**Chapter 6.**

**Micropolitics & Working as a Performance Analyst in Sport
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## Introduction

Working in sport can be a messy reality, with numerous people, opinions, attitudes and personalities all contributing to a mixing pot of micropolitics, that is, the various day-to-day social realities that staff have to work in and navigate. Being able to navigate through this is tricky and known as a micropolitical literacy. Recent empirical studies have begun to illuminate some of the micropolitical realities of working life within professional sport, with such realities resulting from an evolving body of literature that has altered our perception of the nature of the practitioner environment (Gibson & Groom, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Huggan, Nelson & Potrac, 2015; Thompson et al., 2015). Indeed, such investigations have focussed on the working lives of coaches, fitness coaches and performance analysts, evidencing the micro-political challenges faced by practitioners in negotiating the day-to-day environment of professional sport.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the background to, and theoretical concepts of, micropolitics, along with some of the key findings from related literature. Finally, we will provide a discussion that emphasizes performance analysts’ understanding of the complex and ambiguous nature of professional working life, and some suggestions for improving your ability to navigate the micropolitical terrain.

**Background to micropolitics**

Working organisations have been identified as political systems of a kind, with complexities involved in organisational life and constant paradoxes or double blinds (Burns, 1961; Butcher & Clarke, 2003). Leftwich (2005) outlines key elements that make up the political nature of human behaviours as people, resources, and power. Indeed, *people* tend to have conflicting ideas, preferences, and interests, governed by *power* and the ability to achieve one’s desired outcome and the *resources* available to everyone such as material (land, equipment, or money) or non-material (time, status, support, and opportunity) in nature. In performance analysis this is no different, with different analysts *(people)*, having conflicting ideas about how the analysis workflows should be undertaken dictated by their position *(power)* using a variety of technologies *(resources)* depending on various socio-economic factors. This is just one example, but it is clear that micro-politics is in all aspects of organisational life, including our discipline. Frequently used throughout the literature, Blasé’s (1991, p. 11) definition of micropolitics states that:

[m]icro-politics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with a motivation to use power and influence and/or protect.

Taking this approach to studying organisational life allows us to comprehend the inherent political nature that establishes itself within any circumstance that brings two or more people together in any formal, public, or private setting (Leftwich, 2005). As a result, this approach challenges the widespread conception that politics and political activity occurs solely within political institutions and amongst those who are socialised within such institutions. Instead, Leftwich argues that political activity is a characteristic of everyday social life and that politics is not ‘simply an unnecessary, temporary’ or, a ‘distasteful phenomenon that we could do without’ (p. 107). In fact, politics is vital to our social existence, characterised by intrinsic, necessary and functional features of our everyday lives and working practice. Additionally, Ball (1987) indicates that denying the existence and relevance of micropolitics in effect condemns organisational research as ineffectual, and far removed from the realities of working life in organisations.

The exploration of micropolitics within organisational life has been evident within numerous organisational settings such as schools (e.g. Ball, 1987; Kelchtermans, 2002) and business environments (e.g., Dörrenbächer & Geppert, 2006). Although the use of micro-political theory as a lens to understand the business environment has received significant attention, Potrac and Jones (2009a) have called for similar such theory aimed at understanding the working environment of those in professional sport, and in particular professional football in an attempt to shed light on the ‘dark side’ of organisational life (Hoyle, 1987). Though this call and much of the research is directly towards football, the findings are relevant across sports and not contextualised solely to a single sport, instead they remain relevant to those working in other sports too.

We have already discussed coaching in the opening chapter of this book, and have come to understand it as a complex and messy process. Building further on the rationalistic illustrations of the practice of coaches (Cassidy et al., 2004; Jones & Wallace, 2005) additional research has positioned coaching as a power-ridden, everyday pursuit which requires practitioners to manage micro-relations with other stakeholders (e.g. athletes, other coaches, manages, owners) as a principal component of their duties (Potrac & Jones, 2009a). Indeed, research investigating the work of coaches (Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Thompson et al., 2015) suggest that ‘face-work’ (Goffman, 1959) is not only utilised by coaches working at the elite level of football, but also fitness coaches/sport scientists employed within this industry. ‘Face’ is described as an individual’s public self-image which develops with and alongside social interaction, and such ‘face-work’ is efforts made to maintain that image, with conscious efforts often employed by individuals to achieve ‘buy-in’ from players that they are responsible for.

