

## **Chapter1.0: Introduction**

### ***1.1.Personal reflection***

As a community sports coach, I can recall many experiences where my feelings, emotions, and the difficulties of managing working relationships have been an inherent part of my daily coaching practice. These aspects of community sports coaching have been challenging, complex, and multi-layered. I recall one occasion in particular, where an emotionally charged outburst led me to critically reflect upon the everyday realities of community sports coaching. On this particular occasion, not only did this outburst have negative consequences for my professional working relationships with my line-manager and my colleagues, but also for my sense of professional competency. I can remember the day like it was yesterday.

### ***The incident***

#### **June 2010: Poolside**

As I prepared myself for my Saturday morning coaching session, I remember feeling particularly tired and a little unwell. Being perfectly honest, I did not want to go and lead the session; however, I knew this was not an option. I therefore tried to motivate myself, hoping that it might run smoothly and without incident. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. During the delivery of the warm-up, one of the children decided he did not want to listen, choosing instead to mess around and generally do everything in his power to be as disruptive as possible. This was not the day to be trying my patience. As the young person continued to taunt me I could feel myself growing increasingly frustrated. A sense of anger boiled inside me; I simply could not get on with the session as originally planned. While I tried to dismiss

these emotions I was struggling to switch them off. After giving the child several 'polite' warnings I could not contain myself any longer. I experienced an overwhelming need to raise my voice and I found myself shouting at the child 'If I have to tell you this instruction one more time I'm taking you out of the session!' This was followed by 'Your behaviour simply isn't good enough!' and 'You really must learn to concentrate and put more effort into your swimming, as you're not developing as well as the others in the group!' All my comments were said in a stern tone and with the intent to knock him down a peg or two.

Of course, during those few seconds, I had not given thought to the fact that anyone was hearing my comments, including the child's parents. I was soon to learn that my actions resulted in the parents pulling their child from my session and filing a written complaint to my manager about my behaviour. When asked to go into the manager's office for a conversation regarding the session's events, I felt like I was back at school being told off by the teacher.

### ***The meeting***

#### **June 2010: Manager's Office**

As I walked into the office, my manager had a letter in her hand. I felt anxious as she passed it to me, telling me to read it. I felt my face increasingly reddening as she glared at me reading it; I felt humiliated. I did not want to read it, as I felt I had done the right thing at the time. However, the feelings I had experienced after the incident came flooding back. The more I read the more I came to feel increasingly guilty, ashamed, and embarrassed. I also felt angry and frustrated that I had behaved in such a way that led me to be standing in that office.

Why could I not just contain my emotions? Why did I not just take him to the side and speak to him on his own, in a calm manner? I could have avoided this entire process.

As I was reading the letter, my manager told me that she was unhappy with my behaviour and that I should know to act in a professional manner despite the challenging situations we may find ourselves in. I apologised, placing the letter back on her desk and breathing a sigh of relief as my clammy hands closed the door behind me. I knew, immediately after being called into the office, that the other coaching staff would have discovered why I was in there with the door closed. That was the way it was in our organisation. Other colleagues were always ready to criticise, judge and, in my opinion, ‘stick the knife in’ when and where necessary. We all wanted to look good in the eyes of our employer, in order to maximise the amount of work we received. Our manager had ‘favourites’ and I knew that some of my ‘colleagues’ would have taken great satisfaction from my having been reprimanded. I also felt as though I had lost some respect from my colleagues and my manager, as though they were disappointed in me for letting the side down and behaving out of character. Our collective futures depended on us providing high degrees of ‘customer satisfaction’. I had not lived up to expectations on this occasion.

This incident did not end here for me. Indeed, as a consequence of my actions, my manager decided to come along and observe several of my coaching sessions. She carried out a number of random spot checks on my appearance, manner, enthusiasm, delivery, commitment, swimmer interactions, and planning. I came to learn that she would sit in places where I could not see her and then, as she was leaving, she would walk past me to make me aware that she had been watching. It was a very anxious period of time for me.

## *The aftermath*

### **July 2010: The poolside**

I felt like I could never do anything right again in her eyes. I was on edge and very insecure. I was told that she was doing this to ensure my standards of delivery were in keeping with organisational expectations. This really knocked my confidence, causing me to question ‘Was I good enough?’ In this situation, I felt that my professional competence and capabilities as a coach were being judged and critiqued in front of me. I was afraid to say or do anything that may have been interpreted the wrong way by the parents, and just about anyone else who could observe my sessions from the viewing area.

I also had one of my sessions cancelled and my contracted hours reduced. My manager said it was because she was having a ‘re-jig’ of session structure and was trying to save money. This may have been the case, but I felt that she had done this as a form of punishment. As a result of the child being withdrawn from my swimming sessions, I had in effect lost income for my organisation. When I was going through this period, I was worried that my manager might take all of my sessions away if I was judged to have failed to meet the organisation’s expectations on a further occasion. My insecurity was magnified as I also learned, due to cuts in funding, that the Council was struggling financially. We had a staff meeting and it was identified that the throughput of swimmers was considerably lower than in past years, resulting in a lack of income being generated. My manager was concerned about the projected financial figures if this trend was to continue. She told us in no uncertain terms that we must do everything we could to retain, and ideally grow, our existing client base if we were to maintain our respective

employment contracts. After my incident in the coaching session, I felt guilty all over again; my actions were in stark contrast to the organisation's needs (and, by implication, my own employment) as spelled out in the meeting. I was worried that, because I had caused 'trouble', I would likely be the first in line to feel any cut in hours.

*Is it just me who feels like this?*

#### **August 2010: Work Cafeteria**

This is really starting to have a negative effect on me. I cannot relax and I do not think that I am going to enjoy my coaching anymore. I am worrying that having fun and laughing could be perceived as my not taking the job seriously. I feel like I cannot win. 'What can I do to try to snap out of this?'

The above example led me to the personal conclusion that coaching is far from the unproblematic and straightforward activity which was presented to me during the coach education programmes I had attended. Rather, I had come to realise that the social context in which I worked was challenging, complex, and emotionally laden. I would certainly say that these experiences changed how I viewed coaching from a personal perspective. It was in light of this and other similar experiences that I began to ask myself, 'Was I the only one to experience community coaching in this way or were others experiencing this role in a similar manner?' I wanted to find out more.

## ***1.2. Academic Background***

Over the years, the nature of coaching has become the subject of intriguing debates with some suggesting that coaches are ‘merely technicians’ engaged in a transfer of knowledge (Macdonald & Tinning, 1995, Jones, 2000). In this way, associated literature has traditionally viewed coaching from a rationalistic perspective, ‘knowable sequences’ over which coaches are presumed to have command (Jones, 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005). However, Jones and Wallace (2005) argue that this rationalistic approach on which dominant conceptions of the coaching process rest are rather unrealistic and therefore have relatively limited potential either for a theoretical understanding of coaching contexts or, more practically, for the continuing development of practitioners. Such a depiction has left coaches criticising coach education programmes for being ‘fine in theory’ but divorced from the everyday realities of practice situations (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac, Gilbert & Denison, 2013). In this respect, it has been suggested that the content delivered on such courses is simply not actionable as it ignores the many tensions, ambiguities, and social dilemmas that characterise everyday coaching contexts (Saury & Durand, 1998; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Robyn, Jones, Potrac, Cushion & Ronglan, 2011; Potrac, Gilbert & Denison, 2013). In acknowledgement of the limitations associated with such rationalistic interpretations of coaching, scholars have more recently started to conceptualise the coaching process as being multifaceted, dynamic, complex, and messy in nature (Cushion, 2007; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne, Allanson, Gale, & Marshall, (in press).

In this respect, some coaching researchers have embraced interpretive approaches to the investigation of coaching in an attempt to better understand the everyday, socio-cultural, realities of practice (Jones, 2000; Potrac, Jones & Cushion, 2007; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). Central to such work has been a drive to put the person back into

the study of sports coaching, so that a more nuanced appreciation of the coaching can be established (Jones, 2009; Toner, Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne & Marshall 2012). Here, more recent investigations have started to illuminate how coaching is a highly contested and negotiated activity that is constrained by situational demands and expectations (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008). Additionally, it has served to depict coaching as being an everyday, power-ridden, social endeavour comprising contrasting goals and purposes (Cushion et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2004; Purdy et al., 2008; Purdy, Jones & Cassidy, 2009; Purdy & Jones, 2011). Indeed, such work has provided some initial insights into the micro-political strategies that coaches utilise in an attempt to persuade key contextual stakeholders (e.g. players, assistant coaches, chairmen.) to 'buy into' their preferred approaches and personal objectives (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b).

This growing body of work has also begun to argue that the tensions, dilemmas, and challenges that coaches face are not purely cognitive in nature but are also emotional phenomena that need to be understood as such (Potrac & Marshall, 2011; Potrac, Jones, Purdy, Nelson, & Marshall, 2013; Nelson et al., in press). In this respect, coaches may purposely invoke, suppress, and conceal certain emotions in an attempt to achieve their desired ends (Nelson et al., in press; Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne, & Nelson, 2013). However, existing accounts have, with a few exceptions (e.g., Jones, 2006; Jones, 2009; Purdy et al., 2008; Potrac et al., 2013), tended to be free of emotion, 'with coaches and athletes largely presented as calculated, dispassionate, and rational beings' (Potrac et al., 2013, p. 236). Indeed, Potrac et al. (2013) have argued that "this neglect has been unfortunate, as no doubt both coaches and athletes experience a variety of strong emotions as they strive to navigate the challenges and opportunities of their dynamic sporting worlds" (p. 236).

While scholars of coaching science have increasingly engaged with the social nature of coaching, much of this research has principally focused on practices in elite level contexts (e.g., Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones et al., 2002; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Purdy et al., 2008). As such, inquiry into the everyday social, micro-political interactions and emotional experiences of community sports coaches remains absent from the literature. While it is generally accepted that the job of the coach is to help athletes achieve their best possible level of performance (Coakley, 1994; Douge & Hastie, 1993; Lyle, 2002; Tinning, 1982; Woodman, 1993), community coaches have been tasked with doing more than focusing on sport development alone. Instead, they are also charged with using sport and leisure activities to deliver social policy outcomes (e.g., healthy living, good citizenship, social integration) by working with target populations (e.g., disaffected youth, unemployed, disabled) (Department of Media, Culture and Sport, 2002; Pride, Passion and Participation, 2008). The importance of the community sports coaching role has perhaps been underscored by significant financial investments into initiatives such as the 'Community Sports Coaching Scheme', as developed by Sport England and Sports Coach UK. This has meant that the role of 'community sports coach' has increasingly become a legitimate career pathway for individuals.

In acknowledgment of the above, it cannot be assumed that the understandings that have been acquired from research into elite level coaching can be naturally and unproblematically applied to the community sports coaching setting. Research into community sports coaching would therefore seem necessary, as otherwise the field runs the risk of being imprecise and speculative, and ultimately developing representations of community sports coaching that are systemic distortions of the everyday realities of this activity (Cushion et al., 2006; Saury & Durand, 1998; Jones, 2006). In order for coaching scholars to avoid this situation from occurring, it would seem important that researchers seek to develop an in-depth understanding of how community sports

coaches learn to navigate and manage the many and varied dilemmas, and emotions, that accompany practice. It is anticipated that the findings of such research could not only help neophyte community sports coaches to avoid a ‘reality shock’ when entering the working environment (Jones & Turner, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b), but may also provide educators with material that will permit them to develop imaginative, dynamic, and thoughtful coaches who understand the messy realities of their community sports coaching role (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Jones, et al., 2011).

### ***1.3. Statement of the problem***

The aim of the study was used to explore the participant community coaches’ subjective understandings of the socio-political and emotional aspects of their work place interactions and relationships. In particular, specific attention was given to exploring the perceptions and understandings of their working relationships with key contextual stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, managers, participants) in their respective community coaching contexts. Towards this end, narrative-biographical interviews will be used explore the following topics:

- a) How did the participant coaches experience their interactions and relationships with their line-managers, fellow community coaches, and community participants?
- b) What issues did the participant community coaches believed they faced in their working relationships with these various individuals? How have they attempted to manage or resolve these issues? Why did they choose to act in certain ways and not others?
- c) What emotions have accompanied their engagement in these work-place interactions and relationships? Which emotions did they feel they could display or, instead, had to

hide? How did they come to understand the emotional nature of their work in the ways that they did?

- d) What contextual and situational factors did the participant coaches perceive to impact on their actions and understandings of the social and emotional nature of practice?

#### ***1.4 significance of the study***

The significance of this work then lies in illuminating the everyday experiences of community sports coaches, especially as these relate to their understanding of the ways in which they decide to navigate organisational contexts that may be vulnerable to the frequently conflicting motivations, ideologies, and goals of the individuals that comprise them (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). For instance, we know very little about the ways in which community coaches' practices may be influenced by 'their individual motivations, goals, fears and wishes to create desired working conditions, protect them when necessary, and generally keep a job' (Potrac et al., 2013, p. 83). In addition, while community coaching has attracted considerable attention from a policy (or macro) perspective (e.g., Collins, 2009; Hylton, 2013), the micro-level experiences of community coaches are virtually absent from the literature. As such, exploratory work addressing community coaches' understanding of the mundane daily action of practice has much to offer in terms of providing some initial insights into the 'fine grain' and 'connective tissue' of practice in this context (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). Furthermore, it is anticipated that this line of inquiry can also contribute to the broader research agenda that seeks to raise 'our understanding of the prosaic to critical knowledge' (Gardiner, 2000, p.6) about sporting practices (Jones, 2011).

Indeed, if we fail to uncover the contested character of community coaching practice in coach education, it will be difficult to critique the often presented picture of it as a

cohesive social network presented through functional models and constructs (Lyle, 2002; Jones & Wallace, 2005). To ignore it could lead to dangerous adherence to the distorted view of complex social processes, thus denying the constraining and liberating effects of conflict (Sparkes & Mackay, 1996; Potrac & Jones, 2009).

It is also important to note that, within the domain of sports coaching, the literature could be considered to be ‘emotionally anorexic’ (Hargreaves, 2005; Potrac et al., 2013). Emotions in coaching have been largely treated as ‘another variable’ that coaches/athletes need to manage so that they can focus on the technical and cognitive components of their role (Hargreaves, 1998; Potrac et al., 2013). Therefore, if we are to develop a greater knowledge of the everyday realities of community coaching it would seem that we need to move away from such emotionally free accounts of practice. By doing so, it is hoped that research can better consider if, and how, community coaches experience a variety of strong emotions as they navigate themselves through the challenges and opportunities that arise within the dynamic coaching environment (Jones, 2006; Potrac et al, 2013). Unless we can better uncover and theorise some of these realities that coaches face it becomes more unlikely that coaches will be fully prepared to face the potential complex reality of their working role (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Jones et al., 2011; Potrac et al., 2013).

## **Chapter 2.0: Review of literature**

### ***2.1. Introduction***

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of previous works on coaching behaviour and coaching practice. In particular, it will help to identify strengths and weaknesses in the literature to date and to raise new questions or address areas not yet covered in the literature. Initially, this review focuses on the development of coaching behaviour, and how it has evolved from initial quantitative instruments using systemic observations to a more ethnographic mode of investigation. The focus of this review will not only identify findings and gaps on the body of knowledge, but also will aim to critically analyse the paradigms and methodological approaches that have underpinned this work. Secondly, this chapter addresses the different quantitative methods available within the coaching domain and considers how these methods have been linked to the positivistic approach to understanding coaching behaviour. Following this review, the limitations that are associated with this methodological approach will be examined. The review will then focus on previous qualitative studies that have been conducted and the methods that have been utilised, demonstrating how traditional qualitative methods have been linked to the interpretative paradigm. The limitations associated with these interpretive research will also be examined. The review also discusses the more recent application of a postmodernist approach within coaching and its associated limitations. The chapter is then concluded by drawing the key points of the past research and will highlight the foundations and focus for this study.

## ***2.2. Coaching behaviour, the story so far...***

### ***Positivist investigation of coaching***

It is important to note that within the domain such as sports coaching there are three distinguishable research paradigms, namely positivism, interpretivism and poststructuralism, all of which have their own basic beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Crotty, 2009). Paradigmatic allegiances shape the theories and methodologies utilised within the research process, as well as structuring the nature of the research questions asked (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006; Jones & Wallace, 2005). Questions posed in previous coaching literature have traditionally been determined by the methods and assumptions of the positivistic paradigm (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006; Lyle & Cushion, 2010).

Positivism subscribes to a realist ontology and objectivist epistemology, while preferring a nomothetic methodology that traditionally utilises quantitative methods. Ontologically, positivism states that objects and events that researchers study exist independent of people's perceptions of them, believing that there can only be one version of events that is true. In this respect, "the social world external to the individual cognition is a real world made up of hard, tangible and relatively immutable facts that can be observed, measured and known for what they really are" (Sparkes, 1992, p. 20). Here, the idea that there may be several different realities, (i.e. different constructions of events), by the participant is unacceptable in this quantitative positivism (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Epistemologically, positivists assume that truth can be measured with statistical precision; they routinely reduce complex information to summary measures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). From this perspective, the researcher assumes that each question that is asked means the same thing to each respondent (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

It could be argued that coaching was traditionally studied from a positivistic perspective that heavily shaped research into coaching behavior in particular (Chelladurai, 1990; Smith & Smoll, 1990). Here, positivists have assumed that the sports environment is relatively stable across different times and settings and that, within this stable context, the precise measurement and analysis of ‘facts’ allows the development of theories which can then be tested through further measurement, as well as employed to predict future behaviour (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Such initial research drew on systematic observation instruments in an attempt to understand coaches’ behaviours (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Researchers utilised systematic observations to investigate what pedagogical behaviours the respective coaches used. As a result, substantial research regarding coaching behaviours in different sports using various systematic observation instruments followed (eg., Lacy & Darst, 1985; Smith & Smoll, 1990; Smith, Smoll & Hunt, 1997; Bloom, Crumpton & Anderson, 1999; Darst, Zakrajsek & Mancini, 1989; Lacy & Goldston, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002; Brewer & Jones, 2002; among others).

According to Darst, Mancini, and Zakrajsek (1983), “systematic observation allows a trained person following stated guidelines and procedures to observe, record, and analyse interactions with the assurance that others viewing the same sequence of events would agree with his or her recorded data” (p.6). As a research method, this has been popular in the domains such as anthropology, and social, clinical, and cross-cultural psychology (Darst, et al. 1983). Van der Mars (1989) noted that this approach was not introduced to the study of classroom teaching until the 1960’s and, shortly after that, systematic observation instruments were used in physical education and sport settings to help uncover what coaches and their athletes were doing (DeMarco, 1997).

As a result, most research to date in sports coaching has followed a behaviourist approach, whereby coaching actions are analysed by the use of an assay, usually

systematic observations (Abraham & Collins, 1998). Here, behaviours are believed to mimic the action of the coach and are specified clearly prior to analysis. This behaviourist approach has resulted in systematic observations being utilised to obtain quantitative data regarding coaching behaviour (Cushion & Jones, 2001). It is suggested that systematic observations have many advantages over traditional research methods (e.g., eyeballing, anecdotal recording, rating scales, and checklists) due to their lack of objectivity, reliability, and specificity (Van der Mars, 1989).

Systematic observation instruments have assisted in the observational analysis of coaching behaviours in the practice and competition setting using pre-defined behaviour categories (eg., Bloom, Crumpton & Anderson, 1999; Cushion & Jones, 2001; More & Franks, 1996). These behaviour categories include instruction, questioning, praise, silence, scold and management (Metzler, 1989). Despite a relatively short history in the field of sport pedagogy, it has been acknowledged that systematic observations have played a major role in the emergence of coach behaviour as a bona fide area of empirical study (eg., Van der Mars, 1989; Potrac et al., 2002; Brewer & Jones, 2002). Interestingly, several observational systems have been specifically designed to analyse coaching behaviour (eg., Crossman, 1985; Lacy & Darst, 1984; Langsdorf, 1979; Quarterman, 1980; Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976; Chelladurai 1984; Chelladurai 1990; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

Arguably, the most comprehensive body of coach education research that conforms to the positivistic research paradigm has been completed by Smith, Smoll and Colleagues (Barnett, Smoll & Smith, 1992; Curtis, Smith & Smoll, 1979; Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993; Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007). The first empirical consideration of a coach education programme by Curtis, Smith and Smoll (1979) focused upon the effects of an experimental training programme derived from previously created behavioural guidelines addressing relationships between coaching behaviours and children's

attitudes towards their coaches, teammates, involvement, and winning (Smith, Smoll & Curtis, 1977; Smith, Smoll & Curtis, 1978). It investigated the behaviour of 34 little league baseball coaches by specifically assessing coach behaviours and player perceptions, attitudes, and self esteem. The study hypothesised that ‘differences in attitudes toward trained versus untrained coaches would be most pronounced for low self-esteem children’ (Curtis, Smith & Smoll, 1979, p.61). There was also the expectation that there would be a positive change in overt coaching behaviours.

Reflective of the positivistic approach, Curtis, Smith and Smoll (1979) adopted an experimental design, with 18 coaches randomly assigned to an experimental group and 13 coaches to a non-treatment control group. The experimental group attended a two hour cognitive behavioural based (Bandura, 1986) training programme delivered by the authors. The training was delivered in both written and verbal format, employing modelling, role-play, and self-monitoring to emphasise the use of desirable behaviours and discourage undesirable ones. The control and experimental groups’ overt coaching behaviours were observed and coded via the Coaching Behaviour Assessment System (CBAS; Smith, Smoll & Hunt, 1977).

This observation tool consisted of 12 categories of behaviour, attributed as either a reactive behavior, in response to a player or team, or spontaneous behavior, when initiated by a coach. 16 undergraduate observers were extensively trained over a four week period in utilising the CBAS (Smith, Smoll & Hunt, 1977). The players’ recollection and perception of the coaches’ behaviours, their attitudes towards the coaches, and their own participation were also assessed through structured interviews. The players also completed an adapted version of Coopersmith’s (1979) Self-Esteem inventory to measure general self-esteem post season, which consisted of fourteen descriptive statements. It was found that behavioural data provided by observers and players related significantly to both the win-loss record and team attitudes toward both

the coach and team. Perceptions of their own behaviour by coaches were unrelated to the data provided by observers and players, showing that coaches have little awareness of how they behave (Curtis, Smith & Smoll, 1979).

Further positivist studies derived from Tharp and Gallimore's (1976) category of behaviours. Their 11 category observation system, consisting of instructions, hustles, modelling-positive, modelling-negative, praises, scolds, nonverbal rewards, nonverbal punishment, scold/reinstruction, other, and uncodable, was utilised to see and hear the verbal practices of the coach. The findings of the study indicated that approximately half of the coach's behaviour (50.3%) was coded in the instructional category. Similarly, based on Tharp and Gallimore's system, Langsdorf's (1979) study was almost identical, except that two more descriptive categories were added to expand the means for summarising and interpreting the data by viewing different segments of the practice. Langsdorf (1979) conducted a similar study and observed the behaviours of Frank Kush, a head football coach at the time. An important conclusion from Langsdorf's study was that 36% of Kush's behaviours were coded in the instruction category. Hustles, scolds/reinstructions, and praise were the next three highest-occurring behaviours.

Another effective and popular systematic observation instrument for observing coaches during practice was developed by Lacy and colleagues (Lacy & Darst, 1985; Lacy & Goldston, 1990). This was advanced from the behavioural categories of Tharp and Gallimore's (1976) observational tool. The Arizona State University Observation Instrument (ASUOI) includes 11 specific categories of coaching behaviour, seven of which are directly related to the instructional process. It was found that dividing the instructional process into four sections (i.e. pre-instruction, concurrent instruction, post instruction and questioning) enabled a greater accuracy of the coaching process when recording the data (Lacy & Darst, 1983; Potrac et al., 2002). In their first study, Lacy

and Darst analysed the coaching behaviours of 10 winning high school head football coaches. Results indicated that technical instruction occurred three times more frequently than any other form of communication. In their second study, Lacy and Goldston (1990) examined 10 high school basketball coaches. Similar results were found, as almost half of the interactions between coaches and athletes during practices appeared to be instructional. Interestingly, the ASUOI is one of the most frequently used systematic observation instruments when analysing coaching behaviours (e.g., Claxton, 1988; Cushion & Jones, 2001; Lacy & Darst, 1989; Miller, 1992; Potrac, et al., 2006). Kahan (1999) identified this was a strength as he suggested that the frequent utilisation of a few core instruments, such as the ASUOI, helps to create a common technical language and helps promote methodological uniformity during data collection.

A number of studies have utilised the ASUOI to compare the behaviours of top level soccer coaches (eg., Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac, Jones, & Cushion, 2007), female soccer coaches (eg., Vangucci, Potrac, and Jones, 1997), and physical educational practitioners in coaching environments (eg., Jones, Potrac, and Ramalli, 1999), all of which found similar results. The study of Cushion et al. (2001) compared the working relationships of 8 top-level English professional youth coaches from both premier and nationwide leagues. Significant differences were found in certain behaviours when compared across leagues. The results tended to echo those of previous research emphasising the predominant use of instructional behaviours, praise, and silence as a conscious coaching strategy.

Similar findings were also demonstrated in the results of Potrac et al.'s (2007) study, the purpose of this study was to analyse the coaching behaviours of top-level professional English soccer coaches within the practice environment. The (ASUOI) was used to compile data on four coaches during three phases of a given season. The results indicated that the categories of 'pre-instruction', 'concurrent instruction', and 'post

instruction' represented 54.45 per cent of all the recorded behavioural intervals. In addition, the data indicated a substantial praise to scold ratio (approximately 23:1). While 'praise' represented 15.44 per cent of the total coded behaviours, 'scold' accounted for only 0.67 per cent.

Interestingly, other approaches have been taken with regard to the application of systematic observations. Many studies that have analysed coaching behaviours using systematic observation instruments have divided practice sessions into segments to attempt to discover a difference in coaching behaviours during specific parts of those practice sessions (e.g., Langsdorf, 1979; Potrac et al., 2002). In the study conducted by Lacy and Darst (1985) the practice sessions were divided into four segments; warm up, individual, team and conditioning. It was found that the main coaching methods were used during the team segment, by focusing on the frequency of the coaching behaviours, using total rate per minute. Significantly, praise was the most frequently used coaching behaviour within the group segment of the session compared to any other behaviour in any other segment.

The literature also identified that 'snapshot', (i.e. small period of observation) and 'longitudinal' (i.e. prolonged observation) methods can be utilised when conducting systematic observations. According to Lacy and Goldston (1990), observations that are taken at a single phase of the season only have the ability to provide a 'snapshot' of a coach's behaviour (e.g., Cushion & Jones, 2001). In this respect, the snapshot method only involves one particular observation of a coaching session. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) suggested that this method would be appropriate if the focus of the study could be captured by one observation and if what is being studied is expected to be relatively stable over the time of observation. However, they argue that, where there are dynamic or changing qualities to what/who is being studied, one single observation is unlikely to

be able to capture the dynamic reality of the coaching environment (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Due to the limitations of ‘snap shot’ approaches, many studies began to use the ‘longitudinal’ process when observing coaches using systematic observation tools (e.g., Miller, 1992; Potrac et al., 2002). This is because this process produces a more accurate account of the coaches’ behaviours and there is a more reliable consistency within the results (Lacy & Darst, 1985; Potrac, et al., 2007). However, Potrac et al. (2002) recognised that observing a coach over the whole season may affect coaching methods, philosophies and behaviours due to a team’s successes or failures. Therefore, establishing the correct length of time to observe is vital.

The positivistic paradigm has also shaped research investigating athletes’ perceptions of the coaches they work with (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Cote, Bruner, Erickson, Strachan & Thomas, 2010). Empirical research has led to the conceptualisation of various frameworks that focus on the outcomes of coach and athlete interactions in sport (e.g., Chelladurai, 1984; Smith & Smoll, 1989). The Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 1984) has generated a large number of studies on coaching effectiveness and athletes’ outcomes. The central component of the Multidimensional Model of Leadership features three states of coaches’ behaviours: (a) actual behaviours, (b) athletes’ preferred behaviours, and (c) required behaviours. The model suggests that performance and satisfaction are positively related to the degree of congruence among the three states of behaviour.

Quantitative research investigating athletes’ perceptions and preferences of leader behaviour utilising the LSS and the multidimensional model of leadership has helped to increase the body of knowledge and understanding regarding coaching behaviour (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai, 1990; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995). From research of this nature, it can now be tentatively suggested which leadership styles and coaching

behaviours athletes prefer within specific research sports and even within playing positions of these sports (Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). A key finding of the aforementioned research is a strong athlete preference for instruction and training behaviours, indicating that athletes preferred the coach to take up a more active role when coaching instead of a more passive one (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995). However, a limitation attached to this research is that the findings only indicate ‘what’ behaviours athletes prefer, where there is little data concerning ‘why’ athletes prefer certain leadership behaviours. Also, this instrument assesses a limited scope of coaching behaviours. Furthermore, the relationships specified in the multidimensional model have primarily focused on adult competitive sports. Subsequently, we could suggest that such data can be perceived as rather one dimensional (Chelladurai, 1990).

More recent positivistic research into coaching behaviour has utilised the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). The CART-Q can be used to measure the affective (i.e. closeness), cognitive (i.e. commitment) and behavioural (i.e. complementarity) aspects of the coach-athlete relationship (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). The CART-Q includes two versions; one designed for the athlete and one designed for the coach (Poczwardoski, Barrott & Jowett, 2006). This enables the attainment of information from both coach and athlete regarding the aspects stated above (Poczwardoski, Barrott & Jowett, 2006). Results supported the multidimensional nature of the coach-athlete relationship and suggested that coach-athlete relationship can cause problems for the athletes’ motivation (Olympia, Jowett & Duda, 2008). However, due to its positivist nature, the CART-Q represents coaching in a rather systematic and unproblematic way (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006; Olympia, Jowett & Duda, 2008). Cushion, Armour and Jones (2006) contended that viewing coaching unproblematically limits our understanding of it.

### ***2.3. Critiques of positivism***

Perhaps the key finding in this body of literature has been its subscription to positivistic perspectives on sports coaching. As such, this quantitative view towards coaching behaviour is considered to be the underpinning rationality approach utilised, inclusive of positivistic methods and assumptions that require degrees of abstraction to be formalised (Brustad, 1997; Kahan, 1999). As a result, educational research has drawn primarily from physiological traditions that operate within a positivistic approach, as much of the research within the discipline has focused on biological sciences such as physiology and biomechanics (Gratton & Jones, 2004). By taking the positivist approach, researchers contended that there is a straightforward relationship between the world (objects, events, phenomena) and our perception and understanding of it (Willig, 2001). As such, the goal of research is to produce objective knowledge which understands that it is impartial and unbiased, based on a view from the ‘outside’, without personal involvement or vested interest on the part of the researcher (Willig, 2001). The ultimate aim, of course, from these perspectives was to develop generalised conceptual models of the process under study (Bowes, & Jones, 2006). Consequently, several models of and for coaching have been developed (e.g., Lyle, 2002; Cross, & Ellices, 1997).

It has been suggested that such an approach has led to the oversimplification of process and practice resulting in an analysis of only parts of coach education in a bid to understand the functioning whole (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006; Bowes & Jones, 2006; Jones & Wallace, 2005). In a similar vein, Jones and Wallace (2005) contend that such models can never grasp the functional complexities that lie behind and between their composite ‘building blocks’. As these models and diagrams tend to represent coaching as logical episodes and sequences, consequently these models fail to generate any understanding that lies behind the

complex process. As such, we understand much about ‘what’ of coaching, but less about the ‘why’ and ‘how’ (Jones & Wallace, 2005). These models are also criticised for their unproblematic representation of coaching when in fact its process involves complex dealings (Meyer & Land, 2003).

As such, within the positivistic approach much of this research can be classified as ‘knowledge for action’, which is a characteristic of the rationalistic approach that dominates in coach education (Jones & Wallace 2005). With a ‘knowledge for action’ approach, researchers, theorists, and trainers have failed to understand the phenomenon of coaching in-depth. Rather, they have focused on how to ‘prescribe’ good coaching practice through models, theories, and impractical prescriptions that fail to represent the everyday realities of coaching (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Although this perspective has undoubtedly helped coaches improve the performances of athletes and themselves, it has increasingly been criticised for not adequately reflecting the complex nature that lies behind and between coaches’ principal relationships (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004).

Jones and Wallace (2005) suggest that the fundamental problem with ‘knowledge for action’ is that practitioners have not taken time to acknowledge and explore the complex nature of coaching before developing general explanations and recommendations for practice (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Streat, 1998). As a result, the complexity has not been acknowledged or sufficiently understood before attempting to produce models. Consequently, the outcome has been that models have been too simplistic and fail to fully encompass coaching practice (Cushion, et al., 2006). Accordingly, no framework currently exists that represents the complex reality of coaching, leaving the subject matter open to debate (Saury & Durand, 1998; Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria & Russell, 1995). Ultimately, the ‘knowledge for action’ approach has resulted in an oversimplification of the coaching phenomenon, as well as

an over-precision of prescription of the coaching practice through models (Jones & Wallace, 2005).

While the use of systematic observation has done much to navigate the discipline of sport pedagogy away from its status as a dismal science and served purposes (Locke, 1977; Crotty, 2009), there are many limitations associated with this quantitative methodology approach. One such limitation is the simplicity of quantitative behavioural assessments (Abraham & Collins, 1998). Indeed, whilst quantitative data can be statistically meaningful it may not necessarily be applicable to each individual (Markula & Silk, 2011). It is also incapable of providing rich data which takes context into account. Similarly, the observational measurement of coaching behaviour is limited as it does not enable the observer to establish the meaning of the behaviour (Bryman, 2012). For instance, behavioural assessments such as the ASUOI and CBAS have been criticised for being too simplistic when applied to the coaching environment (Strean, 1995) and of being limited in its contribution to understanding coach effectiveness (Bloom, Bush, & Salmela, 1997). Due to the complex nature of coaching, it has been suggested that a coach's behaviour may differ in accordance with not only the sport, but also the level at which the sport is played, whether they are male or female, and their individual coaching style or philosophy (Woodman, 1993).

As such, Woodman (1993) suggests that the use of 'generic' systematic observations has failed to capture these differences and has therefore provided conflicting results in past research. These conflicting results are due to the 'generic' observation tool inadequacies to accurately identify and record coaching behaviours that are valid and reliable. Unfortunately, 'generic' systematic observations are not context specific enough and have not been designed with specific sporting or environmental situations in mind which, in some cases, have left the validity of some results open to debate (Brewer & Jones, 2002). Brewer and Jones (1999) have suggested that, in order to fully interpret

the instructional process of the sport, it is essential that systematic observation instruments are capable of accurately and comprehensively recording the instructional behaviours utilised by the coaching practitioners within varying sporting contexts.

Importantly, systematic observation instruments do not demonstrate the reflection of a player's reactions towards the coach's behaviours during a certain activity when, in fact, it is important to understand a player's perceptions of the coach in relation to the coach-athlete relationship (Kenow & Williams, 1999; Lyle, 2002). Other issues have included the 'inter' and 'intraobserver' agreement (Lacy & Darst, 1984). This agreement indicates the degree to which observers who view certain events agree with the recording of those events (Darst, 1989). This means that the instrument being used by the observer contains behavioural classifications that are representative of the coach being observed. Questions are therefore being raised as to whether 'generic' observation tools such as the ASUOI can meet this agreement when applied to sports such as soccer (Lacy, 1989; Vangucci, Potrac, & Jones, 1998), American football (Lacy & Darst, 1985; Claxton & Lacy, 1986), and tennis (Claxton, 1985, 1988). Thus, it has been argued that these tools have not been fully validated for the specific context they have been intended. Importantly, the systematic observation methodology, as indicated previously, ignores the concepts of feelings, emotions, and beliefs, as within the positivistic paradigm they have no place in research as they cannot be directly observed or measured and are therefore considered unreliable and inconsistent over time (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

In summary, we can clearly identify that the positivist approach does not enable a consideration of multiple realities and how coaches' varied gender, ages, biographies, motivations and ultimately experience and knowledge may influence their approach to coaching. Bustard (1997) contends that positivistic methods of inquiry in the modern era are not capable of explaining human behaviour. Bustard (1997) also indicates that

the process by which new knowledge is generated must utilise a variety of research paradigms and support multiple interpretations of reality. Unsurprisingly then, findings from these studies hold only limited potential for a further theoretical understanding of coaching or for guiding coaches' actions (Conroy & Coastworth, 2004). It is a deficiency that has left the subject area open to accusations of theoretical imprecision, assumption, and speculation (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Saury & Durand 1998). Even existing positivist studies highlight the need for other approaches and assessment techniques that do not share the limitations of self-report measures (Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007) and acknowledge that incorporating additional methods such as interviews would enhance the understanding of coaching (Conroy & Coastworth, 2004).

Not only this, but the positivistic approach neglects to provide insight regarding the different ways people may perceive the same thing, or how responses can vary from day to day, and that ultimately people do not respond in predictable ways. As Kahan (1999) suggests, due to its nomothetic pursuit, the positivist approach appears to be of limited use in the coaching context as it is incongruous with, and insensitive to, the peculiarities of coaching and the unique conditions under which coaches' act. Consequently, scholars have questioned such generalised laws in coach education and have called for alternative methodologies to be used.

## ***2.4. Qualitative Coaching Behaviour Review***

### ***An interpretive perspective of coaching research***

The previous section of this chapter reviewed the application of positivism to coaching research. It also highlighted that more recent literature has contended that positivistic research has represented coaching as linear, unproblematic and sequential in its nature (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009). In an attempt to address these issues it has been argued that an ‘interpretive’ approach could be utilised within coaching research (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones, 2006b, Poczwadowski, Barott & Jowett, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009). Indeed, while ‘positivistic assumptions may be appropriate for the study of the physical world they are not appropriate for the study of the social world’ (Sparkes, 1992, p. 25). In this regard, the interpretive paradigm conforms to a totally different set of philosophical assumptions to positivism. From this perspective knowledge is perceived as the outcome or consequence of human activity (Crotty, 1998).

Interpretivists adopt idealist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology, and prefer an ideographic methodology, often through the utilisation of qualitative methods (Sparkes, 1992). This perspective addresses the positivist notion of objectivity in several ways (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). For example, social reality is not conceived of as ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered and measured but, rather, it is relational and subjective, produced during the research process. Here, the researcher does not assume to be neutral and ‘objective’ but, rather, an active participant, along with the research subjects, in the building of descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Here, the interest of the social world tends to focus on the aspects that are unique, individual and qualitative (Crotty, 2009). Weber (1968) suggests that the interpretive paradigm helps explore the meanings, values, and actions of people’s lives providing subjective meaning. What is important here is that social

researchers are primarily concerned with how people come to understand their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Such research is not concerned with categorising and classifying behavior. Rather, they aim to establish what events mean, how people adapt, and how they view what has happened around them (Berger & Luckman, 1967). In this respect, the interpretive social researcher aims to examine meanings that have been socially constructed and consequently accepts that views differ from place to place and group to group (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In such instances, social researchers believe that there is more than one reality out there to be measured. In this regard, objects and events are understood by different people in different ways and that these perceptions are the reality or realities that social sciences should focus on (Crotty, 2009). Such research starts from the belief that people create and maintain meaningful worlds. This belief is accepted ‘without assuming the existence of a single encompassing reality’ (Charmaz, 1995, p. 62). Such a view contends that ‘different realities can be explored and tapped into, allowing us to truthfully describe segments of people’s lived experience’ (Dawson & Prus 1995, p. 121). Specifically, the interpretive paradigm assumes that there are multiple realities, that the world is not an objective thing. Rather, they propose it to be a function of personal interaction and perception. Indeed, they believe this is a highly subjective account that requires interpreting as opposed to measuring (Merriam, 1988). In this paradigm, there are no predetermined hypotheses and no restrictions on the end product (Guba, 1978).

As previously noted, sports coaching has tended to be dominated by positivist, quantitative, approaches. However, the need to understand the underlying experiences, feelings, and emotions of athletes, coaches, and others has been acknowledged within recent years (Jones & Armour, 2000; Potrac & Jones, 2009). Indeed, some researchers such as Jarvie (1991, p. 2) have pointed out that ‘sport is, first and foremost, a social

activity involving a complex set of social relationships'. It can be noted that a call has arisen to expand traditional lines of investigation into 'what' and 'how' to coach, to the related question of 'who' is coaching, and how they experience these realities (Jones, et al., 2004; Jones, 2006). In this way, it marks an attempt to put 'the person back into the study of people' (Martens 1987, 41). To date, studies have tended to adopt what Sparkes and Smith (2002) have termed an 'outside-in' approach emphasising structural constraints, as opposed to an 'inside-out' one highlighting the muddled reality of personal feeling.

