The increasingly popularity of action and lifestyle sports (e.g., skateboarding, parkour, BMX, mountain biking and snowboarding) has been recognised as an important trend in youth lifestyles (Wheaton 2013; Jeanes et. al. 2018). In contrast to traditional sports, these activities are individualistic, lack rules and have celebrated anti-authoritarian, 'do-it-yourself' and anti-competition cultural values. Athlete learning in action sport is also largely informal and self-regulated, with peer-to-peer learning dominating and digital technologies playing a central role (Wheaton 2013; Ellmer et al. 2019). However, lifestyle sports are becoming increasingly popular for youth development, including in institutionalised settings and PE curricula (Wheaton & O'Loughlin 2017; Jeanes et. al. 2018; Safvenbom et al. 2018). With the increasing professionalisation of some action sports including in international competitions such as the Olympics (Wheaton & Thorpe 2021), there is an increased focus on coaching, with funding directed to coach development and increasing numbers of athletes in structured training programmes (Ojala & Thorpe 2015). In this chapter we explore this changing landscape of action and lifestyle youth sports cultures. In so doing, we discuss critically the challenges and opportunities for coaching. First, we outline the dominance of informal learning environments in lifestyle sports, including the use of digital technologies. Second, we consider coaching and learning in more structured environments, which often differs in ethos and approach to many traditional sporting cultures. Drawing on sociocultural views of learning (Lave and Wenger 1991) we show how disrupting the 'adult as expert' can create less hierarchical and more equitable learning environments. However, coaches being absent from learning environments also has potential implications for safety management and young athlete welfare. Lastly, we outline future directions and considerations in coaching research and policy/practice.

Introduction

The global sporting landscape is undergoing some notable shifts in youth participation, particularly with respect to the largely unquestioned dominance of traditional sports. The increasingly popularity of action, lifestyle, and adventure sports such as skateboarding, parkour, BMX, mountain biking and snowboarding, is an important trend in youth lifestyles noted in many countries around the world (Wheaton 2013; Jeanes et. al 2018). As a result, traditional sports must compete for attention against an “ever-increasing range of leisure activities and trends in the digital world, and in ‘real’ time and space” (Gilchrist & Wheaton 2017, p.6). As the decision to include surfing, skateboarding and sport climbing in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics clearly demonstrates, even the Olympic Movement is having to respond to new consumer interests to remain relevant to younger generations through the assimilation of youth-oriented action sports into the Olympic programme (Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). Thus, while activities such as skateboarding were once seen by parents and youth sport providers as encouraging ‘rebellious’ and ‘deviant’ behaviour, they are increasingly being recognised as important site for youth development (Bradley 2010; Safvenbom et al. 2018) including in institutionalised settings and PE curricula (Wheaton & O’Loughlin 2017; Jeanes et. al 2018; O’Connor & Penney 2020).

As such, some action sports are quickly becoming integrated into ‘mainstream’ sporting culture, resulting in the increased visibility of informal, lifestyle sports in youth leisure and influencing the way action sports are practiced. For example, Thorpe and Wheaton illustrate the increasing professionalisation of some action sports through their inclusion in international competitions such as the Olympics (Thorpe & Wheaton 2011, Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). One way of examining how action sports are moving towards professionalisation is to consider their investment in, and importance attached to, coach and athlete development (Ellmer & Rynne 2019). Typically, ‘coaching’ is largely invisible in action sports contexts with athlete learning largely informal and self-regulated, with peer-to-peer learning dominating and digital technologies playing a central role (Wheaton 2013; Ellmer et al. 2019; Ojala & Thorpe 2015). However, the level of professionalism and interest in action and lifestyle sports has resulted in increased recognition from organisations on the

importance of coaching (Ojala & Thorpe 2015). Furthermore, positioning action sports as an important trend in youth lifestyles necessitates a critical focus on developing high quality coaches in these contexts to support equitable, quality experiences, reduce risk and ensure safeguarding. Therefore, the rapid institutionalisation of action sports provides a unique framework for examining the role, practice and function of coaches in these unique sporting cultures.

