

Encountering unsettling stories of sport coaching violence: practitioner reflections on attending an interactive and immersive installation on the topic of abuse in sport

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This study examines sport practitioner experiences of attending an interactive installation, which was designed by the authors to bring to life athlete voices from previously collected data (Kavanagh, 2014; Kavanagh et al., 2017) on the experience of abuse in sport. Guided by art-informed pedagogy, an immersive audio-visual experience was constructed. Sport practitioners, including sport coaches and sport psychologists, were invited to attend the exhibition to be confronted by athletes' verbatim stories of abuse. Sixty participants attended the exhibition with thirty-one (n=31, 15 female, 16 Male, Mage = 27.4) providing post-event qualitative questionnaire reflections on attending the event and seven (n=7, 2 male, 5 female, Mage =37.1) subsequently participating in semi-structured interviews to develop an in-depth insight into their experiences of the event. In this paper we share the themes generated from the qualitative data: (1) practitioners experienced the physical space of the event as 'moving' and 'difficult' both physically and emotionally, (2) the experience reverberated beyond the event, compelling participants to reflexively make sense of their emotions, and; (3) empowered thoughts around practice and change. We further reflect on the potential of interactive approaches to sharing data on sensitive topics within future practitioner education contexts.

Keywords: abuse; athlete; safeguarding, art-informed pedagogy

Introduction

Global patterns of abuse have been identified in academic research (e.g., Hartill et al., 2021; Kerr et al., 2020; Vertommen et al., 2016; Wilson et al., 2022), highlighting the occurrence and prevalence of abuse in sporting contexts; from community through to high performance sport. Numerous independent welfare and safety reviews have been carried out examining a number of sports across nations (e.g., Yates, 2022; Whyte, 2022; Australian Human Rights Commission; Change the Routine, 2021; Grey-Thompson, 2017; Phelps et al., 2017), reporting cultures of fear, intimidation, and bullying and an acceptance of abuse across performance and grass roots sport. Increasingly, sport organisations are held accountable for their role in developing and maintaining spaces, environments, and cultures that promote a duty of care (Wagstaff, 2018). However, there is danger that such duties of care are treated as symbolic requirements that are overshadowed by performance expectations (e.g., medal targets) if more is not done to educate a future generation of practitioners toward fostering sustainable long-term change.

Collectively, various types of abuse have been referred to as maltreatment (e.g., Stirling, 2009), non-accidental violence (e.g., Mountjoy et al., 2016) and/or interpersonal violence (e.g., Vertommen et al., 2016), in order to encompass a variety of behaviors including, but not limited to, sexual, psychological/emotional and physical abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment. Traditionally, there has been a focus on the coach as the perpetrator and the athlete as the victim with an emphasis on the child athlete. That said, anyone can become a perpetrator of abuse in sport including parents/guardians, athletes, scientific and medical staff. In protecting people from harm, there has been an emphasis on safeguarding sporting spaces, the implementation of safe sport policy and safeguarding practice in sport (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2020) Such

an approach relies upon sport practitioners (such as sport coaches, psychologists and wider support staff) fostering, promoting and maintaining safe sporting spaces.

This paper represents a commitment to sport practitioner education, alongside a response to Kerr and Stirling's (2019) call for greater attention to be paid to safeguarding education for neophyte and experienced sport (psychology) practitioners. Indeed, Kerr and Stirling (ibid, p.2) argue that such an endeavour "will also require a rethinking of graduate curricula." Further, McMahon et al. (2022) have more recently argued for more research to evaluate coach education that teaches about abuse in sport, and for the design-impetus of coach-education events to be unpacked in greater practical and theoretical detail. Within this context, we created an interactive, immersive audio-visual experience for sport coaches and sport psychologists (henceforth sport practitioners) on the topic of abuse in sport. The impetus for this work was grounded in the researchers' aspirations to support cultural change in high-performance environments that place an emphasis on the balance between performance and welfare objectives. This is something that is echoed more clearly through the articulation of a duty of care (Grey-Thompson, 2017) and the emphasis on fostering caring climates to support athlete welfare. The event was designed by the authors to bring to life athlete voices from previously collected data (Kavanagh, 2014; Kavanagh et al., 2017). Sport practitioners were invited to attend the exhibition to be confronted by athletes' verbatim stories of abuse. Before outlining the methodology and providing an analysis of the qualitative data generated for this study, we first provide a discussion on the background context and theoretical rationale for the event, as well as practical details regarding the curation of the event.