**Key theoretical concepts**

Much of the micropolitical theory is drawn from the work of Ball (1987) and Kelchtermans (1993, 1996, 2005, 2009), with Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) furthering the theoretical framework of micro-politics in understanding working life in school environments and how teachers make sense of their working lives. Key to Kelchtermans’ (1993) micro-political inquiry are two frameworks: (1) *subjective educational theory*, which is the personal system of knowledge and beliefs about professional sport that practitioners use to perform their jobs (i.e. ‘know how’), and (2) the *personal interpretive framework*, which is the set of beliefs and representations developed over time that operates as a lens through which practitioners perceive their job situation and their behaviours.

### Professional self-understanding

The *personal interpretive framework* is formed through the career experiences of workers and provides them with a perceived identity of themselves within the workplace, alongside a system of knowledge and beliefs related to their professional activity (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). Here, identity is developed over time and relates to the understanding a practitioner has of themselves and influences the sense-making processes of practitioners in any given situation. While our life experiences reflect who we are, this sense of identity is also developed through reflection on *past* and *future* understandings of the *self*. Kelchtermans’ (1993, 2005) notion of the *professional self* is the product of interaction with our environment and consists of five sub-constructs: *self-image*, *self-esteem*, *job motivation*, *task perception* and *future prospects*.

Kelchtermans, (1993, 2005) explains each, beginning with *self-image*, which reflects how practitioners see themselves, how others see them, and how they would typify themselves as an employee. Practitioners tend to revealself-imagein self-descriptive statements, for example, how they would describe themselves to others. This description is often informed by principles that inform a practitioner’s professional behaviour and is aligned with the perceptions of significant others. An example might be an analyst describing themselves as an *‘innovative and creative analyst with a skill for effective feedback delivery’.* Secondly, *self-esteem* refers to the evaluation of oneself as an employee (i.e., ‘how good am I at my job?’). Such reflections lead to either positive or negative levels of self-esteem. Within the context of sport, a coach’s sense of self may be mediated by the views of their athletes, much like an analyst’s might be by the coach. Additionally, the positive or negative judgments from others play an important role in constructing levels of self-esteem. An analyst might perceive themselves as ‘an integral part of the team’, if they receive feedback from coaches that helps affirm that positive view. According to Kelchtermans, *job motivation* is reflected in one’s directional effort to select, stay in, or leave an employment position (i.e., ‘the drive to be an analyst or coach’). Weakened social status or respect among colleagues can lead also lead to decreases in the job motivation. Therefore, job motivation is interrelated with an employee’s self-esteem. Positive feedback and positive results that can be linked to the success of analysis workflows might enhance this for the performance analyst. *Task perception* is referred to as the way employees define their job (i.e., ‘what ought I to be doing?’). Moreover, productive relationships with colleagues (i.e., fellow analysts, fitness coaches, coaches etc.) and being recognised as competent are significant in the evaluation of such an understanding. Positive task perception may also include autonomy and cooperation with colleagues, along with a stable work environment. Finally, Kelchtermans (1993, 2005) identified *future prospects* in understanding the professional self. This may include reflective questions such as (i.e., ‘how do I see myself in my role in years to come and how do I feel about that?’). Furthermore, the interrelated nature of self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, and task perception influences practitioner’s perception of future prospects.

### Professional interests

Extending the micropolitical framework, the concept of *professional interests* was introduced to understand micropolitical action (Kelchtermans, 1993; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009). Professional interests form part of Kelchtermans’ (2009) subjective educational theory as the “personal system of knowledge and beliefs” (p. 263) about a practitioner’s working environment. This system prompts questions such as “how should I deal with this particular situation?” and “why should I do it that way?”. Indeed, addressing the above questions will help the practitioner to understand the micropolitical nature of a given situation. Developing an ability to read, judge and act upon a situation is essential to becoming competent and successful in different circumstances.

Consistent with Blasé, (1991), Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) outlined professional interests as central to micropolitical theory. The first category of professional interests is that of *self-interests.* Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) note that when self-esteem or task perception is threatened, the protection of self-interests tend to emerge. Specifically, self-interests guard integrity and identity. In elaborating, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) identify the importance of seeking self-affirmation, coping with vulnerabilityand visibility*.* Additionally, the judgment from others is pertinent in searching for self-affirmation*.* In instances of vulnerability, practitioners sense threats to their professional recognition and social relationships (Kelchtermans, 1996). Relatedly, Blasé (1988) described the vulnerable and visible nature of professional environments as “working in a fishbowl,” where significant others observe and evaluate day-to-day working practices (p. 135).

