Within the Sport and Exercise Sciences (SES) and allied disciplines, reflective practice has become firmly established as a fundamental aspect of education, professional training and development, and applied service delivery. This has resulted in an emerging, context-specific evidence base that has attempted to make sense of the application and utility of reflective practice as a mechanism to facilitate personal and professional growth through experiential learning, and subsequently develop the knowledge required to navigate the complexities of applied practice.

This new and fully revised edition of *Reflective Practice in the Sport and Exercise Sciences* explores the contemporary conceptual landscape, critical perspectives, pedagogy, and applied considerations in reflective practice in the SES and allied disciplines. Contributions from scientists, researchers, practitioners, and academics offer innovative perspectives of reflective practice, founded on a synthesis of the contemporary empirical evidence base and applied practitioner experience.

These contributions challenge academic and/or practice-based audiences regarding the utility, research, and representation of reflective practice, while offering critical insights into the application of different approaches to reflective practice. Based on exploring the crucial interface between learning and practice, this book is important reading for all who work in the SES and allied disciplines, and, more widely, any professional aiming to become a more effective practitioner.

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This book is endorsed by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences.
Dedications

**Brendan Cropley:** First, to my fellow editors – the golden sky, the sweet silver song of the lark. Second, to my colleagues past and present – thank you for the opportunity. Third, to my friends and family – thank you for the inspiration. Most importantly, to my wife, Maria – thank you for the love . . . poetry in motion!

**Zoe Knowles:** To Professors Gilbourne, Stratton, Fairclough, Boddy, and Baltzopoulos for their academic support and wisdom. I am paying this support forward to others daily with real privilege having learned from you all. To my co-editors (#Team RP), we did it!! To my family and friends who make me reflect, strive, and challenge for the better.

**Andy Miles:** A big thanks to Ads for her ongoing love and support – she can now believe that those “just popping upstairs to do book stuff” evenings were genuine – here is that book! To my five children, all “growed up” now but loved more than ever, and to my fellow editors – “They said, ‘I bet they’ll never make it’, but just look at us . . . .”

**Emma Huntley:** To my biggest professional champions, my co-editors (aka “Team RP”) – thank you for telling me “You can!” when I believed I couldn’t. To my biggest champions at home . . . Tabo – thank you for your endless love, support and words of wisdom. My parents and sister – thank you for everything! And my amazing children – may my ceiling be your floor.

As an editorial team we would like to thank all the contributing chapter authors, who have also helped to drive the development of our community of reflective practitioners. We would also like to sincerely thank Professor Dave Gilbourne, not only for the Foreword, but for supporting us all along our journeys at one time or another.
We dedicate this book in the loving memory of Professor Lindsey Dugdill. Lindsey sadly passed away between the previous text and this current one, yet her inspiration is felt through the book from that of the Editors’ ideas to all contributors in shaping the words they wrote. Thank you.
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DAVID GILBOURNE

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**Hannah C. Wood** undertook her M.Sc. sport psychology degree at Liverpool John Moores University, during which she worked on the HERizon Project; her first experience of engaging with reflective practice. Having discovered a passion for research during her studies, she is now pursuing an exercise psychology PhD at Kings College London.
First, I would like to thank Professor Zoe Knowles for inviting me to compose this foreword. In my past career I have been very fortunate to meet and work alongside all the present editorial team and many of the contributors. In those times I always regarded myself as privileged to be in their company.

The scope of topics explored in this book serves as a testament to the way philosophic, practical, and pedagogic exploration has progressed. There is little doubt that reflective practice has gained traction across a range of disciplines and institutions. On a more cautious note, the underlying pitch of many chapters contained here serve as a reminder that reflective practice is not necessarily an easy thing to do. At a more strategic level, different authors also stress, directly or indirectly, the important role of institutional structure (as enabler) to promote participation in reflective exercises or workshops.

Despite these advances, at some level, at some time those who facilitate or support reflection may have to confront and overcome an undercurrent of sorts. In my early research days, I would often find myself explaining (sometimes defending) reflective issues. Some colleagues even asked why reflecting on practice was deserving of any form of inquiry. Often my explanation would be met with a shrug of the shoulders. At this time, workplace practitioners often seemed underwhelmed. I constantly sensed resistance. In such moments I wondered if the widespread use of the terms ‘reflective’ and ‘practice’ made the concept of reflective practice seem little more than common sense, something everyone already knew about and had been doing anyway.