Innovative sport practitioner education

In the literature more broadly, the term arts-based learning (ABL) is used to describe an alternative strategy of education that uses, for example, forms of art such as acting, clay modelling and visual installations to facilitate learning across a variety of topics. While we acknowledge ABL, for the purpose of this study we will adopt the term arts-informed to describe the approach. This more accurately reflects the exhibit as being “informed” by the arts rather than involving the production of or being directly “based” in arts activities.

The efficacy of experiential learning, such as role-play, have been emphasised for their importance in the learning experience of applied sport psychologists (e.g., Tod et al., 2007; Tod & Lavallee, 2011; McEwan & Tod, 2015). Arts and media-based approaches are perhaps more clearly documented in the education of other ‘caring’ professions that engage in complex, difficult, social and emotional work for example, counselling, medical practitioners, social workers and palliative care workers (Shapiro et al., 2006; Naghshineh et al., 2008; Trevelyan et al., 2014; Guyas & Keys, 2016; Cramer et al., 2018). Within education settings, arts-informed pedagogy or arts-based learning (ABL) as it is often referred to, may add value, where traditional teaching methods are increasingly being critiqued as less effective in deepening student learning or engagement (Cramer et al., 2018). ABL environments and activities may also open up spaces for critical questioning and creative knowledge construction, through simultaneously activating multimodal learning processes (Trevelyan et al., 2014; Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014; Cramer et al., 2018). Where practitioners are likely to be confronted with and be required to negotiate and understand complex human emotions and experiences, both their own and others, and where perhaps there is no definitive way to experience something, uses of ABL seem apt for creating environments in which

reflection can take place to facilitate contextually-relevant learning (Trevelyan et al., 2014).

Important in this reflection process, is the ability to evoke a sense of felt difficulty (Ixer 1999, p. 515) and uncomfortableness. This concept of “felt difficulty” and its relationship to stimulating critical reflexion is also documented in the work of Clover (2006) who used art-based community projects as a way to tackle social issues of racism and stereotyping. Central to these social justice projects was visibility: Clover (2006) argues that the more visible or public art is, and the more it dares to illuminate and grapple with difficult issues and forces people to acknowledge and confront the issue, the more powerful it becomes. The assertion is that by moving people beyond the point of comfort, arts-informed methods can enrich learning by challenging and expanding their world-view: put simply, it allows, or forces, us to ‘step into the shoes’ of another to experience their world (Lawrence, 2005; Hughes, 2009). As such, proponents argue that art-informed pedagogy can be adopted as a way to give voice to marginalised individuals, groups and communities, but also as potentially provoking (often uncomfortable) feelings and emotions, to elicit social and political change (Lawrence, 2005; Lambert, 2012).

In sport, experiential learning methods have gained significant traction as a method adopted for coach education (Morgan et al., 2013a; Morgan et al., 2013b) and education in fields such as sport and exercise psychology. Scholars in this field, such as Jones et al. (2012) and Morgan et al. (2013a), have clearly explicated a need for less didactic structure and more innovation to disrupt and drive forward contemporary coach development, education, and learning experiences. According to Morgan et al. (2013a), ‘cutting edge’ pedagogies are those that exist outside the realm of traditional sports coaching education that allow coaches to better engage with alternative learning opportunities to increase the relevancy of their experiences.

Indeed, we acknowledge that a number of novel schemes of training have/are being developed in response to calls for alternative and innovative learning opportunities for sport practitioners. In this current paper our own approach adds to a growing collection of existing work seeking to innovate in the realm of sport practitioner education in order to communicate complex issues in novel and creative formats. Some examples include Muir and Munrow-Chandler's (2020) adoption of infographics to promote athletes' mental health, and Smith and Arthur's (2022) and McMahon, McGannon and Zehntner's (2017) respective use of ethnodrama as both a method to illustrate conflict in elite sport (Smith and Arthur) and to explore dominant cultural ideologies around being 'slim to win' and subsequent physical and emotional health effects on elite swimmers (McMahon et al.; McMahon & DinanThompson, 2011).

