

Understanding the Relationships between Parents, Coach and Golfer and their Role in  
Talent Development

By

Justyn Adam Branton

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the inter-relationships between the parent, coach and athlete and how they impact on the golf athlete's development. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews of five advanced young golfers, five parental groups consisting of the mother and father and five PGA Professional golf coaches. To develop an understanding of the relationships between coach, athlete and parents and their role in golf athlete development, a constructivist, interpretive approach was utilised.

The impact of parents and coaches on athlete socialisation and development has been well researched (e.g. Côté and colleagues and Jowett and colleagues). Little research has taken place analysing the triadic relationship between the parent, coach and athlete.

This study identifies that parents and coaches endeavour to meet the developmental needs of the athlete however their relationship is limited to incidental social interaction. Both coaches and parents identified that improving their relationship would be of benefit to the athlete. The implications of the study suggest there is a need to develop the skills of coaches beyond their technical and physical knowledge. Coaches should endeavour to understand and meet the social needs of the parent and athlete in order to enhance and develop the opportunities the athlete receives.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Setting the Scene**

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between parents, coach and athlete and whether these relationships can be viewed as a triadic relationship (three way relationship), or as a series of dyadic relationships that revolve around the athlete. This study's research of young emerging talented golfers and the relationships between parent-coach, athlete-parent and coach-athlete will further our understanding of the influence the triad imparts on the development of the golfer. Therefore it is hoped that the findings of this study will help coaches reflect how they approach their coaching and to consider the wider social and developmental implications when coaching young golfers.

Historically studies within golf predominately focus around psychological (Bäckman and Molander, 1991; Finn, 2008; Taylor and Shaw, 2002), biomechanical and physical aspects of golf (Lephart et al., 2007; McHardy and Pollard, 2005; Smith, 2007). Coaching and coaches have been overly focused on enhancing athletes' physical, technical, management and strategic skills (Miller and Kerr, 2002). Increasingly research within the domain of sport has focused on the pivotal role played by social networks in sport that can help facilitate player development. LaVoi (2007) and Mageau and Vallerand (2003) analysed the nature of the coach-athlete relationship whilst Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) focused on the parental influence on the coach-athlete relationship.



Stein et al. (1999) argue that sport plays an important role in the lives of numerous children and that parents strongly influence their children's sporting experience. These influences can be positive and negative in their nature. Research across sports indicates that the development of young sports people into elite sports people is more likely to occur if the correct social networks are in place. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1997) identified that the development of talent in young people is directly linked to their immediate social environment. This was cited by Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005, p.267). The major influences as identified by Scanlan and Lewthaite (1988) and later by Côté (1999) on children's participation in sport within a social context consist of the child, the coach and the family environment. However this does not take into account the impact of other influences on children's participation such as siblings, peer groups (Fallon and Bowles, 1997), environmental factors and economic factors (Côté et al., 2006; Wilson, 2002) which also impact upon participation and development within a sport or activity.

Further developing the understanding of the roles that parents, coaches and athletes' have within the social context of sport could be useful. For example, coaches may reflect from a social standpoint the way in which the family influences the development of the athlete. Such understanding will aid and inform their own practice. Hellstedt (1987, p.151) asserts that coaches often have difficulty and feel ill equipped to work with athletes' parents. This difficulty increases if the parents are seen as 'problem parents'. In this case Hellstedt (1987) refers to 'problem parents' as:

- 1) Underinvolved parents, characterised by a lack of support financially, emotionally or through functional investment

- 2) Overinvolved parents, characterised by yelling during coaching sessions, disagreements with officials and coaches and or coaching of the athlete with a winning at all costs attitude

Therefore the relationship between the coach and parent is potentially crucial in these circumstances. Jones (2000) believes coaches should be empowered to reflect and to take responsibility for decisions that impact upon their athletes. Empowering coaches to take an increasingly proactive role within the triad, for example with the parent, may lead to more effective coaching and increased success for the athlete. Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) argue that parents can influence the nature of the coach-athlete relationship by effecting respect, trust and cooperation and a sense of commitment towards the coach and sport. This paper seeks to understand the relationships in the triad and their influence on talent development, thereby aiding coaches in their understanding and empowering coaches in their decision making processes in order to improve the athlete's experience and success. Hellstedt (1987, p.151) echoes this thought, "Coaches can be a very useful resource in improving the parent-coach relationship. This change may facilitate the athlete's performance and have a lasting effect on his or her development."

## **1.2 Research Question**

The four interview topics of involvement, relationships, development and support were initially formulated for this research when conducting a critical evaluation of social networks in the sport of golf. Studies such as Aide and Jowett (2010) and Mageau and Vallerand (2003) have provided a body of evidence focused on coach-athlete relationships and the role of the family in sports socialisation is well documented by Côté and Hay

(2002a, p.503). Further research (e.g. Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005) explores the parental influence on the coach-athlete relationship. The purpose of this study is to identify themes that support talent development based around involvement, relationships and support between parent, coach and athlete in emerging young talented golfers. In identifying the common themes that have influenced the athletes' performance and participation within golf, coaches, parents and athletes are better placed to reflect on whether enhancing these relationships might lead to increased performance.

This research interviewed five emerging talented male golfers between the ages of eighteen and twenty one and their immediate social network; in this case the athlete, parents and coach. Talented golfers were defined by a handicap range between 2 and plus 1. The athletes came from two parent families with siblings and at the time of the study the athletes worked with a PGA (Professional Golfers Association) coach. The coaches were all male, and had coached county, regional and national players. Each coach has over 10 years of coaching experience. Interviews took place between the researcher and athlete, researcher and coach and researcher and parents. Fifteen interviews were conducted in total. Interviews took place in an environment within which the interviewees felt comfortable. For the athletes and parents the interview took place at home and for the coaches the interviews were conducted in a quiet room within the golf facility. Each part of the triad took part in individual interviews. The parents of the athlete were interviewed as a single unit.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Socialization and Social Networks**

Socialization and social networks play a key role in nurturing sporting talent. McPherson and Brown (1988, p.267) (cited in Brustad 1993, p.211) define socialization as “the process whereby individuals learn skills, traits, values, attitudes, norms and knowledge associated with the performance of present or anticipated roles.” The socialization process is not only relevant to the physical elements of involvement but to the social and psychological side as well (Brustad 1993). Analysis of the complexity of socialization needs to incorporate the social, physical and psychological issues of involvement. To achieve this, Eccles and Harold (1991) developed the expectancy value model of achievement, choice and behaviour. This proposes that parents influence their child’s choices by communicating their beliefs as to their child’s chances of success. The model was further developed by Eccles and colleagues and analysed by Fredricks and Eccles (2004) whose research identified that parents influence children’s motivation in two primary ways:

- 1) As interpreters of experience
- 2) As providers of experience

If the child’s belief system is influenced by their social environment, such influences will include:

- 1) The moulding of the child’s outlook by parent and siblings
- 2) The child’s education
- 3) The income group in which the child is being raised
- 4) The child’s friendship groups

Fallon and Bowles (1997) argue that the function and influence of peer groups may change with age and gender. Therefore the influence of differing peer groups within a social environment may be affected by the age and gender of a child as it is socialised into a sport. It should be noted that factors outside of social networks such as interpersonal psychological factors are also seen to influence physical activity within children such perceived competence and ego (Brustad, 1993; Nicholls, 1984).

## **2.2 Family**

Family focuses on the parents and siblings of a family unit. Siblings were incorporated as they impact on the parent's ability to influence and support the development of the athlete.

### **2.2.1 Parental Influence**

Relationships formed around the athlete influence them in different ways. Brustad (1993) suggests that parents are the primary influence upon children's self-related perceptions. Researchers have debated the significance played by each parent. In some studies the role of the father would appear to be the significant influence on the athlete's sports perception (Hellstedt, 1995). Other studies suggest that the mother's physical activity is a better indicator of their child's sports involvement (Bois et al., 2005). Mothers are usually the focus of interest because historically they have tended to have a more hands on role in the rearing of children through to adolescence (Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994). This however may have changed in modern society, as more mothers become working mothers, thereby impacting on their ability to spend time with the child. However, mothers' perceptions can

be very important in moulding children's achievement related beliefs (Jacobs and Eccles, 1992).

Possibly a key factor in parental influence is whether the parenting style is authoritarian, authoritative or permissive as identified by Côté and Hay (2002a). Parenting style, (Côté, 1999; Maccoby 1992) as well as the children's perception of parental sports involvement (Brustad, 1993; Hellstedt, 1987; Stein et al., 1999,) is acknowledged as further influencing factors on children's participation in sport. Côté and Hay (2002a) warn us that parenting styles can have positive and negative effects and that the parenting style can affect children's values and beliefs. Research by Hansell (1982) on parental involvement or peer pressure on students during college application indicates that levels of parental involvement are directly linked to levels of stress in the child. This is supported within the sporting domain by both Maccoby (1992) and Hellstedt (1987) who suggest the authoritative parent or moderate parent (rather than the authoritarian or permissive) is the best at developing a child's self-esteem, achievement, motivation and sense of competence. Brustad (1993) indicates that there are links between a child's self-esteem and the level of emotional support that they receive from a parent. Papaioannou et al. (2008) articulates that research has demonstrated the role parents play but it should also be acknowledged that significant others also influence children's goal orientations such as the coach (Smoll and Smith 1993) or the best friend (Smith 2003).