This chapter will explore this changing landscape of action and lifestyle youth sports cultures, considering this shift from informal learning to formalised coaching and learning in more structured environments, as well as examining some of the challenges and opportunities for children and youth. First, the dominance of informal learning environments in lifestyle sports is discussed, including the use of digital technologies. Drawing on sociocultural views of learning (Lave & Wenger 1991) the discussion shows how disrupting the 'adult as expert' – commonly observed in traditional coaching cultures – can create less hierarchical and more equitable learning environments. Second, the ways the professionalisation of some action sports is impacting on these informal learning environments and cultures is outlined, including engaging young athletes in structured training programmes, coaching, and high-performance pathways (Ojala & Thorpe 2015). The ways that coaching often differs in ethos and approach to many traditional sporting cultures is highlighted, examining some of the challenges and opportunities for formalised coaching practices in action sports. Third, the chapter considers the potential implications for safety management and young athlete welfare in action sports, particularly where coaches are absent from learning environments. Lastly, we outline future directions and considerations in coaching research and policy/practice.

Review of Current Research: Action sports and informal learning cultures

A defining feature of action and lifestyle sports is their self-organised and spontaneous nature, with participation in predominantly informal settings, often without external regulation or institutionalisation (Wheaton 2013). While the reasons for the popularity of particular action sports vary, key aspects that appear to engage children and youth include their flexible formats often without competitive structures or leagues; their individualistic

nature lacking rules and regulations, their anti-authoritarian, 'do-it-yourself' cultural values, and the ability for self-definition often without adult control (Gilchrist & Wheaton 2017). Within these environments, attributes including physical prowess, creativity and risk taking are often highly valued.

Despite the proliferation of research on the changing cultures of action and lifestyle sports, research on the learning of action sport participants and how it takes place is limited (Ellmer et al. 2019). Furthermore, as part of this learning process while coaches and coaching are acknowledged as becoming more prominent in these contexts (Ellmer et al. 2019) we know comparatively little about coaching in these sub-cultures compared to more 'traditional', established sports (e.g., soccer, rugby). Ojala and Thorpe (2015) suggested that for young athletes the lure of a highly profitable career in action sports has necessitated increased guidance from coaches in more organised training structures. Nevertheless, the cultural values of action sport cultures influence how some athletes perceive and approach working with coaches. For example, Wheaton (2004) has highlighted the importance of participant control, creativity, and 'do-it-yourself' ideologies. As such, the existing empirical work in action sports paints a picture of athlete learning as highly networked, largely informal and, more recently, technology-assisted (Ojala & Thorpe 2015; Enright & Gard 2016). Rather than engaging in directed training programmes under the watchful gaze of coaches, many participants draw on a mixture of trial-and-error practices characterised by a high volume of self-directed repetition, observation of others, peer feedback and mentoring, and increasingly the use of technology and social media to learn the skills required to perform and, in some instances, compete (Ojala & Thorpe 2015; Ellmer et al. 2019).

In terms of skill development, research has illustrated the various ways that action sports athletes adopt a 'self-check' style through the use of images - from sequences of still images in magazines to moving imagery in films and video (Gilchrist & Wheaton 2013). Watching videos as a method to learn physical tricks has been identified across different action sports from longboard skateboarders (Enright & Gard, 2016) to surfers and parkour (Gilchrist & Wheaton 2013). Increasingly, fuelled by advances in and greater access to technology many action sports participants film their own tricks to review and improve their performance. For example, Jones (2011) explored the role of digital media and creativity in the processes of learning that occur amongst urban skateboarders, showing that the

production and consumption of DIY videos contributed to skaters' mastery of the techniques of the sport, to document the stages of their learning, as well as to their integration into the culture. This is typically achieved through establishing social media profiles and developing content with friends and the wider community. As such, athletes participate in the production, sharing, and acquisition of knowledge (termed prosumers, see Woermann 2012) but also for feedback and critique from others.

A further line of inquiry into learning in action sport cultures has illustrated the value of sensory feedback and embodied knowledge (e.g. Bäckström 2014). This perspective examines the ways in which the built and natural environment where the activities take place - from mountains and oceans to city streets - are central to the practice and learning of embodied knowledges. Participants have also been constructed as being in synergy with the space and their environment they engage (Bäckström 2014; Kidder 2012), which is also important for developing skills and cultural knowledge. For example, surfers need to acquire knowledge of the weather to be able to predict swells, and learn to read and respond to ocean currents and wave forms as part of their immersion in the culture and their training practices.