The opportunity to (re)present data in an innovative manner with an aim of enhancing education on a challenging topic was intriguing to the authors of this paper as coach educators, sport practitioners and athlete welfare scholars. Creating an interactive installation that allowed sport practitioners to engage with research data beyond the normative workshop or academic paper had the potential to 'put to work' and to increase the impact of the existing research of the first author (Kavanagh, 2014; Kavanagh et al., 2017). The art-informed approach taken was inspired by innovations in sports coaching pedagogy (Jones & Turner, 2006; Morgan et al., 2013a; Morgan et al., 2013b), and intrigued by the potential of art-informed methods, particularly where these demonstrate the potential to evoke 'jarring' and 'unsettling' feelings among learners leading to reflexive thinking (Trevelyan et al., 2014).

Thus, the current paper emerges at the nexus of athlete welfare research, innovations in sport psychology and sport coaching pedagogy, and arts-informed approaches to teaching and learning. This study contributes threefold to current

knowledge: by (1) outlining the development of an ‘art-informed’ interactive and immersive exhibition, an approach not previously used in sport practitioner education; (2) using this approach to tackle a social issue in sport and bring to life voices of athletes who have experienced abuse while training and competing, and (3) exploring the value and impact of this approach from the perspective participants.

The event: curating an interactive and immersive exhibition on sport coaching violence

Entitled *Ways of Seeing Sport Coaching Violence*, we curated an immersive and interactive exhibition which was hosted at Bournemouth University. We were particularly inspired by the work of Terra Lopez (2017) and their exhibition “This is what it feels like”¹ which examined how women fear for their physical safety and have faced oppression in their daily lives. Further, we also recognise the influence of the work of Elisabeth Simbuerger and Cath Lambert at Warwick University known as *Sociologists Talking*, which adopted a live gallery of podcasts with the voices of sociologists bringing to life core topics (Lambert, 2012; Back, 2008). Within sport-based research, we have been inspired by scholars such as Dr Jenny McMahon and her use of the innovative presentation of autoethnographic and ethnodrama research (e.g., McMahon et al., 2017; McMahon & DinanThompson, 2011) and Dr Jayne Caudwell’s work (at the time, work-in-progress) with people from trans and non-binary community, sharing their personal drawings representing access to and engagement in the leisure pursuit of swimming in the UK (e.g., Caudwell, 2022).

¹ THIS IS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE debuted at Art Street in Sacramento, CA on February 3, 2017 - <https://thisiswhatitfeelslikeproject.com>

Our own exhibition (re)presented qualitative data from some of the first authors' previous work in the field (Kavanagh, 2014; Kavanagh et al., 2017). This previous work collected narrative stories of athletes who had experienced abuse while in high performance environments. Until this point the data had been shared in a more traditional format through the representation of themes in the narrative data and disseminated through research papers, academic conferences and teaching on undergraduate and post-graduate courses. (Re)presenting the topic of abuse and the voices of participants in the form of an exhibition afforded the opportunity to share the data in a different manner and bring it to life in a way that had not been possible when adopting more traditional formats. We acknowledge that for practical reasons not all data included in the previously published research were included in the exhibition, meaning that we were required to further 'filter' the data and decide on which data to include. In doing so, we were guided by the themes in the previously published research and took care to select data to represent the breadth and depth of themes and athlete abuse experiences as authentically as possible within the exhibit. The previously collected data was (re)presented in the form of text, written or projected onto the surfaces of the room and displayed on easels like a gallery exhibit.

We chose to present the data both in audio and textual format, we included some theory (e.g. definitions of abuse, an overview of the duty of care, information about safeguarding) as textual/visual information. The voices were re-recorded so as to preserve the anonymity of the actual research participant. These voices were played on the speakers around the room and were further reproduced on 'listening stations' whereby participants could put on headphones and listen to the voices more closely. Data was both static and also rolling through screens with seating for participants to sit and watch or

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read the extracts. We also had extracts written on sporting artefacts such as footballs and rugby balls.

The *Ways of Seeing Sport Coaching Violence* exhibition was hosted as part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science. The event opened at 6pm and remained open to guests for 3 hours. Attendees could move around the room freely and engage as they wished with the different items in the exhibition. Photos of the event are presented below in figures 1-6.



