## Developing “good buggers”: Global implications of the influence of culture on New Zealand club rugby coaches’ beliefs and practice

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## Abstract

## Despite recognition of how experience shapes sport coaches’ beliefs and practice empirical investigation into how this occurs is limited. This article redresses this gap in the literature by presenting the findings of a study that inquired into the influence of culture on three New Zealand rugby coaches’ beliefs and practice to identify the powerful influence of interaction between a ‘local’ traditional culture of club rugby in New Zealand shaped by the resilient ‘amateur ideal’, intensified by the perceived threat of professional rugby and the global culture of the sport industry to club rugby.

## Introduction

## Over the past few decades, research on sport coaching has moved beyond a focus limited to techniques of instruction to take into account the pivotal role that experience and socio-cultural context play in shaping he development of coaches’ approaches to coaching (see, Christensen 2009; Jones, Armour and Potrac 2004; Jones, Potrac, Cushion and Ronglan 2011). This has been accompanied by increasing interest in and use of knowledge from the social sciences such as that from pedagogy, learning theory and sociology (Jones, et al. 2011:Light, Evans, Harvey and Hassanin 2015) but empirical investigation into the processes remains limited (see for exceptions, Hassanin and Light, 2014; Wright, Trudel and Culver, 2007). In redressing this gap in the literature this article presents the findings of a study that inquired into the influence of culture on three New Zealand rugby coaches’ beliefs about coaching and their practice. It formed part of a larger study comprised of four separate studies on the influence of culture on rugby coaches beliefs conducted in Australia (two studies), South Africa and New Zealand. The study reported on here identifies the powerful influence of a traditional culture of club rugby in New Zealand on the participants, influenced by the resilient ‘amateur ideal’ and intensified by the perceived threat of the professionalization of rugby to club rugby.

##  The study identified the participants’ beliefs about rugby coaching, which, in order of importance were that they: (1) aimed to develop good people, (2) adopted a holistic and humanistic coaching approach and, (3) were influenced by Māori cultural concepts and rituals. It also explored the influence of culture on the formation of these beliefs.

## Learning and culture

Culture has a powerful influence upon individual dispositions with Geertz (1973) suggesting that it is ‘a way of thinking, feeling, and believing’ (p. 4) that is neither rationalized nor made explicit. It is socially constructed and anything, ‘that is disengaged from its mere actuality and used to impose meaning upon experience’ (Geertz, 1973, 45), with meaning having a powerful influence upon dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977). Culture is not an object that is separate from the individual but, instead, is produced, expressed, learned and reproduced through participation in cultural practices (see, Bourdieu, 1977; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Bourdieu’s work on cultural reproduction and the embodiment of cultural capital through participation in the practices of cultural fields and subfields offers an explanation of how the participation of the participants in this study in rugby over their lives in this study involved the embodiment of culture that shaped their beliefs and practice.

 Bourdieu (1986) proposes three forms of capital that are accumulated by the individual over time in objectified and embodied forms as economic, cultural and social capital. For him, the accumulation of capital by the individual in a range of different forms determines his/her social position and power with the cultural capital accumulated by a person linked to his or her *habitus* (embodied social history as sets of dispositions) and the cultural and social field within which agents (individuals) compete for capital and positions of power, but not always consciously.

 Cultural capital exists in the three states of embodied (long lasting dispositions), objectified (goods such as a painting) and institutionalised (such as educational qualifications) capital with cultural capital convertible to economic capital, which is the most powerful form. Embodied culture is a form of tacit knowledge that enables us to deal with situations and challenges without consciously following a set of rules. According to Bourdieu (see, 1984), culture is embodied over time in particular settings (fields or subfields) through participation in the practices of the field or subfield as part of the construction of the *habitus* as ‘society written into the body’ (Bourdieu, 1990, 63). Embodied cultural capital thus operates as common sense to exert a powerful influence on our dispositions and actions and which is evident among the three coaches in this study. Bourdieu’s concepts and his intellectual project challenge the dualism of agency versus structure with his concept of *habitus* the key to this challenge. The focus of social constructivists such as Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1996) and Dewey (1916/97) on active learning as learning through experience and the implicit, yet inseparable, learning of culture involved in it, reflects the same focus of Bourdieu on implicit learning through participation in practice. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of situated learning within communities of practice also sits upon the idea that learning occurs through participation in practice as a fundamentally social process shaped by the social and cultural contexts it is situated in.