*Material interests* reflect the access to specific materials, funds or infrastructure needed for a practitioner to carry out their role. Within the sport context, this may be access to facilities, software, or other equipment key to one’s day-to-day practice. *Organisational interests* are concerned with roles, positions, procedures, and formal tasks within the working environment. Here, the retention of a job and the consideration of job offers make up key organisational interests for practitioners. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) suggested that increased job uncertainty can lead to threatened self-esteem and professional competencies. *Cultural-ideological interests* revolve around the explicit norms, ideals or values manifested within a working environment and the organisational culture. Specifically, Altrichter and Salzgeber (2000) indicate these interests as the embodiment of the interactions and procedures in defining that culture. Finally, *social-professional interests* reflect the interpersonal relationships among practitioners within the organisation. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) recognised the need to allow for interactions that positively or negatively affect working conditions (e.g., a climate of mistrust, conflict, suspicion, and gossip). Blasé (1988) also described a continuum of political strategies that are either reactive or proactive in nature. Reactive strategies are utilised to maintain, negotiate, and protect professional self-interests. Proactive strategies are utilised to improve a given situation or working conditions. These micropolitical strategies become evident in a variety of actions and behaviours such as talking, pleading, arguing, gossiping, flattering, being silent, avoiding taking sides, accepting extra duties, and the use of humour (Blasé, 1991). However simply creating a list which sums up all actions or strategies is not relevant or possible, since almost any action can become micro-politically meaningful in a particular context, requiring a response of sorts which may not have been on the list.

### Professional Leadership Identity

Recent focus has also addressed the concept of professional leadership identity and the process of constructing a professional leadership identity as a micro political activity (Brown & Coupland, 2016; Croft et al., 2015; Koveshnikov et al., 2016). Indeed, such attention has shed light on the potential for investigating and understanding the working practices of those employed within professional sport. Giddens (1991) describes self-identity as a person understanding the self by reflexivity. Sveningson and Alvesson (2003) suggest that identity themes are attended to on numerous levels including organisational, professional, social and individual, with some of these being linked when organisational identities are seen to cross over to, or fuel, individual identities. The notion of identity is viewed as critical for a large number of issues including meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, logics of action and decision-making, stability and change, leadership, group and intergroup relations, and organisational collaborations (Sveningson & Alvesson, 2003). Therefore, exploring concepts of identity, as above, and identity work, as below, have become key when understanding organisational life.

Sveningson and Alvesson (2003) define identity work as people engaging in a process of forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising the constructions that are productive in contributing to the achievement of desired outcomes in the workplace. More generally, specific events, encounters, transitions, and surprises, as well as more constant strains, serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity. Koveshnikov et al. (2016) further outlined the power that emerges through the construction of certain situations and relationships. Significantly, they suggest that identities formed are dynamic and relational, due to the constant need for (re)negotiation and (re)construction through and in interactions among those in the organisation with employees making sense of who they are, before taking up alternative positions which subsequently influence how employees perceive themselves, others, and relationships with others.

**Micropolitics in sport**

Potrac and Jones (2009b) explored the micro-political strategies of a coach (Gavin – pseudonym) in persuading the players, assistant coach, and chairperson to accept his coaching philosophy and methods. Whilst the findings highlighted the political nature of the coaching environment, most interesting was the micro-political strategy used by Gavin to have an assistant coach removed from the club. Indeed, Gavin’s actions to manipulate the situation to expose the coach’s limitations to outmanoeuvre the coach highlighted the Machiavellian (e.g. cunning) behaviours inherent within the coaching climate. Building on this work, Potrac et al., (2013) illustrated the uncaring nature of the working relationships between coaches. Findings evidenced the insular thought processes of a performance coach relating to his career goals, as well as efforts to increase social status within the unforgiving nature of the coaching environment. Similarly, Purdy et al., (as cited in Potrac et al., 2013) highlighted the political conflict between organisational administrators and coaches by portraying elements of trust and distrust within the everyday working environment. In addition, within the sport of rowing, Purdy and Jones (2011) explored how athletes resist the authority of coaches and their coaching methods. Specifically, findings highlighted the actions of rowers who opposed perceived poor coaching practices, openly challenged and scolded coaches, and complained to senior administrators that were organisationally above the coaches.