Figure 1: data as a gallery



Figure 2: Examples of data used in the exhibition

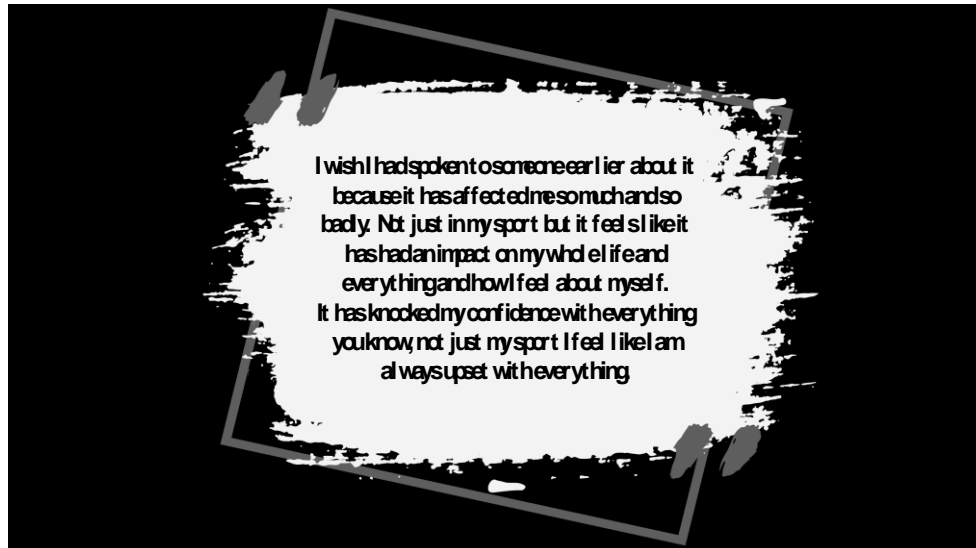


Figure 3: Example of data used in the exhibition



Figure 4: Stop, look, listen



Figure 5: Read it, feel it, touch it – hands on data

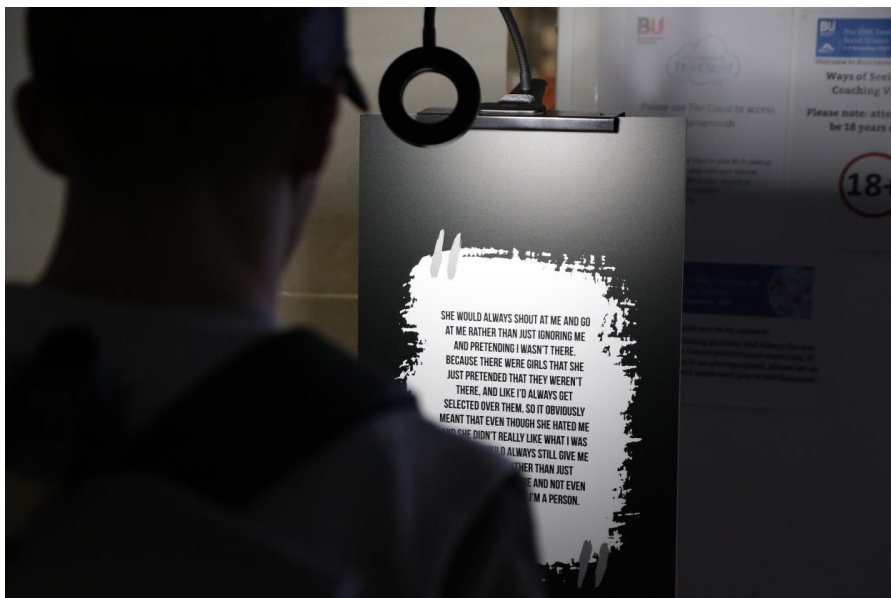


Figure 6: She would always shout at me...

Methodology

In accordance with an interpretive qualitative approach, the aim of the data collection following the event was to ‘capture’ meanings and qualities such as feelings, thoughts and experiences that are non-quantifiable (Jones, 2015). Sport coaches and sport psychologists in the region (whom we refer to in this paper collectively as sport

practitioners) were invited to attend the exhibition (outlined above). The event was marketed using flyers, e-mail and through word of mouth. Promotional material shared that event attendees would be given the opportunity to engage with research on abuse, intimidation and violence in sport through attending an arts-based, audiovisual installation which would share athletes' verbatim stories. Sixty participants attended the exhibition with thirty-one (n=31, 15 female, 16 male, Mage = 27.4) providing post-event qualitative questionnaire reflections on attending the event and seven (n=7, two males and five females, aged between 19 and 54 years, Mage = 37.1) subsequently participating in semi-structured interviews to develop an in-depth insight into their experiences of the event.