Maybe times have changed. This book makes it clear that reflective practice is a well-researched discipline, one that is increasingly understood and appreciated. The opening chapters detail how reflective practice is underpinned by an extensive philosophical base and can now boast an impressive peer review history. Many of the authors demonstrate a generous approach to their writing. They openly discuss challenges they have experienced, as such, many applied stories are included in this book. These sometimes make reference to difficulties both personal and professional. Reflective stories always draw me in and remind me of the close proximity between reflective writing and auto-ethnography. In other sections of the book, topics such as: core reflective skills; attitudes toward reflection; organisational culture as a conduit to reflection; and meaningful personal
development through reflection; offer critical messages and illustrate how difficult it might be for people to engage in reflective practice. All of the above suggests reflective practice has developed in a mature and critically progressive manner. Clearly there are many barriers to overcome at academic, pedagogic, personal, and/or organisational levels. But that just seems normal to me.

A final few words if I may. I offer my congratulations and best wishes to all of those involved in bringing this important project to a successful conclusion and hope readers find the book informative and helpful in a personal and professional sense.

Professor David Gilbourne

Professor David Gilbourne specialises in critical qualitative inquiry. He was a Reader in Qualitative Research at Liverpool John Moores University before moving on to professorship roles in qualitative inquiry at Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of Hull. David acted as a Visiting Professor at Copenhagen University in 2010, and cofounded *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, the first peer-reviewed journal dedicated to disseminating qualitative research from all sport-based disciplines. David took early retirement in 2016 and lives with his wife Janette on their plant-based small holding in the rolling hills of North Wales.
Section 1

Exploring the Conceptual Landscape of Reflective Practice in SES and Allied Disciplines
1 Introduction
Reflecting on Opportunities and Journeys

Brendan Cropley, Zoe Knowles, Andy Miles, and Emma Huntley

“It’s on the strength of observation and reflection that one finds a way. So we must dig and delve unceasingly.”

– Claude Monet (n.d.)

Introducing the Text
Within the sport and exercise sciences (SES) and allied disciplines, reflective practice is becoming increasingly established as a fundamental aspect of education, training, and professional service delivery. Despite this progress, several issues concerning the nature, integration, and pedagogy of reflective practice remain. For example, reflective practice is often found aligned to the discipline of sport and exercise psychology more so than those disciplines favouring more positivistic frameworks for practice (e.g., physiology, biomechanics). Reflective practice is, however, a pedagogical and developmental approach that lies at the heart of applied practice in all SES disciplines. Further, professional applied practice is often dictated by a “hurry-up mentality” whereby practitioners are expected to be engaged in practical action rather than in critically reflective thought. The very nature of working in sport and exercise settings can, therefore, lead to a view that reflective practice is more important and accessible during training and formal professional development rather than as an integral aspect of daily practice. Finally, through our (editorial team) experiences of delivering reflective practice education events for neophyte and professional practitioners in SES and allied disciplines globally (e.g., sports therapy, strength and conditioning), we have been party to ongoing concerns relating to how reflective practitioners can be developed and how individuals and organisations might engage in the reflective process in ways that are meaningful enough to elicit effective learning and improvements to practice. It is arguably a critical time for the genre, therefore, because such considerations emphasise the ongoing necessity to establish a context specific evidence-base that embraces different epistemological positions, as well as the enduring need to better understand both the application of reflective practices and what it means to be a reflective practitioner.
With these considerations in mind, we would like to welcome you to *Reflective Practice in the Sport & Exercise Sciences: Critical Perspectives, Pedagogy, and Applied Case Studies*, which has been purposefully constructed as an evolution from our original Routledge text: *Reflective Practice in the Sport & Exercise Sciences: Contemporary Issues* published in 2014 (Knowles et al., 2014a). We (editorial team) understand that this “Second Edition” has been long in the making – this is despite the gargantuan efforts made by Professor Knowles to (re)build Team RP and mobilise us all to begin the preparation of the current text some time ago. However, as the saying goes, “All good things come to those who wait” – certainly nearly a decade has passed, which, given the developments in the SES and allied disciplines, has furnished us with ample opportunities to advance and shape this text.