Interestingly, the work of Thompson et al., (2015) examined the experiences of a newly appointed fitness coach [a coach responsible for the physical attributes and readiness to train of players] at an English Premier League football club, focussing on the process of becoming ‘accepted’ within the professional football club environment and amongst his professional peers. Indeed, the findings outlined the political and contested nature of the participant’s experiences of starting employment within a professional football club. Thompson et al., (2015) highlighted the impression management that the participant engaged in when trying to present himself ‘to his new colleagues’ (p. 12) and align himself with the current norms and values of the other 1st team staff. Such findings highlight the influence of the working environment and the micropolitical actions and behaviours of individuals on self-presentation (Goffman, 1959).

**Micropolitics in Performance Analysis**

Specifically, in our discipline Huggan et al., (2015) investigated the organisational life of a performance analyst in a professional football club, revealing the vulnerable nature of working in professional football. Though this is the only explicit study into the area thus far, it provides an important insight into some of the struggles faced by a professional analyst, from which readers will learn. Particularly, data evidenced the struggles of getting professional colleagues to buy into the role and the development of an identity that was coherent with the social make-up of organisational life within professional football. Indeed, such factors were perceived to have a significant impact on the success of the individual’s performance. Both papers (Huggan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2015) support the notion that micro-political activity not only affects the coaching practice, but the working lives of others employed within professional football clubs. Though this research provides an insight into the exact role of analysis and other disciplines, further work examining the interrelated nature of practitioner working life was needed. Therefore, the more recent work of Gibson and Groom (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) explored the micropolitical complexities of working life in an academy in a professional football club (Alder FC) during a period of organisational change. This provides excellent insights into the realities of current working practice in elite environments, with many examples and situations which will resonate with analysts reading this chapter, or make those seeking to go into the industry aware of what may come their way.

**A case study of micropolitics in the academy of a professional football club**

Firstly, the authors focussed on the experiences of an academy coach (Ian) employed at Alder FC through the theoretical lens of *professional self-understanding*. Findings highlighted those fellow coaches, who regularly provide professional support and reflective dialogue, would disassociate themselves from Ian when it appeared that he was under scrutiny from senior management figures. Specifically, Ian reported that, ‘it was as if to say, “we’re nothing to do with this group, or Ian”’. Ian also explained how he made sense of the communication within the club, and the political nature of such messages to help individuals strengthen their position and protect their agenda. Indeed, in engaging in such micropolitical action, coaches and leaders within the academy were perceived to be ‘stabbing each other in the back’. Interestingly, Ian revealed that he needed to become more ‘politically savvy’ to the behaviours of professional colleagues to successfully negotiate the working environment of professional football. These findings are likely to be experienced and replicated in other sports too, not just football.

Furthermore, to understand the experiences of practitioners at different organisational levels of the professional football club, Gibson and Groom (2019) continued to investigate the experiences of a Head of Foundation Phase (James) at Alder FC. Indeed, James’ primary focus was to maintain his position and stay in his role as Head of Foundation Phase and protect his own *professional self-interests*. This desire drove his motivations and his micropolitical actions and strategies within the workplace. Specifically, James took up opportunities to engage in social activities, such as staff five-a-side football games with senior managerial figures, along with informal conversations with academy coaches, who he was responsible for, to ensure that they remained ‘onside’. Interestingly, James was also aware of the need to maintain a *social distance* from staff who were perceived to be unfavourable among senior managerial figures.

The experiences of a newly appointed Head of Professional Development Phase (Jack) were also examined. Indeed, Gibson and Groom (2020) highlighted how Jack constructed a *professional leadership identity* to influence other staff, win trust, avoid becoming socially isolated, or to be perceived as weak. Such action was understood to significantly influence the protection of his employment status. Interestingly, findings evidenced sources of self-doubt felt by Jack during instances of vulnerability when trying to address the business remit of developing academy players to be sold for a financial profit. Additionally, the remit that Jack was tasked with also required him to appraise the support staff (i.e., fitness coach, physiotherapist, video analyst) that he would be working with to achieve his goals. In these instances, Jack engaged in *identity work* to evaluate whether each staff member would support him in being successful in his job role.