Implications for learning and coaching

Together, this body of work highlights a unique landscape for the learning and acquisition of skills and knowledge in action sports. Despite being an individualistic activity, social engagement with others is a primary mechanism for learning for athletes in informal, action sports. In essence, learning is viewed as part of social practice, and participation in social (communities of) practice by definition will involve learning, as the process of becoming a member of a community allows learning to take place. Being 'situated' means that people learn as they participate (Cushion & Townsend, 2016). Importantly, while interaction does form the basis for learning in these cultures, unlike in traditional sports these interactions do not follow the typical hierarchical, 'expertise' driven model of instruction between coaches and athletes, where coaches engage in a 'top down' transmission of expert knowledge (Coté 2006; see also Wheaton & O'Loughlin 2017). Rather, the 'coaching' process is based on a distribution of power across networks that are intergenerational and interdependent, where knowledge is co-constructed between learners and mediated by the language and norms of the culture, the availability of and access to technology as well as the built or natural

environment. This represents a distinct and important departure in coaching research, where a body of critical sociological scholarship has illustrated the power of coaches in directing the norms within a sporting subculture, where athletes are passive recipients of coaches' values and preferences (e.g. Cushion & Jones 2006, 2012) and are immersed in disciplinary training regimes based on body management, surveillance and control (e.g. Williams & Manley 2015).

Together, this complex assemblage provides a framework for learning in sporting subcultures that reflects a powerful form of enculturation, involving the construction of identities and the historical production, transformation, and change of persons (Lave & Wenger 1991). The informal nature of lifestyle and action sports cultures, with an absence of coaches, means that athletes adopt the language (vocabulary), customs (values) and beliefs of the subculture to direct their learning. Importantly, in so doing athletes are engaged in a process of identity construction through participation and learning in a community through socially-situated activity (Lave 2009). For participants within informal, action sports, central identity-generating activities take place *in practice*, in which learners participate, and *through* the digital spaces they also inhabit, further reinforcing the absence of adult mediation and instruction. As such, learning can be understood as a process of becoming, of forging identities in the world, with action sports providing a focused site for youth development (Thorpe 2016). Therefore, the impact of large scale shifts in lifestyle and action sports characterised by formalisation, institutionalisation and innovation linked to professionalism has important implications for individual and collective identities.

Sportisation, professionalism and coaching

'Sportisation' (Elias & Dunning 1986, Maguire 2007) is a useful concept to help illustrate the processes by which informal, play-like activities become more regulated, organised, and 'sports-like' (Wheaton & O'Loughlin 2017). Sportisation, along with commercialisation and higher levels of media exposure has had a significant impact on the cultures and practices of most action and lifestyle sports over the past decades. With the proliferation of international competitions (e.g. X Games), the emergence of lucrative commercial sponsors (Smits 2019) – even for some young children – and the increased use of social media technologies (Evers 2019) the experiences of action sport athletes is rapidly changing with competitive success seen as increasingly legitimate, particularly by youth (Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). This is further

exemplified through the 'fast tracking' of youth athletes into elite sport environments, such as the teenage girls who dominated in skateboarding's debut Olympics in Tokyo (Jancetic 2021).

The rapid professionalisation of action sports has clear implications for the development of coaching. Wheaton and Thorpe (2021) examined the impact of the Olympic inclusion on the sports of skateboarding, surfing and sport climbing between 2015 and 2020 in their preparation for inclusion in the Tokyo summer Olympic Games. Each sport has had a different development pattern; for example, in skateboarding, sportisation was less advanced than the other new Olympic action sports, and many countries did not have a sport governing body even by 2020. In sports including snowboarding, BMX, surfing, windsurfing, kite-surfing, and skateboarding, inclusion in future Olympic programmes has in some national contexts intensified the process of sportisation through the increased allocation of high performance funding to coach and athlete development (Ellmer & Rynne 2019; Wheaton & Thorpe, 2021; Strittmatter et al., 2019). While the distribution of funds varies between countries and sports, there is a noticeable trend in national sports organisations and National Olympic Committees investing in their performance pathways, for example through allocating scholarships to talented athletes, developing elite training facilities and providing athletes with access to full time coaching and sport science support (Ellmer & Rynne 2019; Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). For some of these sports, this has meant a radical shift in approaches to learning and training. As noted above unlike more traditional sporting cultures the use of coaches as a way to learn skills was considered antithetical to the value systems embedded in many action sport cultures. In skateboarding, for instance, coaching has long been considered a "taboo" subject, as one skateboarding journalist wrote:

For many of us the idea of skateboarding as a competitive or team sport has long been a point of contention. And because the word "coach" automatically conjures up images of sweaty old jocks with whistles and exercise drills, it's sometimes not a very respected profession in the skateboarding world. (Nieratko 2014, para. 2 cited in Wheaton & Thorpe 2021, p.)

Despite a degree of hesitance in some action sports such as BMX racing, sport climbing, and snowboarding, elite athletes - many of whom are teenagers - are increasingly engaging in full-time, structured and disciplined training regimes working with coaches, personal trainers and sport scientists, to develop the skills and physical conditioning (i.e. strength, endurance and flexibility) necessary for international competition while minimising the potential for injury

(Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). While we know very little about the day-to-day practices of coaching in these contexts, nonetheless, as Ojala and Thorpe (2015) suggest athlete–coach relationships tend to differ from more traditional, hierarchical coach–athlete relationships observed in traditional sporting contexts. The suggestion is that the role of coaches in some action sports (e.g., snowboarding) is unique and evolving, and further research is needed to challenge and expand our understanding of the role, function, and practices of coaches in general.

So, despite some observable changes in the organisation of action sports there is considerable variation in the importance attached to formalised coaching structures. Indeed, arguably the nature of the role is yet to be fully realised in informal action and lifestyle sports (Lyons, Rynne & Mallett 2012) bearing in mind the extensive contribution of coaches to high performance sport generally. Noticeably, in action sports such as snowboarding, surfing and sport climbing the importance attached to coaches (in some national contexts) is reflected in the lack of clear developmental pathways for coaches and limited appetite for accreditation, credentials and licensing (Ellmer & Rynne 2019). As such, the extent to which sports organisations invest in coach development is indicative of an emerging and evolving position in relation to coaching and a sub-culture where coaches do not feature prominently (Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). In many countries, the lack of funded national/regional development pathways for either elite or youth competitors means that even for those who wanted to access coaching it is not always available. Wheaton and Thorpe’s research found that in 2018 most international surfing competitors in New Zealand (including the Olympic qualifiers) did not have a coach for their skill development, nor support for fitness and preparation. Most relied on local support, Instagram and video analysis; some occasionally paid for coaching including overseas. As a world top 16 competitor explained: “I just try and coach myself a lot of the time, or I’ll send the footage to a coach or I’ll work with a coach maybe every couple of months and take something away from them and try and work on it”.

The extent to which sportisation is likely to collectivise action sports coaches and situate them within a professional pathway is yet to be seen. However, there are some general trends across action sports in the willingness to adopt aspects of high-performance sporting culture such as coaching. First, and a familiar situation in the broader coaching

literature (e.g., Townsend and Cushion 2017), action sport athletes traditionally place greater value on coaches with high levels of experience as athletes themselves, bringing with them a high level of cultural status and respect most often as a recently retired athlete (Ojala & Thorpe 2015). Such individuals are perceived to bring important embodied understandings of the unique cultural dynamics and value systems within action sport cultures. Wheaton and Thorpe's (2021) interviews with those working in surfing's NSOs and preparing athletes for Olympic readiness highlighted almost all elite surfing coaches having previously been professional surfers themselves, often without formal coaching skills or qualifications. They explained that most surfers held the view that "if you don't surf, there's no way you can be a coach" (interview 2017); athletes appeared to need to be 'managed' by individuals with understanding of their sport's ethos and culture values.