**Māori culture and rugby**

Since the first recorded player ran on the field in 1872 Māori have been involved in rugby as significant actors in, and users of, it (Maclean, 1999). There have also been suggestions made about the particular characteristics of Māori rugby that typically identify a free, open and intuitive approach with former All Black, Tutekawa Wyllie suggesting that:

Māori play a particular type of rugby. It’s spontaneous and exuberant. In rugby we celebrate the joy of living. So we’re prepared to take risks just for the hell of it…What matters to our young people in rugby and in life is having a go and giving it your best shot. (Shortland, 1993, 47)

This also suggests an emphasis on social and personal development while predating the major revision of coaching undertaken by All Blacks coach, Grahame Henry a decade later that paid more attention to understanding and embracing aspects of Māori culture. Humanistic and holistic coaching also resonates with the holistic nature of the Māori worldview and its emphasis on the collective and with sensitivity to how each individual’s actions affect it (Mead, 2003; Royal, 2002) that is emphasised in athlete centred coaching (Light et al., 2015). This is also reflected in the important Māori concept of *manaakitanga* as reciprocal and unqualified caring with an obligation to ‘support, to care for, be concerned about, to feed, shelter and nurture your kin, and especially when they are in need…’ (Ritchie 1992, 78).

**Rugby as business Vs rugby for moral development**

From its use as a vehicle for the moral and social development of students in the nineteenth century schools of the rising English middle classes until its formal professionalization in 1995, the ideology of amateurism had been the ‘very essence of rugby’ (Collins, 2008, 1). However, its subsequent development into a valuable commodity traded in the international market place has changed its meaning and practice to created tension between the traditional values of the amateur ideal that the participants in this study believed in and the values of rugby as business. At the elite level, rugby’s growing commercial value is suggested by the 120 million who viewed the 2015 Rugby World Cup final between New Zealand and Australia, within the broader context of sport’s commodification and growing role in globalisation processes (Nauright 2004). The development of professional rugby as a commodity has also been shaped by the growing links between contemporary professional sport and the media in the promotion of sport as a global commodity within the field of sport as business (see, Rowe 2003). Shaped by the values of business, the practice and representation of professional, commodified rugby by the media can contradict a history of playing sport for personal and moral development with very different meanings. As Bourdieu (1978) suggests, there is tension between the *doxa* (unquestioned beliefs and assumptions) of sport for sport’s sake, or sport as education, and that of sport as business.

 Webb, Shirato and Danaher (2002) offer a useful way of understanding the larger social, cultural and historical contexts that generate the tensions between the values of rugby as education and moral development and rugby as business that were manifested in this study. They suggest that the intrusion of the field of business with its own *doxa* into the field of sport for education and moral learning, with is quite different *doxa,* created the sub-field of sport as business within which professional rugby sits. *Doxa* refers to unquestionable beliefs and sets of assumptions that are taken for granted in a field or subfield as the taken for granted. *Doxa* can also sets limits on social mobility within fields and subfields to reinforce social limits captured in the individual’s sense of one's place, sense of belonging and acceptance of the ‘natural order of things’ (Bourdieu, 1984).

 Tensions between the field of sport for sports sake (Bourdieu 1978) and sport as business are manifested most noticeably in youth sport that has traditionally been justified by the assumed positive moral, ethical and personal learning that can arise from young people’s participation in sport. This includes contradictions between the educational aims of physical education and the messages relayed by the marketing of professional sport (see, Beneli, Proni and Montagner 2017) and widespread concern over the negative influence of media-sport on youth sport (see, De Martelaer, De Bouw and Struyven 2013). There have been tensions between the practice and place of non-professional club, school and university rugby linked to the traditional model of sport as education and professional rugby in New Zealand (Ryan, 2008b) and elsewhere such as in Wales (O’Callahan and Cronin, 2008) and Japan (Light, Wataru and Ebishima 2008).