Finally, focussing on the experiences of the Academy Manager (Richard) at Alder FC, Gibson and Groom (2021) evidenced the need for Richard to negotiate employment vulnerability, complexity and ambiguity to strategically respond to the actions and behaviours of senior figures such as the 1st Team Manager, Chairman and Board of Directors. For example, this included ‘selling ideas’ to the 1st Team Manager, managing perceptions and expectations of the 1st Team Manager, and politically championing alternative courses of action. In such instances, Richard’s socio-cultural understanding of the working context guided his actions and behaviours when it came to deciding on when to ‘go up against’ the 1st Team Manager and when to ‘back down’. When backing down, Richard developed an emotional coping strategy to deal with these micropolitical situations. Similarly, Richard was also required to manage those below him. This prompted Richard to deal with situations where some coaches would be resistant to change, whilst engaging in micropolitical activity to win trust and respect with other coaches.

The case study findings highlight the interrelated nature of micropolitics within the academy at a professional football club. That is, all participants with various organisational roles and responsibilities engaged in some form of micro-political activity and highlighted the need to understand the micropolitical essence that can often drive the actions and behaviours of others, particularly during periods of organisational and managerial change. Specifically, the working practices, the working environment, and professional working relationships were all characterised as micropolitical in some manner. Indeed, notions of vulnerability were experienced by all four participants within the case study; however, the sources of that vulnerability were influenced by the role of each participant, and where they sat within the organisational hierarchy (i.e., the Academy Manager’s professional working relationship with the Chairperson, or the working environment of the Academy Coach).

Interestingly, the case study evidenced the ambiguous nature of working life in a professional football club and how such ambiguity was driven by poor communication from related, senior colleagues. These situations prompted unanswered questions such as, ‘what am I doing right/wrong?’ and led to participants’ negative *professional self-understanding*. Furthermore, findings highlighted that when participants’ *professional self-interests* were ‘protected’, their working environment and working practices became more favourable, leading to a more positive perception of organisational life within their professional football club.

***Why do performance analysts need to understand micropolitics?***

As highlighted above, working life in professional sport is inherently micropolitical. Indeed, the development of one’s micropolitical literacy is a requirement regardless of role, or level in the organisational hierarchy. That is, analysts employed within professional sport may need to navigate the micropolitical context of a variety of situations or events within their working life. For instance, a recently employed analyst in a new club may need to understand the micropolitical context of their new working environment by developing a level of ‘social astuteness’ through the incisive observation of others (Munyon et al., 2015). In doing so, we may consider the work of Ball (1987) in his attempt to get teachers to understand the micropolitical environment of the school. Adapting Ball’s (1987) work within the context of professional sport may prompt analysts to reflect on (a) the key influential actors within their new club, (b) how key decisions are made, (c) the managerial style of the Head Coach/1st Team Manager/Head of Department, (d) who supports and challenges the Head Coach/1st Team Manager/Head of Department, and (e) the conduct of meetings. In practical terms that might be the analyst taking a ‘back seat’ in initial weeks, seeking to observe the working practices of various stakeholders in the environment and learning about them. The same might be true of players, where the analyst might seek to understand players by observation and reflection. For both, the analyst might also employ the strategy of ‘getting to know’ them away from the job role or indeed sport at all, to build a rapport in a tactic to bring them ‘onside’ early in the analyst’s career in the environment.

Following an understanding of these issues, and when presented with related situations, analysts may engage with reflective questions as suggested by Jones et al., (2011). Such questions may consist of ‘what to say to whom, when and how? What would be the consequences of such actions? And is the social cost worth it?’ (p. 3) (i.e., ‘you can’t go to war with the 1st Team Manager, you won’t win’ (Gibson & Groom, 2019, p. 16)). Answers to such questions will guide behaviour as a practitioner and may be further informed by thinking about their own self-image (i.e., how you would describe yourself to other analysts, coaches, fitness coaches, players etc. at the club) and self-esteem (i.e., how others would describe/judge you in your role as an analyst) (Kelchtermans, 1993). Furthermore, in their exploration of the narrative story of a performance analyst working in professional football, Huggan et al., (2015) found that being perceived as a ‘proper’ performance analyst and competent in their role as a performance analyst was desirable feature of their professional life. Whilst most accept analysis as a ‘proper science’ now, there are still some reluctant to accept this, and so there may be scenarios where the analyst feels that they have to justify their role in some way, to become an accepted part of the organisation.