Second, as some action sports lacked national sporting bodies – and therefore formal athlete development pathways – coaches have typically been hired as independent contractors either by the athlete, their parents, or brand-based performance teams (e.g., Team Burton). This situation has created problems for NSOs to implement an integrated high-performance team structure as is common in most high-performance sports. For example, in Australia, although coaching was being more widely adopted in surfing than in many countries, the NSO found it was a complex area to develop effectively. As such, the NSO had to facilitate significant changes in cultural attitudes for the surfers and their support to recognise and accept more mainstream professional approaches to skill development and value other aspects of HP training:

"The idea is that we have integrated performance teams. That's very new to surfing. That's pretty standard [in] high-performance sport ... but surfing, that was foreign to our sport' (interview Surfing Australia, 2018 cited in Wheaton & Thorpe 2021, p.245).

Third, expertise in areas such as physical conditioning, applying psychological skills and nutrition was largely informal and self-directed or absent. For example, Surfing New Zealand (SNZ) held its first ever high performance workshop for national level junior and senior athletes in 2017. Many of the surfers attending were unaware of areas such as mental skills, and did not have any input into their physical development or conditioning. As with skill coaching, the NSO found they had to "educate" the athletes, their parents and surfing's "old-

school skills coaches” about the role and benefits of such expertise, where sport-specific knowledge was valued over high performance training or sports medicine principles:

It’s like no, “He doesn’t know that, he’s not a surfing coach”, and yet they’re a qualified doctor or strength and conditioning coach, and they deal with Olympic athletes in soccer and all these things. (SNZ, 2017 cited in Wheaton & Thorpe, 2021, p.238)

Nonetheless, Wheaton and Thorpe (2021) found that the teenage athletes’ who had attended these HP camps thought it was very effective, with many subsequently choosing to train regularly with these and other individuals for their physical development. As one 15 year old surfer claimed:

It’s probably the best thing I’ve done for my surfing. It’s really good because I just kind of – it’s injury prevention. I use my body in the right way and it just means that I’ll be at the top of my form when I go out and compete. (interview, 2017 cited in Wheaton & Thorpe, 2021, p.238)

Despite this situation at the elite level, many parents are seeking out coaches and training camps (e.g. Camp Woodward, Windells for skateboarders) for their children who are entering action sports competitions and pursuing careers as action sport athletes from ever younger ages. Coaching is also becoming much more prevalent amongst more recreational participants, with the concept of youth residential ‘camps’ (e.g., in skateboarding and surfing) proliferating in some countries where – due to a lack of full-time contracts and roles in the sport – coaches look to supplement their income. Finally it is important to note that as action sport coaching is a relatively new development, the lack of coaches and of coach development opportunities remains an issue, as does the limitations of only involving those individuals with the levels of cultural capital in the sport to aid in this professionalisation process. Concurrently, there is a reluctance among some action sports coaches to engage in traditional coach education and professional development (Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). Thus, while the opportunities for action sport coaches are increasing as these sports become more institutionalised, social networks and personal connections remain the main gatekeeper to access this unique labour market. Given the male dominated cultures of most action sports, particularly at the elite level and within their industries, this appears to have impact on opportunities for female coaches; the majority of which are men (although the USA Skateboarding National Team hired long-time professional skateboarder, Mimi Knoop, as

team manager for the 16 members). Reflecting many traditional sports, women are also critically underrepresented across formal leadership positions in action sports (Wheaton & Thorpe 2018, 2021). The gender and racial politics in such leadership positions, both formal and informal (see Wheaton & Thorpe 2021), and the implications for more professional opportunities for coaches, across action sports are deserving of further attention. Furthermore, as we discuss in the following section, there are also several issues to consider in relation to equity and welfare of participants, especially children.