After navigating the exhibition, attendees were asked to share their immediate thoughts and experiences of the event. In written format they could share any reflections concerning the event from singular words to more detailed extracts or thoughts. This method was adopted so that some initial reflections upon leaving the event were captured. The questionnaires completed by the participants served as the first phase of the research and data collection. The decision was made to use a qualitative, open approach to the questionnaire. We did so, anticipating that the individuals would react or feel emotion to situations in different ways (Barone & Eisner, 2012) meaning responses to the installation would be subjective. The questionnaires were offered to all attendees' post-installation with no obligation to complete. Refreshments were available outside of the exhibition along with comfortable quiet seating areas so that guests could spend time outside of the exhibit and complete the questionnaire in private. Questionnaires were handed out on a clip board, completed by hand and returned directly to the lead researcher. The questionnaire collected demographic data and comprised three broad topic areas including capturing initial thoughts surrounding the

topic of abuse in sport, sharing immediate thoughts on the design of the installation and any other comments surrounding the experience of attending the exhibition. Finally, participants were asked to indicate if they would be willing to take part in a follow up interview. The questionnaire therefore served as a recruitment method in order to conduct follow-up interviews with participants willing to share more deeply their experience of attending the event.

Seven (n=7) participants were interviewed in person about their experience of the exhibition. Of these, four were currently engaging in coaching practice and three were sport psychology practitioners, one undergoing training (British Psychological Society, BPS Stage-2), two qualified (BPS & BASES Accredited, HCPC registered). Ethical approval was obtained to examine the post-exhibition experiences and to conduct the follow-up interviews. The interview guide was flexible and included an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and their sport practitioner background, any previous knowledge of the topic of abuse in sport, their experience of navigating the exhibition, and their perception of the impact during and post event. The interviews were conducted within one month of the exhibition and therefore afforded a delayed reflection after attending the event. Interviews lasted between 45 and 53 minutes.

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was utilised to evaluate the qualitative data from the interviews and the post-event questionnaires. Thus, we recognise the presentation of the results as themes developed through our interpretation of the data. In organising this into themes there was a process of transcription of the qualitative data followed by familiarization through repeatedly reading the transcripts while listening to the recordings of the interviews. During data description, the content of the transcripts were thematically analysed to identify patterns and themes. These themes captured the

experience of attending the exhibit and the structural nature of the event and further the embodied experience of being presented with the topic of abuse in this format.

From an ethical perspective this study needed to be considered from a number of viewpoints. Firstly, the data used for the exhibit was derived from original studies that collected athlete narratives of abuse in high performance spaces (Kavanagh, 2014; Kavanagh et al., 2017). These studies were reviewed by a university ethics board, however, the participants were originally asked about the presentation of the data through more formal routes (such as teaching and publication of papers). The participants were contacted through a follow up e-mail in order to check that they were happy with their stories being re-presented within the exhibition. Participants provided confirmation and were extremely supportive of the idea in its ability to engage an audience on the topic of abuse in sport. It remained of primacy to protect the anonymity of those who featured (McMahon et al., 2022), thus while voices were represented there was no mention of other demographic details such as the sports included or the ages of the athletes. We further adopted the stance of ‘interpretive authority’ in regard to the presentation of the stories or extracts (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 148) in order to preserve the anonymity of other key actors (such as coaches, sport scientists, family members). As Bochner and Ellis (2016) note, we needed to ensure that we were accountable for what we did and did not include in the exhibition, and the anonymity and protection of the participants was in our minds at all stages in the curation of the event.

For visitors to the exhibition we included information at the event that signposted attendees should the content be in any way triggering and/or should they need to follow up on a disclosure of abuse. This information included guidelines on reporting and sources of support (both physical and virtual resources). We also put an over-18 age

restriction on the event to ensure that attendees were adults and did not need a guardian to attend with them or to provide consent.

Findings

The findings of the qualitative data demonstrated how attendance at the event served to stimulate critical reflexivity, provoke a sense of unease in encountering unsettling stories and empower attendees toward behaviour change. Participants further shared their thoughts on interactive immersive learning experiences as a method to engage with the topic of abuse in sport.