While existing social-psychological theories have proved useful in establishing a framework for good practice, it has been acknowledged that if we wish to better understand the dynamics that construct and affect relationships within the coaching process then we need to better understand the everyday realities of coaching (Potrac & Jones, 2009). Importantly, by considering the potential problems and realities of human interaction between coaches we can begin to recognise the 'complexities, uncertainties and creativity of people' (Pollard, 1988, p. 55). In order to achieve this end, others have adopted an ideographic approach which is based on the view that to understand the social world we need to gain first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation (Sparkes, 1992; Potrac et al., 2002; Jones, et al., 2004). Such an approach emphasises the importance of getting closer to one's subject and exploring its detailed background as well as the analysis of the subjective accounts which one generates by 'getting inside' situations involving oneself in the everyday flow of life (Sparkes, 1992; Potrac & Jones, 2009).

In order to better understand the social realities of coaching the interpretive paradigm perspective has been utilised (eg., Sparkes, 1992; Potrac, et al., 2002; Jones, et al, 2003; Jones, et al., 2004, among others). A range of research traditions can be located within this interpretive paradigm (e.g., ethnography, case study, interviews, observations).

Importantly, this perspective allows us to understand the very basis of social reality by studying the social world of ourselves and others (Sparkes, 1992). The interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is; ultimately it sees the social world as an emergent social process created by the individuals concerned (Sparkes, 1992). Jones and Wallace (2005) suggest that by taking this approach we can better develop 'knowledge for understanding perspective' towards sports coaching as such perspective would provide a more sophisticated grasp on the complexities and realities of the coaching process (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Cote, Salmela, & Russell, 1995). Such a call is not to deny the importance of the conventional models' approach to coaching but, rather, to help highlight how complex and dynamic the coaching process can be (Potrac et al., 2000).

Although the bio-scientific, technical, and tactical training theory must remain a focus for coaches, it has been argued that if the preference for scientific, fragmented, and uncritical knowledge that currently underpins this practice continues only, 'it is possible that coaches will become ill-equipped to deal with the multidisciplinary, unique, uncertain social demands of their work' (Jones & Armour, 2000, p. 34). Jones and Wallace (2005) suggest that if this view continues we will produce one dimensional coaches who are being driven by mechanistic considerations who are unable to adapt to the complex dynamic human context they face on a daily basis. Therefore, in developing further theory we should avoid the temptation to apply 'ready-made' knowledge as this oversimplifies our understanding of coaching. Instead, we need to move the mechanistic body as a focus of analysis aside and bring in the social person (Locke, 1985; Turner and Martinek, 1995).

As such, Jones and Wallace (2005) have suggested that such knowledge would offer a more secure foundation on which 'knowledge for action' projects could build on to gain more realistic practical guidance (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Researchers are in

agreement that using a sociological perspective towards coaching will allow us to look beyond issues of physical performance and see sport as a social construction that influences how people think and live their lives (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2003, 2004; Potrac, 2002). Potrac et al. (2000) also contend that this approach is needed if we are to fully understand or discover the nuances, actions, and behaviours of coaching practitioners. Consequently, the aim of these investigations would not focus on prescribing models but, rather, would provide a deeper understanding of why coaching practitioners act and behave as they do. Interestingly, coaching literature is now starting to recognise that coaching is an activity that should be characterised by ‘multidimensionality, simultaneity, uncertainty, publicity and historicity’ (Cote, et al., 1995, p. 255; Potrac et al. 2000; Jones & Wallace, 2005). Thus, in a ‘knowledge for understanding’ approach, the coach is valued much more than just subject matter specialist or a systematic method applier as previously portrayed in the ‘knowledge for action’ projects (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Squires, 1999).

Van der Mars (1989) proposed that if we wish to generate a deeper understanding of such behavior, then the quantitative data obtained from the systematic observation instruments should be analysed ‘in light of the situations in which they are observed’ (p.9). Potrac et al. (2002) suggested that the systematic observations of coaches should be followed up by reflexive interviews and/or participant observation work. Utilising such an approach enables one to gain a greater understanding of the dynamic and complex coaching environment (Armour, & Fernandez-Balboa, 2001; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004; Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004; Potrac, 2001; Cushion & Jones, 2006).

According to Potrac et al. (2000), it is a combination of appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods that has the ability to develop rich data to greater our understandings. It was also recognised that this multi-method approach to research was required if we wished to develop a more valid portrayal of the realities of coaching from

which subsequent theory could be established (Potrac et al., 2000). This fusion of methods was applied to sports coaching in an attempt to greater understand the behaviours, actions, and motivations of the coaching practitioners (Potrac et al., 2000). It was argued this approach was paramount as without such knowledge an accurate conceptual model of coaching cannot be theorised and, subsequently, the knowledge acquired will remain largely disorganised and disjointed from reality (Potrac, et al., 2000).

With this methodological approach in mind, there have been a small number of studies which have focused on analysing football and rugby coaches by using the combination of systematic observations and in-depth interviews to explore the reasons as to why the coaches behave the way they do (e.g., Potrac et al., 2002; Smith and Jones, 2006). Potrac et al. (2002) study aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of the coaching behaviours utilised by a top-level English footballer. Here, a mixed method approach was used not only to identify the pedagogical behaviours used by the subject in the practice environment, but also to generate an in-depth insight into the rationales that underpinned their use. From their findings it was suggested that the subject's coaching practice was influenced by his perceived need to establish a strong social bond between himself and the players; a bond founded on the players' respect for his professional knowledge and personal manner.

Similarly, Smith and Jones' (2006) study investigating the working behaviours of 6 top-level professional soccer coaches provided a mixture of results. Data were collected using a modified version of the ASUOI and semi-structured interviews. The triangulation of data ensured that both 'what' and 'why' they coached as they were considered. The results revealed a conscious and well thought out pattern of behaviour which included silently monitoring, interspersed with elements of instruction coupled with praise and encouragement. The interviews revealed three themes underpinning this

behaviour; developing game understanding, support and encouragement, and the coaches' roles and influences. Interestingly, the use of silence was the largest single behaviour.

Other popular methods within qualitative research include research interviews (eg., Jones, 2003; Jones, 2004; Potrac & Purdy, 2004; Potrac & Jones, 2009), auto-ethnography (eg., Jones 2006; Purdy, Potrac, & Jones 2008; Jones 2009; Potrac & Marshall 2011), and ethnography (eg., Cushion and Jones 2006; Purdy, Jones & Cassidy 2009). Such qualitative methods have proved useful for research topics about which little is understood, such as interaction between coach and athletes, power, impression management, trust and respect, and much more (eg., Jones, 2003; 2004; Potrac, 2000; 2002). It can be seen that effective qualitative research can help meet these ends in powerful ways as it can illuminate the previously unknown, and provide familiarity with rich description and show understanding (Peshkin, 1993). This approach in coaching has been best suited to discovering confusions, ambiguities and contradictions that are played out in everyday experience in coaching (Sparkes, 2000).

Reflective of the interpretive approach is ethnographic research, indeed, such an analysis involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in peoples' daily lives over a period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and collecting relevant research (Wax, 1971). Such a research strategy is used to help capture a detailed account of the participant's everyday behaviours over a sustained period of time (Darst, Zakrajsek & Mancini, 1989; Purdy & Jones, 2011). Cushion and Jones (2006) utilised a sociological analysis into the triangular interaction between coach, athlete, and context within English professional youth soccer. Data within this study were collected within an ethnographic framework that included participant observation and interviewing (Patton, 1990). They explained that this approach ensured that the participant's behaviours, interpretations and meanings, and

the changes that occurred within them during the course of the 10-month season long study, would be captured and thus offer insight into the varying and evolving perceptions of coach player-interactions. The main findings of this paper demonstrated how an authoritarian discourse was established and maintained, how it was structured by and subsequently structures the coaching context, and how accompanying behaviours were misrecognised as legitimate by coaches and players.

Similarly, Purdy et al. (2009) study embarked on a similar methodological procedure. The aim of this paper was to examine how power was given, acquired and used by athletes in the elite sporting context. It focused on a top-level athlete's reactions to the behaviours of his coaches and how such actions contributed to the creation of a coaching climate, that both influenced and 'housed' coaching. The paper centred on Sean (a pseudonym), a top-level rower, and his preparation for crew selection to the upcoming international regatta season. Specifically, it illustrated Sean's interaction with those responsible for a national rowing program following his decision not to participate in an aspect of that program. Sean's story, from both his own perspective and from the perspectives of his coaches, is presented using a variation of realist tales which drew upon excerpts from field notes and interview transcripts. Bourdieu's notion of capital was primarily utilised to analyse the data. Findings demonstrated how the various aspects of capital are defined, used and negotiated by social actors within the context of elite sport. The significance of the work laid in generating a greater understanding of power dynamics within the coaching context. Interestingly, it is becoming recognised that an effective strategy in qualitative research is to combine observational and interview data collection techniques. It allows the recording of a person's behavior to then employ the observational data to inform and guide qualitative ethnographic interviewing. Such an approach can lead to extremely rich, high quality data (Merriam, 2009).

Purdy and Jones (2011) conducted an ethnographic study that sought to examine how athletes in an elite men's rowing program constructed and negotiated the interactions and pedagogical actions of their coaches. Drawing upon participant observation and the principal researcher's reflexive journal, data were collected over a five-month period while ten rowers participated in a preparatory training camp for subsequent selection to compete at upcoming major events (Purdy & Jones, 2011). The findings demonstrated the importance of social expectations within the coaching context. Such expectations have to be at least partially met if the coaching "contract" is to be honored. Not doing so, puts at risk the respect of athletes, without which coaches simply cannot operate.

The study concluded that, far from being a linear process, coaching could be considered tied to the constraining and enabling influence of the ontological security of athletes. What is more, they suggested that coaching could be viewed as a distinctly personal construction where simply learning the tenets of assumed good practice is not enough. Instead, a coach should be encouraged to interpret the contextual landscape established on its nuanced happenings (Purdy & Jones, 2011). The challenge, for coaches within this particular study, was to better understand the rowers and their own social positioning, expectations, and actions, without losing the capacity to act in the best interests of both parties (Purdy & Jones, 2011). However, the research also highlighted that because of its interpretive nature, the findings cannot be portrayed as the objective truth. The coaches involved may well have had a different story to tell (Purdy & Jones, 2011).

In addition to ethnographies, recent interpretive research has begun to recognise the value of utilising autoethnographies. To date, scholars in the sociology of sport have largely used autoethnography to explore the concepts of, among others, identity construction and reconstruction (Sparkes, 1996; Sparkes & Silvennoinen, 1999; Duncan, 2000; Tsang, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). However, more recently Haleem (2003)

and Jones (2006) have suggested that autoethnography represents a valuable tool for investigating the social complexity of the coaching process. In particular, they believe that by adopting an ‘insider’s’ perspective on the social and emotional worlds of individual athletes and coaches a fuller understanding of the holistic nature of the coaching process is likely to result. As such, this approach holds the ability to shed light upon the mundane or everyday aspects of sports coaching. Within recent years, the value of utilising autoethnographies to further our understanding of human behaviour in the sporting context has been increasingly recognised (eg., Denison, 1996; Tsang, 2000; Sparkes, 2002a). Authors have engaged with such a methodology as it requires them to draw upon highly personalised accounts of lived experience for the purpose of extending our sociological understanding of a particular phenomenon (eg., Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008).

For example, Jones’ (2006) study was conducted with the aim to tell a different, perhaps ‘truer’, story about coaches and coaching through presenting an autoethnography of the author as a dysfluent coach. The author’s tale, which depicted a typical pre-game scenario, explored the issues associated with maintaining ‘face’ and others’ respect in a context characterised by uncertainty, ambiguity, and power. In addition, within the endnotes the study offered Goffman’s work on stigma, interaction, and impression management as a theoretical signpost to help the readers interpret the author’s account. Jones’ (2006) story was placed alongside Goffman’s (1959, 1963, 1969) work to highlight how sociological thought can be applied to this very under theorised field.

Purdy et al. (2008) study also utilised this methodological procedure. Their research built upon existing socio-cultural work into sports coaching by probing the meanings and varieties of the shared coach-athlete experience. Specifically, their paper utilised an autoethnographic approach in an attempt to chart the complex and dynamic relationship

that existed between the author (a rowing coxswain) and her coach during the preparation for a national rowing championship. Data for this study were drawn from a training diary, emails (both sent and received), and memories during the 6 months she spent with her coach. The data were presented through three separate yet inter-related stories. Here, the plot of the tale hinged on the tension between her personal perceptions of effective coaching and those employed by the coach. The findings were principally theorised through Nyberg's and Giddens' concepts of power and resistance, as a fruitful relationship between her and her coach soon turned into a dysfunctional one. The research highlighted the strength of an autoethnographic approach in its ability to construct the personal, together with micro-power issues and consequences, within a public macro social milieu. However, a weakness of research of this nature was also brought to light as an autoethnographic endeavour dictates that research is only attained from a single perspective. Therefore, another individual may hold a different perspective on the same situation (Purdy et al., 2008).

Jones (2009) also wrote about coaching from a personal or autoethnographic perspective. This was presented by an autoethnographical account of himself as coach of a national age-group boy's football team. The first half of this paper was given over to constructing a case presenting autoethnography as being an alternative, pertinent means through which to research and represent coaching. Here, the autoethnographical text was presented as holding a higher capability than much previous work to better explore beyond the surface of coaching to highlight what coaches see and feel and how they deal with the dilemmas that arise. It contained a discussion concerning the space within such writings for recognition of both structure and agency in guiding coaches' actions. A debate was then embarked upon in relation to if and how theory should be used to accompany such evocative, personal writing. Here, Noddings' work on caring within pedagogical settings was suggested as an appropriate framework to interpret his

upcoming tale. Borrowing from the recent work of Sparkes, among others, this was followed by an evaluation of the criteria by which such stories can be judged as ‘good’ work. Finally, the implications that autoethnographies could have for coach education and, subsequently, practicing coaches are discussed. The final part of the article was given over to his story where the importance of caring in the coach–athlete relationship, and of actively nurturing such an ethic to realise the potentialities of others, was emphasised. More specifically, the tale was located within a national age-grade football training camp where he is the head coach. Here, an incident with a particular player recalls his own personal need as a young insecure footballer to be recognised and acknowledged by established coaches as someone who mattered.

Potrac and Marshall (2011) embarked on an autoethnographic approach in the attempt to address the largely unknown phenomenon of emotions in coaching. It was hoped that by addressing this area it would allow future research to better consider if, and how, coaches and athletes experience a variety of strong emotions as they navigate themselves through the challenges and opportunities that present themselves within the dynamic coaching environment (Jones, 2006). Potrac and Marshall’s (2011) study was based around Arlie Russell Hochschild’s theoretical concepts of emotion (Hochschild, 2003), despite the fact that these did not directly address coaches, athletes or indeed sport in general. It was her focus on the relationship between the emotions a person feels, or the emotions individuals display for the benefit of others in a social context, that was of interest to Potrac and Marshall (2011). By employing Hochschild’s framework, they suggested it could help chart the complexities, nuances and the realities of coaching more adequately.

Primarily, their study introduced Hochschild’s work as presented through her text *The Managed Heart* (1983, 2003). In particular, examples of her work were provided, with the intention to offer suggestions as to how such theoretical concepts could be

productively related to understanding sports coaching. The study concluded with a commentary provided by a practicing coach, regarding the value of Hochschild's thinking for his practice. Potrac and Marshall (2011) highlighted that emotions matter and are evident not only in the domestic sphere, but also in the workplace on a daily basis. They argue that the challenges, tensions, and dilemmas faced by coaches and athletes on a daily basis are not just cognitive or social in nature. Instead, they are emotional phenomena and need to be understood as such. From their findings it is possible that researchers and educators now need to explore and construct representations of coaching that are rich in emotion and that reflect the everyday realities of coaching (Potrac & Marshall, 2011).

Toner, Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne, and Marshall (2012) autoethnographic study was centered on the principle author's (John) personal narrative of a coachathlete relationship in golf, and how the original story altered through a process of shared critical thinking. On first telling, John explained to his co-authors how he considered himself to be the victim of bad coaching practice following his coach's failure to correctly diagnose a key but subtle fault with his golf swing. The initial rendering was a story of blame, betrayal, and of a coach who ultimately failed to provide the expert service required. Having shared and critically reflected upon this comfortable version of events with his co-authors, John explores how he came to understand his role in an ultimately dysfunctional coaching relationship in a different way. Rather than being a blameless victim, John began to explore his own contribution to the process of relationship breakdown. For example, his conscious decision to not share his thoughts and feelings about his golf swing with his coach; an act of stubbornness that led John to 'test' his coach in a way that could only lead to failure. Finally, the author team considers the value, role and issues associated with reflective writing in coaching,

especially as they relate to the development of co-constructed narratives (Toner, et al., 2012).

Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne, and Nelson (2012) also utilised an autoethnographic approach which explored the competitive, calculating, and often uncaring world of performance football coaching. Particular attention was given to the dilemmas (the first author) faced, the choices he made, and the consequences of his actions within the coaching context. On one level, (the first author) intentions was to stimulate reflection upon coaching politics at the micro-level of practice, inclusive of rationales that underpin such actions. On another level, it was hoped that this article could contribute to an increased understanding of how ‘emotion and cognition, self and context, ethical judgement and purposeful action’ may be ‘intertwined in the complex reality’ of coaching achieved (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996). Bauman’s work on liquid relationships was suggested as a lens through which his story could be viewed. By highlighting its political and emotional nature, this article sought to contribute to an evolving problematic epistemology of sports coaching; one that seeks to extend beyond continuing rationalistic and ‘heroic’ accounts of practice (Potrac et al., 2012).

These respective studies have demonstrated that autoethnographies do not unproblematically shed light on, nor generate insight into, coaching practice and have to mitigate against accusations of the production of individualistic, melodramatic, self-indulgent texts (Jones, 2009). However, they do allow an inside perspective on the emotional and social worlds of individual athletes and coaches and therefore enable the attainment of a richer and more holistic understanding of the coaching process (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones, 2006a). Crucially they possess the ability to generate insightful and original questions regarding the nature of practice and ‘why’ we behave the way we do (Jones, 2009). In summary, Jones (2009) proposed that previous research utilising ethnographies must not be dismissed for future research, but that autoethnography

should be implemented as another method to be engaged with in the pursuit of a more holistic understanding of the coaching discipline.

Within coaching, research has tentatively begun to explore the impact of previous experiences upon current coaching practice by utilising interpretive interviews (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004). Some researchers have found it more appropriate to introduce the concept of audible data which is the result of interpretive interviews (Salmela et al., 1993). It has become evident that the words of expert coaches often speak for themselves and require little elaboration and indeed, in some cases, they not only speak for themselves but jump off the page (Salmela et al., 1993). Past research that has analysed qualitative interviews on coaching behaviours within sport have primarily focused on effective coaching methods, coach education, entrance into coaching, social interaction, coaching knowledge, influences, socialisation, coaching philosophies, and the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., Cushion, 2004; Jones & Brewer, 2004; Potrac & Brewer, 2004; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002; Potrac, Armour & Potrac, 2003; Potrac & Jones, 2009).

Jones, et al. (2003) conducted a biographical case-study focusing on how an elite level coach's socialisation experiences affected his coaching practices. The study included 5 informal interviews which investigated the coach's knowledge, philosophy, playing and coaching career, role models, future aspirations, and coach education by focusing on his life story and experiences. The interviews, which were reflexive in nature, were audio-taped, and involved open-ended questions. Once the interview process was completed, the interviews were transcribed. The study sectioned the coach's answers into categories, consisting of the coach's story, experiences, and knowledge, which were then scrutinised thoroughly to base an understanding on how and why the coach used self-experience, knowledge, and beliefs to get the best out of the players by using a flexible and adaptable approach. It was found that the coach's philosophy was driven to

develop positive working relationships within sessions by respecting and valuing players as well as importantly supporting them as individuals.

It could be suggested that by employing a qualitative approach within coaching this has allowed researchers such as (Potrac et al., 2002; Jones, 2004; Cushion & Jones, 2006; & Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b) to investigate the social interaction within a coaching environment which has been termed ‘micro-political’ activity. Here, a micro-political perspective was adopted to examine whether coaching is in fact power-ridden and contested in nature, as suspected. In order to achieve this, Potrac and Jones (2009a) identified an existing need to examine power and interpersonal relationships within coaching. Firstly, they made a case for how the adoption of a micro-political perspective could serve to further understanding of the power relationships found within coaching. Secondly, their review provided an introductory examination of the term ‘micro-politics’ as provided from the educational literature. They then addressed how such practice is starting to emerge into the coaching field. Their study suggested theoretical frameworks that could be effectively utilised in order to fully understand micro-politics within coaching (eg., Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b; Ball, 1987; Fry, 1997; Goffman’s, 1957). As such, the purpose of their study was not to present coaching as unproblematic in nature; rather, as an arena for struggle. Their hope was that by positioning coaching as a micro-political activity, it could lead to a more detailed picture of how coaches practice, and also reveal how they get to do what they want to do.

Continuing this line of inquiry, Potrac and Jones’ (2009b) study aimed to explore these avenues. Here, research was conducted on the micro-political workings of a semi-professional football coach. Their paper aimed to illuminate the micro-political strategies a coach used in an attempt to persuade the players, the assistant coach, and their chairman to ‘buy into’ his coaching program and methods. Data for the study were

collected through in-depth, semi-structured, and biographical interviews, together with a reflective log relating to those interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim with the subsequent transcripts being subject to a process of inductive analysis. Ball's (1987) micro-political perspective, Kelchtermans' and Ballet's (2002a, 2002b) work on micro-political literacy, and Goffman's (1959) writings on the presentation of self, were used to make theoretical sense of the specific strategies used by the coach in an attempt to persuade the players to see the merits of his coaching.

Interestingly, other researchers, such as Jones et al. (2004) and Cushion and Jones, (2006), have also hinted at the micro-political action of coaches, discovering similar findings. For example, the elite coaches interviewed by Jones et al. (2004) alluded to the use of many conscious strategies to manipulate other actors and circumstances to their advantage. Specifically, they engaged in 'white lies', humorous friendly personas, and constant face work to make athletes believe in them and their coaching agendas. In a similar vein, d' Arrippe-Longueville et al. (1998) found that elite judo coaches were constantly engaged in a number of strategies to entice the best performance from their athletes. Indeed, while such accounts are to be applauded for highlighting a largely unknown aspect of practice it could be argued that these accounts of practice need to be more deeply understood.

Brown and Potrac (2009) hinted at the emotional nature of coaching practice using in-depth interviews in their study. The purpose of this investigation was to utilise in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of young former elite footballers whose respective professional careers were prematurely ended as a consequence of de-selection. To this end, the analysis focused upon (a) the respondents' development of a strong athletic identity; (b) the impact of de-selection on the respondents' sense of self; and (c) the respondents' adaptations to life outside of professional football. The results indicated that the development of a strong athletic identity contributed to considerable emotional

and psychological disturbances upon de-selection, which included feelings of anxiety, fear, depression, anger, and humiliation. While the majority of the participants were attempting to build new unified self-concepts and alternative identities they were critical of the limited social support that they had received from their respective professional clubs when making the transition out of professional football (Brown & Potrac, 2009).

Nelson, et al. (in press) also utilised this methodological approach. This paper aimed to shed light on the emotional nature of practice in coaching. In particular, this article was designed to explore the relationship between emotion, cognition, and behaviour in the coaching context, through a narrative exploration of Zach's (a pseudonym) experiences as the head coach of a semi-professional soccer team. Data for this study were collected through a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews that were transcribed verbatim and subject to iterative analysis. Two embracing categories were developed from the interview data. The first demonstrated how Zach frequently concealed his true emotions and enacted others in an attempt to achieve his desired ends. The second highlighted how Zach's past experiences as a player had influenced how he wished to portray himself to his squad and, importantly, helped him sympathise with the thoughts and feelings of his players. Here, Lazarus and Folkman's (1986) cognitive appraisal theory, Denzin's (1984) writings on understanding emotions, and Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour, were used to offer one suggested, but not conclusive, reading of the emotional aspects of Zach's practice.

In light of the studies mentioned above, the research interviews were conducted to learn what their interviewees felt about certain avenues they explored (Lichtman, 2006). It has been suggested that utilising interviews can help us understand the process by which events occur, (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) describing it as a conversation between the interviewer and the participant. This approach has been widely used within coaching as it allows participants to be heard 'in their own words', as well as to share what they

know and have learned to provide a guaranteed concrete rich source of data (Lichtman, 2006).

### ***2.5. Critiques of Interpretivism***

One of the main limitations to interpretive research is that it abandons the scientific procedures of verification and therefore results cannot allegedly be generalised to other situations (Williams, 2000). Critics attack interpretivism because it tends to exemplify a common belief that it can provide a 'deeper' and more 'meaningful' understanding of social phenomena than that which is obtained from scientific data (Nudzor, 2009). For the critics, just as the natural science researchers would resist the charge that they are all positivists, interpretivism has failed to provide any agreed doctrine underlying all qualitative social research. Instead, there are many '-isms' (e.g. interactionism, feminism, postmodernism, constructionism) which appear to lie behind and dominate qualitative methods (Silverman, 2006).

Other criticisms of qualitative research include the claim that it is purely descriptive and therefore not rigorous and that the data are flawed due to the subjective role of the researcher (Goulding, 2002). A further criticism is that there is a lack of transparency in qualitative research. That is, that it is difficult to see why and how a researcher might reach their conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The point is, perhaps, that there is no right or wrong, no one approach that is the 'best'. The issue is more that the choice of approach should fit the research aims and questions and the purpose of the study as well as the philosophical and conceptual framework within which the researcher operates (Silverman, 2005). We could say that in light of the critique found from the positivist and interpretive paradigms this has led others to study sport from a postmodernist perspective (Markula & Silk, 2011).

## ***2.6. Postmodernist perspectives on coaching practice***

There has been a growing interest in recent years in poststructuralism and postmodernism in the field of coaching research (Denison, 2007, 2010, 2011; Denison & Avner, 2011; Denison, Mills, & Jones, 2013, Gearity & Mills, 2013; Taylor & Garratt, 2012). Poststructuralism marked a strong paradigmatic shift away from the main tenets, the epistemological and ontological assumptions of positivism, as well as humanism/interpretivism, and critical theory, and their respective articulations of power, knowledge, truth, and reality. Despite its numerous theoretical strands, poststructuralist/postmodernist theorists overlap in their rejection of universal metanarratives (e.g. positivism), dualistic understandings of power (e.g. critical theory), and humanism/interpretivism (Markula & Silk, 2011).

Postmodernists understand the world as fragmented into multiple worlds that resemble a pastiche or collage rather than unified through universally generalised theories that represent the true ‘reality’. In many ways, this is similar to the interpretive approach (Markula & Silk, 2011). They also point to signs of constant change in social theory, society or everyday experiences with an image-based culture (Markula & Silk, 2011).

The postmodernist perspective differs from the interpretive paradigm because instead of focusing on particular groups as either dominant or subordinate, postmodernist researchers believe that all individuals, including the researcher, are participants in power relations (Markula & Silk, 2011). A key belief of postmodernism is that power is relational, and this frees postmodernists to explore particular situations from different perspectives (Markula & Silk, 2011).

What further differentiates poststructuralist researchers from post-positivist or interpretivist/humanist researchers, for example, who also believe that truth/reality is subjective, is their belief in multiple realities and that knowledge, reality, and truth are

produced through ‘discourses’ rather than found. Discourse is a key poststructuralist concept, which corresponds to dominant ways of understanding a particular social field (e.g. sports coaching), as well as understanding the dominant practices within a particular social field (e.g. sports coaching practices) (Markula & Silk, 2011). Furthermore, poststructuralist theorists believe that discourses are produced through dynamic and fluid (albeit non-egalitarian) power relations, which frame our understanding of the social world. Thus for poststructuralist researchers all knowledge, truth, and reality is inevitably political (in the sense that it is tied to power relations) and all human beings are involved in their production since all human beings are part of power relations. In this way, poststructuralists do not endorse a divide between structure and agency (Markula & Silk, 2011).

Ontologically, postmodernists assert that there are multiple realities which individuals construct within the context of certain power relations (Markula & Silk, 2011). Epistemologically, postmodernists, like interpretivists, consider knowledge production to be a subjective process (Markula & Silk, 2011); if an individual creates their own realities within particular power related contexts then it would seem that subjective interaction is the only way to access them (Markula & Silk, 2011). Methodologically, a qualitative approach is taken in order to explore these realities (Markula & Silk, 2011).

As Markula and Silk (2011) emphasised, the purpose of poststructuralist research can be three-fold: (a) to understand/map discourses which shape our understandings of the social world and our individual and social practices, (b) to critique the problematic effects resulting from dominant discourses, (c) to develop theoretically driven pragmatic interventions to foster more ethical practices and balanced power relations within specific discursive contexts. Reflective of this poststructuralist approach, Denison (2007) utilised Foucault’s notion of disciplinary power to provide an alternative reading of his judgement of ‘his’ long distance running athlete’s poor performance.

Denison (2007) provided a reflexive account of the particular incident and discussed his thinking at the time and his thinking after he had consulted Foucault's theory. The paper explores his "sense making" when as a male cross-country runner he performed below his expectation. His initial understanding of his poor performance was to blame him for "lacking" the appropriate mental toughness. As a result, he located the "problem" within him and subsequently ignored many of his own taken-for-granted coaching practices as perhaps contributing to his poor performance. The athlete became a type of docile runner who simply began to go through the motions in a race while he became a docile coach subject who administered his training programs without any critical reflection as to their potential side-effects or unintended consequences (Denison, 2007). This study emphasises the requirement for coaching practitioners to consider the disciplining effects of their coaching practice to prevent athletes from turning into 'docile bodies' (Denison, 2007, p. 381). It also highlights how context dependent coaching is, as coaches have to act on a case-by-case basis. It concludes by suggesting that many everyday coaching practices may have a number of "hidden" or problematic consequences attached to them that coaches should consider in an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of their coaching and to enhance their athletes' performances. However, with this in mind, a potential limitation of the research is brought to the fore as the findings cannot be generalised to other coaches (Denison, 2007).

Taylor and Garrat (2010) examined the tensions, power and resistance that are manifested in practice across different areas of sport, and moves to understand some of the key differences emerging between contemporary reforms, situated practice and socially embedded coaching traditions. Drawing extensively on Bourdieurian and Foucauldian philosophy, the analysis reflects upon the experiences of coaches and stakeholders operating at the levels of voluntary and community-based practice in the north-west of England. It examines notions of resistance and compliance *in situ*,

external factors and policies that have impacted the field, and analyses the complexities that inhabit the profession of sports coaching as a whole. A mixture of semi-structured, individual interviews and group conversations were utilised to collect information. The study concluded that the level of the individual coach the professionalisation of coaching had led to the replacement of existing practices and identities with new forms of knowledge and the 're-branding of the sports coach as an agent of professionalism' (Taylor & Garratt, 2010, p. 136). This could then lead to a shift away from the centrality of the coach-athlete and coach-club relationships to a prominence of the relationship between coaches and their accrediting institution (Taylor & Garratt, 2010).

Denison and Avner (2011) utilised the work of Michel Foucault to critique the reductionist understandings of effective and ethical coaching and argue that for coaches to become a positive force for change, they must engage in an ongoing critical examination of the knowledge's and assumptions that inform their problem-solving approaches. Denison and Avner (2011) suggested that coaches have responsibilities, as participants, in producing other people's worlds as well as their own, in order to begin thinking critically about problem-setting and problem-solving in sport. However, this acknowledgment may make a coach's job more difficult as it implies that there will no longer be a set of clear problem-solving procedures to rely upon. At the same time, however, it was contended that this frees coaches from the burden of always having to figure out the 'right way' to solve problems which can be liberating as the individual's coaching identity becomes a process to reinvent over time and across changing contexts (Denison, Avner, 2011). They conclude that, for coaching to become a respected profession worthy of deep and intelligent thought, it is vital that coaches carefully consider the effects produced by the way they solve problems.

Finally, research from a postmodernist perspective was also undertaken by Piper, Taylor and Garratt (2012). This investigation was informed by the findings of a case-

study into touch between children and professionals in schools and childcare. However, the investigation itself focused on touch in sports coaching, its distinctive contextual and institutional characteristics, and the context of no touch in coaching (Piper, Taylor & Garratt, 2012). The research findings offers a discussion of moral panic, risk society and worst case thinking, before drawing on Foucault's work on governmentality to offer an explanation of how the current situation arose. The authors suggest that the approach to discussing child abuse, and the guidelines and training stemming from the dominant discourse, for the most part initiated by the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit, together create an environment in which many coaches are confused and fearful, and consequently unsure of how to be around the children and young people they coach. The study concluded that the current practice of 'hands-off coaching', and the associated culture of mistrust, will have negative implications for the continued recruitment of coaches, their effectiveness, and also for the development of healthy relationships between adults and children through participation in sport. These negative implications are likely to impact upon levels of achievement (Piper, Taylor & Garratt, 2012).

## ***2.7. Critiques of postmodernism***

While a key strength of postmodernism lies in its perspective of power as relational and its acknowledgment of construction of various meanings, a potential problem emanates from here as well. As with the concept that there is no single truth, merely different constructions, many of which are contradictory and seldom acknowledged or spoken, answers are not always elicited to a question. Rather, signs of change or different constructions are pointed to (Markula & Silk, 2011; Piper, Taylor & Garrett, 2012). In addition, there is a limited amount of research produced using this perspective. Further criticisms of postmodernism are intellectually diverse, and include the assertion that postmodernism is meaningless and promotes obscurantism. That is postmodern thinking deliberately prevents the facts or full details of something from becoming known (Chomsky, 1995). Dawkins (1998) also argued that postmodernism is meaningless because it adds nothing to analytical or empirical knowledge and is too vague, and lacks in depth and content.

Further critiques to post modernism include that it has no theory of agency. That is, it rules out that we actually get to make choices as individuals and that discourses are written onto us. Additionally, postmodernist thinking has, arguably, provided no strategy of resistance and no way to transform structures of meaning that it so brilliantly exposes and critiques (Eagleton, 1996). Finally, Greenfield (2000, 2005) not only argued that the postmodernist tendency to push political agendas casts doubt on its scientific merit, but also that its anti-theoretical position is, ironically, a theoretical stand itself.

## **Chapter 3.0: Methodology**

### ***3.1. Introduction***

Within this section I present the methodology that I employed in this study and the reasoning behind the decisions I made. In this regard, the chapter begins with a discussion of my philosophical and methodological position and orientation. I then turn my attention to describing the process by which the participants were recruited for this study. Following this, I provide a rationale for utilising in-depth interviews as well as describing how they were conducted. A description of the iterative nature of the way in which the data were analysed is then outlined. Finally, I conclude this chapter by outlining the criteria by which I invite the reader to judge the quality of this thesis.

### ***3.2. Interpretivism and narrative biographical inquiry***

As the purpose of my thesis was to explore the subjective experiences of the participants being studied I chose to ground this investigation within the tenets of the interpretive paradigm. Like positivism, and poststructuralism the interpretive paradigm provides a belief system for the ways in which we think about and conduct research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Nelson, Groom, & Potrac, in press). It should be recognised that interpretivism is an umbrella term for a diverse range of intellectual and theoretical approaches for understanding how individuals make sense of their social worlds (Markula & Silk, 2013). These include dramaturgical sociology (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1969), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 2002), phenomenology (Husserl, 1965; Schutz, 1970; Heidigger, 1967), and ethnomethodology (Garkinkel, 1967), among others.

As outlined in the preceding Review of Literature, the interpretive paradigm adopts an internal-idealist ontology (i.e. there is no reality independent of perception), a subjectivist epistemology (i.e. knowledge is subjectively and socially constructed), and

an idiographic methodology (i.e. the focus is on the individual case). Philosophically then, the interpretive paradigm fundamentally rejects the belief that the social world (e.g. people, cultures, and social interactions) can be investigated and explained using the same assumptions that natural scientists (e.g. biologists, physicists, and chemists) have employed to examine the physical world. Instead, the interpretive paradigm 'is founded on the premise that the social world is complex' and that 'people, including researchers and their research participants, define their own meanings within their respective social, political and cultural settings (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 31). At the heart of interpretive inquiry is the desire to understand the subjective experiences of individuals and groups (Markula & Silk, 2011). The essential philosophical difference between positivism and interpretivism is manifest in the importance that each researcher respectively attaches to the explanation and understanding of human behaviour. While positivist inquiry seeks to develop nomothetic explanations of social action upon which to base future predictions interpretive inquiry is primarily concerned with exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences and behaviours (Bryman, 2012; Sparkes, 1992). The emphasis here is on investigating the realities that exist in people's minds, especially as they relate to the impact of a person's biography and the related values and theories, both implicit and explicit, that he or she subscribes to (Sparkes 1992; Kelchtermans 2009).

While interpretivism has a long history of application in the social sciences more generally, its application to the study of coaching is still relatively new. However, the utility of the interpretive paradigm to enhance our understanding of coaching, and indeed, coach education, has been increasingly recognised (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Nelson, Groom, & Potrac, in press) in terms of generating knowledge for understanding that can be utilised as a precursor for future action (Jones & Wallace, 2005). For example, the adoption of an interpretive approach

allows us to better consider how coaches come to understand, consider, and variously respond to the ambiguities and pathos inherent within their working environments (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2011). In this way, it assists the development of more human representations of coaching than have traditionally been present in the coaching literature (Jones et al., 2011). By adopting an interpretive stance, I rejected the view that coaches are homogenous and predictable beings whose behaviour can be understood in terms of a set of cause and effect relationships (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Merriam, 2009; Jones et al., 2011). Instead, I consider coaching to be a socially complex activity in which individuals' experiences and understandings of the everyday realities, problems, and joys of practice are influenced by their biographies, goals, motivations and philosophies (Sparkes, 1992; Jones et al., 2011).

Interpretive researchers utilise hermeneutic methodologies (i.e. that allow them to interactively explore and interpret the meanings which others attach to their social interactions and lived experiences) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Within such approaches, the focus is on the depth and detail of data collected from a small population (Howell, 2013). A priority within interpretive work is given to the production of 'thick description' (i.e. rich accounts of what is seen, heard, done, and felt in the research process) and 'thick interpretation' (i.e. the analysis of events within a research context) (Geertz, 1973; Howell, 2013). This entails the researcher spending an extended period of time with an individual or group individuals in an effort to gain detailed insights into their respective subjective experiences (Mukherji & Albon, 2010).

While I have acquired a significant understanding of social life from traditional symbolic interactionist theorising (e.g., Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983), I also find myself in agreement with Denzin's (1989a, 1991a; 1992, 2001) critiques of this position, and his related call for symbolic interactionists to incorporate elements of

postmodern and poststructuralist theory into “its underlying views of history, culture and politics” (Denzin, 1992, p. xvii). From a theoretical position then, I subscribe to the interpretive-interactionist perspective advocated by Denzin (1992, 2001). Here, Denzin’s postmodern reading of symbolic interactionism suggest that its major theorists have traditionally, and incorrectly in his view, followed a modernist agenda, embraced a verificationist view of science, held a realist conceptualisation of the social, as well as presented an overly romantic understanding of the state, the self, and personal freedom. It is in light of such critiques that Denzin urges symbolic interactionists to acknowledge that:

“Society is more than symbolic interaction. What goes on in society at the level of opinion, news, social welfare, education, labor, the courts, the military, and the family involves more than informed publics exercising their will. Entrenched elites connected to class, status, and power groups of the social order maintain some degree of hegemonic control over what occurs within any society. How these elites work and how their efforts shape what passes for public opinion must be examined” (p. 164-65).

Such position led Denzin (1992, 2001) to call for a more critical interactionist stance that endeavors to link the political with the personal, and deliberately aims to present theory and research that encourages controversy by illuminating “how those in power (the economic, political, and cultural elites) constantly define the personal in terms which further their own political agendas” (p. 167). In this respect, and in keeping with Denzin’s interpretive interactionist stance, I also intend to draw on poststructuralist and postmodern readings to understand the social. Here, Denzin explains that postructuralism is a “theoretical position which asks how the human subject is constructed in and through the structures of language and ideology” (Denzin, 1992, p. 32). He explains that the concepts of text, (i.e., print, visual, oral, or auditory

production) and *deconstruction* (i.e., the critical analysis of text) are central to the poststructuralist position. From this theoretical stance text is always considered to be open-ended, indeterminate, and interactional, and through critical analysis scholars are able to explore how it is given meaning by its producer(s).

Interpretive interactionism, located in the late postmodern period and incorporating postmodern and poststructuralist thinking, then, is committed to:

“Understanding how this historical moment universalizes itself in the lives of interacting individuals. Each person and each relationship studied is assumed to be singular, or a single instance of the universal themes that structure the postmodern period. Interpretive interactionism fits itself to the relation between the individuals and society, to the nexus of biography and society. Interpretive interactionism attempts to show how individual troubles become public issues. In the discovery of this nexus, it attempts to bring alive the existentially problematic, often hidden, and private experiences that give meaning to everyday life as it is lived in this moment in history” (p. 154-155).