Implications for Children's sport coaching

This section outlines two interrelated issues of particular relevance for coaching children and youth in action sports; child welfare, and risk and safety. It can be reasonably argued that all action sports do, to some extent, involve a degree of risk since they require specific and often complex skills, possess an element of physical challenge, and occur in either continually changing or dynamic environments (Collins & Collins 2013). This may be part of the 'pull' for some participants, and thus is a major factor in participation (Wheaton 2013; Salome & van Bottenburg 2012). As action sports become increasingly institutionalised and professionalised, younger athletes are training and competing at the elite level which has provided lucrative sponsorships and advertising deals for some young action sport stars. For example, Tokyo Olympic medal winning skateboarders Sky Brown and Rayssa Leal were just 13 years old and yet have multi-million-dollar corporate contracts including Nike, and digital followers in the millions. Such visibility brings with it a range of often competing expectations and pressures which must be navigated including from parents, coaches, corporate sponsors, national sporting bodies, and digital audiences. While some action sport athletes have employed agents and social media teams to manage their multiple roles and responsibilities, including competition schedules, training, corporate and media interests, in most cases athletes are working alone, or with the help of their parents, often with little support for safety management and athlete welfare. In sport such as skateboarding and surfing, many of these athletes are teenage or younger girls, raising important questions about child welfare.

Some commentators have observed increasing parental pressure on younger athletes in recent years; for some this is because the parents "grew up in a high pressure, high

performance” sport culture, and “are really trying to apply that type of belief on behalf of their children” (interview, 2015 in Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). This pressure, and the often-unacknowledged mental health issues that can come with such expectations, were brought to the fore with the tragic suicide of British professional snowboarder Ellie Soutter on her 18th birthday (in 2018). Soutter’s father subsequently spoke publicly about mental health concerns, head injuries, and the excessive pressure on young athletes. In the lead up to the Tokyo Olympics the horrific life-threatening crash experienced by the then twelve-year-old world number three skateboarding sensation, Sky Brown while ‘training’ with legend Tony Hawk on his private ramp, gained widespread international media attention. Although Brown was using a helmet, she had serious injuries including skull fractures, and it is reported that the hospital ICU team struggled to get her conscious and keep her alive (Morse 2020a, 2020b). Such incidents, while rare, raise important questions about the normalisation of the high-risks being taken by increasingly young action sport athletes, and the responsibilities of adults (i.e., parents, agents, coaches) who are “supporting” these pre-teen action sport participants in their careers. While young athletes may wish to take calculated risks, they should only do so with the necessary skills and experience, underlining the need for coaches to ensure safe, effective, and enjoyable experiences for children. In the subsequent media coverage of Sky Brown’s crash, her father claims that the pressure for Sky to continue preparing for the Olympics was his daughter’s, and that he tried to dissuade her. The family also claims that her decision to represent the UK not Japan (she has dual nationality) was Team GB’s more laid-back approach (Hayes 2021); “Come be on our team, there’s no pressure, just get out there and have fun’. Sky recounts that this approach “made my parents feel a little better” (Sky Brown cited in Hayes 2021).

With coaches absent from many learning environments, the issues for athletes’ protection and welfare – as well as equity issues more widely – in action sports are complex. Olympic inclusion has certainly nudged some action sport IFs and NSOs to develop policies and processes to better support athlete health and wellbeing, but these are largely underdeveloped (Wheaton & Thorpe 2021). Issues of athlete welfare and protection, particularly for young girls, need to be at the forefront of developments facilitating ethical and responsible young athlete support and development (Smits 2019).

Risk, safety and coaching

A range of responses to the concerns around risk have materialised. On one hand those who promote and practice the activities have pointed out that perceptions of high-risk are often unfounded (Gilchrist & Wheaton 2011; Bradley 2010). However, some have expressed disquiet about children's safety in these unregulated environments, and where the use of protective clothing (especially helmets) is not enforced, and cultures often glorify a 'no-pain no gain' attitude (Beal & Wilson 2004; Dumas & Laforest 2009). Furthermore, in activities like parkour and street skateboarding, participants use the city's streets and landscapes in ways that are seen as challenging their designated function (Borden 2001). For example, public perceptions of parkour is that it is dangerous and participants are irresponsible (see Atkinson & Young 2008, Gilchrist & Wheaton 2011). These attitudes, along with conflicts around the use of space, have been prevalent in skateboarding and parkour (Wheaton & O'Loughlin, 2017 Borden 2001, Howell 2008, Atencio et al., 2009, Thorpe 2011), and have fuelled forms of regulation, and the emergence of more regulated, but mostly commercially-driven environments, particularly for children (Atencio et al. 2018).