Stimulating critical reflexivity (self, other and power)

The process of reflection and reflexivity was present in the findings. The interviews afforded an insight into how the participants felt in the aftermath of the event and how the exhibit prompted greater reflection *on* and reflexivity *in* their practice. For example, one participant noted:

So I went with my friends and we were talking about, because we both coach like kind of similar and we talked about like, oh, have we been coaching like effectively have we been abusive? And like it's definitely had an impact; this gives me a new way of seeing coaches... like seeing how I coach my athletes, I guess, because I don't want them to have a negative experience don't want them to go through any the things that these athletes were going through, it definitely does have a negative effect as we can see on these athletes. It's on my mind now when I coach.

This speaks to reflexivity in the moment through a conversation with another coach about practice while processing the data. There was an emphasis on feeling sympathy for the athletes and their experiences, and not wishing to make others have similar stories to share. Yet further the activation to think about this when coaching and using this as an impetus for fostering positive experiences for their athletes. Such findings echo Schon's (1983) distinction between 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action' and

demonstrate how being moved or challenged by the data afforded both forms of reflection to take place.

Reflective practice and reflective learning are recognised as important aspects of psychology and coaching practice (Cropley et al., 2020; Knowles et al., 2011). Reflection is thought to facilitate examination and sense making of practice and in turn raise knowledge in action consciousness (Knowles et al., 2011). Reflexivity is usually distinguished from other kinds of reflection by its timing. Reflective practices typically involve a retrospective examination of a practice situation, 'reflexivity' is said to take place in the moment, while one is still in the midst of an experience (D'Cruz et al., 2007).

As Knowles et al. (2006) suggest reflection is a form of analysis and evaluation that can be used to elicit change in practice and is an important part of the learning process. Part of the experience was linked to thinking about a topic that participants might not be familiar with or may not have engaged with previous to attending the event: "it's quite uncomfortable but at the same time quite reflective so you know you're looking at something that isn't exposed in sport very often, if at all". Engaging with the data made participants feel they needed to stop and think, "you do reflect there's no two ways about it and you kind of think what was the impact of saying that or doing that?".

Participants referred to the power that the coach/psychologist can occupy which they might not always be cognisant of in the moment. Further there was consideration of how hearing and reading athlete stories allowed them to (re)view taken for granted practice from the perspective of 'the other':

I do, like realise now that humour can be used as a form of abuse because like it's like (an) undertone (of) violence and it's not okay... So I'm like looking back... I might have said like a joke that might have been much more abusive than I initially would have liked it to be.

Adams (2020) suggests that while humour in sport can be seen to have cultural and pedagogical importance it must be used responsibly. Speaking to these ideas, Edwards

and Jones (2018) highlight how (male) coaches' use of humour can manifest in 'inclusionary put-downs' and 'disciplinary humour' where teasing and disparaging comments are used in caring, friendly and 'unifying' ways but also as calculated attacks intended to alienate and re-establish compliance and hierarchy. Raising awareness of where potentially normalised practices can be experienced as abusive was deemed enlightening for the participants.

Encountering (unsettling) stories

Participants referred to the experience of being confronted by the data, causing them to feel uncomfortable, challenged and moved. The interviews support the presence of felt difficulty reported in other works of this nature (Trevelyan et al., 2014). All participants shared how the event made them consider 'what it would feel like' to experience violence as a participant in sport but more importantly to consider how the people behind the voices or extracts felt. As one participant shared

the conflicting emotions that I had was predominately your sadness and frustration. As a coach, you want to be the best coach that you can be to help the athlete be the best version of themselves and you read stuff like this and it's just upsetting... the fact that we're still not looking after athletes [visibly upset and shakiness in voice].

While for some the exhibit promoted sadness or empathy for the people whose experiences were documented, in others there was a sense of frustration that athletes can experience abuse and how it is often normalised.

It is anticipated that experiencing 'felt difficulty', provoked by engaging with material that is perplexing or disorientating has the potential to provide a platform for sport practitioners to reflect authentically on and transform their own practice. One participant highlighted the impact of "actually hearing the athlete's stories because it has more of an effect hearing it as you can hear the pain in their voice". This speaks to

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engendering empathic understanding and an emotional connection. This was also reflected in the following extract:

It did like, touch a nerve. I did feel like a lot of emotions did hit me. But then when I stepped out, I did feel like oh, my god, and at the same time was so surreal because I didn't know that lot of athletes will go through like, so much abuse and like the extent of the abuse moved me so much but yeah when I stepped out I felt safe when I was like oh god [lets out a big sigh of relief].