Interpretive interactionist endeavor to realise this project by investigating and representing in evocative ways the emotionally laden nature of everyday stories that help to make the invisible more visible. This is a view that certainly resonates with my perspectives on the purpose of social inquiry.

Given my philosophical position I selected a qualitative methodology that allowed me to explore the subjective experiences of the community coaches participating in this study. In this respect, I subscribed to the narrative-biographical approach developed by Kelchtermans (1993, 2002a, 2002b, 2009) to explore the working lives of teachers. Of course there are a variety of interview techniques available to qualitative researchers these include, for example, biographical and life-history interviews (eg., Jones et al.,

2002) and narrative interviews (Sparkes & Smith, 2014), among others. My decision to utilise the narrative-biographical approach was on, one level, attributed to my belief that I was not conducting purely biographical work. In this sense, my research was specifically focused on the career experiences of the participants, but not their wider lives. Equally, given its specific focus upon, as well as proven utility to, explore the social interactions, micro-politics, and emotions that are features of practitioners careers and everyday working lives, I believed that narrative biographical interviews provided a productive tool for helping me to explore my research questions (e.g., Nelson et al., 2013; Potrac & Jones, 2009, 2009b). Notwithstanding my decision above, I recognise that other researchers may choose to explore this topic using a range of different methods. That is, I do not pretend to believe that my chosen approach represents the singularly best way to examine this topic.

According to Kelchtermans (1993) the narrative-biographical perspective is less interested in an individual's formal career (i.e. the chronological list of positions an individual takes up over the years), but rather looks at the so-called subjective career (i.e. teachers' personal experiences in their professional lives over time). The 'narrative' aspect of this approach refers to the central role of stories and story-telling in the way coaches deal with their career experiences. The 'biographical' aspect refers to the fact that all human beings live their lives between birth and death (Kelchtermans, 1993). From a biographical perspective the researcher is not so much interested in the coaches' experiences as historical facts. Rather, is interested in the meanings these events have for the people who live them (Carter & Doyle, 1996). Indeed, Kelchtermans (1993) explained that such an approach is informed by interactionist and constructivist stances.

From a 'constructivist' viewpoint, Kelchtermans (1993) stated that teachers actively (re)construct their experiences into a narrative that makes sense to them. Career stories are constructed in the act of telling; they are told and can be retold. Their importance

and relevance lies not so much in their historical truth but, rather, in their power to reveal the particular meanings events had for the teacher. Within this, the stories inevitably situate experiences in both time and space. The ‘when’ refers to a particular moment or period of time, while the ‘where’ includes the organisational, institutional, political, social, cultural, and material environments and conditions teachers work in. These include the school and its particular staff, school population, and infrastructure, which are embedded in particular ways in the local communities. Furthermore, these are all framed by a particular prevailing policy environment (Kelchtermans, 2007). In the context of community coaching, this constructivist standpoint arguably entails a quest to develop insights into the ways in which community coaches consider, construct, and indeed, may revise their career stories, in relation to their understandings of the socio-political landscape of practice.

It is suggested that this perspective also implies an ‘interactionist’ stance (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1974). Human behaviour is understood as resulting from a meaningful interaction with the environment, context, and other social actors. Shared patterns of sense-making (e.g. organisational culture) also play a prominent role. In the context of community coaching this outlook suggests that the meanings that coaches attach to their respective experiences may be founded in a social consensus. That is, their respective experiences of reality may be influenced by a range of social, political, and cultural factors that support the development of shared understandings of the social world in which they live (Stryker, 2002; Howell, 2013). It is both the interactionist and the constructivist characteristics that help to avoid a conception of human behaviour that is too cognitive as well as too subjective. As such, the narrative-biographical perspective allows reconstruction and analysis of the community sports coaches’ professional learning and development, based on experiences in their respective careers (Kelchtermans, 1993. 2009). Presenting a detailed description of individuals’ sporting

stories has been identified as valuable as it is deemed capable of highlighting the often chaotic, complex, and ambiguous working lives of everyday coaching practices (Carter, 1993; Jones, et al., 2003; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Jones, 2009).

In the context of this study, a core justification for this approach includes the collection and presentation of extensive and rich high data (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2009; Fine, 1999). A principal strength of narrative-biographical research is that it ‘enables the exploration of an individual’s subjective reality, and can reveal the ‘taken for granted’ world of practitioners’ (Dowling Naess, 1996, p. 42; Kelchtermans, 1993, 2009). In this respect, I believed that a narrative-biographical approach would enable me to generate a greater understanding of the beliefs, and motivations that underpin the community coaches’ behaviour on a daily basis (Jones, & Potrac, 2009). My aim was not to search for universal truths with regard to community coaches’ practice, nor to generalise these accounts into what coaches should do, but to ensure that the reader can understand these coaches, allowing them to generalise them into the context of their own practice and wider lives (Armour & Jones, 1998). Importantly, these coaches have ‘storied lives’ and have stories worth telling (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). What I hoped to achieve in this biographical study then was an illustration of the ways in which ‘emotion, cognition, self and context, ethical judgement and purposeful action’ are all intertwined in the lived experiences of the participant community coaches (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996; Potrac et al., 2013).

Importantly, the data does not need to reach a precise, definitive, singular truth in order to have something useful and important to say about the contemporary human landscape of coaches’ working lives (Fine, 1999). Instead, the intention of the narrative was to express the data in such a way that will allow us to characterise the processes and the meanings that practitioners use in their coaching and to provide a description of the complex interactions and relationships they face on a daily basis (Strean, 1998; Jones,

2009). The aim of the narrative then was to link theory and practice in the context of coaches' stories and to illustrate the multifaceted and interconnected nature of community coaching (Jones, et al., 2004). Indeed, in the context of coaching research, it has been argued that the utilisation of the narrative-biographical approach allows researchers to explore the nuances, mysteries, and complexities of the human interaction inherent in coaching (Potrac & Jones, 2009). As such it has helped to develop a more detailed understanding of the activity than has been achieved to date (e.g., Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b).

Specifically, the narrative-biographical approach allows researchers to draw upon highly personalised accounts of lived experiences for the purposes of extending the sociological understanding of particular phenomena, which, in this case, is the everyday realities of community coaches (Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2000; Kelchtermans, 2009). In this respect, the narrative-biographical perspective holds the potential to shed some light upon the mundane or everyday aspects of community sports coaching inclusive of the micro-political and emotional nature of practice. These are topics which have been largely ignored in the coaching literature (Potrac, Purdy, Jones, 2008; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2011; Potrac, Jones, Purdy, Nelson & Marshall, 2013). Importantly, it was anticipated that the narrative-biographical approach would allow me to engage with the unique, ambiguous nature of community coach practice through illuminating issues that currently lie undiscovered and undisturbed in the muddy depths of the activity (Jones, 2009). Indeed, the stories that coaches tell about their lives has become a means of knowing for the rest of us as well as serving as an avenue for disclosing more about the social worlds we live in (Purdy, Potrac, & Jones, 2008; Bochner, Ellis, & Healy, 1997). In particular, attempts to delve beneath the surface of ordinary practices have assisted in the quest to gain knowledge on the 'connective tissue' that underlines the complex coaching process (Gardiner, 2000;

Potrac & Jones, 2009). It was hoped, by employing the narrative representation of the data, that I could provide a ‘bottom-up’ approach that not only provided insight into the factors that coaches believe explain their experiences, but which also had the potential to help sensitise practitioners and educators to recognise the need to understand the everyday realities of coaching (Potrac, *et al.*, 2000; Jones, 2009; Jones et al., 2011).

### ***3.3. The participants- purposive sampling***

It is a general feature of social inquiry to design and select samples for the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Even if the study involves very small populations, decisions still need to be made about people, settings, or actions (Burgess, 1982a; 1984). The sampling process for this study is known as ‘purposive sampling’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this approach, the selection of participants, settings, or other sampling units, is criterion based (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002). In this respect, the participants were chosen because they had particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles that I wished to study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). For the purpose of this study, ‘typical purposeful sampling’ was utilised (Merriam, 2009). In this regard, the participants were not considered to be ‘in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual’ cases (Patton, 2002, p.236).

In order to secure my research participants, I initially made contact with a number of regional community sports coach officers. At this stage the community sports coach officers were presented with a brief overview of the study and what it would involve. Having secured the support of the community sports coach officer I was provided with email addresses and contact numbers for the coaches who were of relevance to my study. Each coach was then sent an email that informed them of the project aims, proposed methodology, and perceived outcomes. Four community coaches indicated an interest from my email and agreed to participate in the study. It is important to note here

that my participants requested full anonymity within this study. As the data collection was from both male and female participants they were concerned that the data they shared with me would be easily identifiable to the person. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, they will all be referred to as male participants within the results section. Each participant completed an informed consent form prior to the conduction of the first interview.

On one level the number of participants recruited was determined by the responses of the community coaches themselves. Of course, while some post-positivists may question the value of research conducted with 4 participants, this was something that I felt comfortable with given my interpretive roots. Indeed, the emphasis in this study was on producing rich and detailed insights into community coaches' understandings of their everyday working lives. In this respect, the depth and quality of the data obtained was, in my view, more important than the number of participants involved. Given the depth and the amount of data that I generated with each of the participants, I did not think it was necessary to search for further participants to add to the study. Similarly, given my philosophical positioning, my intention was not to provide generalisations that could be applied to all community coaches, but was instead to develop knowledge that would stimulate critical reflection on community coaching work (Williams, 2000; Potrac, Jones, & Nelson, 2014). This is an issue that I will return to in more detail in the conclusion to this thesis.

Charlie (pseudonym) is 26 years of age. The aims of his role were to deliver a range of high quality sporting/physical activity opportunities to men and women, but especially those over the age of 45 years. Examples of this work included circuit training sessions in village halls, indoor bowls at rural locations, multi-skills activities, low-level exercise sessions in rural communities, and providing exercise and recreational opportunities for residents in care homes.

Frankie (pseudonym) was 28 years of age. His role as a community coach was to deliver sessions in the coastal area with the aim of increasing lifelong participation in physical activity. Examples included working with coastal leisure sites and surrounding communities to develop a number of activities (e.g. racquetball, walks), the delivery of beach sport sessions (e.g. volleyball, beach cricket), the provision of informal sport sessions on the coastal strip, working with disaffected youths, as well as delivering and coordinating Key Stage 4 programmes for schools in the local area.

Bobby (pseudonym) was 45 years of age. He was the outdoor adventure CSC, who provided physical activity opportunities for males and females over 16 years of age. Examples of his work included the organisation and delivery of outdoor adventure clubs at local places of interest, orienteering courses, outdoor adventure and team building holiday programmes, walks under the 'Walking the Way to Health' scheme, as well as the outdoor adventure week.

Max (pseudonym) was 23 three years of age. His projects aimed to deliver a range of high quality sporting/physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities, and to promote healthy lifestyles. Examples included providing adult Boccia clubs in the local area, organising fun clubs for young people, disability specific sessions, and multi-skills activities for pupils in special schools. As part of the healthy lifestyles project, Max also delivered a number of town and village hall sessions for voluntary organisations and companies.

### ***3.4. Qualitative interviews: A rationale***

The use of interviews was deemed appropriate as such methods have already successfully been utilised in sports coaching research (e.g., Jones et al., 2003; Potrac & Jones, 2009a; Purdy & Jones, 2009). They arguably represent a mode of inquiry that readily lends itself to questions about which relatively little is known (e.g., how community coaches understand the everyday social realities of practice) (Denzin, 1989;

Strean, 1998; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Potrac et al., 2013). Indeed, qualitative research interviews are a method that attempts to access participants' thoughts, and gain admittance into their backgrounds, emotions, and social worlds (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Indeed, Patton (1980) explains that 'we use interviews to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe, as we cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time' (p. 196). Consequently, interviewing is of value when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. Specifically, they are useful when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate (Merriam, 2009). According to Silverman (2001) interview subjects construct not just narratives, but social worlds, and indeed, 'the primary issue is to generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences' (p. 87).

As such, interview data gains access to direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge, specifically providing a rich detailed description of events (Patton, 1990). In particular, qualitative interviewers listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Interviews are useful as they allow researchers to collect data concerned with concepts that are difficult to measure. They also tend to explore questions of 'why' and 'how' rather than 'how many' and 'when' (Gratton & Jones, 2004). As such, several researchers (e.g., Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2005; Jones, 2006) have suggested that this method is able to capture the often chaotic, complex, ambiguous, and negotiated working lives of coaches and athletes. For Denzin (1989), such an approach marks an attempt to make the world of problematic lived experiences of ordinary people directly available for the reader.

In this respect, every step of the interview process has the potential to elicit new information and open a window into the experiences of those being studied (Denzin, 1989). Importantly, through such interviews, researchers can understand the experiences

of community coaches and reconstruct events in which I did not participate (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Ultimately, the interviews will help explain the specific topics, events, or happenings of the community sports coaches' social worlds. Indeed, the aim here was not to try to simplify the community coaches' everyday lives. Instead, it was to capture some of the richness and complexity of their everyday roles.

The most common way to decide which type of interview to use will be determined by the amount of structure required (Merriam, 2009). Three main types of interview have been identified. Firstly, the structured interview involves a standardised structure, typically found among surveys and used for large sample sizes, where the questions and order are pre-determined ahead of time (Merriam, 2009). These interviews are designed to access information using a uniform set of questions that are expected to elicit the subject's thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about study-related issues (Merriam, 2009). In this structured technique, each person is asked exactly the same questions. Here, careful consideration is given to the wording of each question before the interview. Often, this technique is applied to minimise variation within the interview process, especially when more than one researcher is involved in collecting data from a number of participants (Patton, 1990).

A key strength of this technique is that data analysis is said to be less complex because it is possible to locate each respondent's answer to the same question rather quickly, and to organise questions and answers that are similar. Additionally, many questions can be asked in a short space of time (Patton, 1990). However, a limitation of this approach is that it is designed to eliminate the role of the researcher and to introduce objectivity into the situation, permitting no room for further investigation (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, there is little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances and, in some cases, the wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers (Patton,

1990). Indeed, the respondents must fit their experiences and feelings into the researchers' categories, which may be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant, and mechanistic (Patton, 1990).

Secondly, unstructured interviews operate from a different set of assumptions. The interviews begin with the belief that they do not know in advance what all the necessary questions are. Consequently, they cannot fully predetermine a list of questions to ask and, as such, they do not limit the direction and coverage of an interview (Berg, 2001). Ultimately, the idea of this interview approach is to maintain as much flexibility as possible and to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate. The strength of the unstructured interview is that it allows the researcher to be highly responsive to individual differences and situational responses (Patton, 1990). Also, this technique can increase the salience of the questions asked of each individual (Patton, 1990). However, this approach does require a skilled researcher to handle the greater flexibility demanded by the unstructured interview. As such, the researcher must have the ability to develop, adapt, and generate the questions that are appropriate to the given situation and the central purpose of the investigation (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979; Merriam, 2009). This approach requires a greater amount of time to collect, organise, and analyse data (Patton, 1990). This approach depends on the conversational skills of the researcher to a greater extent than in fully structured interviews (Patton, 1990). Furthermore, the conversational researcher must be able to interact easily with people in a variety of settings, generate rapid insights, formulate questions quickly and smoothly, and guard against asking questions that impose interpretations on the situation by the structure of the questions (Patton, 1990).

The chosen interview technique for this study was the third type of interview, known as the semi-structured interview (Jones, 1997). This technique involves the researcher developing their own set of interview questions as well as the format of the interview.

As such, this approach provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience. Here, the questions asked by the researcher function as triggers that encourage the participant to talk (Willig, 2001). Generally, the interview agenda structure is maintained. However, the questions can vary as the situation demands. Within this structure, questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviews are allowed freedom to digress. That is, the researcher is permitted to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared questions (Berg, 2001). By applying this format, it allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand in a flexible, conversational manner (Merriam, 2009).

This method allows for broad topics to be covered that are specified in advance, with the researcher deciding the wording of the questions used. It also allows the researcher to explore new topics that emerge, and can be probed, during the course of the discussion. The topics outlined need not be taken in any particular order as the interview guide simply serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered (Patton, 1990). The semi-structured approach is concerned with the uniqueness of the individual and their viewpoints and has a further utility in terms of following up on specific ideas or issues that emerge from the data (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). This approach is beneficial as having a 'guideline' increases the comprehensiveness of the data for each respondent, allowing for logical gaps in the data to be anticipated and closed while remaining flexible and conversational (Patton, 1990). Byrne (2004) also suggested that:

‘Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing the individual’s thoughts, which are things that cannot easily be observed through a standardised questionnaire. These open ended flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions

and therefore provide better access to interviewee's views, interpretations of events, understanding experiences and opinions. As such, when this is conducted successfully we are able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other; particularly survey bases approaches' (p. 182).

### ***3.5. Collecting the narrative-biographical interview data***

The data were collected through a series of informal interviews. Each coach was interviewed until I believed data saturation occurred (Merriam, 2009). This was the point at which I believed no new data emerged during the interviews with each participant. In practice, this resulted in a total of 24 interviews and between 30-36 hours of audible interview data for each participant. The variation in the amount of data collected from each participant reflected the time they had available for each interview, the progress that was made in a particular interview session, and, not least, my ability to pursue, as well as obtain, greater detail and understanding of their respective experiences as community coaches (Merriam, 2009). Each interview was audio taped to ensure a complete and accurate record of the data (Merriam, 2009). The interviews took place at a time and location best suited to the coaches to ensure that they were comfortable and relaxed in their surroundings. Importantly, the location was private so that no other person was present. During the first meeting we discussed some ethical principles that would underpin the interview process. These ethical principles were identified by Sparkes (2000), and included: (i) the content of the interviews would be confidential; (ii) the only person that would listen to the audiotapes of the interview and transcribe them would be myself; and (iii) it would be the participant's choice at the end of the project as to whether the audiotapes were returned to them, wiped clean by myself, or remained with me for future analysis. It was also explained to each of the community coaches that they would be given pseudonyms in order to protect their

identity as this was of importance to them (Sparkes, 2000). In order to achieve anonymity I explained that their real names would be changed to a pseudonym when reporting data. Similarly, I explained that the names of places and others mentioned in the stories that they shared, as well as descriptions of certain characteristics about the individual, would also be hidden to further protect their identities.

At this stage, I intended not to be distant or emotionally uninvolved. Instead, I aimed to form a relationship with the interviewee. This was deemed important as the interviews required a degree of openness if rich data were to be obtained (Bowman, Bowman, & Resch, 1984). I had no desire to position myself as a detached, disinterested, and objective outsider. Instead, I attempted to adopt the creative role of 'active listener'. As Wolcott (1995) explained, this implied taking an interactive role in order to make a more effective speaker out of the person talking. As Denzin (1989a) pointed out, 'to listen only, without sharing, creates distrust' among the interviewer and interviewee (p. 43). To avoid this, I therefore shared some of my own community coaching experiences with the coaches as they shared theirs with me. This allowed us to build a good research relationship. During the course of the interviews the coaches were encouraged to talk about their respective coaching experiences, the day to day realities of their role, and their understandings of what is required of them, and how they sought to manage working relationships with others, such as colleagues, service users, parents, and managers.

Importantly, the interviews were 'reflexive' in nature and so the coaches were invited to discuss particular areas of interest with the interviewer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The interviews attempted to explain why the coaches act the way they do in their coaching environment (Sparkes & Templin, 1992). In order to achieve this end, the interviews covered a range of topics such as those listed above. Although the interview guides were semi-structured the order in which the questions were asked flowed from

the coaches' replies, thus making the interview 'conversational' (Wilson, 1996). The questions had the potential to change during the research as new areas of inquiry opened. Here, it was deemed essential that the interview guide would remain flexible, as opposed to something that had been prepared in advance and 'set in stone' (Merriam, 2009). In terms of constructing the interview guide, the questions asked were influenced by my reading of the existing coaching literature, broader reading of relevant social theory, my own experiences as a community coach, driven by my research aims, as well as my continued reviewing of existing interview transcripts for each participant. Indeed, it is important to highlight that the data collection and data analysis were, from my perspective, an ongoing and symbiotic activity. This will be explored in more detail in the proceeding section addressing my analysis of the narrative-biographical data.

Throughout the interview process, 'probing questions' were incorporated as these helped to specify the level of depth and detail of data that I wished to obtain. Specifically, there were two main types of probes used, the clarification probe and the elaboration probe (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The 'clarification' probes were used to clarify any points that were unclear, or open to misunderstanding, or to clarify my understanding of what the participant had to say. For example, 'I want to make sure I understand what you mean. Would you describe it for me again?' Meanwhile, 'elaboration' probes were used to elicit more in-depth responses about a particular point relating to the interview. This involved using phrases such as 'Why is that?', 'Could you expand on that?' or 'Could you tell me more about that?' Such probes helped to enhance the richness of the data that I obtained (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I also incorporated detailed orientated probes, using these in our natural conversations as follow-up questions, designed to fill out the picture of whatever it is I was trying to understand. These included questions such as 'Who was with you?', and 'Where did you go then?' (Rubin & Rubin, 1990).

### **3.6. Data analysis: An iterative approach**

Traditional approaches, to qualitative research, have tended to treat the research process generally, and the analysis of data more specifically, in a somewhat linear fashion (e.g., Creswell 2007). Within such accounts authors frequently position the analysis of data as a distinct phase of the research process, and characterize it as being relatively procedural and unproblematic in nature (Taylor, in press). Such a description of data analysis is unquestionably attractive and there is certainly no shortage of texts that outline step-by-step accounts of ‘what to do and how to do it’ (e.g., Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bryman & Burgess, 2002). While this is the case, such formulaic representations are somewhat different to my own experiences of the research process in which I found myself constantly working back and forth between data collection, data analysis, and the writing up of my research findings. In this respect, my approach might be best described as being iterative, rather than purely inductive, in approach (Tracy, 2013).

According to Tracey (2013), an iterative approach cycles between emic, or emergent, readings of the data, and an etic use of existing models, explanations, and theories. That is, rather than grounding meaning solely in the emergent data, an iterative approach also encourages reflection upon the active interests, current literature, granted priorities, and various theories which the researcher brings to the data. Unlike traditional descriptions of inductive analysis, iteration is not considered to be ‘a repetitive mechanical task’ but, rather, a reflexive process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data, connects them to emerging insights, and progressively refines his or her focus and understandings of the topic being investigated (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77).

Consistent with an iterative approach, my analysis of data comprised of two contrasting cycles that were engaged on multiple occasions (Tracey, 2013). The first of these cycles entailed an emic analysis of the initial interview transcripts. The data for

each participant was used to construct a biographical portrait of that individual. Here, in mirroring the approach utilized by Jones et al. (2004), my intention was to develop a rich portrayal of each participant's career experiences and understanding of their work. In addition to developing the portraits for each individual, this process of analysis, like the one used in Jones et al (2004), also entailed generating similarities and differences between the participants' stories. Overall then, this stage of analysis entailed identifying 'critical incidents', 'critical people', and 'critical phases of time' were established within and between cases (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2009). The identification of meaningful data raised additional questions that were asked in subsequent interviews in an attempt to expand the initial insight that I had started to acquire.

While engaging in this cycle, I principally focused on identifying meaningful data that would help me to address my research questions as stated in the introduction to this thesis (see Chapter 1, p 11). That is, I concentrated on identifying data that provided insight into how the participant coaches experienced interactions with key contextual stakeholders, what issues they had encountered in their working relationships, how such interactions made them feel, and how situational and contextual factors were perceived to have impacted on their understandings and actions.

Following this, I then engaged in a secondary cycle by completing an etic analysis of my initial interview data. Within this stage, I began to critically examine the codes already identified in the primary cycle, and organise, synthesise, and categorise them into interpretive concepts. Within this secondary cycle the coding focused on the interpretation of the data and identification of patterns. That is, my principal aim was to try to understand my findings by drawing on relevant literature and theorising. Here, 'analytical memos' were used to make preliminary links to theoretical concepts that might help to explain my data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Establishing such

tentative theoretical links raised further questions that were explored in greater detail during subsequent interviews.

It is in light of the above that I find myself agreeing with the comments of other researchers who have contended that it is neither practical nor desirable to view the analysis of data as being something that you do after the collection of data, and before the writing up of your research report (e.g., Markula & Silks, 2012; Sparkes, 2002). Consistent with the comments of such scholars, it is my belief that as researchers we are constantly making judgements, reaching conclusions, and ordering our thoughts. In a related fashion, I have come to acknowledge that the writing up of research findings is not something that occurs after the collection and analysis of data. Rather, the writing of the narratives presented in the results section of this thesis occurred alongside the analysis and collection of data. In this respect, I have come to consider the process of writing to be a form of analysis in itself (Richardson, 1999). Indeed, the writing of the respective community coaches' narratives helped me to identify numerous gaps in my understanding and, in doing so, issues that I needed to address during subsequent interviews.

The writing of these narratives also led me to reflect on my construction of them. Here, I find myself in agreement with Jones et al. (2003) who note that 'the multi-layered process of analysing and writing' a narrative 'is a difficult story to retell' (p. 237). While I consider the narratives presented to be 'accurate' accounts of the community coaches' experiences, I recognise that they were ultimately constructed and theoretically analysed by myself and, therefore, accept that there are undoubtedly places where my own perspectives and experiences may have led me to focus on certain aspects more than others (Nelson et al., 2011). It is in light of such acknowledgements that I decided to present the narratives in the first person.

In an attempt to understand the stories that the community coaches shared with me I drew on a number of theoretical frameworks to develop the analysis. Initially, Kelchtermans' (2005, 2009a, 2009b) notion of the personal interpretive framework was used. According to Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a) this is a process of the individual developing their 'professional self understanding' (Kelchtermans 2005, 2009a). Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) explained that professional self understanding refers to practitioners' conceptions of themselves in their professional role. Such self understanding is not only influenced by an individual's perception of their qualities and capacities in their working role at a particular point in time, but also how they believe other people perceive their performances in that role. In addition, Kelchtermans work on micro-political literacy and desirable working conditions was also used to understand the coaches' stories (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a; 2002b). Kelchtermans and colleagues' work (2002a, 2002b), provides an interesting window into the micro-politics that are often an inherent feature of everyday life for teachers. In particular, this body of research explores how beginning teachers come to understand and navigate their way through the political aspects of their job. From this, they focused on how new teachers develop 'micro-political literacy', a process by which they learn to read the micro-political reality of their job, and subsequently write themselves into it (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b; Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1998). Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002a) investigations have led them to suggest that micro-political activity within teaching may take place due to reasons such as their self interests, material interests, organisational interests, cultural-ideological interests, and socio-professional interests.

The second analytic framework utilised to understand the community coaches' behaviours was the dramaturgical theory outlined in Goffman's (1959) classic text, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman's (1959) micro-political framework

of impression management refers to those events which occur whenever two or more people are in one another's presence (Williams, 1998). Goffman examined that the expectations people hold in relation to what is considered to be normal and acceptable behavior, is based on the notion that in everyday life individuals play roles, negotiate situations and, to a certain extent, are forced to act (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004). Central to Goffman's argument is the notion that individuals are not entirely determined by society, because they are able to strategically manipulate social situations and others' impressions of themselves (Goffman, 1959). Goffman's thinking allows a researcher to explore how people not only produce recognisable performances for others, but also how they strategically manipulate others' perceptions of themselves and social situations to reach their goals (Jones, Armour & Potrac). In *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) utilised a dramaturgical approach to not only examine the mode of presentation employed by the social actor, but also to explain its meaning in a broader social context (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004).

The third analytical framework used was the socio-cultural theory of emotions presented by Arlie Russell Hochschild. Hochschild was among the first to develop a sociological appreciation of emotions, with her work considered to be ground breaking in understanding the significance of emotions in everyday life (Theodosius, 2008). Hochschild is most notably known for accounts addressing the binds, intimacy, and emotions that are a feature of social life at work and in the home (Hochschild, 1983; 1989; 2000; 2003). Her findings in this area are best illustrated in '*The Managed Heart: The Commercialisation of Human Feeling*' (1983), '*The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*' (1989), and '*The Commercialisation of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*' (2003). Hochschild's work provides a deep insight into the social actor's ability to work on emotions in order to present a socially desirable performance for the benefit of those around them (Bolton & Boyd, 2003). Hochschild is

most known for her detailed study of the everyday realities of flight attendants in the commercial airline industry from which she developed the concept of ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 2003: 7). Furthermore, in order to place the subject of emotions firmly on the sociological map, Hochschild introduced the concepts of ‘emotional management’, ‘feeling rules’, ‘surface and deep acting’, ‘emotional labour’ and ‘in-authenticity of the self’ (Hochschild, 1983, 2003).

The final analytical framework used to analyse the data was the concept of ‘liquid modernity’. Bauman (2000, 2005, 2006 2007a, 2007b) work investigated the notion of the ‘liquid times’ that we live in. Bauman stated that the passage from ‘solid’ to ‘liquid’ modernity has created a new and unprecedented setting for individual life pursuits, confronting individuals with a series of challenges never before encountered. His work demonstrated how social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life plans. Instead, the individual has to piece together a series of short-term projects and episodes that do not add up to the kind of sequence to which concepts like ‘career’ and ‘progress’ could meaningfully be applied (Bauman, 2005).

### ***3.7. Judging this study***

Historically, qualitative research in sport science, and arguably sports coaching, has been evaluated in terms of what Sparkes and colleagues have labelled the ‘parallel position’ (Sparkes, 1998; 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2009, 2013). This perspective recognises that qualitative and quantitative research differs, and thus, different criteria are needed to judge each. However, rather than generating criteria that are specific to qualitative research it has been contended that the parallel position does little more than convert dominant ideas from quantitative research (i.e. validity, reliability, and generalisability) to the context of qualitative inquiry.

A good example of a parallel position can be found in the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), in which they proposed criteria, such as ‘credibility’, ‘transferability’, and ‘dependability’, which, when taken together, make up the ‘trustworthiness’ of a qualitative research study. In order to produce a trustworthy qualitative study they suggested that a number of techniques be utilised. These include prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, negative case analysis, and peer debriefing. It also comprises triangulation, whereby researchers obtain multiple forms of data to cross-check information and/or more than one researcher analyses the data to achieve a consensus on the findings. Another crucial technique to ensure credibility is member checking. Sometimes referred to as respondent validation, this checking involves ‘verifying’ with participants that the researchers’ interpretations of data are accurate (Guba, 1985).

Despite the concept of trustworthiness and associated techniques being widely used within sports coaching, the parallel stance as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) has been subject to critique by Sparkes (1998, 2002) and Sparkes and Smith (2009). They identified two key problems with the parallel approach. Firstly, they identified that some of the actual techniques proposed to achieve trustworthiness are not appropriate to the logic of qualitative research. For example, the use of member checking as a method of verification is problematic, as it suggests that in the midst of multiple realities (i.e. the researchers’ and the participants’), those being studied are the real knowers and, therefore, the possessors of truth. There is also the possibility that researchers and participants disagree on interpretations. Subsequently, participant feedback cannot be taken as a direct validation of the researchers’ inferences.

Secondly, critiques have suggested that Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) work is philosophically contradictory, stating that their work promotes sports coaching research grounded in ontological relativism. That is, that the researcher believes in multiple

realities whereas Lincoln and Guba's (1985) ideas behind trustworthiness promote epistemological foundationalism. This refers to a way of knowing in which it is believed that techniques can sort out trustworthy from untrustworthy interpretations of reality. These two beliefs are, however, incompatible.

In light of this, some have reacted to the critiques and have adopted different positions and strategies for judging qualitative research. One of these is the 'letting go' position as described by Sparkes (1998, 2002), and Sparkes and Smith (2013). This approach calls upon more relevant criteria to judge the 'goodness' of qualitative study. This shift is informed by a 'relativist' perspective in which the use of time and place contingent lists of characteristics to make judgements is called upon. This is not to say that relativism means 'anything goes' nor does it mean that all knowledge claims are equal to other knowledge claims. Smith and Deemer (2000) point out that relativists can and do make judgements and will continue to do so. However, when passing judgement on a piece of research, the criteria used are not taken to mean a preordained or universal standard against which to make a judgement. Given my interpretive philosophical stance this broad approach is the one to which I subscribe in this thesis.

In drawing upon the work of Smith, Sparkes and Caddick (2013) and Tracy (1995, 2010), I invite the reader to consider the quality of this research study in relation to the following criteria. Firstly, does this thesis make a **substantive contribution**? That is, has the study 'generated a sense of insight and deepened understanding' about the subjective experiences of the participant community coaches (Tracy, 1995, p. 209). Secondly, is this thesis **theoretically significant** in terms of developing our theoretical understanding of community coaching? Thirdly, does this thesis act as a means of **heuristic significance** by providing a foundation for other sports coaching scholars to explore the micro-political and emotionally laden nature of community coaching? Fourthly, is the topic of the research 'relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or

evocative' (Tracy, 2010, p. 840)? Fifthly, in terms of the **credibility** of this thesis, are the research findings plausible? In this regard, are the data presented and theoretical interpretations offered harmonious in terms of the data supporting the theoretical interpretations offered and vice-versa? Finally, in terms of its **resonance**, do the biographical accounts of practice and organisational life described within this thesis permit the reader to recognise and make sense of their own situation? In addition, do they provide a lens for better understanding the experiences of others?

## Chapter 4.0: Results

### 4.1. The story of Bobby

- Introduction
  - Becoming a Community Sports Coach
  - Learning to be a coach
  - Implementing a ‘good’ coaching scheme
  - Managing the unknown.... ‘The ups and the downs’
  - The struggles when working with colleagues
  - Working in the community
  - The coach and the future- Making decisions
- 

### 4.2. Introduction

What struck me about Bobby’s story was the notion of ambiguity; in the way the other community coaches were ambiguous towards him which, at times, made him feel marginalised and misunderstood. What stood out was the notion of ‘autonomy’. There was a certain freedom surrounding his job role, which he loved. However, he came to realise that this independence and self authority came at a cost, one that resulted in intense feelings of insecurity. The structure of this narrative focuses on the main events of his career and his development as a community sports coach.

#### Becoming a Community Sports Coach

Bobby explained to me that he never pictured himself being a community sports coach. His entrance into coaching occurred by chance. On struggling to get a job and change in personal circumstances he chose the career path of sports coaching. He began to tell his story:

*‘About 20 years ago I was working in agriculture and got made redundant then found work on an employment training scheme that a job centre put me in the direction of to become an outdoor physical instructor. I studied sports*

*management and then went on to complete a PGCE. I went to university as it was just another string to my bow. I got lots of knock-backs applying for teaching jobs due to the lack of experience I had. I saw this job advertised with the local council and applied for the job of a community coach specialising in outdoor pursuits. I was lucky this time around, I got the job.'*

Prior to starting his role as a CSC Bobby expressed a keen interest in developing many job specific qualifications, he felt in order to make a worthwhile contribution in his capacity, he seized the opportunity to attend coaching workshops and courses that he deemed to be of relevance for his future career. He stated:

*'Prior to entering the field I had my windsurfing, canoeing, fencing, triathlon, mountain biking, badminton, basic expedition leader's award, archery, and bush craft. I started gaining these coaching qualifications since about the age of 16. When starting as a community coach the ones mentioned above I have recently re-validated such as my mountain biking, triathlon and archery, all of which, over time, will be renewed accordingly.'*

It was explained to me that the courses he attends are useful to him for a number of reasons. Firstly, allowing him to learn more about a particular sport and secondly, 'you get to watch how the coach educator delivers it to you and you also get to see how the participants take to that approach or methods they apply'. In his own words:

*'I think, going on courses, you also develop your own activity skills too as on these courses they may teach you different activities that currently you haven't been doing so sometimes they are good for gaining fresh ideas. I would not just go on any course, it may be that the managers suggest a course to you or it may be a mandatory Council one that we have to attend.'*

Bobby felt that it was important to expand on his professional knowledge as ‘you have to go with the times, sport can change’. He also considered that his coaching had been informed not only by coach educators, but also by listening to other coaches he had previously worked with. In this regard, these experiences appear to have built the basis of his coaching knowledge. He elaborated:

*‘I did a badminton coaching course about twenty years ago. Yes, I could deliver a session on it now, but the techniques, new shots or different rules may have come out since I did it and I’m not 100% fresh on it. So, in this instance, I refreshed my knowledge on it because I want people to get the best out of the sessions. I think there is always something new to learn so you just have to put yourself out there and try to take new knowledge on. I’m always willing to learn from people around me, if they know more than me about a sport or the rules of it and so on, I won’t disregard their knowledge, and I’ll take it on board.’*

When further discussing the impact of coach education he identified a primary problem with coach certification. In this regard, he felt that the courses to be somewhat variable in quality and suitability. He noted:

*‘I don’t think on these courses you learn the realities of coaching as what you learn doesn’t reflect the social settings you may be working within. It is like driving, you don’t just do one day of driving and know everything, you learn over time, gain more knowledge and experience in different areas, then you realise how dynamic it is. You can’t just do a brief course and expect it to run perfectly, it just doesn’t happen. For example, a typical coaching session would be that you would have a group, teach them a specific skill or activity to achieve a desired outcome. However, achieving*

*this isn't a straightforward sequential process you do face hurdles and challenges you have to overcome.'*

### **Learning to be a coach**

In terms of learning to become community coach, Bobby explained that he had to prepare himself for a new social environment. He expressed how this made him feel 'apprehensive, nervous, and unsettled'. Here, Bobby noted that:

*'I had butterflies in my tummy about starting, it was something new so that's only natural. To my surprise, I was soon to learn that I was entering a job that only myself had the experience and knowledge to coach. Initially I was shocked as the realisation kicked in that it was down to me to do everything. However, after I sat and thought about it I realised that it was a good opportunity and it would allow me to develop it how I wanted it, and at my own pace. So, I sat down with the Yellow Pages, did internet searches, and started to find out what was already out there and where I could begin to place my own ideas. I felt in power to a degree as I am the only person who knows what I am doing. The stuff for the Council for outdoor adventures is all down to me; nobody can easily come in and take over my session in that sense.'*

In further elaborating on this, he outlined that this process of getting things 'off the ground' took time. Therefore, he decided to use this free work hours both wisely, and productively. He stated:

*'I decided to offer my help to the other coaches in my new team. I did this for a number of reasons. Firstly, so that I could get a feel of how the Council expected their sessions to be delivered. You can't sit in the office all day. Secondly, I wanted to learn how the other coaches in the department worked and it was also a good opportunity to get to know them. Finally, I*

*wanted to show the managers that I was keen, proactive, and being a team-player. Which, I guess you could say, was tactical behavior.'*

When discussing the preparation for this role, Bobby commented how developing working relationships with his new employees was essential to him. In particular, he wanted to be 'accepted' by his respective colleagues. In his own words:

*'I wanted people to like me, I went about trying achieve this by making an extra effort to talk to them, find out about them, and try to establish a common ground between us. I made sure that I was just how I am all the time; approachable, friendly manner, not over-familiar, keeping professionalism in there. It is how I was when I first started and it is how I am now. I didn't change myself in any way. I wanted to be consistent in my approaches. That way everyone knows where they stand, and what to expect from me.'*

He shared with me that the development of professional relationships with his new work colleagues was important to him for a number of reasons. He explained:

*'If you go in as a 'mate' and there is an issue, it becomes hard to approach as you have got closer to them. It might be that someone has pissed you off but if you are close to them it's harder to approach it. I wanted to avoid situations like this. I didn't want to go in and be over-friendly with everyone as you are there to do a job. It is important that you have this mentality as it shows that you have a professional work ethic.'*

In this instance, Bobby illustrated how he manipulated his climate and initial interactions in what he believes to be the best interests for him. In further articulating his desire for good working conditions, he described to me how the next stage was to develop his coaching scheme.