In relation to coaching, a key challenge however is how to formalise training for action sports athletes, ensuring a level of safety and risk management in these activities, without stripping them of the flexibility, informality and opportunities for self-directed practices that have been central to their appeal. Part of this challenge is addressing the potential role of coaches. Collins and Collins (2013) argued that risk management is an essential element of a coach's skill set and is routinely embedded in the decision-making processes of action sports coaching. Furthermore, safety and risk management tends to occupy a small, but important, place in coach education programmes. The broad range of children's motivations for engaging in action sports requires a differentiated pedagogic skill set from coaches that is balanced with a considered understanding of the risks associated with training and performance. Yet, the absence of many formalised coach education pathways in action sports means that coaches may act on intuition and experience, which as Collins and Collins (2013) argue can be clouded by familiarity with the environment, adherence to 'fixed' coaching plans, a heightened sense of confidence in decision-making and minimisation of risk, which can increase the risks associated with action sports participation particularly in a youth sport context. Hence, the need to educate coaches and instructors, evaluating and certifying their expertise, is an issue of particular importance in lifestyle and action sports. However, as noted

above in some sports there is a resistance to the perceived need for accreditation and the proliferation of coaching qualifications to support coaches professional judgement and decision-making.

The challenges for sports that are predominantly based on individual experiential learning and peer support is thus magnified when considering risk and safety. To illustrate, research on the ways in which parkour has been adapted for more formal and adult-led settings, including school physical education programmes, is informative. Shifts to assimilate Parkour into contemporary youth sport has resulted in increased focus on managing risk and safety (Sterchele & Ferrero Camoletto 2017; Wheaton 2013), which in turn has created calls for formalising safety standards and regulations, including the introduction of coaching qualifications (Gilchrist & Wheaton 2011; Wheaton 2013). The imposition of coaching standards is, for some, perceived as necessary for reassuring public opinion and legitimising the activity as safe (Sterchele & Ferrero Camoletto 2017). However, the challenge of a professional and regulatory framework enacted through coach education is that it necessarily 'normalises' and standardises the practice of Parkour, positioning it as a 'set of skills', and reducing the number of interpretations and performance styles evident throughout the sport (Wheaton 2013). Central to the teaching and learning of parkour is recognition that it is not a set of skills – as is often believed by those who are not practitioners (i.e., gymnasts) – but rather it represents a hidden curriculum into which athletes are socialised to value responsibility and self-mastery rather than overt competition, promoting coping with managed risks, fear, and working on problem-solving and decision-making (Fernández-Río & Suarez 2014). Thus, creating coach education pathways is likely to continue to meet pockets of localised resistance from practitioners, notwithstanding broader governance issues about 'who' has the power to create and administer formal coaching qualifications (Sterchele & Ferrero Camoletto 2017; Wheaton & O'Loughlin 2017).

Summary, Future Directions and Future Research

In this chapter we have examined the changing landscape of action sports with a particular focus on the implications for youth sport coaching. Clearly, the ongoing professionalisation of action sports will impact on the extent to which coaching will establish itself as fundamental to the delivery of action sports in youth contexts. Against this background further research

might wish to consider the unique context of action sports to explore the creation of coaching as a profession. Specifically, how coaching is implicated in protecting the shared cultural interests of action sports in the face of rapid professionalisation, exploring the hybridisation of the coaching role, and how action sports cultures respond to the corresponding need for educational pathways and credentials to support coaches all offer fruitful lines of inquiry.

Further questions might also examine the dynamic learning communities that exist in these youth contexts. In action sports, the processes, relationships and experiences that constitute the participants' sense of identity and belonging underpin the nature of subsequent learning, providing a unique framework for the development of coaching knowledge. Furthermore, the shifting material-economic practices and power relations shaping action sports globally can create sites of "contentious local practice", where participants are "historically related, partially united, partially divided, and surely always in conflict and tension through different political stances and relations of power" (Holland & Lave 2009, p. 3). As such, researchers may wish to consider exploring both the development of coaching knowledge and the ongoing struggles to develop coaching as a legitimate, knowledge building activity and practice (see Wheaton & O'Loughlin 2017). Finally, further research is required to shed light on the coaching processes evident in action sports, with particular focus on managing risk and the welfare of youth athletes.

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