There was further reflection on capturing voices, “voices often get lost, you’ve got them in writing, you’ve got them spoken, you can see them, you are hearing them more and more”. The audio recordings created an unfamiliar sensory environment for the participants to engage with (Lambert, 2012), therefore opening a space for critical reflexivity through a sense of hearing athlete stories. The findings suggest how interactive and immersive exhibitions have the potential to evoke empathy and enable attendees to think more deeply about the experience of being abused, thus getting closer to or considering the experience of ‘others’. In this case, those ‘others’ whose voices were represented in the exhibit.

On empowering change

While it was not a direct aim of the exhibition it was hoped that learning would take place and that attendees would feel more informed on matters relating to abuse, safeguarding and a duty to care in sport. Knowledge acquisition is suggested in the following quote:

that's the extreme and you know, this physical and sexual abuse are probably seen as quite like, okay, that's definitely abuse because very clear cut...I think there is the other side of it, which is probably more overlooked, because it's not that oh, that definitely is abuse... what I learnt, there isn't really a 'grey area' or shouldn't be, that if the athlete feels it is abuse then that is their experience of the situation.

Participants referred to being reminded of the responsibility they hold as a sport practitioner and how their practice is evaluated by the people whom they work with, “it opens your eyes to see that as a coach you have a big responsibility and you can have a

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massive effect on people without even realising” another participant said how “it made me consider how my behaviours may affect others and how others could perceive my coaching methods”. Finally, one participant noted how the exhibition “makes me more determined to combat these cultures, I have a responsibility”. There was an emancipative and empowering effect of attendance whereby participants felt activated to challenge or be more critical of their own practice but also the spaces in which they work.

The interviews were a reminder that abuse in sport is still something that is deemed to occur in the background, often left unspoken about:

a lot of it is almost in the dark, if you like because a lot of this stuff is happening behind closed doors in coaching sessions where it's not being regulated, so to speak. So I think that's kind of the overarching feeling that I got... sport is obviously celebrated in so many positive ways like everyone thinks that sport is very positive, and I think it was ‘shining a light’ on what we wouldn’t usually see in sport or shouldn’t see was a reminder.

The fact that the exhibit served as a reminder that sport is not always positive was an important reflection. As Trevelyan et al. (2014) recounted when using ABL in social work, such an approach can invite practitioners to insert themselves into the different vignettes and to relate these to their own practice experiences. In doing so it can result in transformative or critically reflexive questions concerning current practice and culture.

On engaging with innovative pedagogies

Participants all shared their insights into the exhibit as a *different* way to learn and engage with the topic of abuse. The multi-layered nature of the experience was suggested to increase its impact and the ability for the topic to resonate with the attendee:

actually, reading it and seeing it and hearing the voices it just seemed like I was learning more. It became more of a like it wasn’t just reading on a page and it was just like another case of, or reading the newspaper or blog but it just came to life a lot more... Some of the stuff I hadn’t really spent time thinking about how much damage or how much the athletes normalise it.

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This participant explained how the use of art-informed methods allowed the athlete's stories to "come to life" which helped her develop a different way of thinking through or experiencing the emotion of the content.

One of the participants referred to creating curiosity through changing the learning environment:

This isn't what I expect normally, I was expecting, you know, maybe a presentation and a 400 PowerPoint slide thing... so, I think they (practitioners) come into something like this, you get that preconceived idea to a sport coach type presentation, I know what that will look like. And this actually changes it up. And it's much more impactful. It's, a, it's much more engaging because it's not something useless it creates that curiosity.

This was echoed by another in the following extract:

I definitely think it was more beneficial than actually like, sitting down and reading... having it like, presented to me in a different way, and like being able to hear stuff as well definitely made me like, more engaged. And I was like, oh, yeah, this makes me want to know more about this topic. It was very like eye opening for it to be presented in this way.