**Methodology**

***Approach***

The study we report on in this article was granted ethical approval by the first author’s university. It adopted grounded theory as an open-ended methodology to uncover deep understanding and new insights in an area that we suggest is under researched. We adopted constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as proposed by Charmaz (2006). In all forms of grounded theory the use of formal theory and the literature is delayed until late in the process of developing theory from the data. We selected theories and concepts for the purpose of making the challenging shift from substantive theory to conceptual theory during which we drew on the analytic concepts of Bourdieu as some others have done to inquire into the development of coaches’ beliefs and approaches (see, Taylor & Garratt, 2010) and on explanations of learning informed by constructivist epistemology. Despite the inductive, data driven approach of CGT developing categories from empirical data is ‘dependent on the availability of adequate theoretical concepts’ (Kelle 2010, 206). To move from descriptive level codes to conceptual level theories we used mem-oing and constant comparison as we reached theoretical saturation to guide the development of emerging theory by seeing whether or not data supported it. During this process we used Bourdieu’s concepts and social constructivist perspectives on learning to inform the development of the conceptual theory we present in the findings and how the cultural context shaped and influenced the participants’ beliefs about coaching and their dispositions toward it.

***Participants and recruitment***

We used purposive sampling (Crotty 1998) with the two criteria being that participants had to be head coach of a senior premier grade team and that the club had to be in the highest league in the region. The names used in this paper for clubs and people are pseudonyms with all three coaches being Pākēha (New Zealanders of European descent).

In his mid to late thirties, *Jordan* played rugby from an early age and represented his club in a premiership winning team. His coaching career began at the age of 25 when, after a knee injury, he was asked to help coach a school team. He holds a level three New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) coaching accreditation. *Wes* was in his mid to late forties and did not continue to play rugby after school. His first involvement in coaching was in his son’s rugby club and he holds NZRU level three coaching accreditation. *Steve* was in his mid to late thirties and holds level three coaching accreditation. After a few years playing of club rugby injuries signalled the end of his playing career with him taking up coaching as a way of staying involved in rugby.

***Data generation and analysis***

Data were generated through three rounds of conversational interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) that were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the first author, who played at a similar level in South Africa and coached at a similar level in Australia. He also observed three training sessions and one competition match for each coach to inform his interviews and formulate questions and during which he did not see any differences between what the coaches said they did and what they actually did. Varying from 40 to 60 minutes in duration, all interviews were conducted by the first author after training sessions at the club with a total of approximately 450 minutes of interview data with transcripts of interviews member checked each round. We began with initial coding and then focused coding, using constant comparisons and mem-oing, to develop categories and emergent themes that were developed through subsequent rounds of interviews with probes and follow up questions used throughout the interviews to provide rich descriptions (Ezzy, 2002). This involved identifying texts relevant to codes and emerging themes and comparing them with each other to create substantive themes (Charmaz, 2006) and was assisted through the use of mem-oing to develop conceptual abstractions grounded in data that provided a bridge between data and theory. At this point, we engaged with the literature to identify substantive categories and shift them up to conceptual theories (Birks and Mills, 2011). This is the stage at which we to drew on the analytic concepts of Bourdieu, Lave and Wenger and relevant literature as a way of better understanding the influence that the socio-cultural context had on how, and what, they learned. While there is some chance that the participants may not have accurately articulated their deeply held beliefs the observations of coaching and the rigour of the grounded theory process did not identify any mismatch between what was said and acted out in practice.

**Results**

Here we identify the three main beliefs about coaching of the participants’ in order of importance and how they were learned from one to three. We also suggest how they were shaped by the culture of club rugby in New Zealand and the struggle of traditional club rugby to retain its purpose and meaning in the face of rugby’s growing professionalization and commercialisation.