Family research in sport predominately points to parents providing the initial socialising factor in their child's physical activity as evidenced by (Brustad, 1993; Stein et al., 1999; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1973). The opportunities provided at the sampling stage (Côté and

Hay, 2002a) and the nature and extent to which the activity was conducted appear to be dependent upon the beliefs and expectations adhered to by the child's parents. Key processes in the sampling stage were identified as children's participation in a variety of sports with the children's main motivation in the sport centred on fun and enjoyment.

Families are seen to play an important role in a child's initial involvement and development within sport, but a combination of influences will determine whether a child chooses a particular sport. Sampling is a key feature of the sporting experience of children aged between 9 and 15 (MacPhail et al., 2003). Their participation in sport is strongly determined by intrinsic values of fun and the challenge within the activity. Parents and coaches play a predominant role in this. Stein et al. (1999, p.592) states "Parental involvement entails the time, energy and money parents invest in their child's sports participation... providing instructional assistance." Parental influence goes beyond the initial input of socializing a child into sport but also continues to help them maintain their sport participation. Parents can provide fun, supporting and enjoyable environments or they can be a source of stress and anxiety or a combination in-between.

Athletes' perceptions of parental involvement is well documented e.g. Babkes and Weiss (1999) and Stein et al. (1999). Medium to high level involvement by mothers and fathers has been perceived by athletes as appropriate, helping to create enjoyable experiences more frequently than stressful ones. Within the mother-father dynamic, fathers were seen to have created a higher frequency of stressful situations compared to mothers. Babkes and Weiss's (1999) findings recognised that there is a fine line between parents' perceptions and those of the young athletes in areas such as positive versus negative responses or pressure versus

support. In effect the child might perceive the parents' intention of social support as pressure to excel.

### 2.2.2 Sibling Influence

Parental influence has been researched in some depth but other factors can also influence a child's behaviour and decision making process. Fraser-Thomas et al. (2008) acknowledges that limited research has been conducted examining the influence of sibling relationships in sport. What research there is identifies that siblings can have a significant influence upon one another in terms of behaviour and development. Both Larson and Richards (1994) and Whiteman et al. (2007) identified that siblings spent more time with each other, participating in a wider range of activities than with parents or peers outside of school. Older siblings can act as role models for younger siblings. In general Côté and Hay (2002b) and Côté (1999) found that siblings were competitive as well as cooperative. Côté and Hay (2002a, p.514) referred to sibling competition as "an interdependency between two individuals so that the attainment of rewards by one individual constrains the attainment of rewards by the other." Sulloway (1996) highlighted sibling rivalry as a common characteristic and that siblings can act in direct competition with each other. Serious commitment to a sport by one sibling can lead to a reduction in resources for other siblings. This in turn can lead to bitterness and tension within the family. However cooperation and sharing between siblings can create an environment which is constructive in the development of sporting skills (Côté, 1999; Côté and Hay, 2002a; Sulloway, 1996), examples of which can be seen throughout the sporting world: Waugh twins, Williams sisters and Brownlee brothers, to name but a few.



Both Fallon and Bowles (1997) and Videon (2002) highlighted that little is known of the effects of gender and age on sibling influences. Similarly, little is known of family structure or family functioning variables and their impact upon family members and peers. Whiteman et al. (2007) endeavoured to measure sibling influence by researching the younger sibling's perception of the frequency in which they tried to emulate or differentiate from their older sibling. In general the research on sibling relationships was inconsistent but supported the hypothesis that siblings can influence each other in multiple ways.

### **2.3 Coaches**

Coaches along with parents, siblings and peers play important and multifunctional roles in the life of a young athlete. Jowett (2003) goes so far as to suggest that within the sport domain the coach-athlete interpersonal relationship can be viewed as the most significant one. Coaches can be viewed as instructors of the sport and secondly as an adult role model for the young participant. Potrac et al. (2002) suggested that a significant proportion of a coach's work is linked to a wide range of others and that a coach should be viewed as a social being that functions within a social environment. Their research highlights that role; power and presentation of self are bound into the role of a coach.

The manner in which coach's coach, their values and behaviours all greatly influence children's enjoyment and continued participation in sports (Smoll and Smith 1993 cited in Papaioannou et al. 2008; 125). This is supported by both Côté and Hay (2002b) and MacPhail et al. (2003) whose model of the three phases of children's sports participation

(sampling, specialising and investing) is strongly motivated by enjoyment and effort being rewarded above outcome. This is primarily delivered by coaches and parents. The coach-athlete relationship can influence the athlete and their enjoyment of the sport and therefore their continuing participation in sport.

Cassidy et al. (2004) demonstrated the impact of the coach and coaching behaviour in influencing athlete participation and motivation to continue with or to drop out of sport. The relationship between coaching behaviour and the rate of attrition in youngsters was also examined by Barnett et al. (1992). They summarised that when coaches were trained to increase coach-player interaction, encourage intra team unity and promote sports participation as an opportunity for success rather than failure, then the dropout rate was lower than for those who did not receive the training. This highlights that the coaches positively and negatively influence a participant's perceptions of a sport. This was supported by Fraser-Thomas et al. (2008) in that coaches have a 'critical role' in helping and sustaining youth participation, as well as developing their wider sporting and life-skills regardless of culture, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Babkes and Weiss (1999, p.46) believed that, "children's perceived competence, enjoyment and intrinsic motivation have been linked to the frequency and type of feedback received from significant others", including the coach.

The coach-athlete relationship can develop strong bonds that over a period of time encompass physical, psychological and emotional development. Coaches should be aware of the influence that they can have over young athletes, and that at times they may find themselves acting as substitute parents (Smoll and Smith, 2002). Martens (1988) identified

good coaches teach key skills and instil integrity and guidance to help their young athletes become confident and self-reliant. The coach often plays an influential role in developing children's social values (Côté, 2002). Côté's (2002) analysis of research suggested three guidelines that coaches should develop to maintain the dyadic relationship with youngsters. These are:

- 1) Providing appropriate reinforcement and praise
- 2) Encouraging youngsters after a fault
- 3) Utilising imagery to develop performance

Whilst this research provides guidelines for coaches to maintain relationships with youngsters, it does not expand upon the term appropriate and what appropriate reinforcement and praise is within this context. Brustad (1993) highlighted the dangers of non-specific and ineffective praise that does not meet the athlete's perceived evaluation of their own performance. This can lead to players losing respect for the coach and or parent.

## **2.4 Relationships**

Dyadic relationships or two person relationships such as coach-athlete, athlete-parents or parent-coach relationships are believed to play a significant role in developing athletes and their enjoyment within sport (e.g. Babkes and Weiss, 1999; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005; Lorimer and Jowett, 2009).

#### 2.4.1 Parent-Athlete Dyad

Research on the parent-athlete relationship has predominately focused on two areas:

- 1) Parental effects in socialising their children into physical activity (Bois et al., 2005; Stein et al., 1999)
- 2) The impact parents have on their child's behaviour and attitudes once they are involved in sports (Babkes and Weiss, 1999)

The effects parents have on socialising their children into sport have been discussed above. This section focuses on parental involvement and the child's perception of that involvement.

Côté (1999) theorised that the parenting style displayed by a family could have positive and negative effects on children. This was supported by Stein et al. (1999) in their study on children's perceptions of parental involvement in sport, which analysed young athlete's stress and enjoyment levels. These levels were in part dependent upon the degree of parental involvement, with little involvement from the parents tending to create the impression of a lack of support. The perceived adequate level of involvement created an enjoyable environment. However, high involvement could lead to stressful situations as parents were perceived to be overly involved. Hellstedt (1987, p.153) showed that under involved parents displayed "a relative lack of emotional, financial or functional investment." Whilst moderately involved parents were recognised "by firm parental direction, but with enough flexibility so that the young athlete is allowed significant involvement in decision making" (Hellstedt 1987, p.153). Over involved parents "have an excessive amount of involvement in the athletic success of their children" (Hellstedt, 1987, p.154). De Knop and De Martelaer (2001) supported this by suggesting parents' involvement can be misguided. Parents can lose focus on what is important, in this case the child, and can become too involved with the

overall performance and the competitive aspects of youth sports as opposed to the wellbeing of the person. This can be characterised through actions such as excessive shouting at competitions, arguments with the athlete and coach, continually telling the athlete to try harder, coaching from the side line. Organisations such as the Football Association have created a respect code of conduct for spectators and parent/carers to address some of the problems witnessed on the side line.

Stein et al. (1999) summarise that it is the quality of the parental input that is important. Parents can be highly involved without becoming overly involved. Parents can be a source of support and enjoyment as well as a source of stress and burnout. Scanlan et al.'s. (1991) in depth study of elite figure skaters, showed negative impacts of 'significant others' to be a common factor for causes of stress. Within the 'significant others' theme the most common underlying theme was identified as interpersonal conflict. In parents, coaches and skating peers. This conflict accounted for 46% of the stress related issues. Cohn (1990) echoed some of Scanlan et al.'s (1991) findings about the sources of stress in identifying in youth golf that 9 out of the 10 male juniors in the study cited striving to meet parental expectations as source of competitive stress. It should be acknowledged that both studies found other factors such as personal struggles and negative aspects of competition to be a cause of higher stress than interpersonal conflict. Scanlan et al. (1991) highlighted that what one athlete finds stressful another athlete finds enjoyable. However it is apparent that athletes identify parents, coaches and peers as a potential source of stress.