Perhaps one contributing factor regarding the time between editions was the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged everyone physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. We (editorial team) recognise, therefore, that we bring this text into a very different world, one in which people have had to adapt to new ways of living, new ways of working, and new ways of being. We understand that many of our perspectives will have changed (or evolved), and the way in which we all experience our personal and professional lives is now different. We believe that these developments (in some way) can be recognised throughout our current text, with contributing authors sharing, at times, very different views about reflective practice, professional service delivery, and meaning within the SES and allied disciplines. For us, it is these different perspectives and understandings that add to the rich tapestry of this text. Indeed, it was never our intention to offer “answers” in this edition (e.g., to how we “do” reflective practice; or the most beneficial frameworks for reflective practice). Instead, our aim has been to embrace and explore the contemporary conceptual landscape, pedagogy, and applied considerations in reflective practice in the SES and allied disciplines. In attending to this aim, our intention has been to facilitate discussion concerning the concept of meaningful reflective practice and the dilemmas and challenges faced by reflective practitioners in a way that allows the genre to move forwards.

To ensure that diverse, innovative, and critical perspectives of reflective practice could be garnered in this edited text, we invited a mix of global scientists, researchers, practitioners, and academics from across a range of SES and allied disciplines. Adding to this diversity, we invited contributions from those beginning their professional journeys through to esteemed professionals, and actively encouraged our contributors to collaborate with others on their chapters. In doing so, to potentially counter the impact that the pandemic had on *togetherness* and to facilitate a *sense of collective endeavour* amongst the authors, we sought to develop a *community of reflective practitioners*. Here, we asked all authors to move beyond the traditional approach of simply preparing a chapter, and instead engage more widely with each other, the construction of this text, and the concept of reflective practice. As an editorial team, forming a community of passionate and engaged individuals was important to us as we attempted to create meaningful and lasting
collaborations both for the betterment of the discussions presented in each chapter and more widely the field. To operationalise this community, we arranged to meet all authors collectively during the preparation of their chapters. This meeting allowed us to bring everyone together to share ideas and understandings, positively challenge perceptions regarding reflective practice and associated professional training and service delivery, and develop new collaborations and lines of enquiry aimed at furthering research and insight in the area of reflective practice in the SES and allied disciplines. Beyond the publication of this text, it is our intention to continually engage in, and with, this community, building its membership and level of output. Through this we will provide opportunities to engage with you the readership also.

**A Guide to the Chapters Ahead**

We have heeded to calls presented in the recent literature and those proposed in the first edition of this text in preparation of this current edition. Specifically, we considered it important to: (a) review the current reflective practice literature in the SES and allied disciplines as a way of presenting an understanding of “where we currently are” and where the area might “need to go”; (b) provide greater evidence of the impact of reflective practice on service delivery effectiveness; (c) offer novel insights into pedagogy and applied issues relating to reflective practice; and (d) present bespoke case examples of the utility of reflective practice in a variety of different applied contexts in SES and allied disciplines. Working with the contributing authors, we wanted them to feel free to take our initial ideas in the direction that best fit with their perspectives and experiences. During the process of agreeing the content and delivery of their chapters, however, we advocated that contributions should be designed to challenge, contest, and offer innovative perspectives of reflective practice founded on a synthesis of the contemporary empirical evidence base and applied practitioner experience. Thus, this book aims to challenge both academic and practice-based audiences regarding the utility, research, and representation of reflective practice, while offering critical insights into the mechanisms and efficacy of different approaches to reflective practice. Each chapter is free flowing in design, and the book structured in a way that allowed contributors to present their work through a varied range of writing approaches. Some tell stories from their own experiences through reflective excerpts, others supplement their arguments with conversations, and others compile their discussions through reference to more traditional research-based information.