## Implementing a 'good' Coaching Scheme

I understood from talking with Bobby that his scheme was a programme that he put in place. It was explained to me that, the length of these schemes varied depending on what he was organising. Bobby stated the need to plan projects that were going to be sustainable and popular. From my understandings, this was the beginning of a challenging process. Bobby, in his own words:

*'One of the main problems is the access to resources as we are restricted on the funding side of things as there is only so much money in the pot for resources. You've just got to be realistic in what you ask for and don't ask for things that are ridiculously expensive as you know you won't get them. It usually involves an informal chat with the line manager where I might discuss some new resources or it may get brought up in a team meeting where we will have the opportunity to put these ideas across. At times, it can be frustrating and annoying as the other coaches' equipment is easily accessible such as footballs, netballs. I have to wait till the end of the year to see if there has been a shortfall in spending.'*

Not only was Bobby faced with the struggles of accessing his equipment he also struggled to establish the relevant contacts and links he required. He explained:

*'There was no registry of outdoor adventure providers or clubs, no specific book that I could use. You would have to use a search engine such as the internet, it was a case of searching for hours and hours. I have now created an A-Z list of providers and phone numbers so it just makes it easier if you need to contact somebody. Nobody knew who the local providers were so I needed to see what was already out there; if there were already 10 clubs doing canoeing then me trying to set another one up would mean it would probably fail as there wasn't the demand for it. Developing this registry*

*went down really well with my managers; they saw the time and effort that I had put into it and the resource has been very useful. So much so that my template of this resource has been used in other departments, it is a basic yet useful resource. Then, if at any time I ever needed my sessions covered for illness, another coach could easily use this resource to ring the people they needed.'*

In commenting further on the issues that he has encountered, Bobby expressed how some existing clubs were not 'welcoming' and 'accepting of his services'. In this regard, he felt they were worried that he was trying to 'steal their business', which, in turn, meant they were 'hostile' towards him. In his own words:-

*'Clubs like archery, cycling are quite challenging to approach as they didn't like new people entering, they were a bit old-school like that and wanted to stick to what they knew. They didn't want to talk to me, it was so frustrating and annoying. It took me time to build relationships to be able to access things such as these clubs but they came round I they realised I wasn't there to try and take over, only to offer them additional services.'*

Encompassed within this planning phase was the schemes ability to hit specific targets. When asked to comment further, Bobby stated:

*'Our schemes are based around funding, whatever funding we get the sessions we subsequently plan must meet the aims and objectives stipulated by the funders. I personally worry quite a lot about the statistics, if you didn't get numbers it would fail and nobody wants that. You would be labelled as an incompetent coach. You possibly wouldn't get the funding again. Also, if my numbers were too low the scheme would fade. Obviously I wouldn't want that as I would feel more vulnerable. If funding wasn't coming in then how could I work on a scheme? To avoid this happening, I*

*do try very hard to reach my targets; ensuring thorough planning, thought, research, and marketing is carried out prior to it running. I know there is room for flexibility with regards to getting exact numbers, and we have the authority to adjust and adapt our sessions if we think the changes made can result in a better scheme.'*

### **Managing 'The ups and the downs'**

The more I spoke to Bobby the more I realised that part of his CSC role encompassed an unavoidable sense of insecurity. This was due to the large emphasis placed on target attainment and, that many of Bobby's activities were misunderstood within the council. In some cases, his work was deemed 'as irrelevant or not as important as other projects the service runs'. He expressed:

*'People in the office are very ambiguous towards what I do. For example, one day I was discussing a walk that I was doing; it was part of a long distance walk, start at one end and finish at the other. My manager turned around and said she didn't see the point of it. She just didn't want to understand. Everyone has their own idea about what sport is and I don't think they see it as sport, they see it as a cloudy, hazy area for them. The other coaches don't come across this as the managers view what they do as sport. It isn't a great feeling explaining my purpose, it is difficult and it upsets me. It is annoying in some circumstances as that is why I have been employed so why question it and make me feel different to the other coaches? It's not as though they employed me to coach football and rugby and I teach outdoor adventure projects. It can be pure frustration and anger at times.'*

Bobby explained that, because outdoor activities was not as ‘mainstream’ as what the other coaches did, at times, he found himself having to justify the relevance of his work in order to be accepted by those around him. He explained:

*‘It is annoying having to validify why you’re there; I guess they take the outlook that if they have never heard of something, they wouldn’t participate, so I think they think ‘why would community participants participate in something they have never heard of?’ For example, bush craft; they didn’t understand it at all but, in fact, it is a holistic project and covers and touches upon lots of different areas. They don’t understand the relevance of what I do but I know I have the experience, training, knowledge, and commitment to deliver quality work. Frequently, I get people not acknowledging my purpose. The outdoor adventures stuff is the love of my life really; if people enjoy it, it makes me feel fantastic. So, when it gets questioned it can be frustrating. I have had people come up and say ‘I don’t see the point in it’, but I would just explain the relevance to them in the hope they then appreciate what I am there to do for them.’*

The picture that emerged from Bobby’s story was that of a coach who was passionately committed to role but had to deal with intense feelings of ‘fear’ ‘ambiguity’ ‘insecurity’ and fear of the unknown. The need for developing good working conditions and establishing working relationships with others was firmly captured within the experiences he shared with me. The next part of Bobby’s story begins to further unravel the complicated nature of his coaching role.

## **Working with colleagues**

When questioned about his experiences with other colleagues, Bobby recalled a number of problematic interactions. As a result, leaving him to feel ‘angry’ and ‘frustrated’. In his own words:

*‘Thing that gets on my back is when you can clearly see that colleagues are not putting the effort or motivation in. It all adds up under your skin and sometimes you just blow your top and say something, even just a small comment or dig, I have said things like ‘am I the only one working in here.’*

To elaborate further on these struggles he shared an experience with me when things ‘got too much’ and he had to take action.

*‘I’ve said something to someone before as I found some of the coaches were being a little too personal and I felt some of the things certain people said were directly meant for me. I did want to have an outburst and say something to him, I’m not sure what, but it was office bullying and I wasn’t standing for it. On a daily basis he would take the mick out of my last name which rhymes with the word ‘masturbate’ so he decided to refer to me as that inappropriate word at work. I told him to stop as it was silly and immature, saying anything else wasn’t appropriate as it may have come back on me. So, approaching the manager and explain that I was having problems was the best thing to do. The coach has moved on now and doesn’t work in the team. Initially, the things he said I just kept to myself for a while but, after a period of time, it did start to get to me so I went to my manager as I knew I had to say something about it. I told them it was unacceptable behaviour and that the office banter needed to be sorted. Anyway, not long after all that, I did get an apology off the other coach and it stopped’*

Despite Bobby addressing this issue in the office he explained how he never had his desirable working environment, especially in the office. In some circumstances, in his eyes, the other coaches have become ‘distracting time wasters’.

*‘I mean, I’m about 20 years older than some of them in the office but I just bite my tongue and get on with it as some of the things they say are not worth commenting on, just really silly things. Maybe it’s the age gap and I don’t find the same things amusing as them. They can be loud and it does distract you when you’re trying to concentrate on reading something. I just used to shut off and try and get on with my tasks. It does make me feel like on my own sometimes, like I’m not included in their conversations because in their eyes I’m too old. At times, it gets me down because I feel socially excluded.’*

In addition to managing the ‘office’ environment, Bobby also placed emphasis on the working relationships he had to establish and maintain whilst working with the community participants. Bobby was a firm believer that the sessions he took as a coach had to be enjoyable and fun for the community participants.

## **Working in the Community**

### **Creating the right environment to coach**

When discussing the attributes required of an effective coach, in addition to organisational ability, Bobby emphasised the need to create a fun, happy, positive environment. In turn, he tried to facilitate a confident and relaxed coaching environment; something he believed emanates directly from the persona and demeanor of the coach. In further exploring the capabilities required to be a ‘good coach’ he noted how past experiences had influenced his approach:

*‘You know yourself if there’s a miserable teacher it makes you not want to be there and sat listening I always learnt when the teacher or coach was*

*enthusiastic and happy to be there. I just took that on board really and noticed that I and others were more co-operative when the teacher/instructor/tutor was happy to be there.'*

### **Preparing the 'act' for his Community participants**

Bobby began to realise that in order to generate and sustain this 'happy, fun, enthusiastic, and confident' public exterior to his community participants there entailed a degree of 'acting'. When questioned further on what this meant by this, he explained:

*'Basically, I think you just have to get good at acting and it's like an actor; being up on stage they act a certain way for the time that they have to give a performance but when they've finished they can walk away and act how they usually would on a daily basis. That's how I see it and your acting skills as a coach get better the more situations you're put in and the more you develop as a coach. There are times where you have to do an activity that you don't want to do so you have to act as though you do like it whilst you're there in front of them so they will join in but I know I may not really be enjoying it. Then, once the session has finished you can drop your act and walk away.'*

In further exploring this notion, he explained that it is just like having a 'toolbox' at your disposal. Thus, depending on what situation you are presented will depend on what 'props' you will pull out of your 'toolbox'. He noted:

*'It is like using props in show like an actor would. As a coach you need to be able to display every emotion and be able to switch on and switch off, you need to be good at using your emotions to suit the environment. I think you need to be able to judge a situation and act accordingly; you can't just act the same way with everyone as the people you interact with are all so*

*different, you need to work out what you need to do to get the best out of that situation.'*

An example was provided to demonstrate Bobby's ability to 'act' out particular personas:

*'In a school environment I was doing a session and talking to two boys. One was trying and one was messing about. I had to turn around and shout at one and be firm to get him back on track and then I had to turn to the other boy next to me to tell him how good he was doing. That change of emotion had to happen in seconds and it does become quite hard to do it all the time as you're always having to think how's best to approach it and in what manner it's needed to be done.'*

He appeared to be accepting of the fact that putting on a 'performance' was part of his daily routine. Despite how he may truly feel, he was dedicated to his act, he did not want anything to 'spoil his performance'.

*'Everyone has their own personal issues; it might even be the case that you have just gone out the night before and you wake up and think to yourself 'oh, I really don't want to be at work', but you have to go careful. More so for us as if we turn up and people can tell that's how we feel then they wouldn't come anymore as they would wonder why they have paid to come to a session and spend time with a coach who doesn't want to be there. Plus, it would jeopardize our job potentially. I always try to make sure that I look positive and professional when working with others, if you don't it looks like you're not taking your job seriously and this could get back to the managers. I would rather endure my act then deal with the possible consequences.'*

I would argue, from my interpretation of Bobby's experiences, that his reasoning for maintaining his 'front' was that his effort to remain professional and portray a good service image was monitored by his superiors. As such, he placed effort into appearing as the Council expected him to:

*'Our efforts do get monitored from numbers going through your sessions and customer satisfaction. I am aware that people will get asked how my service is; therefore, it is something that you are always aware of. You can't let your performance change too much as people will pick up on it. Also, we all go through a service induction as we get told what is expected of us, main one being professionalism encompassing a smiley face, representing a service for the Council. Therefore, I feel I should adhere to their expectations. At the end of the day, the council is paying me a wage.'*

He shared with me that the continual adherence to these expectations of the managers and community participants did have its personal repercussions over time. However, the satisfaction of the job was what kept him going. He stated:

*'At times, you just want to be on your own, if you're down or if something had upset you. But you can't act like this in the professional environment so it can become very emotionally demanding and drains you sometimes as you're having to be happy yet maybe inside you really don't feel like that at all. It is hard to manage but I do love what I do as a job so it's just something that you get on with. You remind yourself that you are being paid for doing something you enjoy so I am lucky. By knowing that the service users have had a positive experience, which is a reward in its self for me.'*

As a coach, Bobby to an extent has demonstrated playing roles. The coaching role then, in his case, was a performance that he gave. It appeared that there no longer lies in accepting the fact that he has to engage with certain role as a coach, but in which role to

play and when, and in ensuring a degree of evenness and regularity between the roles. In this regard, even though he had to be different in his interactions with different community participants, he could not be seen to behave too differently, otherwise he could open himself to accusations of ‘inconsistency’ and being ‘false’.

### **The coach and the future- Making decisions**

The message that emanates from Bobby’s story was that of a coach who not only attached great store to his outdoor adventures role, but also of a dedicated professional who was fully aware of the need to adhere to certain expectations from that of managers, funders, and community participants. Bobby believed that investment, time and energy into this role has been worth it. He has variously demonstrated throughout his story an enduring interest for outdoor adventure activities and coaching. However, due to Bobby experiencing high levels of vulnerability and ambiguity towards what he does, it was only natural for him to consider what his future may hold. In his own words:

*‘I do have things that I would like to plan for such as to start my own business. I’m doing the planning and organising for it now. I know it’s not the best thing to do at the minute with the economy. However, I’m keeping it in the pipeline because come this time next year I could be out of a job depending on what happens with the funding situation. I think it’s to cover my own back really so I could have something to fall back on. Ideally, I would like to combine my expertise with a friend and become a small company specialising in outdoor activities. Basically, doing what we already do but more freelance so we can do what we like and not told what to do by anyone else I suppose. This way, I will be free of target attainments, pressure, and having to continually prove my existence. I guess I’m thinking of myself really, because if next year the service changes and I*

*don't like it then I have this to have a go at. I would like to stay working as a community coach but you do sometimes need to have back-up plans these days, nothing can be set in stone or certain for that matter.'*

#### **4.4. The story of Max**

- Introduction
  - Becoming a Community Sports Coach
  - Development of professional knowledge
  - The experiences of being the ‘new coach’
  - The Coaching Scheme
  - Being able to create ‘the good’ coaching session
  - Coaching in the community
  - Summary
- 

##### **Introduction**

In comparison to the other coaches, Max was the youngest and the least experienced community coach. What struck me most about his story was the importance he attached to doing a ‘good job’ and being a ‘good coach’ in the eyes of his managers and the community participants. This story shows the journey a new coach has taken to be accepted within an already established setting; as such, this transition has not been without struggles, complexities, and emotional challenges.

##### **Becoming a Community Sports Coach**

Previous to starting his disability community sports coach role, Max explained to me that he was already employed by the council as a sessional coach for two and a half years. He got into this role via a friend who was in charge of the football development post for the council at the time. His role as a sessional worker consisted of carrying out sessions in the community such as football and going into schools providing multi-skills to primary and secondary students. Despite football being his main interest and passion from a young age he began to realise that there was only going to be so much that you can teach primary school children. In this regard, the process began to become rather predictable for both Max and the children and at times it became unchallenging and

repetitive in nature. On realising this, Max's career aspirations began to change, he wanted to coach variety of sports and work with different ages in order to give himself more of a challenge.

Shortly after, Max saw a job advertisement for a full-time community coach specialising in disability sessions. He applied and was successful for the role. Max was drawn to the job role as he knew it would be something brand-new for him to tackle. He explained that he did always picture himself as a sports coach but he never would have considered himself in the role of a disability coach because he was not aware that such a role existed when he first started coaching. Despite the change in career direction from a football coach to a disability coach he was really pleased that he came down the route of a disability community coach as it was different to what he had been doing previously. He finds it extremely rewarding and fantastic as the users are happy and grateful when he turns up to do activities with them. In his own words:

*'I wanted a change for my career and this job post came up just at the right time for me. I was ready for a career development; also, I wanted to be a part of the Council 100% as I had got my face known to others and I really liked the team there. Also, because it was an area I wanted to work I thought if I went in there and people began to recognise my face then if a job did come up and I applied, people would be able to put a face to the name. I saw it as a way of potentially getting in and developing a first base with more people in the office. It is a great bunch of people all of a similar age so you can relate to one another. Also, the senior management teams are really positive, hard working, and determined. I wanted to do the job for more reasons, such as personal development and career development.'*

## **Development of professional knowledge**

In tracing his development as a coach, Max identified several aspects to have had a significant impact upon his coaching practice. This included attending training days, coaching courses, and learning from others. Indeed, some of the courses and qualifications have been advised by his seniors and others are those which Max felt he may benefit from. It was outlined to me that for a lot of coaching jobs there was a minimum requirement of a Level 1 coaching badge and he was aware that he would need this if he hoped to get a coaching position. So, in 2006 Max gained his Level 1 football coaching badge and in 2010 he gained his Level 2.

*'Before starting the job as a community coach, I had my Level 1 and 2 coaching badges in football and Community Sports Leaders Award which I gained in 2006. Since starting the job I've attained my archery, my active and age training, seated aerobics, and booked onto my basketball and table tennis referee courses for the beginning of next year which will be good. I've gone on these courses to expand my knowledge and so that I can apply them to my daily job in sessions. Obviously, I go on training courses that make me knowledgeable with regards to the different disabilities I may come across on a daily basis. I can work with a group and everyone's disability may be different.'*

In commenting on his continuing professional development as a coach, Max described that it was very important for him to continually expand on his knowledge, especially as he worked with disabled community participants. Furthermore, the Council were also keen for their staff to attend developmental courses. He stated:

*'I go on courses a lot as you do pick up new useful knowledge. They give you the choice; some are advisable and some you have to do which are mandatory. They do want you to develop as it think it looks good on the*

*Council applying for funding if the staff are knowledgeable and qualified in the funding you are hoping to get. However, they're also good for professional development purposes too and it is good to ensure you're up to date. I don't think that you can know everything as things are always changing; the curriculum, the aims, the schemes, and the people that you work with. So, I think continual professional development is a must if you want to be on top of your of your game.'*

It would suggest that the notions of 'wanting to learn' are critical aspects of Max's coaching practice. He has expressed a great desire to further develop and enhance his knowledge base. Here, not only has he demonstrated enthusiasm for collecting qualifications, and attending training courses but also articulated the many hours he invests in synthesising such information. Indeed, Max was eager to emphasise that while 'courses' and 'information' provided valuable guidelines for coaching, applying such information straight to the coaching context was not that simple. He provided an example to illustrate this point:

*'The courses don't teach you the reality of coaching. For example, I was on a course with somebody who was trying to tell me what to do in a situation that she had read from a textbook. However, I had been in a practical experience of it happening and the way I approached it was totally different to how she would have approached it if she had followed textbook guidance. I had the practical experience and she didn't and it showed. You need a good balance of both when coaching. The situation was to do with a disabled child who lashes out. She said to me that with good practice I should have anticipated that happening but what she didn't understand is when you have a session full of 20 YP all with disabilities, situations aren't*

*always corrected and prevented as easy as others depict it to be. Nothing came of it; it was more of a discussion.'*

In summary, we can identify that Max was keen throughout his career to learn from a wide range of sources and he would argue that he is continuing to learn, as he firmly believes that no coach can 'know everything'.

### **The experiences of being the 'new coach' on the scene**

Max described how he entered his new coaching environment very 'open-minded'. In this regard, he recalled how he felt uncertain about what was to be fully expected of him. He noted:

*'I was 50/50 about being prepared for the role; I've done a lot of coaching over two and a half years so I felt comfortable about that aspect as I've been out and done it. However, I felt unprepared as I was nervous, excited, anxious, but looking forward to it as it was a clean slate and I was new to it. I had a mixed bag of emotions which made me feel a little uneasy. I resolved this by just getting stuck into it. I got to know everyone and attacked it with what I had by finding out what I needed to do and being hands-on. I made sure that I was speaking and liaising with others and getting to know the environment as best I could.'*

### **Manipulating first impressions**

On entering the role Max described how he was 'reserved' so that he could picture where he was going to 'fit it'. He further elaborated on this point by explaining that going in with a 'boisterous attitude' could have resulted in him getting 'rejected' from the other coaches. In his own words:

*'I'm an easy-going person anyway; I think that it is important to be yourself. I would say that I am a quiet person so it would be out of*

*character for me to go in with a loud personality. I think if you go in too confident I don't think people would warm to you very well and you would struggle to develop friendships and understand the people you are working with.'*

He further described to me how he is not one to 'rock the boat', even if he does not agree with the other person. When I questioned Max about this approach, he explained:

*'There is no point in causing confrontation over nothing; it is not in my nature to be like that. I think if you're the type of person to always say something you might get known for being that type of person; say if I was to apply for a different job within the Council, I wouldn't want to hinder my chances for a reason like that. They might not want to employ me if I threw my opinion about all the time. I'm good at not letting people aggravate me, as long as they are not stopping me from what I want to be doing I can let daft things go over my head.'*

Encompassed within these initial stages of employment, Max explained how he was 'nervous' being the 'new coach' on the scene, especially with him being young in comparison to the rest of the existing coaching team. In his own words:

*'I think I worry about being the new coach because I am young, and you consider how others will view you because of this. Others are so quick to judge, so I didn't want to mess up. Some community participants have made comments about my age and it sticks in your head. Others have made a few jokes when I was out on a session with an 'older' coach saying 'is that your dad?' but we just laugh it off. I used being new and young to my advantage. For example, if I had said something wrong or daft, or I messed up especially in my early stages of employment I would just say 'I'm the new one, I'm still learning how to do this job', and myself and others would*

*laugh my silly mistake off. By doing this, it did make me feel less vulnerable at times.'*

When I questioned Max about his 'new duties' of his role, he described how he was initially 'surprised', and 'shocked' with regards to the amount of planning and office work it required. He elaborated:

*'It was a bit of a reality shock when I started. What I was confronted with wasn't what I envisaged or expected. Maybe I was a bit naive, but when you get a coaching job, I thought I would just be out delivering the sessions. However, I soon became aware that as a community coach in a full-time position there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work such as paperwork and planning, setting up meetings, and visiting the centres. It was tough to get my head around at first. Luckily, my line manager had followed a similar entry path to me so he was a good mentor. He knew I would be nervous, unsure, and somewhat naive. He knew that people would try and take advantage of me in the sense that they would try give me too much work or off-load some of their coaching on to me. Being the new one you are more likely to say yes. I guess he made sure he was about to stop that happening. He made a list of things I needed to do in the first 3-4 months to get the ball rolling. He also came to my first few meetings to support me as it was all new, which was good. It took me about 2-3 months to balance everything comfortably and get to know my environment and I'm still learning now.'*

At the time of these interviews, Max was very new to this social environment and was very conscious of the fact he had to 'learn the ropes', 'manage his time' and 'impress his colleagues' in an attempt to feel secure in his working environment. In this instance, we can recognise the importance of preparation and organisation required when starting

a new role as a coach. Part of his next development was to plan and implement his own scheme of work.

### **The coaching scheme**

On listening to Max, he defined his scheme as a combination of projects and programs he plans usually over a 6 week period. The overall purpose of his scheme was to engage with people who have disabilities in the community. He explained the process of planning:

*'The first few months of me getting the job, I had been going around the various centres and facilities we access to get to know everyone a little better and to show my new face. I guess this was tactical on my part as I wanted people to meet me so I could make a good first impression and to show them that I was enthusiastic and positive. Personally, it is a role that I can see myself doing for the foreseeable future so building up contacts and making links was very important for me to do. I wanted to put a face with the name. By doing so, it was more likely they would come on board for sessions or attend events I plan. In doing so, you can build the foundations of a good professional relationships.'*

Max described to me that, during this process he did have to deal with some unhappy community participants. An aspect he did not anticipate happening. He noted:

*'I did face a few challenges in the respect that, in the space of the other guy leaving and me starting, there was a period where some of the people previously accessing services by us had nothing set up. I think, when he left, he maybe gave the impression to the community participants that there would be another coach taking over his sessions straightaway. Obviously, with that not happening, due to me having to do an induction period, they weren't happy about having to wait. I wasn't sure how to handle it, I had*

*them ringing me up, being nasty down the phone. It wasn't what I want, especially because I have just started. I was gutted, I was also worrying that I had blown my chance to give them the first impression I wanted. Instead, it looked like I was unorganised, lacked in knowledge and incompetent. I knew I needed to sort it as I wanted these participants on board for me to get my numbers.'*

Having faced these initial difficulties, Max went on to explain how he corrected this issue and began to craft his first impressions to his respective community participants. In his own words:

*'Eventually, once my induction period was over and it was time for me to start my sessions I knew I had to ring them all. I was nervous, concerned that they would be short with me again. Basically, I began by apologising for the time it had taken and the previous misunderstanding. I went out to meet them all, introduced myself and began getting to know the group. All of them were really polite and grateful. They liked the fact I had made the effort to go and have a chat before the sessions properly started. I walked away feeling positive because I had managed to get them on side with me.'*

Max described that structuring his own sessions, meeting and required target audience, and finding suitable locations for his schemes was a complicated process. He stated:

*'I faced challenges straightaway as I was unaware who I needed to be in contact with now, which facilities would be best for my sessions; I didn't know the areas, locations, facilities, the people, which leisure centres to use. How I to know what was already going on? It is now areas I have established and is ongoing as you are always meeting new people in this job. Also, how to get the ball rolling with the marketing side of things, as it*

*was something that I had never done before so it was a case of me looking at what my aims were, my target audience, and the location.'*

Max highlighted how an important aspect of his scheme, was its ability to achieve certain policy outcomes as requested by the funders. He noted:

*'So, as a community coach we get given the target numbers/areas for that project but us, as the coaches, organise their own sessions to meet these aims. We have internal and external targets. The internal ones are the corporate aims and when planning a set of sessions I'll aim to hit both as it looks good on you that you achieve both. Sometimes, you hit the internal ones without realising as they are quite easy to hit.'*

In further elaborating on the influence of targets, Max explained that despite the 'importance' of hitting these targets you cannot let them 'worry' you too much. In this regard, he explained how he took 'comfort' in the fact that all the other coaches in the team were in the same position as him.

*'We all work together well for the service. It gives a sense of security; we're all in the same boat wanting the job security. I think it's for the managers' benefit too; they work hard to secure the funding for us so I feel as though we should work hard to do a good job, with the funding we get, to deliver a high quality service. Sometimes, things don't work or we don't hit the targets but as long as our management know that we have tried different avenues to try and achieve then it doesn't matter too much that we didn't hit the target. It's all about being adaptable, and be willing to change. Just because something has worked in the past doesn't mean that it will work again in a different social environment.'*

Max also described to me how he valued greatly the 'quality' of his sessions. He stated:

*'Sometimes, it isn't always the numbers that matter to me. For example, if they're wanting me to get 15 people at one session and I'm only getting 10 they might be ok with that as those 10 people might really enjoy the session, come every week, and provide us with positive feedback. Whereas, we might get 15-20 attend a session but might not engage with it fully, attend just because their friends are going, and they might not give good feedback. I think the funders will value the positive feedback over numbers to continue funding. If people enjoyed it you're more likely to run something else successful for them. It is hard to get quality feedback when you have a really busy session as nobody wants to stick about.'*

When I questioned Max about how this 'target driven' approach to work made him feel, he explained how a successful scheme does generate positive emotions. Leaving him to feel a 'sense of achievement'.

*'When you have hit the targets you feel positive and feel as though you have done a good job. It looks good on you as a coach that you can sustain a session and hold capability, it's nice to see and hear thanks from your managers and participants when you invest the time and effort.'*

It appeared that one thing that Max was conscious of doing was being able to get the most out of his schemes and he goes about this in a particular way.

*'I go off good existing/past examples; if something has worked well previously then you can use that as a guide and look at how the other coaches have approached aspects of their scheme. Some of the corporate sessions we have run for the Council employees have been very successful so I have taken some of the planning on board with me, organisational skills, and the structure of the event. Or, if another coach has ran a successful scheme you may incorporate some of those ideas into yours.'*

From my discussions with Max, I sensed that being able to manage both community participant satisfaction rates whilst ensuring you hit your projected targets was, an unavoidable aspect of his job role. As a result, Max explained that in order to achieve this end, he had to create ‘good, sustainable sessions which got them on board and kept them coming back’.

### **Being able to create the ‘good’ coaching sessions**

A good coaching session for Max is one where he gets a good reaction from the Community participants. He described how it was very important to him that he delivered the ‘good session’ for job satisfaction, motivation, and to generate a positive representation for the Council. He considered that as a coach he must be ‘confident, approachable, helpful, knowledgeable, well presented, and friendly’. In further elaborating on good practice Max cited the need to be a good at preparation:

*‘Because I want everything to run smoothly, before I run with a set of sessions, I go and check the venue out, meet the people who are going to be there, see who I’ll be interacting with, see what resources I’ll have access to. I think when you’re not prepared you end up being in an environment that’s not comfortable for me and the participants. By me knowing what to expect it is definitely a better working condition for my coaching sessions; I would feel vulnerable if I didn’t because it’s the fear of the unknown.’*

When I questioned Max about his preparation. I asked if his sessions run as smoothly as he hoped. In his own words:

*‘I wish it did, but no, it doesn’t. What I do is like a ritual, I have to do it even though I know on the day it probably will be different. I’ve turned up to sessions before and the equipment I requested isn’t there or, you’ve been given a small place to work in which is unsuitable given your session size. This can be so frustrating it really throws me off what I’m doing.’*

### **The fears of not being able to hold onto a ‘good session’ and be the ‘good coach’**

Even though Max goes out of his way to ensure good practice he still had ‘worries’ and has ‘concerns’ that it could all go wrong. In this regard, he acknowledged the ‘lack of control’ you can have when coaching. He further explained that he had to mentally prepare himself for his sessions. He described:

*‘I think about the session, prior to me actually doing it, all the time so that I feel mentally prepared for it. Although I know you can never have full control of your environment as factors crop up, I feel that mentally preparing myself helps me feel psychologically in control. I paint a picture to try to place myself in the environment as I do wonder how much space I’m going to have on the day, will it have changed for any reason, will the session go ok, will I get the numbers, will they like me, how will I make it a success. I think there is a big mixture of thoughts and emotions even before starting the session really. Even when you’re at the session you’re always actively reflecting on yourself asking if you think it’s going well, if not how can you change. I always come away from a session and reflect on it as a whole. I think it’s just something that you should do to be a good coach. At the end of the day I want my sessions to work, and to be good.’*

When I questioned Max on how it made him feel if his sessions were not going as he had mentally pictured. He described, how at times, feelings of intense ‘panic and anxiousness’ ran through his body. In this own words:

*‘If things feel out of my control, such as the group not fully participating, someone being disruptive, or the activities you have planned haven’t gone down as well as you had anticipated gets me worked up. I feel nervous and worried that the session will fail and I get negative feedback. As a result, I*

*try not to build a picture up in my head too much because if the session isn't going as you pictured you can panic a little bit and I think it's important to work with what's in front of you at that time. I want to avoid letting things run off in my head because that isn't the right thing to do. You end up having nerves, panic and worry running through your body, but you can't let that show so I have to appear confident and enthusiastic to your group. It can be really hard to do and very emotionally exhausting.'*

I learned from talking with Max that the community sports coaching role was very diverse in that not only does he research, plan, and co-ordinate his own activities, he also had targets he needs to hit as part of his role. Max was keen to learn from others and listen to advice being offered to him in attempting to make his schemes a success and develop as a coach. His desire to be a successful and be well thought of coach was also visibly displayed when he worked with his community participants.

## **Coaching in the Community**

### ***Crafting the right image***

Max described to me how crafting the right 'image' to display to the community participants was of importance to him. He wanted to ensure that he behaved like a coach should in their eyes. In this regard, developing and maintaining the 'right' climate for his sessions was vital. This linked back to his personal experiences:

*'I think it's the way I have been brought up, and the people that are around you; I've always been told to respect people and act appropriately and so on, it just comes naturally to me. I think I've also been socialised into this role as well, specifically looking at how the other coaches act and behave when on their sessions; I have picked up on this, looked at things that have worked well, and brought them into my coaching. I think I'm like a sponge; I absorb it all up and look around me. I think we appear happy and*

*confident in all environments as, at the end of the day, it's our job and we have the councils name written all over our uniform so I think if we went round looking miserable it would reflect bad on the service that we provide and people might not ask us back again and participants wouldn't want to come to the session again.'*

Max provided me with a further example to demonstrate the need for continuity in your 'image' as coach. 'You have to behave like the participants would expect'. He elaborated:

*'I was feeling down and upset the other day for my own personal reasons, I thought about in the car on the way to the session but I knew I needed to hide it, it just becomes part of the job; as soon as you step out your car, anyone can be watching you so I think it's important you act professional. I just think if I had gone in showing I was down and miserable then I would get bad feedback from the session; the users wouldn't understand why I had been down and the people I work with would probably wonder why I had gone to the session if I wasn't going to put any effort into it. I would worry that they weren't going to look forward to me going again in case I was going to be the same with them. I just think it is easier to be happy, upbeat, deliver the service, then I can be miserable and down when I step out the door or when I get back into my car.'*

Furthermore, he described how he also crafted the image to meet the expectations of the Council. He was aware that, first and foremost the Council has an image to protect as well. He noted:

*'In the induction period I became aware that the Council touches people in lots of different ways, not just sport, but in different ways too and I represent a part of their service. I realise that the image I project as a*

*Council employee is important. Whenever I am in my uniform I always make sure I have a happy, friendly exterior on as it creates a good image for the Council and will make people aware that our service offers friendly and helpful coaches. If I was to be hostile in my approaches and appear scruffy and unhelpful it wouldn't go down well. We need to smile to get the people on board to use our services. I think what we present for the service gets monitored to check we are delivering what they want. The feedback sheets are a good way of them monitoring us; asking how the coach was, were they good, did they have the right equipment.'*

In order to maintain this happy exterior Max explained that he had learned to put a 'front' on. He described how the buildup of his 'front' started just before the session. In his own words:

*'With me working with a range of people I have to be at their level so they can relate to me and can talk to me. If I walked into a room over-confident and not very nice or approachable then I would probably lose the respect of the people I'd just met because they would probably think I was cocky with my attitude. I think, by considering how to present yourself, it gives you a better chance to get the trust and the respect of the people you are going to be working with. I act differently when working with young children as to when I work with older adults as you talk and behave totally different just simply by the way you talk to them. I do find that it can be quite draining on you at times, more so if you are doing 4 or 5 sessions a day and have a lot of up and downs with how you feel, but I have to act as positive in my first session as I do in my last one of the day as it's not the young person or adult's fault; I might be tired so you just get on with it.'*

In further elaborating on this point, Max described to me that the reason he puts this 'front' on is because he never knows who potentially could be watching his coaching sessions. In this regard, he needed to be consistent to avoid any criticism from his observers. He stated:

*'At times, you can have people watching you and they could be someone from the council and if I don't act professional it may come back on me such as a complaint. I think people do watch you at sessions; for example, parents bringing their children. It doesn't bother me that people watch or that somebody could be observing me. I always make sure that I do act professionally but if somebody were to say that I'm not doing well, it doesn't look good on me; might not be acceptable behaviour or others may perceive it not to be. I think it's on your mind that someone could be watching you if I'm honest. There could be possible implications such as my line manager and manager would want to know why the complaint came in and I would have to sit and explain; it's just not worth it, I wouldn't want to have to go through that when I have worked so hard to show them I'm good at my job such as getting compliments via the office, ringing up, and running good schemes and being recognised energises you to keep working hard.'*

He expressed how deciding what front to use came with experience, and that through socialisation he learnt what was socially acceptable and what was not. Despite Max being aware of how he should portray himself to others he expressed how, at times, this could become hard to maintain. He provided an example to illustrate this point:

*'I was on a primary school session working on a boot camp activity and a few minutes before the session I had some really bad news. Just before the session, I had all sorts running through my head but as soon as I started the*

*session I wasn't happy and I didn't want to laugh but I engaged in laughs and jokes and appeared happy to get on with the session. I knew I needed to act this way just to get me through the session and for others to enjoy it despite me feeling upset inside; I wanted to make sure they went away feeling happy with the session. Your emotions rub off on them, therefore I had to suppress how I felt and hide my upset.'*

Not only has Max made himself feel a particular way but at times he has believed these emotions to be true:

*'There was a time where I had to draw upon how I had previously felt in a situation, forgetting how I really felt in the present and making myself feel the same as I had done previously. My ex-girlfriend turned up to the same session to me and I really didn't feel right being there so I used my memory of a previous session and engaged in acting using the emotions I had felt in the past. I did this as I didn't want those in the room to know the situation so by doing this they believed we were still together and the session ran smoothly.'*

### **Experiencing emotions when coaching in the community**

Since being a community coach Max has experienced some emotional ups and downs when working on sessions. He described the 'frustration' and 'anger' that occurred when he felt as though planning and preparation time had been wasted:

*'We always put a lot of planning into our sessions but things can easily change and our planning we have put in may have been a waste of time. It is frustrating when you turn up to sessions and you are told that people are booked on and no-one comes to the session, which can be fairly frustrating, disappointing, and annoying, as you'll plan the session, you will have made time to do the session. You can't dwell on it though, there could be a*

*number of reasons why people haven't turned up, it's just one of those things and comes with the job; you just have to deal with it and move on.'*

Max explained that negative emotions such as 'frustration' are prominent when he was coaching in school environments. He noted:

*'When in schools the kids say 'I'm not doing that, it's boring', 'I don't want to do that sport, I just want to do football', 'I'm not doing that, I'll look silly', 'and why do you want me to do that?' It's quite frustrating when you plan a session thinking it's going to go well and they say all this to you. It is really deflating when the people at the sessions are negative and say 'I'm not going to do that so stop asking'. It gets you down a little bit if you've gone into a session that you think is going to be a good one and you face challenges like that. I just overcome these negative emotions by reminding myself that I'm just there to do that session; I let it go carry on and get back on track.'*

This is not to say that community coaching is solely a negative experience, there are times where Max has left sessions and felt 'good, upbeat and positive' as a result of his sessions going well. Not only this, Max recalled the impact of receiving positive feedback:

*'You feel like you have done a great job when compliments have gone into the office. A great one was a Paralympics day we had at the leisure centre; we had a young girl attend who was in a wheelchair and hadn't really previously done any sport. After the event we got a 2 page letter sent to us saying how much she had enjoyed the day and that she was now involved in a wheelchair basketball club and a triathlon club. Her parents explained that if she hadn't have been given these tasters it wouldn't have opened these doors for her. It's good to get these compliments for job satisfaction*

*for me and I think it shows to my managers that I am doing a good job and delivering to a quality standard. Also, getting good compliments might be of benefit to me down the line as if I apply for a higher job or different opportunity, getting good feedback like this is good as it shows I'm doing a good job.'*

In this regard, we can see that Max was aware of the need to put a performance on as a coach, to act out a role, based on a number of factors. These included meeting the needs of the community participants and the expectations of the Council. In return of his emotional efforts, Max received, compliments, gratitude's, and happy service users that were likely to return.

### **Summary**

From my interpretation of Max's experiences I believe that we can identify his coaching practice to be challenging, complex, social and emotionally laden. He has had to sort through the fear of the unknown and manage his working relationships whilst 'finding his feet' as a new community coach. To conclude my discussion with Max I asked him about his career aspirations as a coach:

*'At the minute I have thought about it a lot, purely because of funding. When it gets to the time of your contract up for renewal I have my concerns that I won't get kept on. I worry that because I was the last one in I would be the first one out. I'm aware that the job is insecure it is a year on year rolling contract. I hope to stay in the job as it is so rewarding, I love the sport and I have such a big impact on people's lives, it is priceless. At the end of the day, this is great experience for me; it will help me professionally improve. I haven't got a pathway as to where I want to go in my career, I'm very pleased that I've got to where I have so if this job leads me to*

*something different then I'll see but at the minute I'm very happy in this role.'*

## **4.2. The story of Frankie**

- Introduction
  - Becoming a Community Sports Coach
  - Working for the Council
  - Getting to know the job
  - Developing a successful Coaching Scheme
  - Living with uncertainty and competition among colleagues
  - Life on the ground- The reality of coaching
  - Summary- What's next on Frankie's agenda
- 

### **Introduction**

What struck me about Frankie was his determination to be a success within the role and his fear of failure. Importantly, his journey was encompassed with ongoing feelings of insecurity and vulnerability associated with his unstable job role. It became very clear from the early stages that this was a very driven individual. It could be said Frankie had learned to 'play the game' in order to move up the professional ladder. It became clear as experiences unfolded that the drive to establish visibility and to be a success was not without struggle, nor challenges, along the way. Importantly, Frankie's story began to paint a colourful picture of how diverse, complex, unpredictable, and emotionally challenging the realities of coaching can be. As such, his role was far from sequential, predictable, and infused with technical instruction involving co-operative users and others.

## **Becoming a Community Sports Coach**

Interestingly, Frankie's entry into the coaching ranks was not particularly planned or intended. Gaining a degree in criminology and social policy, it was envisaged that his initial career path would begin with working with disaffected youths involved in criminal activity, young people with emotional or social issues, or in certain deprived areas. Frankie had participated in sport since being a youngster, and played football to a high level. However, he never envisaged becoming a sports coach. As such, the entrance into coaching occurred by chance. Frankie had heard through a friend, who already worked at the service, that they were running a scheme called 'Positive Futures', which aimed to get disaffected youth participating in sport and focused on deprived areas. Straightaway, Frankie was interested in exploring this potential avenue as a career, knowing that it would be possible to combine educational and personal interests in a fun, positive way. He noted:

*'I saw the link between my educational and personal interest immediately. The coach I knew was talking about the Positive Futures Scheme which involved him working with disaffected youths, challenging behaviours, anti-social behaviour issues. So I asked him what I would need to do to get involved. He explained about needing to get coaching qualifications, so I went off and did them. When I started this journey it was in 2005/2006. I wanted to explore it more as it was an educational and personal interest of mine. Being out and about and delivering and being able to give something back to the community seemed great to me. I wanted a full time job in something that I was interested in and this was it. I have always been interested in sport myself and I look at my job sometimes, I realise how good my job is, I enjoy what I do. It is different everyday as you do various sports and meet different people. I cannot complain at all. I do not regret*

*that my career path changed. There are not many jobs that you get paid for keeping active and that you are involved in a subject matter that you actually enjoy. I was enthused by this opportunity, I loved the thought of being able to go down to a housing estate and help these young people. Delivering sessions, by using my degree to help them but using sport as the tool to do it, it was great.'*

## **Working for the Council**

### ***Coach certification and learning to be a coach***

Frankie initially entered the coaching scene around four years ago when he started as a sessional coach for his local council. Interestingly, this was his first bit of coaching experience. His qualifications prior to entering his role as a full time community coach consisted of his GCSEs, A-Levels, degree in criminology and social policy, and football coaching badges.