#### Theme 1: developing good people through rugby

The participants placed more importance upon moral and personal learning through rugby than on skill development and performance to reproduce and sustain what they saw as the traditional values and role of rugby clubs in New Zealand. Emphasizing loyalty, commitment, humility and devotion to the club, they were critical of players using clubs to advance their careers without giving to the club and were concerned with the ways in which they felt the values of professional rugby were eroding the values and traditions of club rugby as communities that developed ‘good’ people.

 New Zealand rugby clubs have long played an important role as stepping-stones to higher representative honours in rugby with the coaches concerned about its diminishing status and importance for the development of elite players since professionalization in 1995. As Ryan (2008b, 49) suggests in New Zealand: ‘the better players [have] largely bypassed clubs on the fast-track to higher honours.’ The coaches felt that professional “fast-track” rugby was degrading the values that clubs traditionally promoted:

What happened to playing a good club season and to put your heart on the line? I know it’s a real cliché, but put your heart on the line and the reward of that is being selected in a representative side. Whereas, these guys know that they can have a crap season but they’ll still be picked because they’ve already signed for the union. (Jordan)

 Immediately after formal acceptance of professionalization in 1995 Phillips (1996) hinted at the threat professional rugby could pose to the culture of club rugby in New Zealand. He argued that professionalism threatened the traditional, pioneering male ideology that had long defined rugby in New Zealand with its emphasis on physical prowess, self-sacrifice and loyalty. For the coaches in this study, displaying a good work ethic, self-sacrifice (putting their bodies on the line) and showing loyalty to the club were markers of being a ‘good bugger’. These attributes were also seen by the participants to be essential for developing what they called a good ‘team culture’ that valued the club and team as a whole entity over the individual. They saw players learning life lessons through rugby with commitment to the collective of the team and club as being more important than individual talent and winning matches. They wanted players in their teams who placed the team above their individual needs:

A good player is a guy that works hard off the ball rather than what he’s doing with the ball. Everyone can be a superstar and look real good with the ball but if you’re not getting off your arse quick enough or not working hard enough off the ball then you letting the rest of the team down. So to me it’s that culture, it’s that building a team before your skills and drills so everyone wants to work hard for each other and that makes a difference … sometimes you know you can have the best players [but] it doesn’t always make the best team. (Wes)

For Steve, ‘the human characteristics’ of players were more important than their skills, abilities and talents and acted as, “visual signs that they are connected and that they are on board”. They all felt that players had to value the collective ethos of the club above personal gain and Steve did not like:

Players who would not commit to training, not buy into team standards, guys that weren’t wearing the right clothing, guys that weren’t sticking around after the game, guys that weren’t contributing at all to the amateur nature of a sports club where you socialise together afterwards, for at least a short time, and you give back to sponsors and those kind of things. So we didn’t think that those characteristics were the right sort of things to get success on the field so we worked really hard on trying to create an environment that was maybe conducive to winning rugby. (Steve)

 In the rebuilding of the All Blacks from 2004 coach, Sir Graham Henry, used the mantra ‘Better people make better All Blacks’ to emphasise the importance of ‘character’ for success with what is possibly the most successful international sporting team of all time (Kerr, 2013). This same emphasis on developing better people was evident in this study with Steve saying that there was a, ‘strong correlation between “good buggers” and good athletes.’

 Players committed to training and working hard were seen by the participants to be ‘connected players’ who had become part of the team culture. They said that players had to have “buy-in” to the club and team culture before they could foster cohesion and the sense of collective purpose that they valued so highly. This conformity was maintained and developed through symbolic gestures and rituals such as following routines, explicitly showing respect towards the referee, ensuring players had a uniform they were proud of, managing dress codes for matches and performing war cries. The prioritising of the team and club was most important to the coaches.