The role the family plays is important in shaping children's development in sport. With increased age and competence children spend an ever increasing amount of time in the

company of their coaches and peers and less time with their parents (Fallon and Bowles, 1997; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005). This changes the nature and intensity of the parent-athlete dyad. In effect the parental role in the relationship takes a step back, placing more emphasis on the importance and influence of the coach-athlete dyad.

#### 2.4.2 Coach-Athlete Dyad

The importance of the coach-athlete relationship should not be understated; Bloom et al. (1998) argued that this coach-athlete relationship often extends beyond the teaching of tactics and skills to form genuine bonds of trust and respect. Lorimer and Jowett (2009) stated that the coach-athlete relationship was formed by the athletes' need to gain knowledge from the coach and the coach's desire to impart that knowledge to the athlete. For this to occur, both the coach and athlete should develop positive outcomes goals. Thus a relationship will be maintained as long as positive outcomes outweighed negative ones. The study demonstrated a high correlation between the meta-perspectives (how athletes and coaches think their partners view the relationship) of coaches and athletes and that they were positively linked with satisfaction. The research also brought to light that coach satisfaction was not necessarily linked to interpersonal factors but rather to factors such as how good they perceive themselves to be or towards payment, these can be viewed as intrapersonal factors. This could be because most athletes have one or at most a couple of coaches and therefore endeavour to better understand their coach. Coaches however may have many athletes and are therefore are more focused on their own personal needs.

The coach athlete relationship often develops strong bonds that over a period of time encompass physical, psychological and emotional development. Côté (2002) indicated that sport in general can be an excellent medium to help realistic and positive self-image. Côté (2002) analysed research conducted on several areas of a coach's influence on children's development in sport. This research encompassed psychological, physical and mental development, and also the development of social values. Within the sports medium the research highlights the role the coach often plays and their influential role in developing young athletes' physical, psychological and social values.

Babkes and Weiss (1999, p.46) believed that, "children's perceived competence, enjoyment and intrinsic motivation have been linked to the frequency and type of feedback received from significant others." Côté's (2002) summary of research conducted by Smith and Smoll and Barnett et al. (1992) suggested a series of guidelines and a coach effectiveness training (CET) programme for coaches on how to encourage children's development within the spheres of coaching influence:

**Psychological:**

- 1) Reinforce effort as well as results
- 2) Utilise a positive attitude in correcting mistakes
- 3) Maintain order and discipline

**Mental Skills:**

- 1) Implement a goal setting program
- 2) Teach mental toughness and stress control mechanisms
- 3) Imagery development to help improve performance

All of these guidelines are vitally important coaching skills that coaches need in order to develop and maintain the coach-athlete dyad. CET trained coaches were found to create more enjoyable experiences and were better liked by their athletes. This approach is supported by research in the coach-athlete dyad as seen in Black and Weiss (1992) and Brustad (1993).

Whilst research indicates that the coach plays an influential role in the development of an athlete not all of these relationships are positive. The coach-athlete dyad can provide positive and negative outcomes; athletes can view the relationship with the coach as a potential source of stress (e.g. Cohn, 1990; Scanlan, 1991; Stein et al., 1999). Jowett and Cockerill (2003) investigated a coach-athlete dyad in crisis, in which the interpersonal constructs of *Closeness*, *Co-Orientation* and *Complementarity* (3 C's) were employed to analyse and reflect the coach's and athlete's behaviours and emotions. Jowett (2003) summarised that the dyadic relationship can be viewed in terms of a spiral. The upward part of the spiral is a voyage marked by satisfaction and performance accomplishments. The downward part of the spiral is marked by an unstable and unsuccessful relationship. In this study the relationship was successful to start out with 'the honeymoon period'. However the second phase of the relationship soured, linked to a lack of understanding between the coach's and athlete's needs, wants and desires. Failure to find common ground prevented the dyad from continuing an otherwise successful relationship. Should relationships be analysed as upward and downward spirals or could they be viewed as a series of peaks and troughs with a general upward or downward curve? The evolving relationship between coaches and athletes can be affected by a host of factors, from social influences of significant others on the relationship (Hellstedt, 1987; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005),



to stresses created from performance expectations as mentioned in Scanlan et al. (1991). Interpersonal conflicts in dyadic relationships as highlighted by Baxter (1986) also come from an absence of goals or conflicting goals. Whilst Aide and Jowett (2010), Jowett (2003) and Jowett and Cockerill (2003) have utilised the 3+1Cs model composed of *Closeness*, *Commitment*, *Complementarity* and *Co-Orientation* to develop our knowledge on the interpersonal workings of the coach athlete relationship, LaVoi (2007) identifies the difficulty in trying to measure *Closeness* in that it is far more complex process than identified in the 3+1Cs model.

#### 2.4.3 Triadic Relationships

Research has identified the importance and impact of dyadic relationships (Bloom et al, 1998; Lorimer and Jowett, 2009) but they can also be unstable (Jowett, 2003). Little research has focused on the relationships between all three participants in the triad (parent, coach and athlete); how they interact and affect each other. Scanlan and Lewthaite (1988) believed networks which influence children's participation in sport are made up of the child/parent/coach triad and the family environment. Smoll et al. (2011) referred to the triad as the 'Athletic Triangle' and highlighted the complex ways that these social networks interact and the consequences they have on the development of the child.

Bowen (1978) concluded that a three person system is more stable than a two person system (a statement later acknowledged in Hellstedt, 1987). Where a two person system is viewed as unstable, if conflict should occur a third person can be brought in to resolve the conflict. Research conducted by Bowen was based around family crisis and therapy pre

1970's and therefore the intervening decades, context and the academic domain should be considered. By creating a three person system, i.e. parent, athlete and coach (or triangulation) (Hellstedt, 1987) in which all three are involved together in the development of the athlete, a more stable environment is established which enables the athlete to develop in the sport. The parents feel involved in the developmental process of the child and are therefore more likely to cope with the dyadic realignment that may occur (Sprecher et al., 2002). Research by Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) focussed on the influence rather than the interactions between the triad, on a small cohort of young female Cypriots, whose upbringing and values may differ from those found in England. However, useful insights of parental influence on the coach-athlete relationship were identified; formerly research had not focused on how the parents affected and interacted with the quality of the coach-athlete relationship, its creation, maintenance and occasional dissolution. Coaches identified the positive role the parents could play in developing the child's commitment to the coach and the sport; they valued the information provided by the parents enabling them to adapt to the situation and needs of the athlete (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005). Parents can help gain respect and trust for the coach and arrange opportunities that provide positive outcomes in developing a coach-athlete relationship. They can also instigate the breakup of a coach-athlete relationship by creating a negative influence on that relationship, such as providing negative feedback, looking for a new coach, looking for a new environment. This highlights that a three person system is not always stable, but can be the cause of dissolution of a coach-athlete relationship. This is more keenly felt during the early stages of a young athlete's involvement in a sport, as the athlete is more dependent upon parental support than in later years. Overall the research indicates relationship between parents, coach and athlete influence the coach-athlete's level of complementarity.

Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005, p.281) indicated that a positive triadic relationship can maintain the balance “regarding the degree and nature of influences parents exert on their child and coach.” This enables parents to be involved but not over involved and reduces athlete attrition rates in reaction to parental pressure (Cohn, 1990; Hellstedt, 1988). Parents influence the coach-athlete relationship in terms of quality and interdependence through the support that they offer. They have the power to make or break a relationship, especially during the early years when their position in the triad is at its most powerful. Coaches also have the ability to educate the parents. Gould (1982) (cited in Hellstedt, 1987, p. 151) stresses the importance of coaches educating parents and developing good levels of communication. The major stumbling block in parent-coach interactions as identified by Hellstedt (1987, p.151) is that “most coaches do not feel equipped to work directly with parents and therefore are reluctant to deal directly with them.” Hellstedt concluded that coaches not only coach an athlete but are also involved in a family process. To hide from this will impinge on the relationship with the athlete and the success of the programme.

## **2.4 Social, Economic and Environmental Factors**

The environment a child grows up in influences the journey the child takes within sport and can play a significant role in determining sporting achievement (Rotella and Bunker, 1987). Both Côté et al. (2006) and Curtis and Birch (1987) examined the influence of population size on the development of talented athletes. These studies highlighted that urbanisations between 1000 and 500,000 provided the optimum environment to develop talented players.

Within these communities friends and peers can aid the athlete partaking and sustaining an activity. Roles between family and peers should not be viewed as an ‘either – or’ situation but rather that they can be seen to complement each other. Côté (2002) sees peers as individuals of similar age and level who do not share family ties. Research conducted on friend and peer relationships is limited in comparison to other group dynamics in sports research (e.g. Brustad 1996; Smith 2003; Weiss et al., 1996). The influences of friends on athlete’s motivation are harder to determine than that of parents or coaches due to the unpredictable nature of the relationship. However MacPhail et al. (2003) demonstrates that enjoyment within an activity depends upon both the activity itself as well as involvement with established friends or making friends through the activity. These situations can help maintain the athlete’s participation.