*'I got my FA Level 1, soon after I got my Level 2. To be a sessional coach you only need a Level 1 but to be a CSC you need a Level 2. I decided to go higher with it and get my Level 3 too as football has always been a passion of mine.'*

Frankie knew that he needed at least a Level 1 coaching qualification to be a sessional coach. He followed this by starting his sport specific qualifications from 2007. Since getting the community coach role he has gained some job specific qualifications, including Level 2 football, Level 3 football, Handball, Bocha, Racketball, Multi-skills, Cricket, and Table Tennis. Frankie has used all of these qualifications down the line at some point within his coaching sessions as well as gaining more for his own personal development and to make him more diverse within his job role as a CSC.

In order for Frankie to feel as though he was doing his job effectively, he felt that as a coach you do need to be qualified and attend courses. This was because in any given

situation you need to have the skills to be able to structure, plan, and deliver effectively to those around you. Listening to Frankie, it became clear to me that he had learned the value that the Council placed on continual professional development at the beginning stages of his employment. In his own words:

*‘Continual professional development within our role is a big aspect for the Council. I think it is for them as the Council Department and for us as the workers as a team. They want their staff to have as much knowledge as they can to represent the service well, but also they like us to attend for our own personal development too. I agree with that too as I think it is important the staff working for the service are knowledgeable in what they are doing.’*

Despite acknowledging CPDs purpose and value for coach accreditation, Frankie recognised some limitations to coach certification. In this sense, he believed that the principles learnt in the classroom were not easily transferrable to his community coaching contexts. In his case, he believed that coach education does not reflect the ‘gritty realities’ of community coaching. He provided an example to illustrate his point:

*‘I think the Level 1, 2’s, gear you up to be able to deliver an actual coaching session. Such as that specific sport, those specific games and skills to those particular people, but they lack in a lot of information. As an example, they do not teach you how to deal with a group of 20 lads who do not want to participate and do not respect why you are there and what you’re going to offer them. They do not teach you what to do if you face challenges, changes in environment, or lack of equipment as examples. They depict a coaching session to run smoothly, which obviously is not always the case. No course can actually teach you how to deal with these situations as each environment can be so diverse. It is a case of just drawing on your experiences and being able to adapt to what is in front of you. I think it*

*comes down to the personality of the coach to be able to do this. A lot of people do not want a rigid sequential session, sometimes you have to be informal and relaxed and take the session as it comes.'*

### **Getting to know the job**

#### ***'Good impressions and getting people on side'***

From the early stages of my discussions with Frankie it was clear he attached great importance to making a 'good impression' to those around him. In this regard, Frankie began to share his tactical and manipulative strategies that he employed. He explained:

*'I did this as I do not think that you would be well received if you went in there flying your opinions about. In any situation you slowly let yourself go and you begin to feel more comfortable with them. I made sure that I was friendly, talkative, try to get to know them a little bit and try to establish common ground. I think it was quite tactical on my part as I wanted to be liked. I did not want to go into a new environment and people not like me; just makes it harder for yourself as they would probably think 'oh I won't help him. I keep a professional relationship as people do not need to know personal things about you as they may use it against you at some point. There are a few people that know me well as I have been there 4 years but they know me in a professional sense. I do not sit and mess about.'*

He further elaborated on the reasons why he decided to take this approach when entering his new social environment. He stated:

*'I would hate anyone to bulldoze in to where I worked, I just don't like it, and I don't think it's the right thing to do. If someone thinks they're top notch straightaway it annoys me. So I think going in too confident and extrovert in my approaches would not have been suitable for that type of*

*environment. Plus it's just not how I am as a person anyway, and you weigh up environments and behave accordingly.'*

### ***Getting prepared***

Once Frankie began to read his social setting he now had to get prepared for the job itself. As he was a big sports person, he felt settled into this new environment fairly easily. When questioned about how he felt about this role he shared how he 'surprised' about the volume of office duties he was confronted with.

*'The meetings, planning, the paperwork, I did not realise that there was all that to go with the practical side of it. I did not realise how much background work had to be done to even put things in place. I remember when I first started, Sue, our old CSC officer, instructed me on how to do the paperwork, and when I needed to be filling it in and handing it in, such as my time sheets which was a big help.'*

When Frankie initially started out as a CSC the structure within their team was somewhat different. At that time, there was a CSC officer in place whose job role was to be 'in charge' of all of the CSCs. Frankie felt that 'Sue' did a successful job in maintaining a strong team and she was always there to help the coaches if they needed it. He elaborated on this point:

*'It was great for me being new, as she was just in charge of us so she could always offer a helping hand. Coming in as I was, I did not have the office experience. Sue provided support, you could ask her questions and she would shoot you off in the right direction. I was nervous at this point and she just helped me by being really positive and provided guidance. She popped along to a few of my first sessions and encouraged me with my ideas which was good of her. It was comfortable knowing you could go to her. She would help you out with anything. It was ideal especially when she was*

*likable and we trusted and respected her. She was just easy to get on with and she would help you out which was nice. For example, if we had to market a session and get leaflets sorted and printed, instead of us doing it Sue would help us out, just took the stress off it a little bit. Basically, her role was to be in charge of us community coaches on a daily basis, she would get instructed from the managers and then Sue would instruct us.'*

Frankie perceived that once Sue left, the dynamics of the team changed. Frankie was sad she had left as he valued her as a great team member for the Council. However, he envisaged this to become somewhat of an advantage for him. In particular, he noted:

*'It was great when I first started out. However, I do feel that if she had stayed in post then I maybe would not have been where I am now, as it is possible I would not have been able to develop and progress any further. It could have been that I would not have been able to get to know my managers very well, as she gave us the instruction from higher up so we did not really need to communicate with anybody else regularly. So I guess it had its pros and cons. It was positive in the respect I could maybe now get to interact with more people, just more contact and communication among colleagues. It was negative as we did lose her, as she was a great team member and we always had the CSC team meetings. When she left that went, and then we all got separated into working under different line managers, so it changed, but it still works fine. I took good qualities on which I picked up from Sue, such as the way she approached things, and spoke to people. She had a lot of respect from people that she worked with.'*

It was discussed that reductions in funding resulted in a lack of money circulating within the Council. As a result, Sue's previous job position was terminated. Subsequently, Sue's job duties were broken down and given to existing staff members.

Meaning, two coaches were paired up and worked under one line manager, something that Frankie was happy about.

*'I can easily chat to my line manager. For example, when I have work related ideas. Here, I'll put them across to him to use him as a sounding board and gain his feedback. It is all about having good communication. He does not say to me 'you have to do this, do that', he wants me to have flexibility in what I do as well. If I need help, he's there as a support. We have reviews and meetings one to one and we will sit down and look at the work I'm doing. Here, we might identify something that needs changing. So I guess situations like that he gets what he wants from me as he will have targets to meet too.'*

### **Developing a successful coaching scheme**

It was explained to me that as part of learning to be a CSC encompasses the ability develop, plan, and deliver successful schemes of work for the Council. According to Frankie, a scheme from can be classified as a programme, (e.g., a plan of six weeks, or a project over a number of months). He expressed that to achieve this, you start with a 'blank canvas'. In his own words:

*'By that, I mean running with an idea that you have got in your head, and need to start from the beginning. So, for example, I want to set a basketball session up. I immediately have to think of where I could do this, who I would need to contact, will I be able to get the equipment, and if so, where do I get it from. So it is not a case of just being able to run with something straight away, sometimes you start with a blank piece of paper and jot your ideas down which isn't an easy thing to do.'*

It was explained to that Frankie could seek advice on design and structure. However, it was down to their coaching role to be able to formulate the ideas, content, and delivery, to 'piece one together' that meet the aims and objectives which have been dictated by the funders. Initially, Frankie did face some barriers when trying to establish his new scheme. These included trying to access the right venues for the sessions, and marketing it for the right target audience. He explained:

*'In order for it to function you need to go through a number of processes. You need to phone venues up and chat with them to see if you can use their facility, then from this you need to negotiate time, space, and possible equipment that they have that you might be able to use. With regards to access to resources, we do not really face many problems with that, as over time we have built the kit up to deliver our sessions so we always get hold of something. For the type of coaching that we do, we don't need access to fantastic high quality training equipment because we do not interact with the type of people that require this, the basic stuff is more than adequate for us to deliver effective sessions to the community.'*

When asked to comment further on the difficulties that he has encountered when attempting to create new schemes Frankie shared with me his experience of the 'park run', a scheme that he was in the process of starting at the time of the interviews.

*'My boss was really enthusiastic about the 'park run' I wanted so start. Basically, it's a running club, other locations have done something similar and it's been really successful so I wanted to do it as it would attract large numbers. After getting the nod from my manager I've started the planning stages for it to happen which wasn't easy. I have just hit a brick wall with it really, we're trying to get some funding, but in order to secure the funding, we have to tick a few boxes, we have to ensure that all the local running*

*clubs are up for joining up with the local Running Network, but I have already had a few problems with it, as some running clubs do not want the involvement, although they do not mind it going ahead. They do not want to sign onto the local Running Network as it means they have to attend meetings, forums and so on, and people do not want to do that, they just want to run so it's putting them off.'*

At the time of this happening, Frankie described how he was 'gutted', 'frustrated', and slightly 'angered' as he knew it could have been a great success if it got underway. When I asked why it was so important to him, he noted:

*'I want it to run for my own reasons, I know it will get me good numbers to hit my targets and it will also look good for the service as a whole running a big project like this. I am really passionate about it, it will also look good for me from my managers' perspective as well. Meaning, it will show them that I am capable of planning and managing projects with the potential to bring more funding in too. It's a no brainer really, I need to make it work.'*

Finally, his determination and perseverance had paid off. Frankie expressed feelings of happiness and joy as he referred back to the experience.

*'Basically I did it by being quite bold about it in the end, I went into a catch up meeting with everyone there, the head of service and other managers. I laid it all out on the table again, as I explained all the advantages and what it could bring for the service (i.e., potential future funding). I could feel them in the room agreeing with my proposal by the various smiles and nods I was receiving from the managers. Shortly after the meeting, I received positive feedback and the project was to begin as the relevant funding was now available for me to access. We started with average numbers, now we're up to 40 people every week, max turn out we have had is 70 people*

*which is great. It is now running solely by volunteers and it runs by itself, it has been going nearly a year now and it is a project that will carry on running in the future.'*

### **Managerial influence**

For Frankie, it appeared that a key ingredient for his success was the professional relationships' that he had established with his manager. He variously discussed how 'respected' and 'trusted' his manager. When asked to comment further he stated:

*'It is good to get her advice as she has been doing it for a long time now, I still come across new things so it is always good to run things past her. I respect my manager because of what she does for the team and I would not go against anything that she said as I know that she has the best intentions for the team and project overall.'*

From my interpretation, I would suggest that, Frankie wanted to avoid did 'going against' anything his manager proposed as it was not in his best interests to do so. He expressed:

*'I feel proud that I am appreciated by those above me I wouldn't want me saying out of term to my managers to spoil it. I have worked hard and my managers know this. This has led to me handling a lot of extra work and duties, which does go in my favour as they obviously know that I am capable employee. This makes me feel like they value me as a good worker when they support me and my ideas as a coach.'*

Given these experiences we can begin to see Frankie is engaging in an on-going search for success and excellence within his practice. He feels that the need to constantly challenge and prove himself to key contextual stakeholders is important. As a result, he

sets very high standards for himself to be the ‘perfect coach’. These actions are demonstrated in this example:

*‘We have our external targets which are the ones set by the funders which we need to hit to secure our funding. Then we have internal ones, such as corporate Council aims, such as promoting safer communities. When we are designing our schemes I try and hit external and internal targets. I like to try and hit the internal ones as much as I can. I guess by doing this, if funding did get reduced and people had to go, I know I have worked well for the team and have helped hit corporate targets, so it’s possible I may still get to run some projects and keep a job because I demonstrate the ability to hit both.’*

Perhaps, the reason he aimed high and went the ‘extra mile’ to prove himself was because he had a deep down worry, the ‘fear of failing’.

*‘It is just how I am as a person. If I am going to do something, I want to do a good job at it. I think also, some of it stems from when I was a youngster. It took me a while to decide what I was going to do after school. I did my A-levels and didn’t pick the right subjects at the time, and ended up changing. I just didn’t like how that felt, to some extent felt like I had failed because I made the wrong choices so, since that I’ve always made sure nothing like that happens again.’*

From these experiences shared with me, we can see how Frankie engaged in strategic manipulations to improve his respective position within the Council. I would suggest, that for Frankie, these actions were taken in the attempt to feel more secure.

## **Living with uncertainty and competition among colleagues**

Recent changes in the economic climate meant that job prospects became increasingly uncertain within the council. As a result, Frankie explained how he wanted to ‘climb’ the ladder for greater job security. In his own words:

*‘I work hard to stand out, because you have to be remembered and known by people if you want to progress. I would be more secure if I was to climb the ladder, as they are permanent jobs, whereas ours are not. My main worries are that I have a mortgage, family, cars to pay for. I do not want to have to think that I am always going to have to rely on funding for jobs. Therefore, I am quite strategic in my actions. I make the point in conversations of the things that I have done, the successes I’ve brought. I use these to act as a reminder so people, especially my managers realise that I am a good worker. Maybe, then, I will stand a good chance at securing a job.’*

When asked to elaborate what ‘strategies’ he could use to help secure a job over existing coaching staff, he explained:

*‘Well, I have already had three years’ experience which stands in my favour. Others have been there less time and I would say have made a smaller impact on the team, whereas I have made a bigger impact with big service with the successful projects of park run, beach volleyball, care homes, and fresh. It is a new feeling to me, this, the insecurity. When I got taken on I got a 3 year contract whereas some of the newer ones have only been on a year contract, so they did not really have much security when they started the job. I’ve got very mixed emotions about it all really, not knowing whether your job is secure brings negativity and worry to the front of your mind.’*

### **On changing job roles- The challenges faced with fellow colleagues**

The start of the New Year brought some changes for the CSC team. Luckily, the coaches found out that their jobs had been secured for another year, with all 4 coaches still in position. Although Frankie described how this generated a sense of relief and released some of the pressure in the office, it was not enough. He was ready, and keen, for more professional responsibility.

*'My job role has now changed; I've taken on 50% of a different job role, which is higher than the community coach role, a tiny promotion. Long story, but there has been a little move around and half of someone's job needed filling. Originally, I applied for another job, still in the same office, but a lot higher in money, and totally different job roles. Me and my friend went for the job, went through the interview process, but this other lad got it who was my friend, I was so gutted as I wanted it so bad, I felt so down because I had built myself up to thinking that I stood a pretty good chance. So it was a little embarrassing and awkward when you tell everyone you did not get it, and then you have to be ok and happy for one of your friends, who got the job above you. When, really, I was annoyed he got it over me. However, I learned from this interview experience by using it as something to look back to, as a tool for improvement.'*

Despite not being successful in the first job it was not all bad news for Frankie at this stage; a sense of relief was soon generated. His friend, who got the promotion to the higher job, meant that his position was now vacant.

*'It was not much higher than what I am doing now, but it would entail a few extra roles which would benefit me for the future, I was sure of it, as it involves doing more to what I am now. I thought this could help me move onto something else higher up, if and when the opportunity came up. I*

*wanted the job for a number of reasons; firstly, it was on a higher scale point. Secondly, it was more money, and thirdly, it was a progression which I am keen to always do.'*

Frankie had heard by another colleague that two of the other community coaches in the office had also applied for this position. From my interpretation, this was not going to stop him getting what he wanted.

*'It was a little awkward, as there was 3 people competing for this one job role. One was a guy who is my best friend, and the other was a CSC, you could just feel a little tension in the office because we all wanted it. Anyway, it happens, so we all had the interviews etc. At the end of the interview, they asked us 'what makes you stand out from the other two coaches?'*

It was crunch time for Frankie, at this stage that he had to engage his professional experience, knowledge, self-belief, and confidence, and 'fire the bullet' to secure him the job. He recalled how he had to be 'ruthless' and 'fight'. He elaborated:

*'I smiled a little bit, as I knew my competitive streak could shine through. So I said why I thought I would be more suitable than the others. I drew upon my past experiences and success with projects, the targets I had hit, the impact they have had on further funding and growth, how I have brought something to the service and how I intended to grow and develop. I felt quite bad, but at the end of the day, you have got to think of yourself, right? I am pretty sure the other coaches will have said negative things about me to make themselves stand out. I did not feel guilty nor did I say anything bad about them, but it is a competitive world, and you have to go with what you can get these days.'*

The end of the day brought good news for Frankie; he had secured the job he wanted. However, the emotions he experienced were mixed, He explained how he felt ‘happy’ and ‘proud’, but, equally, at the same time, felt guilty.

*‘I was not too sure how they would react, if I am being honest, I didn’t know whether I should ring them, text them, or wait until I saw them face to face. I left it for the day and then sent them a text on the night to say I had got it. They sent back texts saying ‘well done, you’ve done well, you deserved it’. But you can’t help but think that they might not mean it and they are just saying it to save face. They were ok with me when I went into the office the next day, it was a little bit awkward, it was bound to be, but after a couple of days it was fine.’*

The portrait that emerged from Frankie was that of a deeply committed, passionate coach who was not afraid to compete against others in the quest for success. In this regard, we can begin to see that Frankie’s coaching environment was complex, dynamically challenging and resting on never ending uncertainty. In the next section, my discussions with Frankie turns to his experiences of working with community participants.

## **Life on the ground**

### ***The reality of community coaching***

In order to establish a good coaching environment, Frankie cited the need to be enthusiastic, energetic, and lively for his community participants if he wished to give them a positive experience. In keeping with his general positive outlook on coaching, he felt that, as a coach, he needed to be ‘happy, positive, and confident’, not a ‘miserable, grumpy, downbeat, unhelpful coach’.

*'It is just something I believe in, I would not want to go to a coaching session myself if I knew the coach there was a miserable person. I would be thinking to myself why I would want to go there. I think having plans in place, being organised, making the group aware of what you want from the time that you are there, all contribute to a successful session. I think variety is good, always being able to adapt and provide a good service is essential. If you stay with a rigid plan that does not fit that environment, then the session just won't work for you.'*

### **Working with Community participants**

Frankie demonstrated to me that how he interacted with his community participants was of particular importance to him. As a result, he believed that not all participants should not be treated the same, meaning, he had to approach his coaching in a flexible manner. He noted:

*'When I started this job, I soon realised that I would be working with lots of different groups. It was, and is, just a case of weighing up who is in your session and fitting your personality to those people and the session itself. For example, if I am coaching football, I tend to be quite loud, chatty, and extrovert as the environment is suitable, whereas if I am on a session with women aged over 45, I tend to sit and chat more, as I know they are not coming to a session to sprint around, they have come to engage in some low intensity physical activity. I act a different way for each in order for them to accept me as a coach in their environment.'*

From my understanding, being accepted was important to Frankie and, over time, he explained how he had developed the ability to utilise different personas and employ different emotional strategies to his advantage whilst coaching.

*'The Council service or coach education has not taught me how to present myself in these different coaching environments; I have just learned myself. I have done this from watching others and, of course, from your own experiences. I also think you just pick it up over life, you learn how to act and present yourself in certain situations, and I think you bring that into your coaching too. I have had a few jobs with the Council and from that you learn how to present yourself and act in a professional manner in-keeping with how the Council employees present themselves'*

At times, it was noticed that Frankie's ability to maintain these 'emotional fronts' was not an easy task, especially if he was doing a number of emotionally demanding sessions, some of which happen to fall on the same day. He expanded on this point:

*'It does sometimes become hard when I work with younger children, although I do not worry about the session, there is a huge demand on me as a coach to remain happy and upbeat, smiley, laughing and so on. However, when you're doing 4, 5 of those sessions in one day by the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> one, I do not specifically feel how I am supposed to, yet I have to display this persona to fit with the people I am working with. I do not want to be seen as a coach who can't be bothered. So sometimes, by maintaining my energetic persona, it can become quite demanding and draining on you as a coach. However, it is a labour of love for me. It is hard work you put into it and the demands emotionally are tough at times, but it pays off with the benefits you get, such as people having fun and enjoying themselves. I manage to keep going because I know the next session or the next day it is going to be made fresh again by new kids or a new environment.'*

## Experiencing the ‘emotional rollercoaster’ emotions

Frankie explained how he felt ‘huge satisfaction’ when things ran accordingly. However, he expressed how it became ‘disheartening’ and ‘frustrating’ when things did not go as he anticipated.

*‘I do think emotions play a big part in coaching, when something works well you feel happy and satisfied, but you can also quite easily feel frustrated and angry. I always feel different emotions before a session, sometimes when I am going into a new session to meet new people, I feel very anxious and nervous about how I am going to be received by the group. It is all about mental preparation before the session really. For example, I feel really relaxed if it is a basic fun session with children as I find that really easy to do and the kids love it. However, if it is adults I am going to be working with, I do feel a bit more anxious and nervous because I think people are quick to judge. So I am conscious of the fact that I need to make a good impression to make sure I behave like they will be expecting me too. You always have to think how to present yourself for the time that you are there. Once you have left the session you don’t need to worry as no one is watching you.’*

When asked to comment further on his emotional experiences. Frankie recalled on one incident in particular, which left him feeling ‘disappointed’ and ‘deflated’.

*‘Sometimes you turn up to the sessions and you just cannot connect with them and they’re not interested in what you’re there for or what you’re trying to do for them and it is really hard sometimes to deal with that as you feel as though you’re hitting your head against a brick wall and not getting anywhere with it. Sometimes you walk away from a session and evaluate yourself, you start thinking ‘is it me as coach who did not approach the*

*situation right?’ etc., sometimes it becomes really hard to manage how you feel about certain situations.’*

An example was provided to illustrate the challenging interactions he had faced when working on a ‘positive futures scheme’ directed at helping disaffected youths. Frankie, in his own words:

*‘I have had youths shouting, swearing and spitting in my face. When this happens I want to blurt something out back to them, I run things through my head of what I want to say but I don’t. I have to calm them down, and not get angry, myself. Initially, I do think ‘get out my face you absolute idiot’ but I would not do that because it’s not professional and I would probably put my position at jeopardy. In this situation it is just not worth it, I could lose my job.*

Frankie then went on to explain how he managed to contain his emotional responses. He recalled:

*It is just the realisation that these young adults have been brought up different to you and it is about being able to bridge that cultural gap between you and them. So although you might not understand why they act and behave as they do, you need to try and help them not make them feel worse? I just do my best to try and relate to them and sometimes they realise they have been a little silly. If I was to go into that situation with a bad attitude, hostile, moody, then this would rub off on them and that’s what we do not want. They come to sessions to try to break away from that behaviour as that is probably how they are. Sport for them is an outlet so they need to be surrounded by positive attitudes by the coach so you just have to laugh it off and move on and hope it won’t happen again.’*

### **Summary- What's next on Frankie's agenda**

The picture that emerged from Frankie's story was that of a coach who was always thirsty for something more. He was fully committed, and passionate to his community coaching position and determined to achieve success. During the end of the last interview with Frankie, it felt only right to ask where he envisaged being in the future. It appeared to me that his next move was always on his agenda. He discussed:

*'For now, I want to concentrate on team ethos, make sure we have a good department, if we are seen to be doing well and providing good services, then we are more likely to stand a good chance at getting the funding given to us again. I aim to attend further courses to gain more knowledge, experience. I want to look for higher jobs in the Council as I still feel as though I have more to give, I'm very driven. I don't think the 50% different job I am doing now will be around for me to do next year, it is really frustrating not being able to progress and having that feeling that you are stuck in the job. Due to the way it is structured and lack of money and people already in the higher posts I just cannot see how I am going to get any higher. I guess if I keep working hard an opportunity may come up but at the minute, I guess I will just have to wait.'*

### **4.3. The story of Charlie**

- Introduction
  - Becoming a Community Sports Coach
  - Coach Certification
  - The start of a new journey- Getting prepared
  - Developing the Coaching Scheme
  - Managing interactions with colleagues
  - Life outside of the office politics
  - Conclusion
- 

#### **Introduction**

In the narrative to come I am going to share with you a fresh and enlightening perspective on the everyday realities of a community sports coach. Indeed, what struck me about Charlie and his story were his struggles to manage working relationships and the emotions that were encompassed within these complex interactions. During my meetings with Charlie I found that he was very open and it became apparent early on during our interviews that he discussed personal experiences without hesitation. As such, what interested me about Charlie was his frankness to voice and share his opinions in certain situations which, at times, caused him to have problematic interactions with his colleagues and, in some cases, resulted in him having to leave a job itself. The structure of this narrative focuses on the main events of his career and his development as a community sports coach.

## **Becoming a Community Sports Coach**

Charlie began to coach at the young age of 14 as he held a passion for trampolining, and upon realising that he would never become an athlete within the sport himself, due to family and financial complications, a decision was made that he would assist his existing coach to help others where he could no longer do it himself. It was from here where the path to working in leisure centres began. Charlie had heard about a course to become a lifeguard and was interested in earning some money, and therefore it became an avenue he began to explore. A few years later, at 17, Charlie was working at three leisure centres doing a mixture of duties. These involved lifeguarding and swimming instructing, which he did for a number of years. Out of the blue and unexpectedly for Charlie a job came up within this local Council for a Community Sports Coach position. Charlie had heard about the job through word of mouth at a coaching forum he had attended and was interested in what the job entailed. Charlie applied for it and was successful in getting the post at 22.

It was shared with me that the main attraction to the job was that it was going to bring on a new challenge. It was explained to me that initially he did not picture himself as a community sports coach; instead, he wanted to pursue a career path within sports development. Due to bad experiences in school physical education classes, having never been fully engaged and leaving with bad results, he always felt that he could take those experiences and try to develop physical education in schools more effectively. Despite not taking this career path this is something that Charlie is still interested in working toward in the future.

## **Coach Certification**

Prior to entering the role as a CSC, Charlie explained that he had gained many sport specific qualifications within the leisure industry setting all of which could be readily applied to the CSC role. I understood from Charlie that he felt as a coach he needed to be qualified and experienced to better apply his skills to the dynamic coaching settings he could be presented with on a daily basis.

*'I gained the majority of my coaching qualifications at local leisure centres I worked at. I have used every one of these qualifications, but for different amounts of time I did go through a phase of 'collecting' them because if a course was offered I used to go on it, but they were always used. I started gaining my relevant qualifications at the age of 16 and I'm still developing my knowledge now. Prior to starting the community coach role I had various qualifications such as trampolining Level 3, swimming teacher, gymnastics Level 1, CSLA, Rounders Level 1, Lifeguarding, HND in sport and exercise management , working with disabilities and safe guarding.'*

Interestingly, since starting the role as CSC Charlie had gained further qualifications in order to continue his professional development.

*'Since being a community coach I have got more qualifications which include gym instructor, personal trainer, Bocha, curing, cheerleading Level 2 & 3, behaviour management, chair aerobics, circuit training, multi-skills, manual lifting and handling, stroke awareness courses, age/illness specific training. Although I have racked up lots of qualifications they have all been useful for the job and I have applied them to areas of my scheme. Also, I do think it's important to always expand on your professional knowledge, I never think that there will be a time where you know everything. It's*

*impossible as there are always new things to learn with regards to coaching. You never finish learning.'*

Like the other coaches in this study, Charlie also identified a problem with coach certification programmes. In particular, he felt that not enough material is given that truly reflects the dynamic environments he works within. In his own words:

*'There just can't be a 'one size fits all' in this job, it's not just about your technical instruction and knowledge it is also about being able to deal with the people you interact with and the various working conditions you may be presented with. I think it's a reactive career, it's ok to go in there and plan a session, which would be my action, but until you're actually there and have the people sat in front of you I just don't think that you can fully gauge with the environment and pre-plan it like coach educators say. You never know whether the people you're going to be engaging with are happy, sad, or angry people. Coach education programmes don't teach you how to deal with unhappy participants or, how to manage working relationships with other colleagues. You need to be aware of these aspects because these are the things you also have to deal with on a daily basis. It's really not a straightforward process. It's unfortunate that you don't get fully prepared for what it's really like out there to be a coach.'*

### **The start of a new journey- Getting prepared**

I understood from Charlie that by taking on the role to become a community sports coach he was about to embark on something that was completely new to him. When asked to elaborate on how he felt about this, he acknowledged that he was rife with feelings of 'nervousness, anxiousness, fear, happiness and excitement'. Here, Charlie began to reflect:

*'I did think about the job before I started, I think that this is a natural process you do with all new things. I did feel a little vulnerable as you are new in and you don't really 100% know what's waiting for you, more so as I was a brand new face, I hadn't worked with anyone in the office. Initially, I thought that I would have been turning up to the job and that everything would be planned for me and I would just be there to coach in the community. I thought I would be doing a few hours coaching here and then having to go somewhere else. I thought it would be very clear cut and that I would just be the delivery arm side of it. I thought I would maybe be handling some paperwork but I definitely thought that it all would be set up for me and ready to go with it.'*

However, soon after starting the job Charlie began to realise that there was not this structure in place that he had previously envisaged. Despite Charlie identifying it would be a step up from his previous job, he was not fully aware that he would now be required to manage his own systems of work.

*'I knew that there would be a step up from what I had been doing, it was different in the respect that I went from being told what to do and being heavily dictated by people above. Now I'm my own 'duty manager'. I initially thought there would be lots of staff, like a really big team of people, just from coming from leisure centres you're always working with a large group of people. However, in this case it was quite low numbers and I do a lot of working on my own, it did feel really different and bizarre at first.'*

### **Developing the coaching scheme**

Part of Charlie's process of becoming a CSC was developing his own 'systems of work'. Primarily, his scheme focuses on grass roots level participation and it is about

being able to integrate people who live in rural depravity such as villages with limited transport links and no local shops for the community to access.

*'Some people never go out and therefore hardly know anyone in their village so my sessions are about them getting to know each other and make friends in their community. I do all sorts within my scheme, from low intensity activity style such as bowls right up to circuit training, so I vary in what I do. The activities depend on who I am working with, they usually run for 6 weeks and I decide what I want to do as long as I'm ticking the funder's boxes. One big purpose of it is to stop people going into care and to make friends within their community which may mean that they can stay living in their house for longer and so on. We try to keep them in a social network as some of the ladies are bereaved, losing people around them and no family, it would be quite easy for them just to sit at home all day but we try out activities that will stimulate them mentally and hopefully make friends out of it.'*

In my discussion with Charlie it was explained to me that the scheme he works on was a project title he was given. As a CSC he was not provided with any specific training on how to put one in place, it was simply a case of 'trial and error'. This appeared to be a challenging process. He explained:

*'I did face some challenges within this planning phase such as my limited knowledge on 'geography'. I had no idea how many little villages there were around, so trying to plan sessions and deciding which village to pick was a nightmare. I had to make sure that there weren't already activities running and also see which village would benefit from it more. Additionally, I had to make sure I got the timings right. For example, do not plan sessions across lunch time as it is highly unlikely that you will get people coming.*

*Or, do not plan ones at 8.30 in the morning if you are trying to attract mums to go to the session as that is the time they will be dropping their children off. I also had to make sure my sessions were hitting the right target audience to meet my aims and get my outcomes that had been provided by the funders. There is quite a lot to think about in this planning phase. It did take time, there is no manual. It would be ideal if there had have been a flow chart of processes you need to follow to get schemes up and running. I have made a flow chart of my own now so when it comes to setting something new up I know who I need to contact, venues, money, equipment, areas. It makes it easier, it is like having a check list and I know all bases are covered.'*

The next challenge that he faced was the realisation that the scheme he puts in place needs to be one that can hit the targets. Initially, he was not aware of the importance attached to these numbers nor did he know a great deal about them.

*'I would say around 3 months in I identified the importance, I used to fill in the KPI forms to fill in how many were at the session and then I would hand this sheet into Sue the CSC officer at the time. She would then type it all up and deal with the numbers. At first, I thought it was Sue monitoring me individually, not the funder. I wasn't sure that it went any further. Then, in one of the team meetings it came out what targets we had hit, it was then I realised that sheet I was handing over was an important piece of paper. Since Sue leaving, I and the other coaches input our numbers on a spreadsheet now.'*

I understood from talking to Charlie that, as coaches, they get regular feedback from line managers, managers, and the funders about their performances. It was explained that the feedback and review was carried out to ensure that the scheme in place was

achieving the strategy targets and aims. In some cases these are unrealistic. Charlie elaborated:

*'Every six weeks my line manager comes to my sessions to get feedback from the people I have been working with. She then feedbacks to the funders every 3 months with the figures and what I am achieving. Then, annually this gets reviewed and they will discuss how to generate the next year's funding. When I first started out, some of the targets were very unrealistic. For example, the numbers were far too high so in the first year of starting the job, some of us did not hit the target. What they did is just set general numbers that applied to all regions, not just one region. Obviously some areas have a higher population than others, so the targets could be easily met in some places but unachievable in another.'*

Charlie provided an example to further illustrate the unrealistic targets he was faced with:

*'The ethnic numbers for us were too high as we do not really have a large ethnic community whereas in some areas they will have been able to achieve the number that was set. Initially I think they were set high as it was a national plan Sport England had put in place, they had divided us up by the regions and coaches and we were put on the same scale as big cities which was irrational for us. However, now some funding comes from different pots such as schools and promoting independence the targets set are more realistic and achievable for the region.'*

Despite targets and figures being a part of Charlie's job role he did not always feel that it was the most important aspect. As such, I understood that Charlie valued the 'quality' of his sessions over the 'quantity'.

*'The softer approach is better than the hard figures to me. At the end of the day they are just a statistic, there is no way that the numbers can reflect the quality that we put in. At the end of the day, if someone has turned around and really enjoyed the session that is like gold dust, it makes you feel great inside and very proud. You could have a class full, busting with numbers, but can you deliver the session you want to effectively if there are too many people? No. Whereas, when the numbers are a little lower you have more time to spend on the individual users. These are the ones that are more likely to keep returning, it will be these community participants that keep your sessions ticking over with numbers. One's sufficient enough for it to run.'*

### **Challenges faced with managerial input**

Over the time of being a community coach Charlie explained to me that he had built up a good working relationship with the head of service and the senior manager. However, he had struggled to build a good working relationship with his line manager, which happened to be the person he needed to interact with the most with regard to his coaching scheme. Charlie explained the relationship with his line manager:

*'I do not get on with my line manager; I have to deal with her on a regular basis to be able to get what I want for my schemes. I have to run everything past her, and she usually shoots me down, scraps my ideas at times and tries to knock my ideas down. We just haven't got on from literally day one, clash of personalities. We do not work well together as she just likes to play power games all of the time. She won't budge and I don't like it. For example, a HTC and an iPhone, they both do what they need to do but someone always says it works better than other. That is how we are, we both feel like we work in a better way than the other person so we are always*

*going to have our differences. I do have to interact with her regularly as she can pass pretty much anything in relation to my scheme planning and activities.'*

I understood from his experiences that these interactions caused tension and conflict on a regular basis. As a result, Charlie decided to consult his manager about his working environment.

*'I went in to see my manager and told her that I was unhappy with the working conditions and how my line manager was being with me. Not long after, my manager called us into the office for a meeting to discuss the issues. This was done individually, not together at the same time. During the meeting I explained why I was unhappy and the things she was doing that made it harder for me. My boss took notes and then my line manager had a meeting too. There were changes after this meeting, my line manager changed in her approaches and she started to say things nicer to me and seemed to think about how she spoke before she said something to me. It was a better working environment as it meant I was not always second guessing or wondering how she was going to be with me. However, I did think she is probably only being like this as she is being watched. Anyway, after a few months it has slipped and she has slowly gone back to how she was, not as bad, but she is still doing it in small doses. I think she has gone back to it as she knows she is maybe not being watched as much.'*

Charlie explained to me how he felt relived once he had spoken out, but was also worried and concerned that there could have been some potential consequences in doing so. When asked to elaborate he described:

*'If I'm honest, I thought there may be a consequence of me saying something, speaking out, not everybody likes it. It is possible they may have made the job harder for me, or my line manager might not have changed. So, I would have said something for no reason. But, as it turns out, it went ok me saying something. I backed myself up before I did it as I had backing from other colleagues who have heard how she speaks to me and they had similar experiences too of her not being very nice.'*

Despite some changes and improvements in their communications with one another, he still disliked approaching his line manager to ask her questions. He explained:

*'Previously, I could not figure out how to ask things sometimes and because she has the power she wants to be asked so she can decide overall. It is really frustrating. I think she likes knowing I have to ask her first, but now what I do is work with rather than against her. So, I will think about the way I word it. I go in knowing what I want but so she feels as though she has some involvement, I will say to her 'what do you think?', 'I want to do this?' I let her have an input so she feels that she has the power and then she usually says yes to me. If I went in and said 'I'm going to do this', she would probably say no, it's just knowing how to word it now.'*

In elaborating upon this, he expressed how it became tiring and draining when he always had to be one step ahead in his thoughts 'I have to look as though I'm doing things her way but also keep my own agenda in mind'. An example was provided to illustrate this point:

*'I guess it's devious at times, the things I do. It's also takes strategic thoughts. It's hard work and frustrating, I wish I could just be relaxed at work but I can't. I know I'm good at my job, so I just go for it and I will*

*keep going. It is like playing games; it is all about pre-planning the conversation and knowing what I want to achieve, knowing my outcome before I ask her. You also need to ask it right. Took me a while to figure out I just had to judge responses, see what worked well in our interactions and what did not. I know now that if you annoy her there are repercussions. By that, I mean she will make the next few days hell and be unapproachable. But, if you keep on her good side it can be ok. So by pre-planning and thinking conversations and thinking how she might respond, the interaction usually goes better.'*

To further explain the struggle Charlie had faced with this relationship he provided me with an example which certainly highlighted their rocky relationship. In his own words:

*'So, she turns up at one of my sessions and observes and checks it out really. She writes the report for the scheme that has been run so in the last week she comes to the session to get verbal feedback from the people at the session. She does this to get more answers than what you can obtain just from the feedback sheets that get handed out. During her time there she had a little chat with a few of the people about what I had been doing with them in a session. I overheard some of the conversation and then I heard her say something that made my blood boil there and then, it was like a big smack in the face. She turned around and said to the class 'oh if I had have done the session I wouldn't have done it Charlie's way, I would have done it my way'.*

Charlie recalled how he felt as though he had immediately 'lost the trust and respect of those in the room'. He explained that despite his 'upset and frustration', he was not in a position to address this issue. He elaborated:

*'It just highlighted the fact that she has no respect for me at all. I would never dream of doing that to anyone, not even her. We do not like each other, no, but I would not do that to her, I do not see the point at all. Obviously I was mad at the time, but I was not going to say anything, what is the point, I would lose the argument, she is the boss. If I had have said something it would have been embarrassing for everyone there in the room and it would make people around me uncomfortable. Also I probably would have given my line manager a reason to get me into trouble if I was to react. It was safer all round if I just bit my tongue. I'll admit, this was hard for me to do.'*

He explained that, in situations such as this, it had made him want to leave the job as he did not want to have to deal with the constant battle. However, leaving this job was not something that he was in a position to do.

*'Basically because there is nowhere else to go I will have to stay. At one point, I was searching and applying for other jobs. I think if one would have come up that I was interested in then I would have gone.'*

It became clear from talking with Charlie that there was more to the coaching role than what meets the eye. Meaning, his coaching was far from straightforward, sequential, and linear in nature. Rather, time, investment, struggles, challenges, and emotions were inevitably intertwined within these daily processes. In the next section the narrative I will explore Charlie's journey of establishing, managing and maintaining his professional working relationships with other colleagues.

### **Managing interactions with colleagues**

When discussing his working relationships Charlie made it very clear to me that when interacting and dealing with CSC work colleagues it was managed in a very

professional manner. Having experienced troubled working relationships in the past he now chose to keep a personal distance. He noted:

*'I don't have friendships in work, I see them as 'work friends', work is work, I don't let them in. If you open yourself up people are easy to judge and I don't need any more friends. I think it can open up a can of worms getting too close to your colleagues; work needs to stay professional and respectful.'*

From my interpretation, Charlie had adopted this mentality towards his working relationships to avoid 'repeating the past'. He openly discussed how in previous employment, emotional public outburst and disagreements with other colleagues occurred on a regular basis. I would suggest that he had learned from these negatives experiences and has decided to take a 'different' approach. One that requires him to 'think before he speaks' to avoid 'blowing his top'. I was interested to know why this job was so different to the rest. He explained:

*'Being a community coach, I really have to keep a lid on it sometimes. Yes, things frustrate me. However, I'm more passionate about this job. I think as well, I'm more grown up now in comparison to when I was at the leisure centres, and I realise now that I get better results when I'm a nicer person. The environment I work in is totally different really, because it is a smaller team and we all have a purpose and are there to help the community. I do a lot of working on my own, and everyone who is there is there to do a good job and trying to make it successful. Like, when in leisure centres it is just a bigger working environment. You were always working with different people, lots of casual workers who just used to turn up for a few casual hours, not really put much effort in and then go home. Whereas, I was a full-time worker, I was there all the time. It was just such a bitchy*

*environment, there was always something going on; cross words, bitching, arguing, you couldn't help but be involved.'*

He shared with me that in the past he would not hesitate to voice his views and opinions publically, nor was he concerned how others perceived his actions. Unfortunately, these public outbursts had consequences but at the time, he was not bothered, 'if I felt it I said it'.