#### Theme two: holistic and humanistic coaching

The participants believed in holistic and humanistic coaching that treated players as socially connected people rather than objects. They felt that, ‘it’s not all about winning, it’s about development and it’s about getting the best out of your players’ (Wes) in reference to personal development. As the previous theme demonstrates, they were more concerned with developing good people than with winning matches and emphasised caring about players as people:

If players see you’re trying to help them out on and off the field, you’re a good coach. You give them tips and work-ons [sic]. You’re interested in what they’re studying. If they’re in trouble and you’re there to help, you’re a good coach. (Jordan)

 The notion of care featured in interviews with the coaches seeing caring for a player as a being more important for retaining players than financial incentives. It also seemed to be used to support the club values that they saw as being under threat in New Zealand from the professionalization of rugby:

As soon as you start paying players and putting dollars in, guys are going to start going where the biggest dollars are and guys are going to say ok well we’re going to go here…Those guys still playing club rugby need to be kept in the club environment and made sure they’re looked after. And I’m not saying financially looked after - their value as a person. (Wes)

They saw coaching as an educational and socialising practice that develops the whole person and not just the player as a component of the team. Suggesting an affinity with athlete centred approaches to coaching (see, Kidman, Hadfield & Thorpe, 2011; Light et al, 2015), they viewed coaching as facilitating and guiding rather than instructing and commanding to improve players as people both on and off the playing field:

**The more you’re educated in coaching, the more you understand that it’s the process that’s important and not the outcomes. And so you start developing processes that you stay true to. And those processes are going to evolve with experience and learning. So my philosophy now is very much around you know helping other people achieve their goals, or as a group setting or achieving collective goals. So my role in that is as a head coach is partly facilitator as well. (Steve)**

Jordan felt coaching was, ‘about the whole person and not just on the rugby field’ with all participants believing that good coaching relied upon having relationships between the coach and players that engendered dialogue and enough trust and respect for them to broach issues on and off the field. Some studies suggest that this approach is reasonably evident in New Zealand. For example, Evans’ (2014) study on New Zealand rugby coaching at the most elite level identified the same emphasis placed on coach-player relationships and caring for players’ in and out of rugby. This emphasis on developing trusting relationships in athlete centred coaching is facilitated by establishing more equal power relations than in traditional coaching and was also a strong theme in Evans’ (2014) study of elite level New Zealand rugby coaches.

While by no means universal in New Zealand, athlete centred coaching seems to have a significant influence in rugby (see, Evans 2012; Kidman et al, 2011) and across a range of sporting organisations in New Zealand such as Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). The participants said they wanted to empower their players to challenge them when they saw the need as a way of developing thinking players and of improving their coaching: ‘I love it when a guy comes up and challenges you and hopefully we’re right, but not all the time’ (Wes). They all said took the time needed to understand their players as people: ‘The better you can understand people then the better they can understand you and the more successful you’re going to be. So it’s a bit airy-fairy but it’s not a one size fits all thing you know’. (Steve)

 Although the coaches in this study had considerable experience in using what Kidman (2001) terms an athlete empowerment approach they still had to deal with tensions between being a caring figure and being an effective leader:

There’s that fine balance where, so that’s probably linked in with, I care about the guys and want to help them out with their studies you know, when I can try and get them jobs … but on the flip side of that is that I don’t really drink with them on Saturdays, you’ve got to have, I think being a father figure and all that, and for lack for a better term, there’ll be issues with that if you constantly treat them like a mate and socialise with them as well. I think you have a fine balance where you separate the on field stuff with the off field, even though they’re mostly correlated. (Jordan)

They said that to empower players in a group who are new to this athlete-centred approach required them they initially taking a more directive approach that involved pushing his/her views and ideas and telling them what to do but, as the group formed and developed, expect increased player ownership and independence as it matured:

I think there definitely has to be someone who drives it, but the more you can get people on board establishing it then obviously a more of a piece they are, and the more likely they are to invest their time…I believe that you know a head coach, there is a certain amount of leadership and direction that has to come from one individual but you’ve got to be a facilitator at the same time. (Steve)

The coaches embraced being challenged by players because they saw it as contributing to learning and improving on the part of the players *and* the coach. They felt that a good coach was capable of stepping back, giving the players autonomy and managing ‘the big picture’ (Jordan).