The difficulty with this research is that it is dependent upon the strength and stability of the relationship, which varies according to the perception of who the best friend is. This will change in a short period of time (Furman, 1996). This research is limited as the data is based on the perception of the relationship as opposed to the reality of the relationship. Fallon and Bowles (1997, p.29) explained that “the function and role of the peer group change with age and gender.” The importance of peers potentially increases with age as the stability of these groups improves. Both Carr et al. (1999) and Weiss et al. (1996) imply that peer created climates can influence children’s goal orientation in positive and negative ways. Despite the difficulty in measuring the influence of the friend, due to the changing status of friends (Furman, 1996; Papaioannou et al., 2008) peers can affect children’s motivation in sport.

Wilson (2002) and Raudsepp (2006) analysed the influence of economic and cultural capital on participation in sport. Wilson (2002) found cultural capital to be the major influence on the type of sport undertaken in, whilst economic capital played a role in providing an increase in sport participation in general. Raudsepp (2006) enhanced our understanding of the relationships between socio-economic class, parental support and physical activity. The study found that social support and social class had a positive link to physical activity but that the economic status of the family had little impact upon physical activity. It should be noted that all the respondents came from two parent families and that the study was conducted in Estonia where income and social status are not necessarily interlinked. Nor was the study sport specific with certain sports having a greater financial and time burden or limited access or playing environments than other sports

The Training of Young Athletes (TOYA) study conducted by Rowley (1992) identified that children were more likely to succeed in sport if they came from a certain background. The support provided by a family played a crucial role in the success of young people's development of talent in sport (Kay, 2000). The TOYA study indicated that working-class children received less encouragement to use their time in a constructive manner than their middle class counterparts. Social class or status also appeared to impact on sports participation in a practical sense as well. Financial costs were harder to meet if you came from a working class background and families were less likely to have access to direct transport. Factors such as low income, access to private transport and facilities create a more challenging environment in which to succeed in a sport, placing a further burden on low income groups. The study concluded that middle-class parents placed greater importance on the health and safety benefits of sport.

Demands such as time and expenditure increase as the child progresses within a sport. Rowley (1992) found that the price of supporting a 14 year old swimmer as opposed to a 12 year old swimmer more than doubled over the intervening period. As athletes improve and mature the cost of equipment, competitions and membership plus additional expenses (food, travel, and accommodation) increase. Some costs are offset by a reduction in the number of sports played. Earl Woods took out a home equity loan stating “from this day on you will have all the advantages of a country club kid” (TWI, 2004) in order to finance his son’s development. The expense of supporting a talented child was commonly identified as the most significant demand placed on families. The levels of support required varied from sport to sport, but viewed in the context of golf all the factors mentioned above were critical in the development of a young elite golf performer supporting Kay’s (2000) findings.

Kay (2000, p.154) states there is a “tendency of high performing children to come from families headed by a couple.” Family structure influences athlete development, with children from two parent families better placed to progress to levels of sports achievement. Rowley (1992) suggests that children from unfavourable circumstances, in this case one parent families, were under represented in elite sport. This problem is further compounded by the growth of the lone parent family since the 1970s (Kay, 2000). This under representation may be due to financial limitations and restricted job mobility which reduces the availability of, and access to certain leisure activities. The study is limited in its diversity of sample in that it was conducted in the UK in 1986 with the sample population of elite athletes born in the 1970s. Demographics and family structure have changed significantly since that time. According to the Office of National Statistics (2007) single parent families more than tripled between 1972 and 2006. Therefore such a study would need to be replicated as demographics and family structure have clearly changed dramatically since the

conception of the TOYA study. Some of these demographic changes include ethnicity, rural versus urban, religion etc. Demographic changes highlight the need for sports to understand the potential barriers that can arise from such changes. Underrepresentation of these ethnic groups within sports would impact upon the future welfare of sports. De Knop et al. (1999) highlighted some of these issues by indentifying that immigrant youth did not readily take part in youth sports clubs and that Flemish Muslim girls were even less likely than Flemish Muslim boys to be involved.

In 2011 The PGA conducted an England Golf coaching audit to analyse their coaching workforce. The research identified that the composition of the PGA coaching workforce in England was 96% male and 99% white. The limited diversity within the workforce in comparison to the ethnic diversity found within England could present barriers of participation as identified by De Knop (1999) to other groups in England who are not male or white. Limited access to an appropriate coach or dress code issues may be seen as a barrier to an Islamic woman and therefore would have an impact in sports participation within this demographic.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has reviewed some of the research conducted upon social networks involved in socialising children into sport from family to friendship and peer groups. Wider elements affecting children's sports participation, social, economic and environmental issues have been addressed in order to acknowledge that multiple factors affect children's participation

and retention in sport beyond social networks. The chapter concluded by acknowledging the role and influence of the coach and the interactions between the coach, parent and athlete.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Quest for a Research Method**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000a, p.19) define the paradigm or interpretive framework as the net that contains a researcher's ontological, epistemological and methodological premise. Kinash (2012) articulates that the paradigm can be viewed as a matrix of beliefs and perceptions. Within the research domain a wide variety of strategies of inquiry are available to the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2000b, p.371) define the strategy of inquiry as "the skills, assumptions, enactments that the researcher-as-methodological-bricoleur uses in moving from a paradigm and a research design to the collection of empirical materials." Effectively strategies of inquiry connect researchers to specific approaches for collecting and interpreting empirical material. This research for example, relies upon interviewing, and observation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000a, p.22). In order for a project to be successful the research methods must be addressed as well as there being a justification for the chosen methodology and explanation on how the data was gathered (Gratton and Jones, 2004). The paradigm selected by the researcher in effect directs how the research proceeds, it influences the questions the researcher asks, how the research is collected and how the findings are generated into knowledge.

Gratton and Jones (2004) indicate that positivists believe that behaviours can be observed and numerically measured and analysed. This is referred to as the quantitative approach. Before 2000 the field of sport research could be viewed as being weighted in favour of quantitative research (Gilbert, 2002). This approach tells the observer that a relationship

exists, however it does not explain why that relationships exists. In effect quantitative research focuses on the measurement and interpretation of causal relationships between the variables rather than the process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000a, p.8). This type of research assumes a single, objective reality and this reality remains constant no matter what the time and/or location. The researcher can be seen to be objective and detached from the subjects under investigation, and the data is often collected through questionnaires as demonstrated by Brustad (1993), Papaioannou et al. (2008) and Stein et al. (1999).

Recently the nature of research has changed. Increasingly research conducted on socialization and social networks in sports is qualitative in nature as shown by Cohn (1999), Côté (1999), Jowett (2003), Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) and Scanlan et al. (1991). Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the emotions and experiences associated with behaviour. The difference between the two disciplines refers to the character of the data collected (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Qualitative research relies on smaller sample sizes and examines why relationships exist by looking beyond numbers. It assumes that social reality is a subjective experience and is continuously constructed and related to the immediate social context. It captures non-quantifiable information, such as feelings, thoughts and experiences, a concept linked to interpretive approaches to knowledge, and in effect it captures a richer data set. Its strength can also be viewed as its weakness as critics of qualitative research deem it to be subjective at best with no way for the researcher to verify the truth of the statement (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000a).

Within qualitative research the researcher tends to collect the information in natural locations in order to produce a rich set of data. This data selection can be flexible in its

approach. Such inquiry is difficult to translate into numbers therefore it is information that takes the form of words that have to be interpreted by the researcher, inductive research. In order to examine the role social networks have on sports development feelings and experiences need to be examined. Therefore a qualitative approach was utilised in this research as it is well suited to deliver the rich data sets required. Streat (1998, p.334) highlights that good qualitative research brings light to that which was previously unknown or poorly understood by providing, “familiarity through rich description.”

Analysis of qualitative data is predominately inductive in nature especially when utilising pattern identifiers in searching for themes and patterns (Patton, 2002), although Braun and Clarke (2006) and Joffe and Yardley (2004) point out that themes and patterns need to capture important information in relation to the research topic and therefore the research does not need to be purely inductive in its approach. Content analysis was utilised by Jowett (2003) and Jowett and Cockerill (2003) whilst (Côté, 1999) utilised thematic analysis to search for themes and patterns in order to interrogate the data. Patton (2002) refers to this process as pattern recognition. This project seeks to enquire into parent, coach and athlete relationships and therefore thematic analysis was utilised, as demonstrated by other researchers working in this field such as Côté (1999).

Thematic analysis is used to encode qualitative information into manageable units of analysis i.e. ‘meaning units’ or ‘code’ (Boyatzis, 1998; Côté, 1999). Encoding organises the common features into categories that relate to the phenomenon under study. Braun and Clarke (2006) reflect that one of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility which can provide rich and complex sets of data. It allows the researcher to identify, analyse and report

patterns within the data. However its flexibility can also be its weakness, Braun and Clarke (2006, p.78) comment “an absence of clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis means that the ‘anything goes’ critique of qualitative research... may apply in some instances.” As mentioned previously ‘bias’ plays a part through the active role that the researcher has in identifying themes of interest. Ely et al. (1997) state that themes reside in the head of the researcher creating links with the data collected. Effectively for every piece of acknowledged data there will be edited pieces of data that remain unacknowledged. However Braun and Clarke (2006, p.80) point out that what is important is “that the theoretical framework and method match what the researcher wants to know, and that they acknowledge these decisions.”