*'A few years ago, I would just quit the job if I didn't like it. The things that used to really piss me off was just the laziness of some people, they just didn't care. By just blurting it out what I was thinking and feeling I felt better, but it has had some consequences. This resulted at times me getting into trouble over it and being told off by my managers. I used to have massive arguments with the other staff as I didn't get on with everyone, some people drove me mad because they just couldn't be bothered with the job, I wanted to do a good job while I was there so that it would help me move onto something else. I've argued on poolside, swearing with other staff, so it has got very heated and sometimes after the incident I wished I hadn't been so hot-headed because you have to deal with the consequences, also you have to see the person you had an argument with the next day.'*

When I asked how he managed to 'hold in' these intense feelings, he explained that he was now more mature and needed to act professionally. As a result, he found different ways to 'vent' his frustrations.

*'Although at times I suppress how I truly feel in public or towards someone and cover it up with a different emotion, to stop it driving me mad I do vent my true emotions out, but usually when I get home. If something has annoyed me at work I will tell my partner when I get home or I write about*

*my day in my diary. Then I'm relieved that it is off my chest and I saved a confrontation at work.'*

Charlie explained to me how he became more reflective of his actions and he decided there was no need to be 'hot-headed'. He stated:

*'I try to assess the situation and the people in it and think about how is best to talk/interact with the people in the environment. I do this because I do not want to end up in some of the situations that I have such as getting told off for it, or having to deal with the tension when I next go to work with the person I fell out with. I don't want silly cross words, arguments or heated debates to spoil this job for me as I want it to take me somewhere so I have to behave.'*

Charlie provided me with an example to demonstrate how he had changed with regards to 'reacting' to negative situations:

*'There are a few other teams based in the office such as play action, play rangers, recreation team etc. who run different projects. There is one guy within one of the other teams who gets on my back a bit. He does not like me as I do not look like a coach should according to him, a little overweight and he has a big issue about the fact that I smoke. He makes little digs all the time and he leaves no smoking signs on my desk all the time, and it just got too much. Previously I would have given him a piece of my mind there and then, and I wouldn't have cared who was listening or witnessed it. But now, I chose a different approach. I had a discussion with my manager about my issue, once the other member of staff had been spoken to the issue was resolved. I felt better doing it this way, rather than having to deal with the tension and awkwardness the next day after an argument.'*

Another reason Charlie has decided not to react is that he had realised it sometimes did not make a difference ‘people don’t change’.

*‘After a while, it becomes really exhausting challenging people. Sometimes, nothing changes with people and I have come to realise that. I think there comes a time when you just have to start accepting that that is how some people genuinely are. Now, I look at people and think ‘right, I do not like you, but rather than offend you, I just will not talk to you’. That is the best approach by far.’*

## **Life outside the office politics**

### ***Working with participants***

In addition to managing his working relationships as discussed, Charlie also had to manage a positive friendly environment for his community participants. As a result, he gave consideration to how he wished to conduct himself in these social settings. Indeed, Charlie identified that this was an essential aspect if he was to gain the trust and respect of the session’s attendees.

*‘You fit yourself in accordance to who you are working with. For example, when I work with the elderly I have to talk louder and slower and my role is pretty relaxed and chatty. I wouldn’t go in playing r ‘n’ b songs to them, I’d go in and play the older songs. Conversely, when you’re working with younger people you’re a bit chattier about different things, the sessions are a little more intense and active, even just your general banter changes when chatting to people of different age groups. You have to work out what will make your participants most responsive. It’s hard, one size doesn’t fit all, so you’re always switching. Sometimes, you force yourself to be really happy and upbeat and you come away so miserable because it’s not how you want to be, sometimes inside I’m in a right mood because something has pissed*

*me off but I just don't show it and try to be happy because if I did show it I think it would rub off on the session and the participants would also probably start to feel that way.'*

In further discussing this point, Charlie noted a number of strategies that he employed when entering a social setting to 'get people on side with him'.

*'When I first go to a session I act really professional, I make sure I tick all the boxes, cover all the bases, and make them aware of what I'm there for. I think I do this to ensure I get the trust and respect of the people in the room. First impressions count for a lot. I do extra little things with my appearance such as tidy hair, Council gear on, badge so that I am identifiable, I have my professional equipment with me, and room set up are the key things. Also, because you are knowledgeable and people have come there to learn something new they respect you for it. If I was to walk in there unprofessional, wrong attitude, and bad manners they probably would think I was a joke and not listen to a word of what I was telling them. I would lose numbers, people wouldn't come to the sessions, I would never be able to sustain any programmes and if this kept happening to all my sessions it probably would affect whether I had a job in the future or not. I don't want to jeopardise that, this job is a career path I want to stay on so I need to make sure I keep a good impression, I need to meet their expectations. They wouldn't want a coach who wasn't doing their job properly.'*

Further elaborating on his efforts to please his community participants he explained:

*'I like tying everything up with a bow, I have always been like this in things that I have done, primarily for the reason that I like to be able to finish the package. I never leave a job half done, it's just not how I like to do things. I*

*don't see the point in starting something and not finishing it off for the community participants. I enjoy seeing something from start to finish and be able to go back 2 years down the line and the activity I set up still be running in the community. Things like that make me feel really happy and proud of what I did for them. I enjoy the job and it is a labour of love. The people keep me going, the interactions and the new people that I meet. It can be draining and tiring ensuring you are presenting yourself accordingly. However, I get great job satisfaction for providing something useful to the community. It's all worth it.'*

## **Conclusion**

The portrait that emerged from Charlie's story was that of a coach who had gone through a process of professional development. In this respect, Charlie entered a social setting that he now valued as a career as opposed to a 'job'. As a result, he became conscious of the fact he now needed to impress his colleagues rather than working against them. This story highlighted how such a transition was not without its struggles, complexities and emotional challenges. Although Charlie voiced how he was happy to be in his current position. Our last conversation focused on the future:

*'In the future, one thing that I would really like is a fixed term post; I have had to lie just recently to secure my mortgage. They wouldn't have said yes if I had been honest about my job insecurity. Because I feel vulnerable that I only have a job secured for a few more months I have started to think 'would it worth downgrading my job for less money?' for a more secure job.'? It is really gutting and upsetting that our job is cloudy, hazy and not clear-cut. I have stuck at this job as I really enjoy it, I guess I will just have to play the waiting game and hope.'*

## **Chapter 5.0: Discussion**

### ***5.1. Introduction***

The aim of this chapter is to theoretically analyse the participant coaches' narratives of practice. Initially, this section will begin with the analysis of the micro-political actions evident within the coaches' narratives. Then, in the second section, the analysis will turn towards understanding the emotional nature of their work place interactions.

### ***5.2. A micro-political analysis of community sports coaching***

As identified in the results section, it became clear that the community coaching role required more than the application of in-depth subject knowledge and technical skills. Rather, I believe it was also infused with many social and political daily demands. Indeed, from my perspective, the daily practices of the community coaches that I interviewed were far from unproblematic, predictable, and sequential in nature, all of which have previously been depicted by others (Lyle, 2002; Cross, & Ellices, 1997). Rather, the reality of their coaching practice was characterised by challenging social interactions. Indeed, it appeared to me that the coaches' work had less to do with 'coaching' and more to do with judging the multiple demands of a functioning institution. On realising the micro-political realities of their job, the coaches demonstrated the use of strategies and tactics in order to achieve and maintain desirable working conditions to perform their job roles and tasks effectively. Indeed, each coach dealt with the complex process of coaching in different ways. These findings will be considered in more depth in the following sections.

### ***5.3. Dealing with vulnerability and visibility in community coaching***

Perhaps the biggest issue that the participant coaches shared with me during the interview process was the recognition of the vulnerability of their working roles. Indeed, they all voiced how they understood that government funding cuts, political change, and the wider period of austerity had a significant impact upon the continuing nature of their employment and, as a consequence, their micro-level interactions and relationships with key contextual stakeholders. For example, Frankie in particular variously demonstrated how forging relationships with his superiors diminished some feelings of vulnerability as the recognition of his work by key contextual stakeholders made him feel a worthy, valuable, and important employee that the service would avoid 'letting go'. Similarly, Bobby worked hard to ensure his outdoor adventures schemes were acknowledged, accepted, and recognised by his managers in the quest to reduce his feelings of vulnerability.

A key finding within this section is that the coaches' sense of vulnerability and uncertainty was heightened due to the ongoing importance attached to their work-place performance. In light of this, attempting to hit these targets meant that the coaches adapted their schemes in a fluid way, such as accepting change and being willing to change ideas and tactics at the last minute. Frankie, Charlie, Bobby and Max were all in agreement that trying to hit their key performance indicators (KPIs) was a fundamental and unavoidable daily aspect of their job. As such, I would say that the coaches soon realised that their outcomes were only partially determined by their actual coaching, whilst the majority of their outcomes were determined by the coaches' ability to organise, plan, and implement successful schemes to achieve imposed policy aims whilst achieving participant's satisfaction.

In the attempt to ensure success it became apparent that the coaches employed strategies and tactics to avoid failure. The strategies used by all of the respective coaches included a restructure of session times, dates, locations, marketing, and co-coaching as examples. The community coaches in this study felt that failure to satisfy their respective superiors in this regard could result in the removal of the practitioners from their position as coach. In this way, it is likely that any replacement would be an individual who was perceived by his or her employers to be more capable of meeting the demands of the role within that social structure. Indeed, this was a situation that all of the coaches wished to avoid.

From my interpretation of the data it appeared that the coaches were not in full control of the conditions that they have to work within. Indeed, due to regulations, quality control systems, and policy demands, I would suggest that, to a large extent, these working conditions were imposed upon them. In this regard, the experiences the coaches shared with me highlighted how they had to work within particular frameworks set by the Council (e.g. in a particular office with a particular infrastructure and population of staff), whilst their ‘performativity’ with regard to their effectiveness and efficiency to deliver schemes is continually judged by key contextual stakeholders (e.g. managers, line managers, external funders).

On one level, the participant coaches’ understandings of the vulnerability of their positions could be interpreted using Kelchtermans’ (2005) work on structural vulnerability. According to Kelchtermans’ (2005) analysis, ‘vulnerability’ is best understood as a structural condition that teachers find themselves in. In his work on teaching, he proposed that the practice of teaching is more than the application of technical knowledge. Rather, it ‘implies an ethical relationship of responsibility in which one engages oneself as a person’ (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 998). It is because of this ethical dimension that Kelchtermans (2005) believes that ‘the teacher never has full

control over the situation, nor over the outcome of his/her actions' (p. 998). Kelchtermans' (2005) narratives revealed several critical incidents (Measor, 1985) that showed how teachers often felt powerless, threatened, and questioned by others, such as a principal or parents, without being able to properly defend themselves. Also, linked to this were accounts of teachers not being in full control of the processes and tasks they felt responsible for. Similar to the findings of the community coaches in this study, Kelchtermans (2005) found that the experience of structural vulnerability also occurred when the teachers did not feel in control of what they considered to be valued working conditions due to factors such as infrastructure, contracts and professional relationships. Indeed, the policy measures and imposed educational reforms that were not congruent with the teachers' deeply held beliefs about good teaching, but from which teachers felt they could not escape, clearly contributed to the experience of vulnerability.

Jones and Wallace (2005) also reported similar findings to the community coaches in this study. They described how the ambiguity surrounding the coaching process meant that coaches' were not in full control of their environment. In this regard, organisational goals were inherently challenging, variables within the coaching process were many and dynamic, and intended outcomes could never be a foregone conclusion. As a result, they argued coaches could never gain absolute predictive control over their coaching. It was further suggested that, if we consider the ambitious and potentially contradictory nature of long- and short-term goals established by employers, executives and sponsors or by the coaches themselves, it seems inevitable that the coaching experience will be characterised by many tensions and perceived failures. It was proposed that a picture of the coaching process was starting to emerge which could be typified by considerable ambiguity, especially for coaches. Whether deriving from their limited control over their coaching (i.e. be they athletes, other coaches or administrators), their limited comprehension of where each participant is coming from (i.e. direct access to whatever

evolving meaning the situation has for each participant), their allegiance to contradictory beliefs (i.e. differences among individuals involved, generating divergence amongst the goals pursued), or the novelty of each coaching situation which is unique in its detail (i.e. it is impossible to guarantee the outcome of particular strategies, even if they worked in the past) (Jones & Wallace, 2005).

On another level, these findings could be understood in relation to the modernisation of sport as explained by Houlihan and Green (2009). It has been recognised that since the election of the Labour government in 1997 and its commitment to modernisation of public policy making, and of the institutions of the government, it was highly unlikely that the sports policy infrastructure was going to remain undisturbed (Houlihan & Green, 2009). *Game Plan*, a 20 year strategy for delivering government sport and physical activity objectives reinforced this ‘modernisation’/agenda arguing that ‘sport is a powerful and often under-used tool that can help government to achieve a number of ambitious goals’ (Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCSM)/Strategy Unit, 2002 p 5). In order to try and achieve the aims set out in *Game Plan*, the government introduced a number of organisational changes, all of which expressed these changing policy priorities for sport in England (Bloyce, Smith, Mead & Morris, 2008; Houlihan & Green, 2008). Consequently, community sport coaches who were working within the Sport England umbrella were now expected to deliver social welfare policy goals such as health, crime reduction, social inclusion, mass participation, educational performance and community development (DCSM/Creating a sporting habit for life (CSHL), 2013; DCSM/Strategy Unit, 2002).

Such modernisation involved ‘ensuring policy making was more joined up and strategic; making sure that public service users, not providers, are the focus by matching services more closely to peoples’ lives; delivering public services that are high quality and efficient’ (Cabinet office, 1999, pp. 6-7; Burton, 2006). As such, great emphasis

was to be placed on long-term effectiveness of programmes rather than short-term efficacy. In light of this, policies were implemented within increasingly self-governing networks giving individual units of government and staff more responsibility for their activities (Houlihan & Green, 2009). This is firmly reinforced in the latest DCMS strategy:

‘We will bring a sharper sense of direction and purpose across the entire sporting family through payment-by-results: a collective discipline of building on what works, and discarding what doesn’t. The most successful organisations will be rewarded; and those which don’t deliver will see their funding reduced or removed’ (DCSM/CSHL, 2013 p 2).

As a result, it was a priority for Sport England that they would adopt a more ‘strategic role’ ensuring public funds would be ‘properly spent’ (DCMS 2000, p. 20). Such reform meant that there was a need to establish meaningful targets; outcome driven against which performance could be measured. As such, the funding agreements were designed to have clear statements of attainment, baseline data, milestones and performance measures (UK Sport 2003; Sport England 2004c). In this way, the reform meant the implementation of target driven policies, ones that aid cost savings, ensuring services provided were efficient.

It was in order to operationalise these new ways of working that Sport England adopted the business techniques of performance management and key performance indicators (KPIs) to provide measurable outcomes upon which performance might be judged. The funding agreements spell out what they expected and was monitored closely to assess whether it is being delivered (Sport England and UK Sport). In this regard, the ‘performance indicators’ allowed for continuous improvement among local authorities as they are always working toward attaining goals to secure funding

(Houlihan & Green, 2009). As we can see from the coaches' examples they were aware of the society of which they work within as they are very conscious of the fact that funding can simply disappear if they fail. Frankie, Charlie, Bobby and Max variously highlighted how they had to deliver to a certain standard in the attempt to reach policy outcomes and avoid failure on their schemes. UK Sport (2007) explained that using this modern business approach helps to create a world class environment and that because they were responsible for funds it was crucial the sports are 'fit to deliver'. If they do not, UK Sport does not shy away from withholding funding from any sports that do not meet the set criteria (UK Sport, 2007, pp. 20-1). In light of this, it could be said that part of the impact of modernisation on UK Sport and Sport England has created this sense of vulnerability, uncertainty, and insecurity surrounding the community coaches' jobs as great emphasis has been placed upon KPIs and the monitoring of job performances.

Equally, it could be argued that the participant coaches' understanding of their vulnerability experiences reflected the wider work of Bauman (2000, 2005, 2006 2007a, 2007b) who investigated the notion of the 'liquid times' that we live in. Bauman states that the passage from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity has created a new and unprecedented setting for individual life pursuits, confronting individuals with a series of challenges never before encountered. His work demonstrates how social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify, and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life plans. Instead, the individual has to piece together a series of short-term projects and episodes that do not add up to the kind of sequence to which concepts like 'career' and 'progress' could meaningfully be applied (Bauman, 2005). In light of this, it requires the individual to be flexible and adaptable, as well as ready and willing to change tactics at short notice. In doing so, the individual needs to be capable of abandoning commitments and loyalties without regret and to pursue opportunities according to their current availability. Here, we can see that in liquid times the

participant coaches arguably must act, plan actions, and calculate the likely gains and losses of acting, or failing to act, under conditions of uncertainty. For example, past successes for the coaches do not necessarily increase the probability of future victories let alone guarantee them; while successfully tested in the past it needs to be constantly inspected and revised since they may prove useless or downright counterproductive once circumstances change (Bauman, 2007). For example, it is impossible for the coach to guarantee the outcome of particular strategies, even if they worked in the past. Therefore, coaches must repeatedly make rapid assessments of circumstances, and make appropriate changes (Saury & Durand, 1998).

In this case, Frankie and Charlie explained that a successful scheme or project that the coach has produced for the organisation does not mean a guaranteed continuation of this. Equally, Max noted that funding changes, lack of money, and different targets to hit, required the coaches to change their tactics if they wish to remain a successful employee. It is in these situations of constant change where the decisions are placed on the shoulders of the individuals (Bauman, 2007). Bauman (2007) explained that it is here where the individuals are expected to be ‘free choosers’ and to bear in full the consequences of their choices. For example, a bad decision made in haste could lead to a negative consequence such as higher job insecurity; the Council would not want to employ an incompetent coach who makes bad decisions. In order to avoid these situations flexibility is required as following their preference may not be the right thing to do. As the coaches are unable to slow the pace of change, and their job prospects are admittedly ‘shaky’, the coaches focused on things they could, or believed they could, influence by trying to calculate and minimise the risk of unemployment by adhering to organisational requests.

However, Bauman (2007) explains that, as a result of liquid modernity, we create a world that puts ‘a premium on competitive attitudes’, whilst degrading ‘collaboration

and team-work to the rank of temporary stratagems that need to be terminated the moment their benefits have been used up' (pp. 2–3). As a result, self-interest and the protection of individual standing and status are considered to exist at the forefront of social life. In this regard, Bauman (1996, p. 18) suggests that we often live 'separately side by side' with others. I believe that we can best understand this in relation to Frankie's experiences. Indeed, his hunger for professional development, his competitive attitudes, and his 'ruthless' manners in the interview, were readily applied to secure a job position over his former colleagues.

Bauman's (2007) metaphor of the 'hunter' also appears particularly appropriate in this context for Frankie. Here, Bauman considers how the primary concern of the 'hunter' is to pursue 'another kill, big enough to fill game bags to capacity' (p. 100) with little consideration for other people and the surrounding environment. In particular, Frankie explained how 'it is a competitive world and you have to go with what you can get'. Bauman (2007) explained that individuals are, however, not unfettered in their pursuit of the 'prize.' They compete with, and against, other hunters. Thus, the principal concern for the individual becomes one of not losing out. It is a position that appears at odds with notions of trust and compassion, with 'survival being the ultimate proof of fitness' (Bauman, 2003, pp. 88–89).

Interestingly, the findings in the narratives also relate to the findings of Beck (2000a), whose analysis looks at the 'risk society' that we live in. According to Beck (2000a), in western cultures the latter half of the twentieth century has been described as an epoch of flux, uncertainty, and rapid social change (Bauman, 1991). As such, economic convergence, political fluctuation, and national insecurity have become a reoccurring element of this age. Mythen (2004) explains that we are now living in a 'runaway world' and increasing portions of our everyday lives are spent negotiating change, dealing with uncertainty, and assessing the personal impacts. Within contemporary

culture risk has become something of an issue casting itself over a wide range of practices and experiences (Adam, Beck & Loon, 2000, Lupton, 1999a).

Due to the enhanced pressure of job risks, knowledge it was unsurprising that individuals employ personal techniques of risk avoidance. This can be seen from all of the coaches who have attempted to stand out, be seen to be a good employee, to regularly reestablish their professional identity, and seek managerial recognition. I would suggest that these strategies not only account for their personal dangers, such as unemployment, but also thinking about the public effects of risk, such as the lack of money within the Council, means their job role could be terminated at short notice.

The type of risk which the CSCs and the Council are subject to can be understood using Beck's (1999) notion of 'cultural relativism'. This suggests that the meaning of risk cannot be objectively determined, with the risk deemed to be a social reality constructed via the reproduction of shared ideas and values. As such 'relativism' avoids the approach of objectivism by taking account of the culturally situated character of risk cognisance, or awareness of their individuality. It is here that we can recognise that despite the coaches' best efforts to reduce their risk, it is not a risk that can easily be controlled by them or by those in a superior managerial position.

Furthermore, a lack of government money has called for organisational restructure generating risks of unemployment, redundancies, and the disintegration of job security, leaving job prospects under threat. This is something that all of the participant coaches have experienced. Beck (1998; 2000) explained that, so far as uncertainty is concerned, the latent composition of risk (i.e. present or potential which might not be easily evident or active right now), means there are always potential dangers in the future. In light of this, nobody knows precisely where or when risks will impact (Beck, 1999). As such, the variable of risk and the uncertainty of their possible frequencies cause anxieties. For example, the coaches never know if their contracts were going to be renewed or be

secured for a substantial period of time; in the society we live in today their job is not something that can be guaranteed. Subsequently, the coaches lived in fear of losing their job. It is these uncertainties that have left the coaches in a state of permanent watchfulness as they attempt to negotiate these customary hazards of their everyday working life. That is to say, they consider their interactions with others and look to constantly prove themselves around various stakeholders.

It appeared, from the experiences that the coaches shared with me, that the collegiality between the coaches was influenced by their own individual motivations, goals, fears, and wishes to create a 'safe' and 'secure' working environment. In this regard, efforts to protect themselves, when and where necessary, in an attempt to keep their employment were an inherent part of their job (e.g. going 'the extra mile' and competing against colleagues) (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). However, I could not help but notice the sense of 'irony' surrounding their position as a community coach. For instance, despite one coach in particular wanting to race ahead and obtain career progression, he also needed his colleagues to be a productive unit to ensure that as a group they were secure. Equally, the other coaches noted how doing well as a team, and hitting external targets, would mean greater job securities for all. In other words, when required to, I would suggest that the coaches engaged in collaborative actions (e.g. doing things together, being co-operative, and helping achieve group targets, for the job-related purposes for feeling secure as a group). However, I would contend that such collaborations and relationships were grafted precariously and perched temporarily on the margins of their work. That is to say, once it had served its purpose (e.g. increased job stability, extended job contract, secured external funding), their collaborative relationships were temporarily withdrawn.

Hoyle and Wallace (2005) termed individuals who behaved this way as 'competitive collaborators' and that 'such collaboration is used as a solvent to their problems and

particularly the problem of change and reform' (pp. 127). It has been suggested that such actions are a result of the 'widespread competition introduced by the government in their attempt to increase effectiveness through various forms of productivity' (pp. 127). In this regard, Hoyle and Wallace (2005) suggest that irony is endemic in social life, and whilst we have to live with that irony there is still room for human agency. Meaning, the individual has the ability to choose between alternative courses of action (O'Brien & Kollock, 1991). From an ironic perspective, such uncertainty cannot be 'solved'; the problem is one of living with it. In this regard, we begin to see that the micro-politics engaged in by the coaches to reach these goals encompasses both struggle and conflict, as well as collaboration and coalition building (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b).

#### ***5.4. The importance of professional self-understanding***

What became clear to me as I engaged with the participants and concurrently analysed the interview transcripts was the apparent individualised nature of their thinking about their workplace performances, reputation, and future career development and security. Frankie, Charlie and Bobby attached importance not only to maintaining their employment within their organisation, but also advancing their position, standing, and status. This outlook was also shared by Max who, as part of this process of professional development and advancement, emphasised his need to be regarded as a highly competent and productive practitioner. From my perspective, this desire to stand out or be recognised in this way lay at the heart of the coaches' professional practice and was very much a fluid, dynamic, and ongoing challenge for them in their working lives.

To elaborate, Frankie, Charlie, Bobby and Max variously highlighted how they placed a high importance on their 'self' within their coaching role. That is, not only how they view themselves but also how they thought they were viewed and perceived by those around them. For example, the participant coaches also outlined how their views of their

respective personal competency were not only influenced by their own critical self-analysis of their actions but also the extent to which they felt their practices and ideas were, or were not, valued by contextual stakeholders (e.g. line managers, fellow community coaches, and the participants in their respective coaching programmes). In a similar vein, Max shared with me his belief that, being the new coach, he wanted to avoid being viewed as incapable or incompetent and was consciously aware of how others viewed him.

I believe that this finding could be explained using Kelchtermans' (2005, 2009a) work addressing professional self understanding. While his research was principally conducted in the context of classroom teaching, I believe it can be utilised for explanatory value in terms of explaining the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the community coaches in this study. I am not alone in this sentiment as a variety of his ideas have been increasingly used by scholars of coaching science in recent years (e.g., Jones, Thompson, & Bailey, 2013; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b), in their quest to illuminate the social complexity inherent in coaching and coach education. According to Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c), professional self understanding refers to practitioners' conceptions of themselves in their professional role. Such self understanding is not only influenced by an individual's perception of their qualities and capacities in their working role at a particular point in time, but also how they believe other people perceive their performances in that role.

It is self understanding that refers to both the understanding one has of one's 'self' at a certain moment in time (product), as well as to the fact that this product results from an ongoing (process) of making sense of one's experiences and their impact on the 'self'. In developing the notion of professional self-understanding, Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a, 2009b) described how he 'purposefully avoided the notion of 'identity' because of its associations with a static essence' that ignores or denies 'its dynamic and

biographical nature' (Kelchtermans, 2005, p 1000). From my perspective, Kelchtermans work was certainly evidenced within the process of narrative-biographical inquiry with the participants.

In terms of how they judged their professional self understanding, the participants identified a number of important factors. For example, Frankie, Charlie and Bobby noted how they would judge themselves as coaches and look at their capability and ability to fulfil their job duties. Equally, Max described how appreciation of his actions contributed to how he viewed himself in a positive light therefore boosting his self esteem. It is here that I believe that my interpretation of the data could be theoretically explained using Kelchtermans' (2005, 2009a, 2009b) notion of the personal interpretive framework. According to Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a) this is a process of the individual developing their 'professional self-understanding' (Kelchtermans 2005, 2009a). It can be clearly evidenced that throughout the community coaches' careers they have developed a personal interpretative framework. The participant coaches have demonstrated this to me through how they view their job, give meaning to it, and act in it. According to Kelchtermans (2005) this framework not only guides their individual interpretations and actions in particular situations (context) but at the same time is modified by and results from these meaningful interactions (sense making) within that context. In essence, I discovered that professional self-understanding is not a static entity but a fluid feature dependent on changes in circumstances and the coaches' interpretations of events. It was here that positive and negative elements developed for the coaches, which I believe can be best understood in relation to self, image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective (Kelchtermans, 2005, 2009a, 2009b).

From my perspective, the way the coaches were viewed by others lay at the heart of their practice. Charlie, in particular, provided an example of how the observation of

others placed him in a vulnerable position, one that threatened his professional status to those in the room. It was explained to me that at the end of a scheme the coaches' line manager usually attended the final session to gain additional feedback from the service users to help report the progress of the scheme back to the funders. Charlie overheard his line manager having a conversation with the community participants, asking what Charlie had been doing on the session.

Unfortunately for Charlie, he heard his line manager say to the group that if he had done the session it would have been done differently. This left Charlie feeling as though he had lost the 'respect' of those in the room as they looked over to him. He desperately tried to maintain his confident front, but there was no hiding place, no refuge. Not only was he humiliated he was also left feeling as though he had not done enough. With no other suitable course of action given the managers authority over Charlie, he had to publically accept these derogatory comments. As a result, he was left feeling deflated and betrayed.

Here, I would suggest that, Charlie's experiences might usefully be understood in relation to Kelchtermans' (2005, 2009a) discussion of 'self-image', described as 'the way teachers typify themselves as teachers' (p. 1000) and 'self-esteem', or 'the teacher's appreciation of his or her actual job performances' (p. 1000), as both were impacted on by Charlie's belief that a number of the service users viewed him and, indeed, his sessions at that time, in a somewhat negative light. According to Kelchtermans' (2005, 2009a, 2009b) work, a practitioner's self-image is not only influenced by how the individual perceives him or herself but, importantly, also how the practitioner is perceived by others. As such, this is based on self-perception but, to a large degree, also on what others mirror back to the teachers through comments from pupils, parents, and colleagues). Here, we can identify that Charlie's self-image was strongly influenced by the way he was perceived by others. In this case, it could be

suggested that Charlie's line manager's derogatory comments led Charlie to critically reflect on how he might be perceived by his participant group.

As a consequence, Charlie was placed in a position where the image he was trying to portray to the participants may have been interpreted in multiple ways by those in the room. However, despite the challenge of his self-image, it appeared not to affect Charlie's self-esteem as the service users appreciated and acknowledged his job performances with the positive feedback they gave in relation to the sessions that he delivered. According to Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) this feedback is important for generating one's self-esteem. Indeed, feedback from one is considered more relevant, valuable or important than that of others. Similar to Charlie's experiences, Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) found that, to most teachers, students are the first, and most important, source of feedback, since they are the ultimate reason for teachers' teaching. Finding that, it is only the presence of pupils and students that makes a teacher a teacher, which allows him/her to enact teaching. This is strongly related to the experiences of Charlie as once he knew he had gained positive feedback despite his manager's comment, he felt as though he was still doing a good job for the community participants.

From my perspective, the participants' desire for professional advancement and maintaining their self-image and self-esteem was closely linked to the coaches' efforts to fulfil their job roles and duties. To achieve this end, the coaches worked hard to identify what legitimate duties they needed to do, such as planning their schemes of work. However, this proved to be more of a challenging process than the coaches expected. Frankie, Charlie, Bobby, and Max recalled how the meetings, planning, paperwork, and targets were a 'surprise' and 'unexpected', but, equally, they valued the development toward understanding their job role. They explained to me that despite being initially unaware of their full duties and roles, they worked hard to develop a full

understanding of what was required of their role. In order to achieve this end, the respective coaches in engaged in staff inductions, questioning, researching, building contacts, consulting managers for guidance, and liaising with experienced coaching colleagues.

I would suggest that the learning process demonstrated by all the coaches' could be explained in terms of 'task perception', a category of Kelchtermans' (2005) five-part framework of self understanding which 'encompasses their idea of what constitutes his/her professional programme, his/her tasks and duties to do a good job' (p. 1000). We can see from the coaches' examples that they considered what they must do to be a proper coach, what essential tasks they would have to perform to justify feeling that they are doing well, what they considered as legitimate duties to perform, and what they refused to accept as part of their job. According to Kelchtermans (2005) it not only implies value-laden choices and moral considerations but also encompasses deeply held beliefs about what constitutes good education and about one's moral duties and responsibilities in order to do justice to students.

It was in relation to their development of 'task perception' that I noticed the coaches experiencing increased motivation towards their job. For example, being able to fulfil duties that encompassed their deeply held beliefs about practice appeared to motivate the coaches. Similarly, Kelchtermans (2005) found that working conditions which allowed a teacher to work and act according to that personal normative programme were crucial determinants for the job motivation. Furthermore, I noticed that the motives for their coaching developed over time. Initially, I could see that the coaches entered the profession because of their love and interest in the subject discipline. Over time, however, several of them came to understand that their work, presence, and actions were also meaningful to the community participants for reasons other than just being a qualified source of subject knowledge. Another contributing factor for job motivation

appeared to be when the coaches received positive feedback from key contextual stakeholders (i.e. managers). In particular, Bobby and Max explained how they felt happy and energised when their managers acknowledged the value and purpose of their work. It is these findings that could be understood in relation to Kelchtermans' (2005) concept of 'job motivation', defined as 'the motives or drives that make people choose to become a teacher, to remain in or to leave the profession (p. 1000).

For Max, not only did this positive feedback link to job motivation and satisfaction but he also saw it as another potential benefit connected to his future opportunities. This can be closely linked to Kelchtermans' concept of 'future perspective', defined as 'a person's expectations about their future career trajectory in the teaching role' (p.1000), as Max explained to me that receiving compliments would be of benefit to him if he was to apply for a higher paid job; the feedback showed that he was a capable and competent member of staff. In essence then, job motivation was also linked to self-esteem in the respect that heightened self-esteem was observed when the coaches considered how well they were doing in their job. Frankie and the other coaches appeared to have had a self-esteem 'boost' when their projects were successful and recognition was given. Subsequently, this positive self-esteem resulted in job satisfaction and motivation that generated a sense of fulfilment, therefore helping them feel more secure about their future. This also was linked to their 'self-image' in that positive comments from colleagues and managers would reconfirm their self-esteem.

Perhaps it could be said that one of the reasons the coaches worked to establish their self understanding (personal interpretive framework) was so that they could better reflect on their current practices and consider their future prospects. It was clear to see that Frankie, Charlie, Bobby, and Max recognised that what they do now may impact upon potential future opportunities and career progression. It was identified from the participant narratives that this component was not a static or fixed identity but was the

result of an ongoing interactive process of sense making and construction. In other words, their actions in the present were influenced by meaningful experiences in the past and expectations about their possible future. In light of these findings, we can identify that the efficacy of their actions, over time, impacted on their professional self understanding. In other words, how they thought about themselves (self-image), their abilities (self-esteem), their futures (future perspective), their level of drive (job motivation), and what they needed to do to be seen to be doing a good job (task perception) was constantly changing. It is here that I would argue that the participants' professional self-understanding was not static but fluctuated over time.

### ***5.5. Developing and maintaining professional interests***

In their quest to maintain and advance their standing within the workplace, as well as to generally make their work as intrinsically fulfilling as possible, the participant coaches respectively shared with me how they attended to a number of issues. In many ways their actions appeared to be guided by their respective interests and aspirations in the workplace. For example, the coaches demonstrated how developing a strong professional identity was important to them. Frankie in particular continually strived for successful experiences and proactively looked for opportunities to demonstrate his competence to those around him and was determined to progress higher. Frankie worked to develop a professional reputation to make a good name for himself which, in turn, promoted his qualities to other colleagues. This reputation could be seen as a way to enhance his career, such as taking on extra duties, covering sessions when needed, being proactive in ideas, using his line manager as a sounding board to share his thoughts, and pushing projects to run.

Equally, Bobby wanted to 'stand out' as a valuable coach, he felt vulnerable due to his projects becoming increasingly misunderstood within in the department. Accordingly, he would 'put the extra work in', do that 'little bit more' and involve his managers in

his 'new, fresh, and different ideas' to make outdoor adventures be a success. I believe that such findings could be best understood in relation to Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002a) concept of 'self-interests', which is defined as 'issues of professional identity and its social recognition, and, how an individual protects these, especially in the early stages of their career' (p.110). Kelchtermans (1993) considered an individual's self-interests as the threatening product of an individual's 'professional identity' because when a person's identity, self-esteem or task perception is threatened then self-interests emerge. Equally, Charlie, and Max also strived for social recognition of their work from those around them and it appeared that this self-affirmation and visibility as a professional was a key element for the coaches' practice.

Like the coaches in this study, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002a) found that teachers showed that self-interests mainly had to do with looking for self-affirmation, dealing with vulnerability and with the visibility in their job. What is more, they found that it was an important aspect in a teacher's career when they gain acknowledgment from others in their profession, especially from those higher placed within the organisation (Kelchtermans, 1996). Indeed, being a coach implies more than merely a technical set of tasks that can be reduced to effectively applying curriculum knowledge. As such, the person is also at stake in these professional actions. Therefore, the protection of one's professional integrity and identity is always of concern (Nias, 1989; Bullough, 1997; Kelchtermans, 1996, 1999).

As part of their role, it became apparent that a considerable amount of time was made to planning, creativity, and the development of new ideas on a regular basis was achieved. From my interpretation, I believe these actions were taken by the coaches in their quest to become visible as a competent, creative, hard-working professional and, as such, proactively using their self-interests as professional visibility as a political strategy to 'advertise' their professional competence (Kelchtermans, 1996). In this

respect, Frankie and Max noted how they proactively thought ahead of their sessions by viewing the venue, negotiating time, and identifying space and accessible resources.

Unlike the other coaches, Charlie and Bobby demonstrated that another way they attained their resources was by designing their own. For example, Charlie noted how designing a flow chart identifying the sequential process for starting new sessions was developed. Encompassed within this flow chart were possible contacts, venues, money available, equipment, and the areas for sessions. This was a template that was made accessible for other coaches' to use. His efforts and time to produce this flow chart was acknowledged by his manager. Equally, Bobby explained how he had designed an A-Z registry for the outdoor clubs and venues in the local area to make contacting easier. As a result of his hard work, the template he designed is now used by other Council members in the department. I would argue here that by designing their own resources they were not only using this as a form of self-representation but also using this as a strategic reason to be seen as competent and hard working employee by those around them. It is here that we might draw upon Kelchtermans' (2002) concept of 'material interests', referred to as the 'availability and access to teaching materials, funds, infrastructure, and structural time facilitates' (p.112). As we can see, the coaches actively sought access to materials in order to gain their desirable working conditions. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) noted how beginning teachers spend a lot of time carefully planning lessons, inventing creative learning activities, and developing teaching materials. Equally, they found, from the teachers' stories, that it was not just material, technical or organisational issues but that they often, more or less consciously, disguise a micro-political agenda of self-presentation. These efforts were made not only to please the pupils and get their appreciation but also strategically to become visibly competent teachers to those around them.

However, it became apparent to me that, at times, access to some resources lay within the professional relationships with various key stakeholders. For Bobby, in particular, forging alliances with his superiors and convincing them of the importance of his sessions, at times, resulted in him gaining ‘extra equipment’. Indeed, unlike the other coaches, Bobby required specialised materials to conduct some of his sessions (e.g. mountain walking, bush craft, spoon carving). In this respect, Bobby believed that building these relationships gave him a greater chance at securing his resources. I believe that this finding can be closely linked to ‘socio-professional interests’, defined as ‘issues on the quality of interpersonal relations in and around the school as an organisation’ (p.115). When using Kelchtermans’ work as an analytical framework, it could be contended that Bobby’s efforts to build and establish relationships with his colleagues illustrated his desire to develop his ‘socio-professional relationships’ in the respect that he believed it important to develop working relationships with colleagues that were co-operative and supportive in nature and, in an ontological sense, made him feel comfortable as he secured the materials he needed (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a, 2002b; Purdy, Potrac, & Jones, 2008). In a sense, these actions were not that separate from Bobby’s self-interests. That is, his political actions to develop positive working relationships with others originated from his desire to be recognised and accepted by others as a valuable, competent, knowledgeable member of the team.

In light of my findings, it could be argued that Kelchtermans and Ballet’s (2002) notion of self-interests surrounds all of the other concepts derived in this analytical framework. Therefore, when relating my results to the other conceptions proposed by Kelchtermans and Ballet’s work, I would suggest that there was a great deal of ‘crossover’ when pinpointing the analysis of the data to the other categories. For example, it was identified from the coaches’ narratives that their ‘material interests’ were linked to their ‘socio-professional interests’ and ‘self-interests’ as they recognised

that they needed to establish good relationships with others (i.e. venue staff), in order to access their facilities and equipment, as well as negotiate time and space for their session to run. Additionally, building relationships with managers and communicating with them was also required if the coaches wished to obtain new equipment, or if they needed to negotiate time to plan new projects. This, in turn, relates to the coaches' self-interests as the managers recognise their efforts in delivering their 'good sessions' which, subsequently, strengthens their professional identity.