####  Theme three: the influence of Māori culture

The participants felt that Māori culture and approaches to rugby had a significant influence on New Zealand rugby and on their development as coaches, with much of what they valued in Māori approaches to rugby tied into the first two themes. They said that they saw rituals and routines as expressions of embodied ‘rugby virtues’ and of the values needed to be good team players. They emphasised the importance of the group over the individual for the team and the club and were very positively disposed toward the emphasis of Māori culture and approaches to rugby on the group as a whole. They also drew analogies between rugby and war to highlight the efficacy of Māori values, cultural concepts and rituals for both winning ‘the battle’ in rugby matches and for personal and moral development with the *haka* acting to connect Māori culture with warfare for them. It is also likely to have been encouraged by the historical links between rugby as a heavy contact sport and its origins in the education of the officer classes.

 In the late nineteenth century English public schools the images of sacrifice in war and preparation for war through sport were powerful enough to make sport (and rugby in particular) ‘the ultimate metaphor for war and for war to become a sporting endeavour’ (Mangan, 1996, p. 140). This saw military values inculcated into British schoolboys, ‘as sport and war became central elements in the character training of future British and imperial officers’ (Mangan, 1996, p. 140). This analogy between rugby and war was reflected in the participants’ views on how the pressure of what they called ‘the battle’ that they saw as providing an ideal environment for culturally preferred moral development. In particular, they spoke about the *haka* and the concept of *mana* and how they contributed to the learning of preferred cultural and personal traits. They believed the role *mana* and the *haka* played in winning the battle had more important significance for life off the rugby field with the *mana* forged in battle expressed in humility and respect off the field:

So the *mana*, and the haka, it’s about the battle and that it’s a war. So you do your haka, and you play real hard and physical, and you’re relentless but once you’re off the field, that’s it. That side of the *mana* changes [so] you’ve got to be humble and you’ve got to be respectful and you’ve got to look professional, and I think in schools that do that well, it filters through into your life. (Jordan)

As a noun, *mana* refers to prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power and charisma as a supernatural force in a person, place or object with authority seen by Māori as a spiritual gift and humans being able to be the agent, but never the source, of it (Māori Dictionary). Maclean (1999) suggests that *mana* is a measure of social standing or authority that may be held individually or collectively. Jordan believed that the meaning and enactment of *mana* changed with context and was transferred to, and modified for, life outside rugby.

 The *haka* is probably the most explicit and best-known symbol of the relationship between New Zealand rugby and Māori culture with has different versions having different meanings. It is not only performed by the All Blacks and the Māori All Blacks, but also by high school rugby teams (and other sporting teams) in New Zealand. The *haka* performed before rugby matches originates in war *haka* (*peruperu*) performed by Māori warriors before battle to proclaim their prowess, intimidate the opposition and promote collectivity (see, Mathews 2004) with this *ngeri* *haka*, ‘used to flex sinews and summon blood for battle’ (Maclean 1999, 17). The three coaches emphasized collectivity and the contribution the *haka* made to team culture and the team as a collective.

 Each of the participants’ coaching *habitus* (Light and Evans, 2013) can be seen as the embodied social history of the individual constructed over life times of participation in rugby within the subfields of rugby and club rugby and the communities of their schools and clubs. This included embodied cultural capital embedded in the *habitus* through participation in practice (Bourdieu 1986) such as training for, and performing, the *haka* over their time at high school. This and other practices contributed toward the embodiment of a culture that disposed them toward the importance of the collective and of holistic, humanistic coaching aligned with Māori culture and the culture of Māori rugby (see, Hapeta and Palmer 2014). While the power of the *habitus* lies in its implicit operation (Bourdieu, 1984), the three coaches articulated how they thought the *haka* had influenced them through watching it, performing it at school and coming to understand its meaning.