### **3.2 Research Method Rationale**

Donnelly (2003, p.77) states that “interpretation is the basis of all sociology.” To develop an understanding of the relationships between coach, athlete and parents and their role in golf-athlete development, a constructivist, interpretive approach was utilised. This approach allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the subjects and to investigate and provide an explanation for a relationship (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Sport can be viewed as a social reality and those who take part in it are influenced by a variety of social forces. Due to the nature of human free will they will react in a multitude of ways. It can be argued that this complex interaction cannot be measured by numbers, but instead should be measured using words, statements and non-numerical data collection techniques when collecting data from the participant’s point of view, as evidenced by the research methodologies of Côté (1999), Jowett( 2003), Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) and Scanlan et al. (1991). This forms the

foundations of the interpretive approach (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Sparkes (1992, p.26) endorses this by stating that “the interpretive paradigm seeks explanation within the realm of individual conscience and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant.”

According to Guba and Lincoln (1990) (cited in Patton, 2002, p.96) “constructivism begins with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently.” Patton (2002) reminds us that human perception cannot be viewed as real in the same way as we view the sky as real, but is in fact made up by human interpretation and construction of reality which is shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs. It is crucial to remind ourselves that there is no guarantee of absolute methodological certainty as Lincoln and Guba (2000, p.164) discuss. Denzin and Lincoln (2000c, p.872) add that “all inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer,” therefore no inquirer can be a neutral spectator of the social world. The background of the researcher can influence selection and interpretation of data (Warren, 2002). The impact the researcher has upon research is discussed by Toms and Kirk (2006) who highlight that the social position a researcher occupies in the eyes of the person or persons taking part in the study can influence the information collected. In utilising social positioning MacPhail et al. (2003) argue there is a danger of the researcher leaving their footprint on the research. Patton (2002, p.567) identifies four ways in which a researcher can distort the findings of any research:

- 1) Reaction of the participants to the qualitative researcher
- 2) Changes in the fieldworker
- 3) Biases of the researcher
- 4) Researcher incompetence

With these acknowledgements a brief bibliographical account of the researcher is provided.

### **3.3 The Researcher**

“Personal experience reflects the flow of thoughts and meanings that persons have in their immediate situations” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000d, p.636). This is examined further by Gergen and Gergen (2000, p.1027) who state “investigators seek ways of demonstrating... their historical and geographical situatedness, their personal investment in the research, various biases they bring to work.” In qualitative research the researcher is the instrument of inquiry and therefore in any qualitative report some information about the researcher should be included (Patton, 2002). In this chapter I attempt to acknowledge my background i.e. gender, social class, race, ethnicity, education values and biases that influence the orientations I bring to this research as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2000e). The language I use is purposefully colloquial in order to reflect who I am.

I was born in Brunei into an English white middle class two parent family. I effectively grew up as an only child, despite having two older siblings, thirteen and fifteen years older, however for ten months of the year they were at boarding school or with grandparents that I never met. My first six years were spent growing up in the jungle and the following eleven years in Oman growing up in a predominately white European expatriate community of oil workers. At the time I thought that this was a normal life that everyone lived. My days were filled with attending primary school until 3 o'clock at which stage my friends and I would pop over the school wall into the expats club to swim, run, play games for the next few hours before our parents picked us up. Weekends followed a similar theme except that we

would play all day stopping occasionally to eat or drink. Parental limitations on our freedoms were minor and going home to watch television was not an option. My view of the world was limited to my immediate environment. That I was an English boy growing up in a foreign country never crossed upon my thought processes at the time.

The reality of a wider world full of rules and constraints did not impinge onto my consciousness until I attended Oundle Boarding School from the age of 10 to 18. I spent my first years being viewed as an outsider with no understanding of British society or culture especially the television culture my fellow students related to. After several unhappy years I settled down and established friendships groups as I learnt and developed within this upper middle class environment before undertaking 'GCSEs' and 'A' levels. Despite this restrictive culture that I first perceived at Oundle, I can now reflect back on the wide range of freedoms the school provided as well as a vast array of academic, vocational and sporting opportunities for the developing child based around a Christian white middle class framework. Post 'A' Level I spent a year working in Australia and travelling the world before attending the University of Southampton to study 'Geology and Physical Geography' graduating in 1997. After University I worked for a year as a geologist in the oil industry based on rigs in the North Sea and Trinidad. I left the oil industry to undertake a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Geography with Subsidiary Sports at the University of Bristol, graduating in 2000. Teacher training exposed me to the most deprived schools within the Bristol area. The experience opened my eyes to the disparity of resources and opportunities offered to kids in comparison to my experiences.

After completing my newly qualified status (NQT) year in London, I spent two years teaching geography and sports in state schools in Gloucestershire. During this period I was offered the opportunity to become an Assistant Professional Golfer. I entered The PGA training programme, graduating with a Foundation Degree and qualifying as a PGA Level 3 golf coach in 2006.

In October of 2008 I left full time golf coaching to work for the PGA as part of their Coach Education Team working with the England Golf Partnership (now England Golf) as a Regional Coaching Development Officer. The focus of this role is to develop the ethos of 'Right Coach, Right Place, Right Time'. Part of this process is to help develop a coaching workforce that meets the needs and wants of golfing participants. I rewrote the County Academy Programme 2013-2017 for England Golf which is part of England Golf's Talent Pathway. My recent work and coaching experience has provided me with a wealth of experience and knowledge on coaching, coach and player development within sport and golf in particular.

I have grown up loving sport, from my earliest memories of catching a ball or a screwed up ball of paper that my parents or older siblings threw at me in a wastepaper bucket, to playing rugby, hockey, swimming or any activity my environment offered. I have experienced the joys of representing my schools and counties in a variety of sports as well as being offered an opportunity to play rugby at elite level until a major shoulder injury followed by knee and ankle injuries curtailed my rugby career.



Through all this golf has been the sport that I have played for a multitude of reasons but mostly for the individuality that it offers, where it is you versus the course. My first memories of golf are of a cut down club whacking balls, flowers and sometimes trees in the back garden and of the times I used to sit on mum's big green golf bag as she pulled her clubs and child around the course. I shot my first subpar round by 14. The exhilaration of that round still lives with me today.

Despite the formalities, traditions or restrictions and rules encountered in golf in England in comparison with my early experiences overseas it has provided an environment that has helped develop characteristics especially respect and patience that I display today. The experiences that I have gained from sport have led me on a journey that inspired me to become a coach. This has allowed me to interact and develop subsequent generations of golfers, as they discover the joys and challenges that sport can bring.

### **3.4 Researcher Bias**

MacPhail et al. (2003, p.257) acknowledges that “the strength of evidence presented in this paper is a matter of judgement, i.e., it is not free from potential bias.” For example, as Gergen and Gergen (2000, p.1027) highlight, researchers seek ways of “demonstrating to their audiences .....the ways in which their choices of literary trope lend rhetorical force to the research report,.....ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view.” This reflexivity in part aids the researcher by revealing their work as being historically, culturally and personally situated. However it still does not totally satisfy the concept of validity (Gergen and Gergen, 2000).

The background of the researcher as highlighted in the previous section created a well-developed awareness of the subject and allowed him to develop an understanding of the research area. The researcher's immersion in the same field of research enhances the type of follow up questions offered and can improve the quality of findings (Amis, 2005). However immersion in the field can lead to perceived dangers, for example Chambers (2000) highlights that if the is to close, this may influence the researcher to paint their practices in a positive light. It is this very criticism that allows researchers to provide rich contextual information that increases the depth of knowledge on the subject area. As highlighted previously the researcher is involved in the education and development of coaches as well as creating development pathways for young golfers in England. Therefore the researcher may have entered this research with preconceived ideas on potential findings. The researcher may also have previous relationships with the coaches through the researcher's role within the PGA. This relationship may be viewed as bias to the findings of the project.

Presentation of oneself is crucial as "once the interviewer's presentational self is 'cast' it leaves a profound impression on the respondents and has great influence on the success....or lack of it on the study" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p.654). Whilst social position was used to establish credibility with the coaches, parents and interviewees, the researcher did not want his perceived social positioning to bias the research, therefore the researcher tried to alleviate any misunderstandings by the interviewees on the researcher's perceived social position. The researcher needed to be aware firstly of the coaches' perceived ideas on the interviewer's position within the PGA and secondly of the athletes' and parents' views on the researcher's role within the England Golf Talent Pathway. The researcher felt it was important to acknowledge his social position. By allowing interviewees to establish their

own ideas on the interviewers social positioning misunderstandings can arise and perceived pressure can occur. Toms and Kirk (2006, p.104) allude to this “as the research progressed it became clear that these misguided beliefs also affect behaviour.” One newly qualified coach felt that the researcher was there to check his coaching. This situation may impact upon the results. Within this study information sheets provided a background on the research and the researchers’ role within it. Open discussions pre interview took place to alleviate any misunderstandings concerning the reasons behind the research.