This book consists of five sections and 17 chapters, with all chapters contributing to the achievement of the aims of the book whilst also being prepared in a way that allows them to standalone as critical discussions on distinct topics related to reflective practice in the SES and allied disciplines. Section 1 – “Exploring the Conceptual Landscape of Reflective Practice in SES and Allied Disciplines” – aims to frame this text by offering conceptual insights into reflective practice and, more specifically, the reflective practitioner, as well as provide an analysis
of the current reflective practice literature that has been published since the first edition of this text. In this section, we offer insights into “what it means to be a reflective practitioner” through a novel approach to chapter construction whereby all authors contributing to this text provided their own perspectives through a vignette, on which the editorial team subsequently offered a summative analysis to facilitate ongoing critical discussion in this area. Section 2 – “Critical Perspectives” – this collection aims to provide contemporary debate regarding reflective practice, focusing specifically on the evidence underpinning the advocated efficacy of reflective practice, and critically explore the meaning of reflective practice and its evolution within SES and allied disciplines. Section 3 – “Pedagogical and Applied Issues” – given that reflective practice has become more widely embedded within education, professional training, and professional proficiency standards, chapters in this section explore the importance of reflective practice in preparing practitioners for the nature of applied SES service delivery, as well as issues relating to organisational reflection, facilitating reflective practice in others, and novel approaches to reflective practice. Section 4 – “Applied Case Studies” – this collection offers a variety of personal insights into reflective practice, including examples of: how reflective practice facilitates effective service delivery; how reflective practice underpins organisational practices; the impact of reflective practice on personal and professional sense making and growth; and context specific approaches to reflective practice. Finally, Section 5 – “Reflecting Forwards” – concludes the text by offering reflective analysis on the preceding sections in light of the aims of the book, and outlines future directions appropriate to researchers, practitioners, educators, and consumers of reflective practice.

Reflecting on Reflective Practice

It is not our (editorial team) intention in this introduction to engage in a full conceptual debate regarding the origins, application, and importance of reflective practice in the SES and allied disciplines – such discussion can be located in the previous edition (see Knowles et al., 2014b), the growing research base in the area (see Huntley et al., 2014, 2019), and in the chapters presented in the current text. However, we do feel it important to (re)consider our position regarding the nature of reflective practice. We do this not only to frame the forthcoming contributions, but also provide you (the reader) with an opportunity to reflect at this early stage of the book on your own understanding of reflective practice.

It may seem somewhat confusing, given the burgeoning size of the reflective practice literature across fields (including SES), that debates regarding how we should define the concept persist. Indeed, in response to the growing need for practitioners across fields to submit documentary evidence of reflective practice as part of the requirements of professional accreditation/certification, Marshall (2019) recently posited that, “It is important . . . consensually validate the concept and definition of reflection” (p. 399). We do understand the importance of conceptual clarity, having previously presented that of the 179 research
manuscripts published between 2001–2012 on reflective practice in sport and exercise settings only 68 demonstrated what might be classified as an appropriate conceptual and applied understanding of reflection (see Huntley et al., 2014). We also accept, however, that given the varied modalities of reflective practice (e.g., on- and in-action) and the multiple purposes that it may serve (e.g., personal growth, sense making, practice improvements) that an encompassing definition is difficult to locate.

In an attempt to address this issue, in the first edition of this text, following analysis of the process and outcome elements presented in many definitions of reflective practice constructed by authors in different fields, we proposed that reflective practice is:

A purposeful and complex process that facilitates the examination of experience by questioning the whole self and our agency within the context of practice. This examination transforms experience into learning, which helps us to access, make sense of and develop our knowledge-in-action in order to better understand and/or improve practice and the situation in which it occurs. (Knowles et al., 2014b, p. 10)

While we stand by this definition as it moved our understanding beyond the often-accepted literal view (at the time) that reflective practice is simply a matter of pausing for thought, or the mere evaluation of self and/or practice, we appreciate that on its own it may add further confusion into the “conceptual mix.” Thus, to add clarity to our conceptual view, we do not offer a new definition but instead have broken this definition down into its constituent process and outcome elements and provided additional layers of insight to confirm our position regarding reflective practice (see Table 1.1).