 The coaches said that having performed the haka at secondary school the players they worked with would be familiar with its meaning but they felt that it would be improper to try to impose Māori rituals on their club teams’ players who may not have adequate understanding of its true meaning. However, their experiences of the powerful effect that the haka had on the teams they were in at high school encouraged their belief in the need for rituals in their teams. This included prioritising non-verbal communication and adopting rituals such as war cries, strict dress codes and social rituals to ensure that the values and mores of the group of players and its cohesion were reinforced on a weekly basis.

 The coaches used rituals to promote team culture and promote identity with the club and the team and ensure everyone was ‘on the same page’, which included rituals for entering the change room and getting dressed for the game. Steve suggested that, ‘…you know your people, your symbols, your rituals and all of those things that connect a common collective purpose’ and they valued the enactment of team values more than its articulation as an indication that the person had embodied the values expressed in the ritual:

Someone’s behaviour is more of an indication than their words as to whether or not they are actually connected with what you’re doing. So the things, when you’re working as a team or operating as a team, you’re wanting [sic] everybody to be on the same page and not just on the field [but] off as well. Hence, the importance of the symbolic stuff, the symbols and the rituals of a team. (Steve)

**Discussion**

 New Zealand is a former British colony where rugby has been used in schools to provide a ‘manly education tempered by civilising restraints’ (Phillips 1996, 50) and to promote preferred moral and social learning. For the three coaches developing ‘good buggers’ through rugby was facilitated by taking an athlete centred approach (see Pill 2018) to coaching and the influence of Māori culture and approaches to playing and training for rugby on them. The emphasis they placed on rugby’s role in educating and socializing players through moral, social and personal development also seems to reflect a culture of club rugby that is underpinned by the resilient values of the amateur ideal (see, Collins 2008; Mangan 1996).

 The participants’ prioritizing of moral and personal learning over performance and the importance they placed on adopting a humanistic and holistic approach to coaching were intensified by anxiety over the threat of professionalism to the culture, function and status of club rugby and its traditions in New Zealand. Club rugby in New Zealand is the historical product of the development of rugby in colonial New Zealand, rugby’s global development over the past three decades and the interaction between *Pākehā* and Māori culture (Crawford 1999; Hapeta and Palmer 2014; Phillips 1996; Ryan 2008a). The anxiety of the three individual coaches over the threat of professionalism to the culture and future of club rugby arises from, and is a manifestation of tensions between the culture and history of local club rugby and the growth of commercialized, professional rugby as business at a global level. The study thus seems to provide an example of how tensions between field of ‘sport for sport sake’ and sport as business (Bourdieu 1978) influence and shapes individual experience and development.

 Nowhere is the commodification and commercialization of rugby in New Zealand more evident than in the globalizing and marketing of the iconic All Blacks within the ‘media sports cultural complex’ and within which rugby has become such a highly valuable commercial commodity (Sherer, Falcous and Jackson 2008). However, this is not to suggest that professionalized rugby in New Zealand is necessarily the antithesis of local rugby or to suggest there is a clear division between rugby as local sport and rugby as a highly valuable commodity traded in the global sport market. Indeed, the mantra of ‘better people make better All Blacks’ (Kerr, 2013) suggests the development of good people as one of its goals. Instead, this study provides insight into the *interaction* between local sport and cultures and what can be considered to be sport shaped by the culture of global of sport as business.

**Conclusion**

This study identifies the powerful influence of club rugby culture in New Zealand on the values, beliefs of three rugby coaches and how they are threatened by the professionalization of rugby to the values, place, meaning and purpose of rugby in New Zealand culture. We recognize the limitations of being able to generalize from one small, study with only three participants but, for the three coaches in it, the time-honoured function of rugby as a vehicle for moral, ethical, social and personal learning formed a powerful influence on their beliefs and practice. We also suggest that the tight focus on three coaches and the depth of inquiry it provided at an individual level provides valuable, detailed and humanistic insights into how tensions between the local and the global in sport play out in people’s day-to-day life, which in this case, focuses on rugby union coaches in New Zealand.

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