By acknowledging that the findings within this qualitative research are therefore based on subjective analysis the researcher has attempted to approach the research with an openly inquisitive and objective mind.

### **3.5 Pilot Project**

Good practice leads researchers to conduct a ‘pilot project’ or ‘stretching exercises’ (Janesick, 2000, p.386). This allows qualitative researchers to “practice interview, observation, writing, reflection and artistic skills to refine their research instruments” (Janesick, 2000, p.386). Pilot projects allow researchers the opportunity to develop their skills before committing to the rigours of the larger project.

Prior to the main research project a pilot project was conducted on two groups made up of the coach, athlete and parents. The purpose was to test the structure of the study, to gain experience in interviewing techniques and to test the semi structured interview guide with open ended interview questions and follow up probe questions in order to gain greater depth

of information within the framework provided. The interview guide allowed the researcher to follow the same lines of inquiry with each interview whilst allowing the interviewer to develop conversational areas within a topic area, to probe and ask questions to elucidate further information. This approach allowed the interviewer to manage the limited interview time more effectively by narrowing the fields of exploration which the research subjects explore (Patton, 2002). With interviews recorded and transcribed the style of questioning was analysed, notes were made to ensure the questions remained open ended and further prompts or probe questions were identified. When interview locations were reviewed, the background noise of the club environment was identified as an issue. New interview locations were identified where the subjects felt comfortable as well as providing a private and quiet environment. Limited information gained from one of the coaches identified a change in the selection criteria for coaches, with the stipulation that athlete must have been with their current coach for over a year. An observational sheet was created to record certain other data on the individuals from the amount of time coaches have been coaching, to inquiries made on the family status such as married with siblings.

### **3.6 Research Design**

#### **3.6.1 Sampling**

Qualitative research lends itself to purposeful sampling, where small sample sizes are the norm. In quantitative research random sampling counters potential population ‘bias’ and allows for the generalisation of the sample to be transposed on to the broader population. This ‘bias’ in statistical sampling is seen as a weakness, however within qualitative

sampling this 'bias' becomes a focus which allows the researcher to develop information rich cases which can be studied in greater depth (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005; Scanlan et al., 1991) it is therefore seen as a strength (Patton, 2002). Targeting subjects typical of the group being researched and who have insights in the area of research are the main principles of purposeful sampling (Amis, 2005). Research (Côté 1999; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2008; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005) utilised clear criteria in which to categorise their groupings when identifying a sample population. In Jowett (2003) and Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) the criterion for the coach and athletes are identifiable but no criterion is set for the parents. In studying these information rich cases the researcher is able to develop their understanding around the central issues pertinent to the inquiry.

### 3.6.2 Sample Criteria

To reduce the sample population this project utilised criterion sampling as the strategy of selection. Criterion sampling allows the researcher to study cases that meet predetermined selection criteria. The sampling was conducted upon a select group that was of interest to this researcher and would aid the researcher in understanding the central issues based on interactions between coach, parent and athlete and their influences in developing talented golfers. In this project key criterion to elicit potentially rich data are based on the performers and coaches' background. The researcher indentified a group of talented male golfers with current or recent experience in the developmental journey, from sampling through investment (Côté, 1999). It was important that the athletes were in a position to reflect on their development and the influence their relationships had on their development, as

previously identified by Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005). Therefore male athletes were identified between 18 and 22 years of age with a handicap of 2 or better. The athletes had to have a current PGA Professional coaching them. Whilst a younger cohort could reflect more clearly on recent events in their development they would be less likely to have completed the developmental journey. An older cohort was not approached due to concerns that they would be further removed from the key events during development and from their family unit and have increased problems with memory recall (Patton, 2002).

In interview data it is important to highlight some of the potential limitations. As mentioned above this age group will potentially suffer from recall bias as well as self serving responses. To minimise these in the sample population, probe questions were employed to test the quality of the data and to reduce potential bias expressed by the subject (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Gratton and Jones, 2004). However, respondents' accounts should not be viewed as an accurate account of reality but rather as a "plausible account of the world" (Silverman, 2002, p.823). A further limitation of this sample is that findings cannot be generalised to other groups such as female elite golfers and younger golfers who do not achieve elite status.

Previous research (Côté et al., 2007; Jowett, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis 2005) criteria on coaches highlighted coaching experience of 10 years or more as well as in national or international involvement. Coaches in this study demonstrated the ability to work with low handicap golfers and to be PGA qualified. Coaches involved in County, Regional or National coaching schemes were likely to work with and coach low single figure handicap golfers. Whilst this study does not focus on the coaching expertise of the coaches, expert

coaches have a greater opportunity to work with talented developing golfers. Expert coaches are those who can identify the needs of the participant, understand their role within that context and provide the appropriate developmental requirements of the participant (Côté et al., 2007). This view on expert coaching, counter to Lemyre et al.'s (2007) view, allows coaches to be expert no matter what level of participant they are working with and also argues that not all elite coaches are expert and not all expert coaches coach elite players.

### **3.7 Pre Field Work**

Gaining the trust of the subjects is crucial in the success of any research, especially that which leads to face to face interactions. Once trust is established it can be easily lost (Fontana and Frey, 2000). In order to maximise the effectiveness of the interview structure utilised in the project and to gain a richer data set, it is important to establish rapport with the subjects. Fontana and Frey (2000) highlight that researchers should be mindful that the closer the researcher becomes to the subjects the easier it is to become a spokesman for the group thereby losing objectivity. Patton (2002) suggests rapport must not affect neutrality; the interviewees must be able to share their experiences without influencing the researcher's perspective. Qualitative researchers utilising interviews frequently endeavour to establish rapport with their subjects (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005; Lorimer and Jowett, 2009). Coaches in this research project are known to the researcher through previous coaching experiences or through the researcher's position in the PGA therefore rapport has been previously established. Coaches were informed through information sheets and meetings with the researcher of the nature of the study. In the case of the parents and athletes, rapport was established pre interview through the recruitment of the

potential participants by the researcher. During this phase the aims and the background of the research were outlined verbally and through the use of information sheets (Appendix 1) and consent forms (Appendix 2). In establishing open and honest communication the participants were encouraged to express their views at any time prior and post the research project. All participants were informed of their right to check the transcripts for accuracy. After an explanation as to the background of the study interviews were arranged with all participants and an interview scheduled was established.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Arguments for and against confidentiality are based around the subject's empowerment (Patton, 2002) as opposed to the traditional view that the code of ethics insists on safeguards to protect the location and identities of the subjects (Christians, 2000). Professional courtesy predominately agrees that no one should be harmed or embarrassed by insensitive research practice. "Sacrificing anonymity means we may have to write less poignant, more circumspect ethnographies" (Walford, 2005, p.89). Therefore each participant's real name is replaced by a pseudonym in order to protect their confidentiality as much as possible. There is however always the potential for pseudonym and location changes to be recognised by insiders, as highlighted by Christians (2000). Information (clubs, counties, family etc.) which is not important to the research and could potentially lead to identification, was altered to further minimise the risk of identification (Jowett, 2003).

All subjects were contacted and guided through the nature and purpose of the study. Following on from the conversations each participant was provided with an information



sheet, consent form and interview topic sheet (Appendices) which provided an outline of the research project, and explained their right to privacy and their freedom to withdraw from the research at any time, thus they were able to provide their informed consent voluntarily (Gratton and Jones, 2004). The process complied with the British Ethical Research Association (BERA, 2011) and University of Birmingham guidelines. Further ethical issues arising through the research are explored throughout the methodology.

### **3.9 Data Collection**

#### **3.9.1 Developing the Interview**

To reveal truth Cohen et al. (2005, p.5) state that the search for it should incorporate personal experience, reasoning and research and that this process must be regarded as “the most successful approach to the discovery of truth.” Amis (2005) suggests that the researcher develops a sound understanding of literature based around the study. This allows the researcher to potentially develop questions relevant to the subject area. Questions should be developed by understanding what information is required to meet the research objective (Gratton and Jones, 2004). This was achieved through a combination of developing the researcher’s knowledge of relevant literature with the sports domain pertaining to the field of inquiry (Côté, 1999; Jowett, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005), through active engagement with the researcher’s academic advisor and through the researcher’s personal experiences as a player, PGA coach and parent.

Both Fontana and Frey (2000) and Patton (2002) highlight the popularity of interviewing and its use as the basic method of data gathering by researchers. It can be viewed as an active interaction between people that leads to contextually based results. Interviews can collect data that is challenging to measure and can explore the why and how rather than when and how many (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Interviews provide richer data sets than for example questionnaires. There is however societal assumptions that interviews lead to a true and accurate picture of life Fontana and Frey (2000) question whether the interviewee is clouded by recent experiences. In order to develop deeper understanding 'probe questions' can be utilised. Patton (2002) qualified this type of interview as a standardized open-ended interview. To avoid interviewer bias, care was taken not to present leading questions that can influence the interviewee in providing the answers the researcher wishes to find. To counter this, questions were open ended. Jowett (2003, p.446) used 'What does it mean to you to have a close relationship with your coach?' as an open ended question, however this appears to identify a dimension along which the respondent can answer 'e.g. close relationship'. Open ended questions such as 'How do you feel about your coach?' Avoid fixed choice responses and the dimensions along which they can respond (Patton, 2002). 'Probe questions' such as 'How did that come about?' can then be employed to develop further the richness of the information.