### ***5.6. Development of micro-political literacy***

In an attempt to secure their self and organisational interests, it was evident that the coaches engaged in a number of micro-political strategies to secure resources, conform to or change the Council's expectations, establish strong working relationships, and reduce the experience of vulnerability. From my interpretation of the interview data, the coaches began to recognise the micro-political realities of their coaching role at different stages of their career. Once the realities were recognised, it could be seen that, at times, the coaches were required to be quite strategic in their thought processes and actions in order to establish desirable working conditions. However, the ability to develop and apply these strategic thought processes and actions was different for the participant coaches. As such, perhaps I could suggest that this element of practice can take time for an individual to develop in their professional career. I can see an example of this in Charlie's professional experiences. In the past, Charlie had struggled to understand the political realities of his previous jobs. This resulted in him having to deal with challenging working relationships, disagreements, and arguments. In some cases, it even resulted in Charlie quitting the job itself. Having decided this was a career he wished to stay in, he took time to understand the existing functionalities, organisational structure, existing roles, and colleagues and considered how to place himself within the already established organisation. Equally, Frankie, Bobby and Max noted the

importance they attached to getting to know the team dynamics, responsibilities, and functions as well as situating themselves within their new setting.

I believe that such experiences are closely related to Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002) concept of 'micro-political literacy', which refers to the ability to effectively 'read and write' themselves into the micro-political reality of their school landscape and engage in 'micro-political action' (i.e. actions that aim to establish, safeguard or restore desired working conditions). It is demonstrated from the coaches' experiences that they began to read situations through a micro-political lens and understand them in terms of their different interests (i.e. self-interests, material, socio-professional, and organisational). Alongside this, the coaches began to learn coping strategies and thereafter utilising them effectively within their practice. The coaches demonstrated from their experiences that in order to establish, safeguard or restore their desirable working condition, they were required to skillfully apply strategies and tactics in order to influence the situation. This meant that they either used strategies to resist and protect or they tried to proactively change their working conditions.

According to Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002), this constitutes as the 'operational or instrumental aspect' of micro-political literacy. This operational aspect refers to the political efficacy of the individual and to what extent, and under what conditions, they are capable of effectively influencing the situation. This is achieved either pro-actively or reactively. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) explained that this knowledge goes hand in hand with the 'experimental aspect', referring to how one feels about one's micro-political understanding and actions. This understanding, and the implied need for action, often triggers intense emotions, both positive (e.g. joy, pride, increased self-esteem, fulfillment), and negative (e.g. powerlessness, frustration, anger, grief). In relation to my study, it could clearly be seen that being micro-politically active takes two forms. Firstly, I noted how the coaches employed strategies that were aimed at maintaining

their working conditions. Secondly, they employed strategies and tactics that were directed towards changing their working conditions.

As identified in the results section, Charlie's narrative provided examples of his efforts to change situations in which he was unhappy. For example, Charlie engaged in discussion with his manager in an attempt to try and adjust his working conditions when he could no longer handle the turbulent relationship with his line manager. He achieved better working conditions for himself through his diplomatic, tactful strategies. Because Charlie was confronted with the potential impossibility of changing working conditions (e.g. developing a good relationship with his line manager), he looked for, and fortunately found, a form of compensation relationship with his manager. This became an often used strategy by Charlie when things were not as he wanted them. He began to look for, and focus on, other pleasant elements in the situation in order to keep a satisfying balance of the positive and negative aspects of his work-place experiences. As such, he would employ his relationship with his manager to discuss changing his working conditions, conversations that he would not be able to have with his line manager. It could be said that Charlie developed a 'compensation strategy' (i.e. frustrating and negative relations with his line manager were compensated by a strong, positive bond with his manager with whom he could discuss his issues) (Keltchermans & Ballet, 2002).

Equally, Bobby also utilised strategies in order to make a 'change' as he found his working environment to be too distracting and noisy. He silently endured what he considered to be the immature and inappropriate behavior of a former colleague until it became too difficult to continue. After Bobby's diplomatic communication with his manager, the other workers stopped their inappropriate behavior and respected the working conditions that Bobby wanted. It is here I would suggest that both Charlie and Bobby's experiences are consistent with Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002) work on the

micro-political realities that beginning teachers face. In particular interest to my study was their notion of 'proactive strategies', which they define as 'strategies that are directed towards changing the situation and influencing the conditions' (p. 116). According to Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002), these proactive strategies are taken by the individual in order for them to actively engage in an attempt to change their working conditions. Despite these strategies leading to potential implied confrontations for the coaches, Charlie and Bobby managed, through tactful and diplomatic interventions, to achieve their desired end and thus working in better conditions.

Conversely, the actions taken by Max, unlike Charlie and Bobby, demonstrated that his micro-political actions was aimed at maintaining his working conditions. For example, he variously explained how he would protect the professional relationships with his colleagues despite not always agreeing with their choices or actions. As a result, I would suggest he was guarding both himself and his environment. This finding could closely be related to Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002) concept of the 'reactive strategies', which they defined as 'strategies that maintain a situation or protecting the teacher against changes or external influences' (p.116). Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) proposed that such strategies are used when the individual wants to avoid taking stance in the conflict which I believe helps to understand the behaviour demonstrated by Max.

From my interpretation of the data, significant levels of strategic activity were invoked when the coaches were faced with issues and processes that challenged their professional values and beliefs on how they should work. Encompassed within this process was how the coaches responded to powerlessness in the inability to create the workplace conditions necessary for good job performance. In order for the coaches to cope with this, they applied strategic actions which were aimed at regaining the social recognition of one's 'professional self-understanding' and restoring the necessary workplace conditions for good job performance. From these examples, I believe it is

evident that the coaches realised that their working conditions can quite easily change. Therefore, they began to fine-tune their actions by balancing proactive and reactive strategies in order to deal with their working environments. Not only this, but these strategies took different forms within the organisational setting such as talking, arguing, being silent and reserved, avoiding taking sides in decision making, accepting extra duties in exchange for something, such as a change in working conditions. Further strategies used by the coaches, and demonstrated through Frankie's narrative, included a high commitment to the job role, volunteering for extra duties, engaging in proactive communication, and maintaining professionalism.

### ***5.7. Impression management and manipulation***

My reading of the interview data suggested that the coaches' micro-political literacy and understandings influenced the way that they conducted their respective micro-level interactions with the various contextual stakeholders. Perhaps one of the most striking themes that I took from my reading of the participant coaches' stories was the importance that they all placed on managing the impression of their respective selves that they presented to the various stakeholders with whom they interacted on an everyday basis in their role (i.e. community participants, fellow community coaches, line managers). For example, in terms of interactions with the community participants, Bobby described how he attached great store to 'preparing his act' for others to watch. In a related manner, Charlie, Frankie and Max highlighted how they carefully crafted the impression via their uniform, tidy appearance, mannerisms, and approaches with their participants. In this way, the respective coaches carefully guided and controlled their impressions to the audiences in front of them as a way of negotiating their respective coaching contexts.

In addition, the community coaches also described their perceptions of 'how' and 'why' they sought to manage their interactions with their co-workers. Here, Charlie and

Frankie highlighted how they did not want to enter their new social setting appearing overconfident, boisterous, fake, and ignorant of others. Equally, Max and Bobby noted that they wanted their actions to be believable and sincere to those around them in order to get colleagues 'on board'. They did this by attempting to create social bonds and by taking the extra time to 'get to know everyone'. Finally, in this regard, I learned from the participant coaches how they also felt the need to manage the impression they sustained in the eyes of their respective managers. For example, the coaches wanted to sustain a professional image to the managers that had employed them; one that was professional, competent, and capable of delivering.

It is these actions of the coaches that could be explained in terms of Goffman's classical text which addressed 'The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life' (Goffman, 1959). This seminal work provided a detailed description and analysis of process and meaning in mundane action. In this respect, Goffman (1959) utilised micro-sociological analysis to explore the details of individual identity and group relations, the impact of environment, and the movement and interactive meaning of information (Barnhart, 2000). Central to this argument was the notion that individuals are not entirely determined by society because they are able to strategically manipulate social situations and others' impressions of themselves (Branaman, 2000).

However, he also emphasised that individuals are unable to freely choose the images of self that they would have others accept. Rather, they are constrained to define themselves in congruence with the statuses, roles, and relationships that they are accorded by the social order (Branaman, 1997). In considering the presentation of self, Goffman (1959) utilised a dramaturgical approach to not only examine the mode of presentation employed by the social actor but also its meaning in the broader social context (Branaman, 1997; Branhart, 1994). In short, he viewed interaction 'as a

performance shaped by environment and audience, constructed to provide others with impressions that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor' (Branhart, 1994, p.2).

For example, Charlie explained that he always considered how to conduct himself in new social situations and utilises different personas, saying 'I act really professional, I make sure I tick all the boxes, cover all bases, and make them aware of what I'm there for'. Charlie felt that first impressions counted and attached high importance to gaining the 'trust' and 'respect' from people in the room. Alongside this, Charlie recalled how he did extra 'little things' with his appearance, such as 'tidy hair', and Council gear on', to make him look more professional for his job role. In a similar vein, Bobby was also aware of his first impressions as he explained 'I think the big key is that you go into an environment and that you treat people how you wanted to be treated'. Bobby ensures he does this by 'getting to know everyone's name, try and get to know them, and find out what they like doing'. Like the other coaches, Frankie explained that he employs different 'fronts' depending on who he is interacting with 'I have had a few jobs with the Council and from that you learn how to present and act in a professional manner in keeping with how the Council employees present themselves. You act professional and look professional in what you wear'. Max noted how he engaged in impression management for a number of reasons, stating 'I keep a front on, you need to meet the expectations of the people in the room such as being professional, knowledgeable, approachable, and enthusiastic'.

Bobby, in particular, described how 'putting on a show' was used to 'protect' his professional image to the audiences around him. He said, 'basically, I think you just have to get good at acting, and it's like an actor being up on stage. They act a certain way for the time that they give their performance but when they have finished they can walk away'. To further explain how Bobby maintains his performance, an example of a 'toolbox' was given 'it is just like having a toolbox for your emotions and, depending

on what situation you are presented with, will depend what you pull out of your toolbox'. As such, Bobby had the ability to use his toolbox like 'props', recognising what the situation would require of him and, subsequently, adjusting his 'performance'.

These acts portrayed by the coaches can also be understood in relation to Goffmans concept of 'dramatic realisation' (Goffman, 1959). That is, in order to present a compelling front the actor is forced to both fill the duties of the position and communicate the activities and characteristics of the job to other people in a consistent manner (Branhart, 1994). They must behave consistently like a coach in the participants' eyes because if they wish to maintain established power relationships, the coaches must uphold the standards of conduct and appearance expected of someone within that position (Goffman, 1959). A point to be made here is that the expectations of the participants are an issue in determining the performance style of the coach. That is, Frankie expressed how his front would be different when working with the elderly than it would when on a school session because the participants would be expecting different actions from him. This supports the view that the individuals put on the shows for the benefit of his or their audiences (Goffman, 1959).

However, the 'presentation of self' is not without its perils. If the 'front' of the situation is 'read' incorrectly, the coach may be discredited. Hence, if the performance is not convincing enough then doubts may be thrown onto the coach's projected image (Goffman, 1959), a situation that Goffman (1959, p 13) describes as 'definitive disruption'. Such a disruption could relate to audiences not buying into the coach's persona. In this way, the coaches have to be careful not to present 'phoney' or 'false' fronts as they could easily lose credibility in the eyes of those around them. Such awareness was evidenced among the coaches interviewed. For example, Charlie and Frankie expressed how you have to be consistent with what you do, not come across too boisterous or 'in their face', and not force anything. Equally, Bobby and Max voiced

how they ‘hung back’, were ‘quiet and reserved’, and took their time to build their impressions to others in an attempt to avoid looking ‘false’ in the eyes of others.

In an attempt to deviate away from being perceived as insincere in their actions, Goffman (1959) explained that the performer generates some ‘elbow room’, or a leeway to build up an impression of his or her choice. Indeed, this space needs to be maintained in order to protect the image presented from too close an inspection by followers. Such an inspection could discredit or destroy it. Bobby described how he likes to know about the group he is working with but he does not tell them too much about himself. In a similar light, Max attempted to ‘get on with everyone and make friends at his session’ but they were viewed purely as work friendships maintaining a social distance. This allowed him to give a degree of personal attention to the participants in the group, making them feel acknowledged. In this regard, Goffman (1959) argued that it is important we only act in certain ways for certain audiences. Here, Goffman (1959) says that the performer segregates his or her audience and himself or herself into ‘front region’ and the ‘back stage’. The latter is where the performance is prepared whilst it is presented in the former. This back stage is private with access to certain aspects of behavior being controlled, to prevent outsiders seeing a performance that is not intended for them (Goffman, 1959). This was evidenced in the actions of all of the coaches interviewed as they equally expressed how they consider and construct the impression before the delivery of their session.

Indeed, I would argue that Bobby, in particular, engaged in this impression management to preserve the image or front presented by the individual as any sudden deviance from it puts the credibility of the actor and performance at risk and hence the respect in which he or she is held is inevitably weakened. In order to prevent such incident spoiling the ‘show’, performers have to possess, and be able to express, certain attributes to save the show (Goffman, 1959). Closely linked to Bobby’s example was

his adherence to a 'dramaturgical discipline' (Goffman, 1959, p. 210). This involves the actor dedicating themselves to the performance but without losing oneself in it. It involves self-control, making sure one can play the part properly and rehearse it. They must offer a show of intellectual and emotional activity in the performance they are presenting but must keep themselves from actually being carried away by their own show (Goffman, 1959). Indeed, Bobby knew that he only had to perform whilst on the session and that once he had displayed what was required of him he could put his toolbox away until the next time it was required. Equally, Frankie expressed how he knew he only had to act a certain way for the period of the session and that once he left the session and got back into his car, he could drop the front as no-one was watching him.

Moreover, the findings of this thesis also add further weight to the increasing view that coaches, regardless of the setting in which they work, feel the need to engage in impression management in order to achieve desired ends (Jones, et al., 2011). Indeed, similar findings are reflected in previous work such as (Jones et al., 2004; Potrac et al., 2002), who found that coaches presented a particular image of themselves as knowledgeable and caring, yet decisive, experts. In doing so, they often engaged in scheming actions such as telling 'white lies'. Like the community coaches in this study, previous inquiry has highlighted how coaches attach considerable importance to presenting the 'right front' to athletes in order that the latter, seemingly voluntarily, act in accordance with, or 'buy into', the coaches' respective agendas or programmes. Such fronts included deliberately showing a human side and expressing themselves in a supremely confident manner so that athletes believe the coaches know what they are talking about (Jones, et al., 2004; Potrac, et al., 2002).

From my perspective, it is clear that the respective community coaches in this study sought to present an idealised image of themselves to the various stakeholders with

whom they interacted. Indeed, they strongly believed that their success in their respective roles was dependent upon their ability to construct, maintain, and advance positive working relationships with the various individuals and groups with whom they interacted. As such, the quest here was very much to avoid embarrassment by failing to subscribe to the dominant expectations regarding appropriate social performance with these individuals. In this regard, they wanted to exclude from their performances any expressions that might discredit the impression fostered in fear of being stigmatised as an undesirable rejected stereotype by key contextual stakeholders (Jones, 2006). In this way, the coaches did not want to appear ‘less competent’, ‘less effective’, and ‘not as good’ as their fellow coaching colleagues. The strategies utilised to avoid this deviance included crafting their appearance (e.g. professional uniform and kit; getting to know the group in a friendly manner e.g. taking time to talk and interact with the participants), and carefully selecting the ‘fronts’ they employ.

## **Part 2: Understanding the emotions inherent in community coaching practice**

### **5.8. Introduction**

The aim of this section is to theoretically analyse the emotional experiences that the participant community sports coaches described in relation to their everyday practice. Whilst the importance of the need to recognise the emotions that coaching practitioners experience on a daily basis has been acknowledged (e.g., Jones et al., 2013; Potrac et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2013), there remains little empirical investigation of this topic. Within this thesis, it became clear to me throughout the coaches’ narratives that their coaching practice was not just cognitive in nature but, rather, it was enthused with intense emotions. Indeed, each coach expressed feeling passionately about their role as a CSC. Evidently, in times of reform in policy making, aimed at changing coaching practices for the better and achieving higher outcomes, an array of emotions appeared. During these stages, the coaches described how they have had to sort through feelings

of anxiety of the unknown, frustration of the ambiguous, joy and recognition of shared ideologies, and guilt in constructing modifications and change despite any possible professional repercussions.

While Kelchtermans and Goffman's respective theorising in the previous section provided a high degree of utility in developing my interpretation of the coaches' stories, I was not convinced they fully captured the experiences that the coaches described to me. In this regard, I was struck by the coaches' discussion of the emotional nature of their work and did not feel that Goffman's, or indeed Kelchtermans', insightful analysis of face-to-face interaction fully captured the ways in which the coaches felt they had to manage their emotions when interacting with key contextual stakeholders.

A key finding explored within this section is the way in which the coaches managed their emotions for the benefit of others. Indeed, the respective coaches variously shared with me how, at times, they were required to hide or suppress their 'real' feelings. When asked why they felt that they had to manage their emotions in such a way, the participant coaches shared with me how they had learned what was expected of them in a variety of different ways. These included Council inductions, team meetings, interactions with line managers and colleagues, and feedback from community participants. For example, Frankie noted how, in his induction phase, the Council made him aware that he had a Council image to portray, an image that was happy, positive, helpful, and inviting to the community. In a similar vein, Bobby and Charlie spoke of how a requirement of their daily routine involved ensuring that they delivered a continuous display of professionalism for the Council along which included 'wearing a smiley face'. The coaches were all in agreement that failing to present a happy, inviting, warm public exterior meant that they ran the risk of creating a negative image for the Council. Max noted how 'he needs to smile to get people on board to use the services'. On failing to do so, the coaches described how they were concerned that their numbers

would drop on their session and, as a result, managers would be unhappy and funding for that project may be taken away.

A further related finding was that the coaches believed that their ability to maintain these public displays were monitored by key contextual stakeholders such as managers and community participants. It was explained how such monitoring was conducted by random spot checks from the managers and by gaining feedback sheets from the community participants. It could be argued that another reason the coaches endured this happy, public display was due to fear of getting negative feedback from others. Frankie explained that it would certainly be evident if he started to drop his standards of work, saying 'what we deliver shows what we do as a person, they can see in your programmes'. Equally, Charlie, Bobby, and Max were aware that the service users receive feedback letters to fill out when a scheme is coming to an end where they are asked for their opinions on customer service, the delivery of the schemes, the coach, and their impact.

In making sense of the participants' experiences here, I believe that the work of Hochschild (1983, 2000) provided me with an insightful theoretical lens by which my collected data could be 'made sense of' from an emotional perspective. Within her analytical framework, it was her concept of 'emotional labour' that was of particular importance at this stage of my data analysis. This has been defined as:-

'Labour that requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others [such as] the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labour calls for communication of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality...Emotional labour is sold for a wage and, therefore, has exchange value.'

The conceptualisation of emotional labour was the result of an ethnographic study based on the working practices of flight attendants employed by an American airline. Hochschild's (2003) work highlighted how the process of learning emotional labour started with the recruitment phase. Here, the company set out to identify people with a warm personality and enthusiasm for the job. During their intensive training, the flight attendants were taught to 'receive passengers on the plane as if they were guests in their own home, to make them feel safe and comfortable, and to learn the passenger is always right, and the flight attendant must always manage their emotions' (Theodosius, 2008: 20). In their recruitment and training phase, they were constantly reminded that their smile was their biggest asset and that they should really 'lay it on' as much of the airline's profit depended upon their 'smiley face' (Hochschild, 2003).

Significantly, it highlighted how flight attendants were required, and taught, to manage their emotions so that they could maintain a happy, smiley public exterior for the benefit of their passengers. So much so, in fact, that this was monitored throughout their training programme and once or twice the inspectors tested their stewardesses by being deliberately exacting. From this, Hochschild (2003) argued that flight attendants' private emotion work was transmuted into emotional labour. That is, the friendly, smiley, happy public exterior was used to promote a good company image and persuade customers to believe that they receive warm and friendly service from Delta Airlines. This would thereby encourage them to use the company's services in the future (Theodosius, 2008). This act of emotional labour was believed to result in a greater profit for the airline company (Hochschild, 2003). In relation to my study, I believe that throughout the participant coaches' experiences we can see that there is a strong link to Hochschild's (2000 [1983]) conception of emotional labour. That is, within their workplace it was the ability to sustain their happy public exterior that got people on

board to use their services. The coaches therefore generated business for the services whilst gaining a wage for their emotional efforts (Theodosius, 2008).

While Hochschild's research was not principally conducted in the context of coaching, I believe it has useful explanatory utility in terms of explaining the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the community coaches in this study. Indeed, I am not alone in this sentiment as a variety of her ideas have been used by scholars of coaching science more recently (e.g., Potrac & Marshall, 2011; Nelson et al., 2013; Potrac et al., 2013), in their quest to illuminate the emotional complexity inherent in coaching and coach education. In the context of my study, I would argue that the participant coaches' experiences are closely linked to Hochschild's theoretical notion of emotional labour. That is, the coaches' management of their emotions was, to an extent, exploited for commercial purposes (i.e. the Council services that they deliver). I contend that these initial findings also add further support to Grandey (2000) who implied that emotional labour consisted of employees managing their emotions consistently within a company's organisational rules, regardless of their feelings, opinions, and emotions toward a specific situation in the workplace. Within this, an individual may have to deal with their emotions by managing them and then 'acting' a certain way to 'create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (Hochschild, 2000 [1983], p. 7; Theodosius, 2008).

On another level, these actions taken by the coaches could also be understood in relation to 'organisational socialisation' (Eckert, 1989). Here, we acquire certain beliefs, and create expectations, about others, ourselves, and what is considered appropriate behaviour. It is here where I would suggest that the coaches became socialised as they learned to act in keeping with the expectations of others within their organisation, as set out in their induction day for example (Horne, Tomlinson & Whannel, 1999). However, not only were these expectations reinforced, and monitored, by their superiors on a

regular basis but the community participants also developed beliefs about what the coach should or should not do as part of their role when out on their sessions. Subsequently, role expectations are formed (Rodham, 2000). It was here that the community participants also expressed behaviour expectations of the CSC by defining how they thought their coach should act (Troyer, 2000). In such a 'service encounter', both the coach and the community participants have learned a set of behaviours appropriate for that environment and both have clear role expectations of each other. Here, the service users evaluate the service of the perceived role performance given by the coach (Broderick, 1999). In this regard, the respective coaches variously highlighted how their emotional displays and behaviors varied depending on who they were working with (e.g. the elderly, disaffected youths, primary schools, a women only group).

Significantly, although these emotional expectations appeared to be pressed upon the coaches by Council inductions and expectations of community participants, it became apparent that each coach had different emotional strategies. That is to say, having had past experiences of similar situations (e.g. socialisation into the role, learning from mentors, being coached themselves), had helped the coaches to decide how they should best respond and feel). It is this finding that could be understood in relation to Schempp and Graber's (1991) research in physical education. Their investigation addressed the issue of teacher socialisation from a dialectical perspective and examined the notion that 'all teachers participate to some degree in the dialectic process and that all, to some degree, are the architects of what they believe and how they behave' (Schempp & Graber, 1991, p. 331). Initially, they suggested that the education of teachers begins long before their teaching roles are assumed. Specifically, they noted that, as children, prospective teachers 'actively engage in dialectic, building strong viewpoints about the teaching role by internalising classroom experiences and objectifying assumptions about

life in schools' (Schempp & Graber, 1991, p. 333). Such a notion seems to reflect the findings obtained in this study. Specifically, Charlie, Bobby, and Max indicated that their respective conceptions of good and bad coaching practice began to form before they occupied the role of a coach. Indeed, these formations mainly occurred when they had been coached themselves as youngsters. Here, their decision to adopt or reject certain emotional displays could be explained from a dialectical perspective (Schempp & Graber, 1991).

Given these initial findings, we should also acknowledge that the adherence to the 'emotional labour' of the job means that, at times, the coaches had to 'manage' and 'suppress' what they truly felt in order to produce the expected feeling for a given situation. Indeed, the coaches demonstrated that the ability to manage these feelings was not always an easy process, particularly as it was required on a daily basis. In particular, Charlie explained how it was hard to manage your emotions if you felt angry but had to be happy. Equally, Frankie and Bobby found that within their daily routine this was hard work to maintain. It is here where I believe we can understand these experiences in relation to Hochschild's concept of 'emotion management', defined as the 'management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (Hochschild, 2000 [1983], p. 7).

According to Hochschild (2003), it is such acts that are learned as a consequence of the various socialisation experiences to which they are subjected. For example, pictures often show young children learning how to express surprise or being taught to control their tears when they are unhappy (Theodosius, 2008). A point to be made here is that emotional management requires emotion work. That is, the effort directed toward the production of suitable emotions in a given situation (Hochschild, 2003). Emotion work refers to the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing, feeling in oneself (Hochschild, 2003). Emotion work is evident in everyday social exchange. It may be

done half-heartedly, or it may not be carried out at all, either in ignorance, dislike or complete disregard for the 'rules' of the situation (Bolton & Boyd, 2003).

Depending on the actor's perspectives of the situation, some expressions of emotion work may seem more generous than others. Hochschild's (1983) work on emotion management also distinguishes between the private and public spheres of social life. Here, she draws on the work of Erving Goffman (1959), who examined how people know how to behave and how they present themselves to others in everyday public life. One of the important distinctions Goffman (1959) made is the difference between front stage and back stage. The front stage is where the performance takes place whereas the back stage is where it is prepared. Hochschild uses this distinction in her work as she sees emotion work belonging in the private realm (i.e. at home, the back stage), and emotional labour as belonging in the public realm (i.e. in the workplace, the front stage) (Theodosius, 2008).

Frankie's narrative provided a strong example of how he had to manage his emotions when working on the 'positive futures scheme' with disaffected youths. Frankie, at times, found it difficult to manage how he felt when he had youths 'spitting' and 'shouting' in his face. Frankie expressed how his initial reaction would be to 'blurt' something out to them 'I do think get out my face, you idiot' but I can't do that, it's not professional. I could put my position at jeopardy'. It is evident from this example that Frankie engaged in 'emotion work'. Indeed, this was required of him if he wished to keep control of this social environment.

When the coaches were asked how they knew how to produce the expected feeling, Frankie and Bobby explained that assessing their environment was essential 'to what degree you show that emotion is trial and error'. Similarly, Charlie and Max shared with me that they had come to learn what was expected of them by 'trial and error' as well as watching others learn from their 'rights and wrongs' in social contexts. Such a finding

could be explained in terms of ‘feeling rules’, a category of Hochschild’s (2003) framework of emotions which has been defined as ‘*what* emotions people should express, and *the degree* of that expression according to their social roles. Acts of emotion management are not simply private acts; they are used in exchanges under the guidance of feeling rules’ (Hochschild, 2003 p.7). It was through these feeling rules that the coaches could tell what was ‘due’ in relation to each role (Theodosius, 2008). Hochschild suggested that it is feeling rules that guide emotion work by establishing the sense of entitlement or obligation that governs emotional exchanges and that this emotion system works privately and is often free of observation (Hochschild, 2003).

In order to be able to assess the situation correctly and produce the expected feeling social guidelines, a set of shared, often latent rules, are used (Hochschild, 1983). It is these rules that help connect the emotion and the situation. For instance, feeling sad at funerals but happy at weddings, or expressing thanks and pleasure on receipt of a gift, irrespective of whether those feelings are real (Hochschild, 2003). The use of rules was clearly illustrated in my data when the coaches felt that there were certain ‘display rules’ that they had to comply with (Hochschild, 1983). That is, the coaches felt obliged to provide certain overt expressions of emotion during particular social encounters within their social environment.

Despite it being evident that the coaches had developed ways of managing their emotions at work, there were times that this management became hard to control and they struggled to produce the expected feelings. Therefore, in an attempt to carry on with their sessions, and to avoid any disruption, the coaches were required, at times, to engage in acting to superficially cover up how they were truly feeling. All of the CSCs provided experiences of where they have acted as though they have a particular emotion when, in reality, they were feeling the opposite emotion. For instance, Charlie expressed how he had to pretend that he liked someone at his session. Similarly, Frankie expressed

that, after having to do a long drive to a session in a care home, he found it quite depressing seeing the residents sat indoors with little stimulation or interaction from others. However, he knew that he needed to put a brave face on for them as he may well have been the only person they would see all day. In order to make this emotional switch, Frankie said that it required him to act as though he was happy to be there and 'have a laugh' to try and pick up the spirits within the group. Frankie explained that when he walks out of the session he can 'drop his shoulders' and relax from 'pretending'. Hochschild refers to this as 'surface acting', which she describes as 'how we try to change how we outwardly appear such as the body language. The put on sneer, the posed shrug or the controlled sigh we may use' (Hochschild, 2003, p.35). As such, this type of acting is used to deceive others without deceiving themselves (Hochschild, 2003). That is, the coaches knew that they were pretending (Theodosius, 2008).

While others appeared to have adopted the dominant expectations and chose to engage in surface acting, Max shared a contrasting experience with me where he had to draw up on his memory of a similar situation from the past to make himself feel particular emotions. This could be closely related to Hochschild's (2003) concept of 'deep acting' which has been defined as 'the display is a natural result of working on feeling, here the actor does not try to seem happy or sad but rather expresses spontaneously, being a real feeling that has been self-induced' (Hochschild, 2003, p.35). Here, there are two ways of engaging in deep acting. One is by directly exhorting the feeling (Hochschild, 2003). For example, Hochschild asked students to describe an everyday event in which they experienced a deep emotion. Specifically, she recorded responses such as 'I psyched myself up', 'I squashed my anger down', and 'I tried hard not to feel disappointment' and 'I forced myself to have a good time. These are all examples of the students exhorting the feeling.

The second way of engaging in deep acting is by making indirect use of the trained imagination (Hochschild, 2003). It is this method which helps make sense of Max's experience where he had to draw upon how he had previously felt in a situation, forgetting how he actually felt in reality, to make himself feel the same as he had done in that previous situation. Max explained how an ex-girlfriend turned up to the same session as him and he did not feel comfortable with her presence. He was worried that the community participants may pick up on the tension. In order to avoid this happening, Max used his memory of a previous session and engaged in acting using emotions. By doing so, Max felt that the session ran smoothly and without disruption. In this instance, Max drew upon his emotion memory, imagining how he could act out more appropriate emotions. It then became possible for him to believe the feelings that he was experiencing. Hochschild (2003) noted how, in these situations, the individual may forget, or be unaware of, the extent to which they had worked on themselves to create those feelings. By doing so, Max made the 'performance' to those in the room to be perceived as believable.

Whilst the management of emotions was a central theme across the coaches' narratives, it appeared that the management of emotions was not a simple or straightforward task. Indeed, it would appear that such work entailed what Hochschild labeled as 'emotional stamina' which refers to 'sustaining a particular controlled feeling for an extended period of time' (Turner & Strets, 2005, p. 39). Indeed, the emotional requirements, at times, do not match what the worker might actually be feeling. Thus, they are required to pretend and give a false appearance. In this instance, the worker has two options; they can change what they are feeling, or they can change what they are pretending to feel (Turner & Strets, 2005). However, the coaches described how, at times, it was extremely difficult to demonstrate or feel the expected emotions at the expense of their true feelings. Max, Bobby, and Frankie described how this became

difficult to sustain, especially when they were required to deliver five emotionally demanding sessions in the same day. They all noted how remaining 'up-beat, smiley, positive and enthusiastic' became particularly hard to maintain.

Charlie, in particular, appeared to lack the 'emotional stamina' required to indefinitely sustain a particular emotional display (Turner & Stets, 2005). It appeared that, at times, his repeated engagement in emotional labour, emotion management, display rules, and acting was impossible to keep up. This, in the past for Charlie, resulted in emotionally charged public outbursts, arguments, fallings out, and even leaving a job because he had struggled to 'keep a lid on it'. Such incidents were beginning to negatively impact upon his career development. In light of these experiences, Charlie wanted to avoid conducting and portraying himself in this way when working as a CSC, as he wanted to keep this employment. In summary, Charlie became conscious of how his colleagues would likely interpret, evaluate, and respond to the way that he conducted himself in their presence.

Here, I believe that Denzin's (2008) theoretical discussion of emotions helps to explain how Charlie's emotional experiences in the past influenced his coaching practices in the present. In this regard, one way of understanding Charlie's varied accounts of experiencing and responding to situational demands is through the thinking and theorising of Denzin's work on 'unreflective emotional consciousness'. Consciousness, according to Satre (1962; 2008), can be experienced in two forms; reflective consciousness or unreflective consciousness. Emotional consciousness that is not reflective is lived from within (Denzin, 2008). This is a consciousness of the first order, where the objects are those outside of the subject. In unreflective consciousness, there is no 'I' (Ashman, 2008) and the individual is not explicitly aware of their feelings, thoughts, movements, actions or statements, except that these are further elements of the emotion being experienced. In unreflective emotional consciousness,

consciousness reflects on itself but does not stand out from itself and become a distinct object of self-reflection. The experience of emotion builds on itself internally, reflecting back on itself (Denzin, 2008).

Charlie's narrative provided strong examples of him being emotionally unreflective, especially in the early stages of his career. At times, it could be said that Charlie became overwhelmed by his emotions and his actions have been emotionally driven with no thought behind them. In these experiences, Charlie openly admitted that how others viewed him was not of concern to him. If he did not like someone, he would tell them. Denzin (1984) uses the term unreflective emotional consciousness to capture and explain those instances where 'consciousness reflects on itself but does not stand out from itself and become a distinct object of self-reflection' (p. 72). He goes on to explain that when caught in unreflective emotional consciousness, 'the experience of the emotion builds on itself internally, reflecting back on itself' and thus becomes contained within the emotional experience (Denzin, 1984, p. 72). This would seem to capture Charlie's experiences of his inability to control the frustration and anger he felt toward a colleague not doing their job properly. These emotions seemingly 'unreflectively engulfed and crushed' his emotional field at that moment in time and rendered him incapable of factoring any other thoughts into his conscious decision making (Denzin, 1984, p. 72).

On the other hand, due to bad experiences of being unable to manage his emotions, it could be said that Charlie, over time, has become more conscious of how others viewed him now that he has entered a professional career in which he wishes to stay for the foreseeable future. He now considers what is expected of him from others and tries to 'engage his brain before he speaks' which, subsequently, has enabled him to engage in emotional management on a better level. The experiences that Charlie shared with me appeared consistent with Denzin's (1984) description of individuals that are engaged in

reflective emotional consciousness. In relation to Denzin's discussion of this theoretical concept, Charlie seemingly strove to situate himself biographically in the lived present of the emotions that he experienced when coaching. He also reflected on his emotional experiences by questioning whether or not this was how he wanted to present his feelings in that moment. It could be argued that he attempted to become an object in his own stream of emotional consciousness by engaging in a double reflection whereby the 'self of the person feels, reflects the emotion, and reflects on the emotion' (Denzin, 1984, p. 73).

We can also see how Charlie's inner phenomenological time, when engaging in coaching practice, was often 'continuous and circular, wherein the future, the present, and the past constitute a continuous temporal horizon against and in which the person's emotional consciousness is experienced and accomplished' (Denzin, 1984, p. 79). It is here that I would suggest, all of the respective coaches have demonstrated temporality to their thinking. That is, they are seemingly tactical in their approach and conscious of the present of what emotions they do or do not show as a result of past experiences. As such, Denzin's (1984) notion of 'emotional temporality' could help to further explain Charlie's, and the other coaches' emotional experiences and reactions. Their stories provided evidence to suggest that his reflective conversations often included not only an emotional analysis of the action present but his own experience biography and the possible consequences of certain actions and responses. Their descriptions seemingly mirrored Denzin's (1984) argument that, in such instances, 'the future, the present, and the past all become part of the same experience' (Denzin, 1984, p. 79).

For Charlie in particular, It was apparent that emotions shift through time and that individuals can drift in and out of emotional experience all of the time. For example, when Charlie had an argument with a colleague which resulted in cross words and an outburst of emotions, he was being unreflective. However, after the event, emotions

calmed down and Charlie was left to become more reflective on the situation. This meant that, on reflection, Charlie felt guilty and somewhat ashamed of his initial feelings of anger and frustration as they result in no improvements. He felt that he should have managed his reactions better. Here, his narrative arguably illustrates a transition from unreflective to reflective emotional consciousness whereby he engaged in a moral reinterpretation of his actions (Denzin, 1984). It could be suggested that this transition from unreflective to reflective consciousness was accompanied by a phenomenon that Denzin (1984) termed 'the double structure of emotional experience'.

Denzin (1984) conceptualises the double structure of emotional experience as a 'twofold passage through an emotion's horizon to its core and then the passage out from the core, forward through an often new emotional horizon into a new stream of consciousness' (p. 99). As such, he contends that 'the experiencing of a particular emotion takes the person into and through other emotions' (Denzin, 1984, p. 99). In the present study, Denzin's (1984) discussion of the double structure of emotional experience captures Charlie's emotional journey from the anger and frustration that was fuelled and embedded within his initial outburst before eventually fading to be replaced by the feeling of guilt that accompanied his thoughts about how the colleague might have emotionally experienced his attack. Here, Denzin explains that the structure of emotional experience has two basic elements; firstly, a core, or essence to the emotional experience (e.g. anger, fear, and joy) and secondly, encircling spheres of feelings, thoughts, memories, and emotions that surround the core of the experience.

Denzin (2008) explained that the double structure of emotion refers to this twofold passage through an emotion's horizon to its core, and then the passage out from the core forward through an often new, emotional horizon into a new stream of consciousness. Here he argued that 'the experiencing of a particular emotion takes the person into and through other emotions, thus, the person moves into emotions and then out of them

passing in both directions in and through different streams of emotional consciousness' (p. 99). At times, Charlie acted in haste but, on reflection of the situation, he came to realise that this was unacceptable and if he were to carry on like this within his career, it was highly unlikely that he would keep his job, let alone progress with it.

### ***Experiencing problematic aspects of coaching***

In terms of describing some of the problematic aspects of their work, the participant coaches outlined how they experienced negative emotions when contextual stakeholders, such as the community participants, questioned the value of the respective coaches' work. For example, it was these experiences that called for the coaches to reflect upon their competencies, expertise and scheme decisions, which result in negative emotions occurring as they feel as though they have to justify their actions as a coach. As such, when they feel as though they are not appreciated, or their purpose is questioned, it becomes quite frustrating and disheartening for the coach. Max found that sometimes, when he attends sessions with the elderly, they can 'put the barriers up' and do not appreciate the efforts of his planning. In a related manner, Bobby also expressed how he frequently comes across people who do not acknowledge his purpose as a coach because his activities are 'different' to other coaches. This results in him feeling 'frustrated' and 'deflated'.

This finding could be understood using Hargreaves' notion of emotional geographies and, specifically, his discussion of moral geographies. This analytical outline utilised Denzin's (1984) work on understanding emotion and related this toward the school organisation to represent the emotional understanding and misunderstanding of teachers' working experiences with their colleagues. Hargreaves (2001) acknowledged that:

'...emotional geographies help identify the supports for and threats to the basic emotional bonds and understandings of schooling that arise

from forms of distance and closeness in people's interactions or relationships.' (p. 508)

Hargreaves suggested that there were different 'geographies' of emotional understanding established through these interactions among teachers, students, colleagues, and parents. The theoretical framework identified 6 forms of emotional distance and closeness that can threaten emotional understanding (Hargreaves, 2000). Of particular interest here was his notion of '*moral geographies*' which suggest that 'emotions are moral phenomena, where people pursue common purposes and feel senses of accomplishment together, or where they are defensive about their own purposes and unconcerned or in disagreement about the purposes of others' (p. 1066).

Similar to my findings, Hargreaves (2001) found that negative emotion can occur when there is distance between teachers and others and when teachers feel their purposes are being threatened or have been lost. This can lead to the teachers losing energy and enthusiasm toward work (Goleman, 1995). In their study, moral distance occurred when interacting with parents. One example in their study was that a parent did not understand the current teaching approaches and why their child was underachieving. They demanded to see the curriculum documents and insisted that the teacher should teach differently for their child to achieve. Equally, another parent, who was seen to be 'overly ambitious' for her child went behind a teacher's back to solicit additional, more difficult work from the teacher of the next grade. The teachers in this study reported how they felt angry and upset that their work was being criticised and judged, which left them second-guessing their capabilities as a teacher. These effects of moral distance and conflicting purposes are apparent within my findings. For example, the coaches reported how, on a number of occasions, the community participants did not appreciate the efforts they had gone to for planning and delivering their session. Bobby, in particular, was questioned about the 'purpose' and 'value' of his work, with him

being asked ‘why do we have to do this?’ and told ‘we are not doing that’. It is therefore unsurprising that this has left Bobby feeling frustrated and upset that his work is not appreciated, and is often misunderstood, by his community participants.

Equally, the participants’ descriptions of how they felt fear and anxiety when they were undermined by colleagues or managers were clearly evident. Charlie, in particular, explained how he had projects taken from him and managed by someone ‘higher up’ due to the sessions become more established and he was told it now required managerial management for it to run. As a result, Charlie was left feeling ‘angry, frustrated and hurt’. Equally, Max has also experienced reductions in power when co-coaching. In these instances, he felt that power can be taken off you by the other coach and they may choose to dismiss your ideas and chose their own. In a similar vein, Frankie worried that his extra job duties could be taken from him by his superiors, leaving him feeling ‘anxious’.