Reflecting on the above issues may also inform how analysts ‘sell’ ideas to senior figures within the club; a key skillset when ‘managing up’ within organisational life (Gibson & Groom, 2021). Here, Kelchtermans and Ballet’s (2002) framework of *professional interests* becomes apparent when deciding on micropolitical action. For example, a leader may need to carefully consider the best approach to protect their material interests if they require financial support for department resources (i.e., new software, equipment etc.) to enhance practice and productivity within their team. When engaging in such action, one may need to understand ‘what the powers that be are like, what potentially could they do with this problem… if something needs weight behind it, going to the Chairman or a money man might be the answer’ (Gibson & Groom, 2020, p. 773). Analysts might also think tactically about how to explain to and, gain the understanding of the decision makers about the value that a certain new product brings them. Drawing upon some of the content in chapters two and ten of this book may also provide guidance here. A sound pedagogical approach to investing in analysis infrastructure is critical, as is finding the optimal solution based upon budgetary confines, thus there will be a need to think this through thoroughly before going ‘up’ to have conversations.

As discussed, leading a department of analysts requires a level of micropolitical skill. Such an endeavour not only requires an individual to manage-up (i.e., Head Coach/1st Team Manager/Sporting Director), but to also manage those hierarchically below in your team of analysts. Here, one may consider the social group identity of the team they are responsible for, and how the creation of their own professional leadership identity is aligned to that of the group. As outlined by Gibson & Groom (2020), leaders may be required to consistently revise and maintain their professional leadership identity as the micropolitical landscape evolves, and their micropolitical literacy becomes increasingly informed. Indeed, a new Head of Performance Analysis may have to ‘fit into them [their team] first, get their trust… rather than isolate’ themselves (Gibson & Groom, 2020, p. 772) before implementing desired or required changes to working practices. In doing so, the leader is protecting their own self-interests by getting their staff ‘onside’ (Gibson & Groom, 2019).

For analysts working early in their careers, the considerations of micro-political literacy will likely be vast and varied, riddled perhaps with self-doubt or imposter syndrome, especially early on if part of a ‘big’ organisation which brings its own pressures. Therefore, noting an awareness of your own *professional self* is critical. *Self-image* will likely be a big consideration early in a career, with analysts perhaps cautious of ‘overselling’ themselves early on in fear of being found out or, the other extreme by over-promoting themselves, only to be found out later on and thus damaging relations. Both of these are of course explicitly linked to *self esteem* in obvious ways. The notion of *job motivation* is unlikely to be an issue early into an analyst’s career, especially if you have landed a dream job. Motivation is therefore going to be present, though that should not stray into over eagerness or knowing place, at which point issues of *task perception* may come into play whereby analysts define their job up or down. For those engaged in and around interns or placements these issues might be further heightened as they seek to do all they can to impress over the duration of their role in order to try and secure a job at the end, which may or may not be in the pipeline. This is a consideration of *future prospects* for analysts, with interrelated issues also attached. A solution would to engage in reflection through formal means with mentors and significant others to help their own development, requiring a certain level of vulnerability and humbleness, which may harm perceptions. Though the benefits of reflective practice are many, students and early career analysts are notoriously bad at engaging with reflective practice and have pre-conceived poor conceptions of its worth. If, however it is engaged with, the value is huge, helping to navigate some of the many issues we have uncovered in this chapter.

***Concluding thoughts***

In summary, we have provided a background to micropolitics, along with some theoretical concepts that have underpinned activity aimed at understanding micropolitics in organisational life and professional sport. Although further exploration of working life in professional sport, and specifically performance analysis, is required, we believe that the need for practitioners to develop their repertoire of micropolitical skill and action is becoming increasingly prevalent. Indeed, good micropolitical literacy may reduce feelings of vulnerability in an environment that is frequently described as unstable, contested, socially complex and fraught with competing agendas amongst stakeholders (Gibson & Groom, 2019). Whilst we cannot provide a definitive, bulletproof guide of behaviours for every micropolitical situation faced as a performance analyst, we believe that reflections on the theoretical concepts and empirical findings discussed in this chapter may better prepare practitioners for considering how their behaviours may influence their day-to-day working life. Moreover, practitioners should dedicate enough of their professional development to understanding the interrelated nature of micropolitical activity and their daily procedural and technical duties within organisational life in professional sport. Indeed, we suggest that in doing so, analysts may become more ‘politically savvy’ (Gibson & Groom, 2018). Finally, in reflecting on their own experiences, Jones et al. (2011) state, ‘every utterance seemed to count, every gesture had an effect in terms of securing, maintaining, or losing respect of those we wanted to influence’ (p.3). Therefore, in your working careers as analysts, carefully consider every action, every thought and every decision, since you may not know the value or harm it may hold.

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