Following minor changes from the pilot project a semi-structured interview guide was developed. The interview guide (Patton, 2002) allowed the researcher to follow the same lines of inquiry with each interviewee but it also allows the interviewer to develop conversational areas within a topic area, to probe and ask questions to illuminate further information relevant to the project. This approach to data collection allows the interviewee

to express themselves in their natural manner, whilst retaining a structure to the data collection between different interviewees (Biddle et al., 2001). This allows the interviewer to manage the limited interview time more effectively by narrowing the fields of exploration the research subjects explore (Patton, 2002). The semi-structured approach provides researcher flexibility in collecting the data, by altering the order of the questions and by the use of 'probe questions' to illicit further information (Bell, 2005; Sewell, 2009).

### 3.9.2 Data Collection Process

Interviewing individuals was the chosen method for collecting information from the research subjects. The use of focus groups in conducting the interviews was considered, however Patton (2002) identified that focus groups work best when the group is comprised of strangers. Issues of confidentiality also arise. Research suggests (Gratton and Jones, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) that interview location is important; the interviewee should feel comfortable and secure. Privacy is essential to minimise bias created by the presence of others. Conversations should not be overheard, nor should there be high levels of background noise, in order to minimise misunderstandings of commentary. All the coaches requested the interviews to take place in a private room at their coaching facility. Interviews of parents and athletes took place at their homes at separate times from each other. For each interview the researcher checked that the environment was conducive for a good interview and where the audio device could record the conversations clearly (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

Each participant was asked to allow an hour of their time. The same introductory procedure was followed for each interview and the participant was reminded of their rights to anonymity and their right to withdraw at any time. Completed consent forms were returned and last minute questions concerning the process were answered at this stage. Each participant was asked to discuss the four topic areas presented on the sheets (Appendix 3). Probe questions could be utilised as discussed previously to elicit further information relevant to the subject area.

Qualitative interviews have utilised recording devices to record the context or the raw data of the interview. For an in-depth interview it was essential that the interview was recorded on digital voice recorder (Olympus VN-480pc) in order to check the wording of any statement or quotes to be utilised in the research (Bell, 2005). Both Gratton and Jones (2004) and Bell (2005) identified that it is impossible to recall the content of an entire interview without recording it. Audio devices allow interviewers to focus on interview content to take notes on areas of interest, to make eye contact and engage with the participant helping to establish rapport. Neutrality however must be maintained. Patton (2002) raised some ethical issues to be aware of whilst interviewing as interviews are in effect interventions and can affect people. Interviews often reveal thoughts, feelings, experiences and knowledge. They may open old wounds or interviewers may be tempted to offer advice or answer questions. The interviewer, should as far as possible remain neutral throughout the information gathering process.

Technology can inhibit participant responses (Gratton and Jones, 2004; Patton, 2002). Throughout the interviews the researcher tried to retain a 'neutral' pose, conscious that interviewer responses might inadvertently change the interviewee responses (Patton, 2002).

### **3.10 Data Analysis and Encoding**

Transcription "prepares the material from the interview ready for analysis" (Sewell, 2009, p.4). Audio files were transferred on to a password protected hard drive in accordance with the Data Protection Act and transcribed verbatim on to a Word document. Each document was returned to the participant for verification of the text. This process adds validity to the research findings (Creswell, 1998). Subjects had an opportunity to add further comments that may have been overlooked at the time. Where participants responded it was in each case limited to grammatical issues. In total 106 pages of single spaced interview transcriptions were produced. Within the word document each line was automatically and sequentially numbered as indicated below:

75      Mary: He didn't have a new set of clubs until he was, his handicap was  
76      down into the teens. He always had second hand...

Coding is the first step of analysis (Patton, 2002). Encoding the data utilised a combination of the interview number e.g. interview 1, the participants (pseudonym) initial M and the line number, Line 121, on which the data unit started. This encoding allowed the researcher to identify and relocate relevant sections of text, (e.g.1M 121 would stand for Interview 1, Marie, line 121). The initials utilised for the encoding were derived from the pseudonyms

created for the participants; the initials indicated who the response came from. Mothers' names would start with an M or Fathers' with an F, coaches had names starting with C and athletes' names all start with A. The names utilised reflect the cultural background of the participants.

During the encoding, the researcher utilised the underlying principles that underpin the research to inform the coding for the overarching themes (deductive research) Joffe and Yardley (2004). The underlying principles were: involvement, relationships, support and talent development. Interviews were coded for patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002). Once the overarching themes emerged the data was re-examined. Further themes emerged from the overarching themes for example, parental support (money, equipment) and parental influence (introduction, playing, advice.). These emerged from the overarching theme of family. These subthemes were closely linked to the data set and therefore inductive (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The text was copied and pasted into a Word Document as shown in Analysis 1 (see Appendix 4).

### **Analysis 1**

Interview	Initials	Line	Theme	Sub-Theme	Data Extract
1	M	519- 520	Family	Parental Support	We sorted him with lessons, we supported him... up until... seventeen

The number of themes and subthemes that emerged (as shown in the hierarchical table) was determined through the analysis of the data after it had been encoded and collated. The data was exhausted once no new themes and subthemes had emerged. Themes were reviewed and refined by the researcher and second investigator. Some themes were removed due to a

lack of relevant data to support them whilst others were merged or separated in order to achieve meaningful themes that were clear and identifiable. At this point the data within the themes was analysed and a detailed analysis was written in order to tell the story of the data collected (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006)

### Hierarchical Table

Theme	Sub Theme	Data Unit
<b>1. Family</b>	Parental Influence	Mainly it was my dad that got me started in golf. Mainly because he just played
	Parental Support	There are times we have had to get up early on the weekend to ferry him to a comp in other counties it's just what you do
	Parent-Athlete Relationship	It was very positive to start with... until my teens... where you know maybe me and dad didn't really well there were sort of arguments
	Siblings	I had an older brother and sister erm and they always took me down during the holiday periods and played with me
<b>2. Relationships</b>	Coach-Athlete Relationship	He was always able to motivate him wasn't he even if he wasn't playing very well
	Coach-Parent Relationship	I got to know him from having brief chats when I picked up or dropped Alex off
	Dyadic Realignment	Since he started driving he has pretty much made his own decisions on who he goes to see for his coaching
<b>3. Environment</b>	Organisation Influences	He won all his matches [County] but didn't get selected again. I don't know why... maybe his face didn't fit
	Peer Influence	He has got a good group of friends that help him out... and encourage him

### **3.11 Reliability and Validity**

Gratton and Jones (2004, p. 85) state that the two concepts by which research is assessed “are those of reliability and validity”. These are utilised to determine how truthful a piece of research is. Whatever the procedure used for data collection it should always be examined to what extent the data is reliable and valid (Bell, 2005). The documenting of the data collection, data analysis and data interpretation methods used in this study are offered as evidence of reliability in this instance (Biddle et al., 2001). Reliability according to Gratton and Jones (2004) generally refers to the consistency of the results acquired during the research. The collection of data was approached in the same way for each of the interviews. Each interviewee was presented with the topics of discussion along with a sheet that contained memory prompts. All interviews took place within an environment that the interviewees felt comfortable and that was quiet. For the parents and athletes the interviews took place at their homes and for the coaches interviews were conducted in a room at their coaching facility. Validity is more problematic and is often why many qualitative researchers avoid terms such as validity and reliability, instead utilising qualitative concepts such as credibility and dependability (Janesick, 2000). Patton (2002) argues that researchers can increase credibility by emphasising the criteria that are deemed to have priority within the tradition.

As highlighted in previous chapters, reliability and validity were increased through a variety of methods. The standardised interview schedule allowed for a consistency in approach across the interviews in essence reliability. Open ended questions and follow up probe questions were employed to check for understanding and to test the quality of the



data. This minimised the potential bias expressed by the subject and researcher (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Gratton and Jones, 2004; Martindale et al., 2007). Gratton and Jones (2004) also highlight that validity can be increased if the subjects are aware of the confidentiality of the interview. Walford (2005) highlights that research can become increasingly circumspect if anonymity is sacrificed. Rapport with all interviewee's was developed (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Patton, 2002) and interviews were recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were then verified by the subjects, in effect 'stake holder checks' (Martindale et al., 1997), leading to an increase in reliability of the data. However rapport must not affect neutrality (Patton, 2002).

In order to further develop the credibility and to minimise researcher bias, a second investigator interpreted the data collected, i.e. triangulation through multiple analyses (Gratton and Jones, 2004; Patton, 2002). The data was analysed and encoded into themes and sub themes by the researcher. Upon completion of the encoding a second investigator analysed all the encoded themes and sub-themes. Areas of uncertainty in interpretation of the data units, themes and sub themes were discussed between the researcher and investigator until a consensus was reached. Failure to reach an agreement led to the removal of the data unit from the theme or sub theme. This led to the reduction of data units from 578 to 468. Discussions between researcher and second investigator also led to movement of some data units into a more appropriate theme. In this way the researcher attempted to minimise potential bias.