Introducing the Team

You will read elsewhere about the origins of reflective practice (RP) and how and when it made the leap into the SES literature. However, the origins of Team RP, the group that has come together to edit this book, is a little less clear and shrouded in mystery. Where and how we came together is not certain, but Liverpool is almost certainly involved as are Leeds and Cardiff, and there can be no doubt that there was input from Hamish Telfer, Dave Gilbourne, and Andy Borrie with a significant cameo from Ailsa Niven (nee Anderson). Somewhere and somehow though the team came together. A glance through the history books shows that I (Andy), had some role to play in the PhD’s of each of my co-editors as either Director of Studies (Brendan), Examiner (Zoe), or Supervisor (Emma) – not bad for a lapsed physiologist! Thus, it falls to me as the more ‘senior’ member of Team RP to offer some comment on the band’s history and on the various team members and their involvement in this book.

If we draw the lines that link the people and events, then we can probably start in the mid to late 1990s when sport coaching started to adopt RP as a means of
Table 1.1 Constituents of Reflective Practice and Their Application

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<th>Constituent</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Application</th>
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<tr>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>Reflective practice is something that we* consciously decide to engage in, which distinguishes reflection from the subconscious processes of daydreaming. Additionally, there should be a purpose to the reflection (an aim) to give the reflection focus and make the process purposeful and meaningful.</td>
<td>Many believe that they reflect “all of the time” usually through subconscious, implicit processes that they cannot explain. To really make sense of and examine practice in a meaningful way, however, reflective practice must be purposeful. It must be about something (e.g., an experience) and for something (e.g., exploring personal meaning). Identifying a purpose (e.g., to examine congruence between values and actions), instead of aimlessly gazing back can result in a more meaningful approach.</td>
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<td>Complex process</td>
<td>Reflective practice is complex due to the need for individuals to consider personal cognitions, emotions and behaviours, their interaction and impact on the situation, as well as the impact of the context on these – rather than simply focusing on what they did and what happened as a result.</td>
<td>We must excavate beneath the surface of our observable behaviours (e.g., the use of certain modes of intervention) and examine why these behaviours occur, how they have come to be that way, and what impact they have. For example, exploring how personal values and beliefs may influence the way that we practice, the decisions we make, and the way that we react in situations, while not easy, allows us to develop a level of awareness that can facilitate sense making.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The importance of questions</td>
<td>Thinking in an unstructured way about experience is complicated. The lack of a guide through the “swampy lowlands” often results in individuals unable to process and make sense of a series of connected but random thoughts. Good questions can offer this guide.</td>
<td>(Good) questions, those that encourage deeper, critical thought and examination, initiated through a reflective conversation (with the self or in a process of shared reflection) helps to guide the reflective process. Such questions can help to facilitate the checking of blind spots and encourage individuals to engage meaningfully in the reflective process.</td>
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<td><strong>Focusing on the self and agency</strong></td>
<td>Through reflective practice individuals need to consider the self as an agent of change. Reflective practice is about who you are, what you do, why you do it, and how it has come to be that way. Indeed, <em>reflexivity</em> – the exploration of self and development of self-awareness – is fundamental within the process.</td>
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<td><strong>Change as an outcome</strong></td>
<td>Change represents: (a) a change in behaviour, values, or beliefs; (b) confirmation or rejection of a particular theory or practice; and/or (c) a change in knowledge of the self, the context of practice or the environment in which the practitioner is working.</td>
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*Note: By “we” in this table, the editorial team refer to all individuals and/or organisations irrespective of discipline, purpose, or role.*

Many individuals focus too much on the external (e.g., the client, the setting) without considering themselves and the way in which they have impacted on these external factors. To engage in deeper, more critical reflective practice, individuals have to question their own practice and the values that underpin it. By placing the self at the centre of the reflective process individuals can elicit a level of developmental control that facilitates improved practice.

The outcome of reflective practice should result in a form of learning or understanding depending on the nature and purpose for reflection. This learning should be expressed, and sense should be made about how this will impact on future practice and/or thinking. Individuals should commit to ensuring that the outcomes of their reflective practices become the content of their future actions, which can be supported by a process of goal setting, action planning, and goal-striving.