While it is acknowledged that these are preliminary findings, they speak to the efficacy of art-informed methods, especially when bringing to life confronting or challenging data or concepts.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Building on the recommendations of researchers such as Morgan et al. (2013a; 2013b) concerning the efficacy of art informed learning as a way to activate learners, and learning, we embraced the challenge and experimented with this method as a tool to educate sport practitioners (including sport coaches and sport psychologists) on the topic of abuse in sport. The event was curated as an attempt to enable those who attended to see, hear and confront the contemporary issue of abuse in the world sport, from the perspective of 'others.' As such, it aimed to bring sport practitioners together around a

shared concern/problem in the sport industry, with the aim of inspiring awareness, increasing understanding of the topic, and promoting empathy or care in practice.

The formality of traditional sport psychology and coaching pedagogy has been criticised by researchers because of its overly educational structure resulting in learners having difficulty transferring the knowledge into real-life situations (Chesterfield et al., 2010). The structure of the installation and the use of an arts-informed approach allowed the participants to engage with the materials in a way that provoked thought and emotion that could serve to deepen the learning process (Hughes, 2009). Morgan et al. (2013a) suggest using ‘cutting edge’ pedagogies in teaching or education can provoke greater engagement from learners. The adoption of innovative methods such as those used in our study have the potential to allow individuals to engage in a freer and different way of thinking, ultimately providing meaning to their experiences promoting critical reflection of their actions. This was certainly echoed through the data collected from participants and from our experience of experimenting with this as a method.

The data demonstrated how bringing topics to life in non-traditional formats can promote emotional engagement alongside the learning of theoretical principles or concepts. Perhaps more importantly doing so led to the potential to promote meaningful change or long-term reflection on practice. As Morgan et al. (2013a) suggest, changing the way in which we conceptualise the learning experience can result in us becoming facilitators of learning, rather than transmitters of knowledge. This can afford examples of innovative constructivist learning opportunities that enhance the nexus between theory and practice (Morgan et al., 2013b).

This study responded to Kerr and Stirling’s (2019) criticism of sport psychology and coaching research and practice which they felt had remained relatively silent on the topics of abuse and safeguarding. As a result, sport coaches and sport psychology

consultants may still be ill-prepared to carry out professional responsibilities to detect, address, and/or intervene in cases of abuse in sport. Sport practitioners such as coaches and psychologists, by virtue of their roles and the nature of their work, are uniquely positioned to prevent and address harm to athletes and they may often be the first point of contact for athlete disclosures, but such topics need to be more present in the curricula aligned with practitioner training.

In closing, we acknowledge that further research is required to really consider the scope of such methods in formal sport practitioner training and education, and that interactive installations and such events are not a panacea in practitioner development but rather should form one part of a wider curricula and framework (alongside follow up activities, readings, site visits, guest speakers, etc). Getting sport practitioners to engage with research data via multiple varying methods and activities and in a more sustained manner may enable them to access/re-access the thoughts and feelings which could meaningfully inspire in-situ action. Moreover, we propose that sport psychologists, coaches and researchers explore art-informed learning opportunities more broadly to reflect on what could ‘hit home’ within their own unique coaching/sport contexts, as a means to engage with (challenging) topics in a more dynamic manner.

Finally, we continue to reflect on further ways to extend this and future events of a similar ilk and suggest three ways forward: (1) coaches and athletes could be (more) active participants in decision making about how data are presented; (2) organisers could combine the installation with other ‘innovative pedagogies’, for example via integrating sporadic ethno-dramatic performances within the event performed by student-actors interacting with the event visitors to extend the ‘confronting’ nature of the topic within the event space, and (3) exploring the possibilities for integrating the event with Virtual

Reality (augmented, mixed, extended reality) technologies and ways this could extend its impact.

As a research team we had anticipated taking the exhibition ‘on the road’ in order to share it more widely and to further explore the efficacy of the approach for sport practitioner education on the topic of abuse. We made sure in the design process that whatever we created was reusable and sustainable and therefore could be shared in/across multiple formats. Unfortunately, Covid-19 prevented us from taking the event forward in its entirety. That said, aspects of the exhibition have already been encompassed in classroom teaching and shared through research dissemination at conferences (such as the sharing of participant voices, showing the digital scrolling data extracts). The use of elements of the exhibition to be encompassed in safeguarding training for sport and exercise sciences is currently being explored, all of these examples we believe speak to the legacy of the initial event and potential for the adoption of the immersive, interactive exhibition as a method for education and research dissemination in the future both on the topic of abuse and beyond.

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