Such findings that could be explained using Hargreaves’ (2001) concept of ‘*political geographies*’, ‘where differences of power and status can distort interpersonal communication, or where such differences can be used not to protect peoples own interests but to empower others’ (p. 1072). Like the coaches in this thesis, Hargreaves (2001) reported in his study that the teachers experienced anger, depression, and anxiety when working with authoritarian principles, especially when unwanted, inescapable reforms and change were imposed upon them. The teachers were left feeling out of control of their own work. In this sense, it was reported how reductions in power and losses of status led to feelings of fear and anxiety as well as anger at those who were responsible. It can be seen from the community coaches’ experiences that a loss of ‘professional status’ generates negative emotions insofar as, for the coaches, the situation seems irredeemable to them. In this respect, the reductions in power due to projects being taken from them led to feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability.

It is important to recognise that the participant coaches' engagement in emotional labour and emotion management was not solely a negative experience. Interestingly, the coaches in this study shared with me how they had gained significant satisfaction from their ability to maintain what they considered to be appropriate emotional performances in the eyes of their respective contextual stakeholders. This finding could be understood in relation to recent research which had highlighted how engaging in emotional labour could be seen as a positive experience. Indeed, it is possible that workers might seek out emotional labour as a rewarding, fun, and exciting part of their job. Frankie expressed how 'it is a labour of love for me' and that the hard work and emotional demands are worthwhile for him when he sees service users have enjoyed themselves. Bobby explained how he found it hard but he loved his job, saying 'you remind yourself that you are being paid for doing something you enjoy. I want to deliver what they expect'. Like the other coaches, Charlie explained to me that he enjoyed the job and it was more a 'labour of love'. As such, it was the people, both old and new, and the interactions which kept him going. He told me that getting huge satisfaction when projects took off and having a positive outcome makes the emotional labour worthwhile.

Indeed, the findings within my study relate to existing findings as demonstrated by Potrac and Marshall (2011), who reported that the emotional labour which a coach invested into his coaching offered many positives. The coach expressed how he coached through choice because he enjoyed it. Despite coming at an emotional cost of expectations and management he found it to be a hugely rewarding experience. Engaging in emotional labour meant that he could support his athletes more effectively as well as achieve goals and competition ambitions, generating a great deal of satisfaction in a job well done. In a similar vein, Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) explained that some teachers may be rewarded by the emotional labour demanded in teaching, especially when they see teaching as an opportunity to help improve students'

lives. In essence then, if we restrain ourselves to Hochschild's definition of emotional labour we may be prevented from seeing the joyful and liberating aspects of emotional management (Sass, 1997; Wouters, 1989).

Finally, in developing upon the notion of structural vulnerability, outlined in the micro-political aspects of the coaches' practice, it could be argued that this vulnerability was something that was felt. In this regard, the coaches' engagement in emotional labour and emotion management was stimulated by their recognition of the vulnerability of their situation in relation to budget cuts and ongoing employment. Such incidents appeared to act as triggers to intensify emotions such as anxiousness, fear, frustration, devastation, and anger among the community coaches. What is more, the coaches' experiences of this were multidimensional, multifaceted, and felt in an array of coaching contexts.

However, this is not to claim that vulnerability was solely a negative experience for the coaches. Indeed, I am not alone in this sentiment as Kelchtermans' (2005) investigation into teacher vulnerability found that the condition of vulnerability 'can bring about both positive and negative emotions' (p. 999). In this regard, there are aspects of their job which are rewarding, liberating, and satisfying and which diminish these feelings of structural vulnerability (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004). Equally, I would suggest that as the community coaches perceive that they are 'making a difference in the community improving people's lives', they take away a sense of joy, pride, and personal fulfilment out of their role. In this way, Kelchtermans (2005) suggests that 'vulnerability is not only a condition to be endured, but also to be acknowledged, cherished, and embraced' (pp. 999).

## **Chapter 6:0. Thesis Conclusion**

### **6.1. *Introduction***

Following this brief introduction, I will begin the final chapter of this thesis by summarising the key findings of the research project, as well as reflecting on what I consider to be the empirical and theoretical contributions of this work to our understanding of community coaching. My attention then shifts to outlining some of the methodological limitations associated with narrative-biographical inquiry before I outline some specific avenues for future inquiry.

### **6.2. *Summary of main findings***

In order to make theoretical sense of the coaches' actions, Kelchtermans' (2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2009a) work addressing professional self-understanding, and micro-political literacy theory and Goffman's (1969) work on impression management were utilised to make sense of the strategic actions taken. Certainly, the findings here, and those of recent research (e.g., Ball, 1987; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b; Purdy, Jones & Armour, 2008; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Purdy, Jones & Cassidy 2009; Potrac, Gilbert & Denison, 2013), suggest that coaches, as people in positions of influence, need to engage in strategic micro-political actions with relevant contextual stakeholders, in order to secure their objectives. This, of course, is not to say that the coaches' day-to-day coaching life was only marked by political dispute or strife, that political behaviour was only negative in nature, and that they were always politically active. However, I believe it would be incorrect to ignore the lived experiences which the coaches shared with me if we wish to educate others of the complexities of community coaching (Potrac et al., 2012).

In terms of making sense of the participant community coaches' interactions with their respective contextual stakeholders, the data illustrated how the coaches sought to

present an idealised image of themselves to the various stakeholders with whom they interacted. Indeed, they strongly believed that their success in their respective roles was dependent upon their ability to construct, maintain, and advance positive working relationships with the various individuals and groups with whom they interacted. It is these actions of the coaches that were explained in terms of Goffman's classical text, which addressed the 'presentation of the self in everyday life' (Goffman, 1959). Such findings add and build upon existing coaching research which has also examined coaches' interactions with others (e.g., Potrac & Armour, 2002; Jones, 2004; Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b; Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010) and found coaches to engage in many forms of impression management (e.g. using conscious strategies to manipulate others by engaging in white lies and humorous friendly personas), in an attempt to protect their carefully built up self-images in the face of contextual difficulties. However, this is not to say that community coaching is always built upon false impressions. Rather, it appears that the coaches in this study, when required to, engaged in 'face work' to construct and project a certain image of themselves in an attempt to leave a desired impression in the eyes of others. Furthermore, such engagements should not be seen as underhand, Machiavellian scheming but, rather, the acting out of considered strategies designed to make social interactions and related contexts work (Jones, Bailey & Thompson, 2013).

An interesting related finding here was the importance that the participants attached to their micro-political interactions within a context which, they believed, was characterised by internal competition between coaches, as well as a high degree of structural vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 2005). In this regard, the participants highlighted how cuts in government funding for Council projects had led to a high degree of job insecurity. The coaches all voiced how they understood government funding cuts, political change, and the wider period of austerity to have a significant impact upon the

continuing nature of their employment. On one level, these experiences were understood in relation to Kelchtermans' (2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009a, 2009b) work on structural vulnerability within the organisation. On another level, the participant coaches' understandings of the vulnerability of their positions were understood through the modernisation of sport explained by Houlihan and Green (2009). Equally, the participant coaches' understanding of their experiences reflect the wider work of Bauman (2000, 2005, 2006 2007a, 2007b), who investigates the notion of the 'liquid times' that we live in, and Beck (2002a) who addresses the 'risk society' within western cultures. Arguably, developing such multi-layered insights has much to offer in helping us to better recognise and critically engage with the dilemmas and vulnerability of the coaching practice (Potrac, Jones, Purdy, Nelson, & Marshall, 2013).

The participants described, and variously explained, the emotions that were an inherent feature of their everyday practice as community coaches. They highlighted their emotional struggles and how they had faked, enhanced, modified, and suppressed their expressions as well as their understandings in doing so. As such, the coaches' experiences would suggest that, for them at the very least, coaching could be classified as an emotional practice (Denzin, 1984) as it aroused feelings in both themselves and the individuals with whom they engaged within their services. However, this is not to suggest that their coaching was solely an emotional practice. Rather, I am highlighting how the various emotions (e.g. anger, excitement, nervousness, embarrassment), which were experienced in coaches' interactions with significant others within the pedagogical setting, were an inherent feature embedded within the community coaches' daily practice.

In order to make sense of this connection between the emotions displayed for the purpose of the Council service, Hochschild's (2000 [1983]) was used as an analytical framework. From my interpretation, the coaches regularly 'induced' and 'suppressed'

their feelings, resulting in emotional labour. Alongside to this was how the coaches managed their outer expressions of feeling through engaging in surface acting. In trying to bridge a gap between what they feel and what they 'ought' to feel, the coaches appeared to take guidance from 'feeling rules' about what is owing to others (i.e. key contextual stakeholders), in a given situation. It was based on their private mutual understandings of feeling rules that the coaches made a 'gift exchange' of acts of emotion management. A further finding was that when emotion work, acting, feeling rules, and the gift of exchange occurred in the public world of work, it was transmuted into the notion of emotional labour. That is, the coaches were required to deliver a service and create a greater demand for it, requiring them to go 'that extra mile' with a continuous, happy public exterior. It was evident in this study that the coaches were trained to accept feeling rules and techniques of emotion management that serve the Council organisation (e.g. increases in numbers result in increased profit, meaning the coaches will continue to get paid).

Further findings illustrated some of the problematic aspects of the coaches' work. For instance, the participant coaches outlined how they experienced negative emotions when key contextual stakeholders, such as the community participants, questioned the value of the respective coaches' work. This also occurred when they felt as though they had lost power over their position as a CSC. These findings were understood using Hargreaves' notion of emotional geographies and, specifically, his discussion of moral and political geographies (2000), which helped to identify the emotional closeness and distance bonds found within community coaching. To elaborate further on the problematic aspects of emotions, and to help understand the muddled realities of personal feelings for one coach in particular, I drew upon Denzin's (1984) seminal text '*On Understanding Emotion*'. Here, Denzin's (1984) notions of 'reflective and unreflective emotional consciousness', 'emotional temporality', and the 'double

structure of emotional experiences' were applied to understand how an individual experiences emotions and how they shift through time.

As previously identified, some studies have hinted at the emotional nature of the coaching practice which was reviewed in the literature, this had been done so largely indirectly (e.g., Cushion & Jones, 2006; Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008; Jones, 2006). While such accounts were to be applauded for highlighting a largely unknown aspect of practice, it could be suggested that they had presented these social encounters as being largely unemotional in nature. Moreover, it could not be assumed that the understandings that have been acquired from research into elite level coaching could be naturally and unproblematically applied to the community sports coaching setting. In acknowledgment of the above, I suggest that the findings within my study begin to address these issues whilst building upon existing coaching literature on emotions in sports coaching (e.g., Potrac et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2013; Potrac et al., 2013).

The aim of this study was to explore the participant community coaches' experiences of the everyday realities of their working lives, especially as these related to the relationships and interactions with their key contextual stakeholders (i.e. colleagues, managers, community participants). In this regard, I believe that the thesis has provided some new and, indeed, novel initial insights into the micro-political nature of community coaching. Indeed, the findings have suggested that the participant community coaches understood themselves to be engaged in a fluid and ongoing process of forging and reforging the image of themselves which they present to their respective key contextual stakeholders in order to achieve their immediate goals and needs as well as their longer term career objectives.

The coaches attached a high importance to not only maintaining employment within their organisation but also to advancing their position, standing, and status. This desire to stand-out, or be recognised in this way, lay at the heart of the coaches' professional

practice and was very much a fluid, dynamic, and ongoing challenge for them in their working lives. It was also highlighted how the coaches managed and negotiated constraints and opportunities with their coaching context whilst managing the situational and contextual consequences. Thus, it was demonstrated that the micro-political nature of their coaching is an arena for struggle and uncertainty (Potrac & Jones, 2009).

While the notions of micro-politics, impression management, and emotion have been dealt with separately for the purpose of analytical clarity within this thesis, I believe that these notions are, within the context of the participant community coaches' understandings of everyday practice, inextricably intertwined. Such a finding does not currently exist within the coaching literature. In this respect, having listened to the lived experiences of the coaches, I would argue that the experiences of the micro-political reality, together with their interactions and relationships with others, evidenced how intense emotions can often be triggered in the community coaches, such as discomfort, vulnerability, insecurity, uncertainty, powerlessness, and, in some cases, anger. Therefore, I contend that these emotions cannot be separated from the wider social and cultural forces that shape and inform them. For example, within this study, structural vulnerability led to fears about job security and advancement which, in turn, led to impression management and emotional labour, including being seen to comply with official ideology regarding behavior, as the coaches sought to sustain an idealised image of themselves in the eyes of those who matter, and to obtain what they, the coaches, desire career-wise.

One of the key outcomes of this thesis has been, from my perspective, a better recognition of the complex interplay between professional self-understanding, micro-political action, and the emotional nature of impression management within the sporting workplace. While some researchers have explored the notions of emotion (e.g., Nelson

et al., 2013), micro-political action and impression management (e.g., Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b), this work has tended to focus on one element (i.e., emotion or micro-politics) alone rather than exploring their various interconnections. Equally while there is a growing literature base addressing impression management in various performance orientated coaching settings (e.g., Potrac et al, 2002; Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 2009b), there has been little consideration of this issue as it relates to the 'identity' or 'professional self understanding' of coaches. As such, I believe that this thesis clearly expands the coaching literature through its provision of unique empirical insights into community coaches' understandings of their work, but also, perhaps as importantly, through its efforts to consolidate and advance our theoretical understandings of the inter-relationship between identity, emotion, and micro-political action in the context of coaching. While I recognise this analytical framework is very much embryonic in nature, I hope that this provides a platform for future theorisation of the complex social nature of coaching.

Of course, I am not arguing that community coaching should only be understood from a micro-political and emotional perspective. Nor am I suggesting that the experiences and the shared understandings of the participant community coaches in this study are uniformly applicable to the experiences of community coaches more generally. However, I do contend that by highlighting the political and emotional nature of the participant's experiences contributes to an evolving problematic epistemology of sports coaching, one which seeks to extend beyond continuing rationalistic and 'heroic' accounts of practice. In doing so, it further takes up Hoyle's (1982, p. 87) challenge to shed light upon the 'dark side of organisational life' by illustrating some of the everyday strategic and manipulatory aspects of coaching practice.

In this regard, I would believe that this thesis has begun to develop a multi-layered understanding of community coaches' experiences, helping to uncover and theorise

their emotional realities which was previously imprecise and speculative. I believe that this exploratory work addressing community coaches' understanding of the mundane daily action of practice has much to offer in terms of providing some initial insights into the 'fine grain' and 'connective tissue' of practice in this context (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). Furthermore, I feel that this thesis can also contribute to the broader research agenda that seeks to raise 'our understanding of the prosaic to critical knowledge' (Gardiner, 2000, p.6) about sporting practices (Jones, 2011).

I further believe that the findings within this study could be fruitfully incorporated into our coaching curricula. Indeed, utilising individual and shared emotional and political reflection, collaborative discussion, and action research approaches will help to contribute toward the development of confident, supportive, and facilitative educational leaders who understand, and are responsive to, their own emotions and those of the individuals they interact with. I trust that the findings in this thesis will also contribute toward the preparation and development of coaches. For example, coach education may benefit from encouraging practitioners to construct, and critically reflect upon, their emotional experiences as coaches. Such coverage could include the consideration of the social and political conditions that influence and frame their work as they strive to realise their coaching visions and agendas. Finally, it is hoped that by highlighting how the coaches in this study managed and negotiated opportunities and constraints, we can encourage coaches to critically consider what it means to be a coach and to challenge the constraining influences in the quest for innovative personal practice. Further examination of emotions and micro-politics is relevant not only for appropriate theory building but also because it deserves explicit attention in coach education provision in attempting to more adequately prepare coaches for the realities of their role.

Indeed, this may help to avoid a 'reality shock' when entering the coaching environment (Jones & Turner, 2006). Furthermore, being able to understand how to

cope with relative uncontrollability, incomprehensibility, contradictory values, and novelty as normal parts of everyday coaching life is essential for good practice (Jones, & Wallace, 2005). In light of my findings, I believe that it is important to continue and pursue this line of inquiry if we hope to develop a credible, critical sociology of coaching, one which inquires beyond the ‘unproblematic, functionalist and innocent portrayal of coaching’ that has been typical of much previous writing. I contend that this present study addressed some of these issues by gaining the experiences and perceptions of the coaching practitioners and utilising relevant theory to help explain these findings. I would argue that, within this thesis, the findings hold considerable value in illuminating some of the different dimensions of the multifaceted and multilayered nature of community sports coaching which has previously gone undiscovered.

In terms of the generalisability of these findings, I am drawn to the work of Williams (2000). Indeed, some would suggest that this thesis cannot be generalised, such as Denzin (1983) or Guba and Lincoln (1982, 1994), who claim that generalisation is impossible in qualitative research. Indeed, this could be true, as I am only capturing four coaches in one region working within one organisation. However, the aim of this study was not to portray every region or Council to be the same. Therefore, in light of this claim, Williams (2000) proposes that generalisation is inevitable, desirable, and possible within qualitative research. It is held that interpretivism must employ a special kind of generalisation, characterised here as ‘*moderatum*’.

This type of generalisation requires ‘inductive inferences’ and is premised on drawing ‘categorical equivalences’ (Williams 2000). In order to advance ‘*moderatum*’, generalisations sufficient detail must be given of the ‘characteristic being studied and, crucially, on the similarities of the research site to the sites to which generalisation is to be attempted’ (Payne and Williams 2005, p. 305). Although I have purposively selected

research participants to meet my predetermined criteria of ‘community sports coaches’, this method has not resulted in a sample that can be considered statistically representative of people who ‘community coach’ elsewhere. However, I believe that the coaches’ descriptions of the micro-political and emotional aspects of their coaching practice in this study could be utilised as a resource for wider critical reflection. In this regard, Stake (1980) suggested that qualitative methods may ‘provide a vicarious link with the reader’s experience and thus be a natural basis for generalisation’ (p. 64). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated ‘the final judgment is vested in the person seeking to make the transfer’ (p. 217).

That said, it is also important to consider the context in which my thesis was conducted. Indeed, at the stage the interviews took place we were in an economic crisis where money investment was sparse. As such, the coaches were working in an environment in which the economy of the country experienced a sudden downturn brought on by a financial crisis. This meant that their working lives were in a liquid fluctuating state, where jobs were uncertain and they continually grappled with feelings of vulnerability. However, if I had interviewed the coaches ten years ago the findings may have been somewhat different, as ten years ago we were experiencing an economic boom with rising employment, real wages, and secure job contracts. In light of this, this would have meant that the notion of vulnerability may not have featured so heavily and as reoccurring in this thesis.

Arguably, a limitation of the present study is that it only provides a retrospective ‘snap-shot’ of the community coaches lived experiences. While the provision of critically reflective insights is arguably a key strength of such an approach and the presented findings, it is not possible to confirm whether the accounts provided are fully representative of the coaches’ experiences as they occurred at the time (Nelson, Potrac, & Groom, in press). As was previously acknowledged, narrative accounts are temporal

in nature, as interpretations of previous experiences are inevitably shaped by understandings of the present (Toner, et al., 2011). In this regard, it is important to note that the present narratives represents a moment-in-interpretive time; a frozen moment within an ongoing process of reflection (Goodson, Biesta, Tedder & Adair, 2010; Biesta, Field, Hodgkinson, Macleod & Goodson, 2011).

### ***6.3. Suggestions for future research***

I believe that the findings of this study provide a useful starting point for future research into community coaching. Indeed, whilst the narrative-biographical approach that I utilised within this thesis was valuable in terms of allowing me to retrospectively access the meanings and emotions that the participant community coaches attributed to their everyday interactions in this role, I do not believe that this approach represents the ‘best’ or, indeed, ‘only’ way to develop our empirical and theoretical understandings of community coaching practice. I would now like to end by contemplating the various avenues that researchers might need to explore if a comprehensive understanding of the realities of sports coaching is ever likely to evolve.

While no one approach will ever be able to tell us everything about the realities of community sports coaching, each will nonetheless shed some additional light onto this complex, often misunderstood, subject. It is only by engaging with these separate disciplines, and fusing understandings from them, that we will ever likely be able to capture, and make sense of, the complexities inherent in everyday practice. It is therefore suggested that research should now move beyond the findings in this thesis to a more in-depth analysis of the process evident in present community coaching practice. To achieve this end, it would likely entail longitudinal research aiming to track these experiences over a prolonged period of time. Research conforming to these recommendations would conceivably allow for a more sophisticated understanding of the realities of coaching.

Therefore, there is a need to move beyond a single method and toward a combination of approaches in an attempt to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the social complexity of coaching practice. Intuitively, it makes sense to further explore community coaching utilising ethnography, as it employs multiple methods to understand the culture of a group from the perspective of the group members (Tedlock, 2000; Wolcott, 1995). Understanding the culture will lend insight into the behaviours, emotions, values, goals and political actions of group members and produce a more defined 'sociological picture' of community coaching. What is more, we can further uncover the intricacies, contradictions and complexities that are an inherent part of community coaching. Such approaches appear to house the potential to explore beyond the surface of coaching and illuminate how coaches and participants feel and how they respond to the dilemmas, challenges, and ambiguities that they encounter (Jones, 2009; Zembylas, 2005).

In light of this methodology, I propose that future investigation into community coaches could seek to acknowledge how other key contextual stakeholders influenced the delivery and evaluation of this particular community coaching programme. In particular, to explore how the respective coaches, employers and Council officials interpret and respond to policy documentation and, as a result, how might these actions and related emotional experiences of the participants be influenced by their respective self-interests. For example, what did they do and feel? Why did they act and feel as they did in this regard.

Furthermore, future investigation could also seek to uncover and explain how the Council teaches their employees to behave. In particular, what influence do inductions, appraisals, staff reviews and CPDs events have? Where is this information channeled down from? How have the coaches learnt about conforming as a coach to present this

idealised front? How do they avoid ‘stigmas’, or what causes them to correct it if they have one? What emotions does this generate for the coach?

I believe that utilising Ball’s (1987) work more extensively could reveal more about the ‘behind the scenes’ nature of community coaching. For example, acknowledging the different ideologies they adopt about the purpose of their respective coaching contexts and how their formal structures impact upon how people operate within them, especially with regard to experiencing ‘change’. Building upon this, the work of Fry (1997) could provide future researchers with an analytical tool to understand how coaches attempt to initiate and deal with change within their social contexts. In particular, it could help explain the tensions of interpersonal influences within the coaching systems thus giving a credible account of how change is instigated and handled on a personal level. Indeed, it is these potential exploratory avenues that will further clarify the complex ambiguous nature of organisational life to help shed light upon how it can be managed (Jones, Bailey, & Thompson 2013). In this way, I hold the potential to break the silence that seems to exist regarding the issues of conflict and its manipulation in community coaching. By doing this, we could better recognise and theorise the largely covert aspects of negotiation, compromise and, collaboration between coaches and others (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b).

In keeping with this suggested research agenda, I contend that we, as researchers, could look beyond Hochschild’s idea of ‘emotional labour’, the ‘service with a smile’ which everyone from cabin crew to restaurant or call centre staff is expected to give irrespective of what they actually feel or think. A useful theoretical lens provided by White (2013) extends on the work of Hochchild’s work by could considering the more complex ways in which this need to show, or hide, particular emotions translates into job roles, specifically those of leaders, where the relationships are lasting rather than

transient, two-way rather than uni-directional, and have complex, ongoing goals rather than straightforward, one-off ones as presented through Hochschild's work.

In particular, White (2013) contends that these differences contribute unique characteristics to the nature of the emotional labour required and expounds and explores this new genus within the 'emotional labour' species. The main theme of this theoretical lens is the explication and exploration of emotional labour in the context of leadership and management. As such, it focuses both on how our understandings of emotional labour in this context enrich the original construct and also where it deviates from it. By exploring these issues at the level of situated practices and the real world, with real time experiences of leaders, we could make an innovative and nuanced contribution to our understanding of the emotional element within leadership positions (e.g., managers, line managers, policy makers, local policy officials, coaches).

Indeed, whilst this thesis introduced conceptual frameworks that could be utilised to explore emotions and micro-politics in coaching, such as Hochschild (2000 [1983]), Hargreaves (2000, 2001), Denzin (1983) and Keltchermans (2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2009a, 2009b), it is important to note that I am not dismissing the potentially significant contributions that other theorisations of emotion in the educational (e.g. Zembylas, 2007a, 2007b, 2011), sociological (e.g. TenHouten, 2007), and psychological (e.g. Lazarus & Lazarus 1994), literature could bring to our scholarly endeavours in coaching science. Indeed, considerations of additional perspectives could no doubt further assist in the quest to 'develop contextualised theoretical, conceptual, and empirical tools that are relevant to the investigations of coaches' emotions' (Zembylas & Schutz 2009: 373). To not do so would certainly hamper the investigative academic process (Perkrum & Schutz, 2007).

I believe that the knowledge developed through such inquiry can assist to better prepare community coaches for the often messy, contested realities of practice. In no

way am I seeking to de-value the technical and technological aspects of the role of community sports coaching. Indeed, the value of such knowledge and methods to successful practice has been firmly recognised. However, from my perspective, it would seem unwise to continue to think about sports coaching in only a technical and procedural manner. As a researcher, we have the responsibility to try and achieve this agenda in order to further understand how coaches learn and deal with their social environments and also to identify means that could best facilitate the development of community coaching practitioners.

This thesis has served to document my existing thoughts relating to an empirical study of these topics. This is a foundation on which I am hopeful that much further understanding will later develop as there is yet so much to be understood.

## **Chapter 7:0. Reflective account as a researcher**

### ***7.1. The messy, micro-political, and emotional experiences of conducting narrative biographical research***

For the purpose of this of this PhD, a reflective diary was kept in order to develop a rich account of my engagement with the research process as a whole. I kept a brief reflective diary about how I felt about the process and identified any issues that arose within the ongoing research. Rubin and Rubin (1995) explained that it is a popular process that many qualitative researchers maintain a running diary of their thoughts and responses to the people they are studying. It was by keeping these reflective diaries that provided an opportunity for the reader to engage with the authors as researchers as they relate to what Sparkes (2002: 57) calls ‘confessional tales’, or stories that foreground ‘the voice[s] and concern[s] of the researcher[s] in a way that takes us behind the scenes of the ‘cleaned up’ methodological discussions that are often included in qualitative research in sports’. According to Sparkes (2002) this approach directs us to both understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times, and to free us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone.

According to Mruck and Breuer (2003) interpretive researchers are urged to talk more about themselves, ‘their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process’ (p. 3). Reflective practice such as this aims to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes, a construction that ‘originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching’ (Mruck & Breuer, 2003 p. 3).

Throughout this study, I, the research instrument, was constantly reflecting upon the process, experiences, and emotions that accompanied my doctoral study. The academic

demands were a constant factor as I continually grappled with the challenge of making an original contribution to the sports coaching research literature. I was consciously aware that my role required me to conduct a new or unique study in some way, resulting in me very much 'feeling the pressure'. During this doctoral process, I have had to sort through feelings of anxiety, excitement, fear, frustration, elation, satisfaction, loneliness, and even slight insanity. I felt intermittently fluxed between negative and positive experiences. According to Van Krieken (1998 cited in Perry, Thurston & Green, 2004) researchers, as human beings, studying a social world of which they are a part, are inevitably emotionally involved with their subject of study.

Although this is the case, a significant lack of discussion of the emotional dimension of research within scholarly writing has occurred (Bourne, 1998; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2008; Rager, 2005). Indeed, positivist social science researchers argued that research had to be conducted objectively and that emotions were seen as irrational and/or a contamination of the research project (Tillmann-Healey & Kiesinger, 2001; Holland, 2007). Within contemporary social science research, it is now more common to find acceptance of the researcher's emotions and experiences within the research context (Dickinson-Swift, James & Liamputtong, 2008; Morrison-Saunders, Moore, Hughes & Newsome, 2010). In light of this, scholars believe that within qualitative research we are not distant, disembodied, and objective scientists or dispassionate observers (Gould & Nelson, 2005). Rather, human researchers are attempting to make sense of, and cope with, the research experience. Such an approach is said to be a popular choice by qualitative researchers (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001; Etherington, 2004).

When looking at my reflective logs I would say that different phases of the research brought about different emotions. For example, I noted in the early phase that I was enthusiastic, raring to get started, and overwhelmingly positive about this journey I was

about to start as a researcher. I was lucky in the respect that the department where the research idea was formulated provided me with useful guidance with regard to deciding where to start; tackling the body of literature that needed to be understood and reflected upon. This allowed me to focus on a research area that was going to be manageable, focused, and one that would provide a valuable contribution to the field. These initial approaches ensured that the research was sufficiently original to fulfill the requirements of the role.

### ***Facing the reality***

#### **June 2010: University Campus**

Sat drinking my coffee thinking about what piece of work to concentrate on next, I began to realise this phase was not as easy or as straightforward as it initially appeared. Instead, it was going to be challenging, demanding, and draining. At this stage, I was feeling scared and slightly nervous about this journey as a new researcher. Was I capable of this level of research? Can I do what my supervisors are expecting of me? Am I ready? What if I am not good enough?

Toward the end of the early phases of my research, I had started to face some problems with regard to contacting and meeting my participants. I knew that I had to wait and work around their busy schedule which, admittedly, was frustrating at times, as I just wanted to 'get on'. However, I could not help but ask myself 'did they really want to be there chatting with me?', 'did they have time for these meetings?', 'were they getting any enjoyment out of sharing their lives with me?', 'did they want me asking and probing about the tough and challenging times that they have faced since being a community coach?'

## *Playing the game*

### **August 2010: Interview with the coaches**

As I sat waiting for one coach to turn up I couldn't help but feel frustrated that it had taken so long to get to this point. How hard is it to respond to my email or my text? This is becoming difficult and quite stressful but I knew I could not let it show when he arrived. I began to think, what can I do to ensure that they 'like me'? As the coach arrived I decided to buy him a coffee, even some biscuits. He looked tired and slightly disheveled maybe this would make him feel better. I began with general 'chit chat' asking how his weekend had gone, how was work going. He even 'off loaded' to me about general stresses of life. As I sat there listening, I would nod my head, smile and appear to take interest as he spoke. I just had to wait and hope he would talk when he was ready.

I knew that to gain the rich data I had hoped for it was essential for me to build a research relationship with the respective participants. It was a requirement, especially since they were beginning to make the effort to attend the meetings with me. Within the field of qualitative research, it is perceived important to develop a research relationship that would allow me to actively work with participants to construct their stories (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2006; Sword, 1999). It was also suggested that by making the participants feel relaxed, showing empathy, understanding, and interest in what they had to say, the participants would feel more comfortable in opening up and talking about their experiences (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007; Hubbard, Backett-Milburn & Kemmer, 2001; Rowling, 1999). Being of a similar age and having, in many cases, similar characteristics (i.e.

being a member of their community as I am a coach myself) to my participants were factors that I considered would be beneficial in fostering this relationship

I conducted myself in a professional manner when in the presence of my participants, wanting to convey to them that I was passionate about the research I was doing and that I was extremely interested in what they had to share with me. In doing so, I felt as though the participants would feel at ease when sharing their experiences with me. I also divulged some of my own personal experiences when they had opened up to me. I did this as I believe it helped the participants to feel as though I would not be judging them in any way. I feared that by not doing so, the coaches may have not willingly shared their experiences with me which I needed. Such actions conducted by myself could be explained in terms of Goffman's (1959) classical text which addressed 'The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life'. Central to this argument was the notion that individuals are not entirely determined by society because they are able to strategically manipulate social situations and others' impressions of themselves (Branaman, 2000).

The process of establishing social identity was closely allied to the concept of 'front' which is described as 'a part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance' (Goffman 1959: 22). Branhart (1994) noted that the 'front' serves as a mean of standardisation that allows others to understand the individual on the basis of projected character traits that have normative meanings. In order for the 'front' to take action there needs to be an appropriate 'setting' for it to be performed (Branaman, 2000; Branhart, 1994). According to Goffman (1959), a setting tends to remain stationary, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until 'they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave' (Goffman, 1959, cited in Lemert & Branaman, 2000, p. 97). In relation to my own experiences, I

worked hard to produce a ‘performance to the coaches’ and maintain my ‘front’ by wearing smart clothes, looking happy, being enthusiastic, listening to them, and having my interview resources in front of me. Once the interview had finished I could drop this ‘front’ and relax. In this way, I was fulfilling what they expected to see as a researcher. In doing so, I was strategically manipulating other people’s perceptions of me to reach my desired goals (the interview data) (Goffman, 1959).

### ***Feeling the pressure***

#### **September 2012: University Campus library**

Time was passing me by; there was too long of a gap in-between meeting my participants but they were not free to see me. How can I try and fit it around their busy schedules and my shifts at work? How can I progress and move forward without feeling like pestering them to book in a meeting. Will I just have to persevere in the hope that they will contact me when they are ready? I knew I had to be careful as I could not risk the relationships that I have built up with them. They may become reluctant to share any more personal experiences with me I was beginning to feel anxious about how much research was still left to conduct I will just have to keep trying.

When establishing and managing these research relationships, I quickly sensed in the early phase that the issue of anonymity was going to be a potential issue due to the male/female ratio of my respective participants. Indeed, I was going to struggle to hide the identities from one another due to their only being one female and three males. Also, the female coach was also concerned that her narrative could easily be linked to her if gender were to stay the same. It was also becoming an increasing concern of mine as the reality hit me that their working lives were intertwined. Although, initially, I was aware they worked together, I did not realise how closely they would be linked. At this stage, I

had to consider my options on how I was going to deal with this issue. I panicked about achieving anonymity as the participants divulged a lot of things to me that they felt uneasy about others reading. When reviewing relevant literature it became evident that this is not an uncommon problem within research. I drew upon Ellis (2007) who spoke in detail of how researchers must consider their ethical responsibilities to identifiable others. In light of this issue, I applied names that could be used for both the male or female population and referred to each participant as a male within their respective narratives.

Focusing on the actual interview process, I recognised that there were many hurdles I had to overcome in order to acquire the data. Indeed, negative emotions were very prominent in the middle phase of my doctoral research. I felt frustrated and guilty if I had not done the work I had intended to do. Then, when I went through phases of trying to catch up, I was faced with the issue of fatigue or burnout. This was something that supervisors and other academics had forewarned me about and, as a result, I was well aware that researchers can, and do, experience both physical and emotional exhaustion during the research venture. This can be closely related to what Hochschild (1983) refers to as 'human costs', explaining that researchers may encounter emotionally challenging situations throughout their data collection. This was amplified when I realised the size of the project and the amount of time and effort that was going to be required in comparison to my undergraduate studies where the timescale had been much shorter. Indeed, it is apparent that I am not alone in this sentiment (e.g., Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007; Wilkes, 1999).

I found this to be a very tedious, draining, and demanding part of the process and, at times, I felt emotionally exhausted. Some aspects took longer than I had anticipated, such as transcribing the interviews and building the narratives. At times, I felt that I was never going to get through it. I felt frustrated at the repetitive nature of ongoing

interviews and transcribing. For example, there had been occasions throughout the interviewing process where I felt that I had misspoken and interrupted what they were saying, or I failed to ask an appropriate question, or I missed a good opportunity to probe an area even further. When leaving the interviews, I felt frustrated and slightly angered that I had missed opportunities to get rich data and that I would have to return to that topic again. This was also evident when listening back to the recordings. This was a very lonely and isolated stage as it was up to me, the researcher, to go out and collect the data I needed. Feelings of guilt also encompassed this stage as I decided to undertake some casual teaching which became distracting and time-consuming even though I needed the money. In this case, I was beginning to realise that life impacts on the research, and research was impacting on my life. My data collection at times got pushed aside as the thought 'there is no deadline set in stone, I will be ok' would repeat itself in my head.

***Making the right choice- something has got to give***

**January 2013: University Coffee shop**

I cannot keep pushing my doctoral studies aside because I need to work. University and completing this work should be my main priority, surely? What if I do not work though? I am going to struggle to live with hardly any money. What should I do? Maybe if I found a balance I could manage doing them both. Something has got to give I feel sick, anxious, frustrated and I am losing sleep over worry this has to stop. I have got to cut back on work, and make sure that it is equal. My research has to get back on track; I will feel better for doing this, I know I will.

The end stage of my doctoral studies was characterised by a mix of strongly felt negative and positive emotions. Negative emotions included fear and panic whereas

positive emotions included satisfaction and elation. Within this end phase, I felt satisfied that I had advanced drafts of all the sections to my thesis. However, I was also facing practical problems during the writing of the narratives. For instance, there was a mixture of real names and pseudonyms within the narrative. The reallocation of names to accord with the community coaches' wishes to fully hide their identities proved a time-consuming and complex matter. To have anticipated that such identity issues might arise, at the outset of the research process, would have saved hours of complex editing. Alongside these practical problems, I also had a fear of failing. What if the work I present is not good enough? What if it's not what my supervisors wanted?

### ***The last hurdles- Feeling the pressure***

#### **August 2013: University Staff Offices**

Before I was about to go into a meeting with my supervisors, I was asking myself 'what if it does not make the contribution to research that was intended?' Anxiousness was rife, running through my body there was nothing I could do to take it away. 'Will my work justify the conclusions that I have made?' Not only this, but I was in receipt of a scholarship and the end of the funding was associated with my feelings of panic; I knew I had to find an internal motivation to make it to the end and complete the thesis. I did not want to let myself or anyone else down for that matter.

### ***Using strategies to overcome struggles of doctoral research***

Throughout the process of undertaking research, and experiencing its associated highs and lows, I utilised a range of methods to try and reduce the impact that it would have on me, as the researcher. One aspect that lifted these tensions, panics, and worries was the good, professional, relationship that I had built up with my supervisors. Alongside

this, I found that my supervisors were also another beneficial resource to me throughout the research process.

The likelihood of PhD students making good progress with their research and developing good working relationships with supervisors is argued to be aided by shared research interests (Ives & Rowley, 2005; Murphy, Bain & Conrad, 2007; Bradbury-Jones, Irvine & Sambrook, 2007). Supervisors are seen to not only guide and assist their students but to offer a degree of support. They focus not only on my academic achievement or progress but on me as a whole person by being sympathetic and supportive of academic and non-academic aspects of my life (Murphy et al., 2007). This helped to break down the feelings of isolation and it made me realise that what I was experiencing was a 'normal' part of doctoral research (Ives & Rowley 2005).

Despite establishing the positive research working relationships, there have been times where I did not share my thoughts and feelings with my supervisors. I never wanted to divulge any of my struggles, such as grappling with new theory, not understanding, not being sure what I was asked to do. I tried to avoid this as I did not want my academic capabilities to be weakened in their eyes. They had trust in me that I was capable of completing this research project and I did not want to give them any reason to think otherwise. There were also times when their actions provoked strong internal thoughts and feelings. For example, after doing numerous drafts of the same piece of work it became quite disheartening, frustrating, and 'gutting' when I felt as though it is still not good enough for them. For example, the supervisors wanted more, it needed to be better, and I needed to improve my writing. These comments triggered intense emotions of anger, upset, and frustration, at times, I felt as though I could not give any more than what was down on paper in front of them.

It is here I believe we can understand my experiences in relation to Hochschild's concept of '*emotion management*', referred to as the 'management of feeling to create a

publicly observable facial and bodily display' (Hochschild, 2000 [1983], p. 7). A point to be made here is that emotional management requires emotion work. That is, the effort directed toward the production of suitable emotions in a given situation (Hochschild, 2003). '*Emotion work*' refers to the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing feeling in oneself (Hochschild, 2003). I knew, in this instance, that I needed to hide these intense feelings of negativity and appear as though it was not affecting me. I suppressed this as I did not want my supervisors to think that I was not up to the job or that I was unable to handle the pressure of being an academic. I was also concerned that showing my true feelings could have long term implications to my long term career aspirations. Meaning, if I was seen to be incapable at this stage, would they view me as incapable of becoming a researcher or lecturer in the future.

Another strategy I adopted to deal with the highs and lows of the research process included avoiding working exclusively at home. Going to the library on a regular basis and seeing other people working hard motivated me. I also constructed a timetable for the major milestones, including both academic tasks and administrative requirements such as departmental progress reports. This gave me a sense of direction by having short and long term goals in place and rewarding myself with a break if I had reached a goal earlier than expected. This left me to return to work feeling refreshed and energised to carry on.

I have learnt from this research process that what I was experiencing was not something new or unique to me but was actually something that many researchers before me had gone through, and many to come after me would go through, which made me more accepting of the research process. According to Howarth (1998), researchers are always susceptible to the emotional pressures of research and it can evoke highly emotional responses in not only the participants but in members of the research team (Lalor, Begley & Devance, 2006). It is hoped that, by reflecting upon my research

process, this will help other PhD students to become aware of the complexities and challenges they may face.

## Chapter 8:0. References

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