### **3.12 Chapter Conclusion**

Qualitative research provides the tools with which to gather rich data in order to analyse the roles which socialization and social networks play in athlete development, as evidenced by previous research within this field (Cohn, 1990; Côté, 1999; Jowett and Timson-Katchis 2005; Scanlan et al., 1991). The constructivist and interpretive framework provided the basis for the methodological framework discussed within the chapter. This chapter introduced the participants involved in the study and explained how they were selected. The researcher, his background and potential bias were identified. Research design, methods of data collection and analysis were identified along with ethical considerations and bias, before concluding by identifying issues of validity and reliability surrounding qualitative research.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter explores the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data and relates them to previous research conducted within the domain of sport based around socialization, relationships and environment in developing talent. This chapter primarily focuses on the two overarching themes of family and relationships. These encapsulate the influences and relationships between the coach, parent and athlete and discuss the sub themes found within them. The remaining overarching theme of environment is discussed briefly, due to the low frequency of the theme. The percentages of the overarching themes are laid out in order of frequency found within the 468 data sets (as shown in the Frequency Table). However, as Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82) highlight “more instances does not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial.”

#### Frequency Table

Overarching Theme	Encoded Data Units
Family	$220 \div 468 \times 100 = 47.00\%$
Relationships	$187 \div 468 \times 100 = 39.96\%$
Environment	$61 \div 468 \times 100 = 13.03\%$

## **4.2 Family**

The overarching theme of family focuses on the parent-athlete relationship. Within this theme two main sub themes emerged from the data units, firstly parental influence, in which either the mother or father influenced and helped maintain the participation of the athlete in the sport. This also affects the impact the parents have on the athlete's decision making process within the sport. Secondly, parental support encapsulates emotional, financial and time commitments and opportunities provided by the parents for the athlete to become involved in or develop within the sport. All five athletes came from a family structure involving two parents which links to Kay's (2000) research that family structure may positively influence athlete development.

### **4.2.1 Parental Influence**

Research conducted on families (Anderson et al., 2003; Brustad, 1981; Côté and Hay, 2002a; Eccles and Harold, 1991) highlighted the variety of ways in which parents interact and influence their children's extracurricular activity. Eccles and Harold (1991) propose that parents influence the child's choices by communicating their beliefs on the child's chances of success. This research has confirmed some of the findings in previous research which showed that parents provide the main introduction for the child into sport.

Dad got me a membership at xxxx golf club..... where I started to play junior club nights, which was a Saturday afternoon nine holes and we used to have a bit of fun really - (8A 25/5/2011)

The influence of parents can also be seen to play a crucial role in reintroducing and sustaining the athlete's engagement in the sport after a period of inactivity due to commitments from other sports.

Played on holiday... [with dad] thought I want to get back into this, I'm enjoying this...so yeah started playing down in xxxx, joined there as a junior member - (11A 17/6/2011)

Both Côté (1999) and MacPhail et al. (2003) endorse the role parents and fun play in exposing and maintaining children's sports activity. Côté (1999, p.401) states "parents provide opportunities for their children to enjoy sport." Especially during the sampling years when the focus is based around fun and enjoyment. Parents are seen to provide the opportunity for children to sample, have fun and become interested in a range of challenging sporting activities.

Research indicates that a key influence upon children's sports involvement is the children's perception of parental sports involvement (Brustad, 1993; Hellstedt, 1987; Stein et al., 1999). Within this study all the athletes echoed similar sentiments indicating the main cause of their initial involvement in golf was directed by a parent or a significant family member introducing or exposing them to the sport.

Earliest memory was probably when I was... aged six... and dad took me to play nine holes down... xxxx. I had an old six iron that he [dad] cut down for me... that's the earliest memory – (11A 17/6/2011)

I would have a few shots on the golf course, because my mum was heavily into her golf at the time – (14A 17/7/2011)

No direct evidence could be found to suggest the father (Hellstedt, 1995) or the mother (Bois et al., 2005; Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994) to be the main influencer of a child athlete's development. Both family members play a significant role in encouraging their child to play sport, however the primary golf player in four of the five family units was a male member (father or grandfather) of the family. The research highlighted that the non-golf playing family member, usually the mother, still played a significant role in influencing their child's participation in golf. The mother appeared to influence the child either through their own involvement in sport, or by providing significant parental support.

I [mother] always encouraged Andrew to play sport, but golf was never my thing, I would always take time and listen to what he had to say about his game. But he played because Fred played – (6M 16/2/2011)

Athlete (4A) supported this by identifying the influence the mother played in encouraging and maintaining her son's sports participation, despite not being an active golfer.

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My mum has always encouraged me to play sport, keep fit and be active but does not play herself – (4A 2/2/2011)

Research highlights the impact of parenting styles and children's perceptions of parenting styles upon sport participation (Brustad, 1993; Côté, 1999; Harter, 1981; Hellstedt, 1987; Maccoby, 1992; Stein et al., 1999). Parenting style was not directly investigated in the research, especially in relation to Maccoby's (1992) and Hellstedt's (1987) descriptions of the authoritarian, authoritative or permissive parenting style. It was hoped in maintaining open topics for the interviewees to talk about based on influences, relationships and talent development that indicators would emerge to the nature of the relationships between parents and the athletes. Observations from the parents and athletes provided indicators as to the nature of the parenting style adopted. It was clear that the athletes identified their parents to be supportive in their endeavour to pursue golfing success. This supports the findings documented by Stein et al. (1999) and Babkes and Weiss (1999) in which medium to high level involvement by both parents is perceived by athletes as appropriate and helps create enjoyable experiences more frequently than stressful ones.

My parents have always been supportive.... but not over pressurising. They wanted me to do well, but they never built me up before an event wanting me to do well. They just really wanted me to enjoy it – (4A 2/2/2011)

You know I doubt... I would have made it on my own... I would definitely hit the wall much earlier without their help – (2A 8/2/2011)

Whilst the relationship in one group remained positive and supportive between the parents and the athlete, conflict increased in another as the athlete matured and the relationship with the coach became increasingly interdependent. This supports Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) research on dyadic realignment, which highlights the change in relationship with the parents as the coach-athlete relationship strengthens. For a time increases in conflict arose between the father and athlete supporting both Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) findings of dyadic withdrawal and Stein et al. (1999) findings that fathers were seen to have created a higher frequency of stressful situations than mothers.

Flynn: as far as he's concerned I'll talk with Chris and nobody else you know, it's that..., that sort of relationship

Margret: that started to happen over the last twelve... eighteen months. I would say... for me that was no problem. Dad I can't speak for... I think his nose was put out of joint a little – (7F 9/6/2011)

This conflict identified by the mother is further supported by the athlete who highlighted an increase in arguments during this period with the father.

There were... arguments..... I know he wants the best for me.... It's just the way it comes across in the heat of the moment... and I always feel... he wants to put his penny's worth in, which... he has every right to... but at times I don't like it – (8A 25/5/2011)



De Knop and De Martelaer (2001) indicate that involvement from parents can be misguided. Parents lose focus on what is important in this case the child and can become too involved with the overall performance as opposed to the wellbeing of the child. This can be characterised through actions such as excessive shouting at competitions, arguments with the athlete and coach. Babkes and Weiss (1999) recognise that there is a fine line between parent's perceptions and those of the young athletes in areas such as positive versus negative responses or pressure versus support. During this study few comments were made upon parental expectations, pressure, stress or anxiety as experienced by some athletes (Brustad, 1996). This is not to say that the athletes interviewed did not feel any but rather a reflection on the topics the subjects were asked to reflect upon. However, regrets were expressed by several of the parents in that they felt that they should have done more to influence or support their child but were afraid of putting too much pressure upon the athlete.

I know it's difficult. Perhaps if I pushed him more....made more noises about it –  
(6F 16/2/2011)

Parents identified some issues they face and the fine line in trying to help their child but not wanting to be overbearing and not doing enough to push their son and feeling guilty about missed opportunities. In several cases parents expressed their desire for support in areas where they lacked knowledge which could have been beneficial in the athlete's development. This highlights a perfect opportunity for coaches to educate parents (Gould, 1982 cited in Hellstedt 1987, p. 151). If this opportunity had been taken then the beginning

of a constructive triadic relationship could have developed that revolved around the development of the athlete.

I do feel like with not knowing a little bit more in depth information about the county and everything... we might have been able to get him to that next level.... I do feel like I have let him down there – (10M 17/6/2011)

I didn't really know who to speak to as opposed to other parents. At the more established clubs they know the people to contact – (6F 16/2/2011)

The impact of parental influence is most evident in the early years of the athlete's journey and is demonstrated by their influence in choosing the coach.

I [dad] gave Chris a ring... from the moment he met him that was it, you know that was all I want to see... that's where I want to go and he's... been there ever since – (7F 9/6/2011)

Dad met up with a bookmaker... who recommended a golf coach... at xxxx, who was Craig. Went to see him probably from about the age of twelve probably to about eighteen – (11A 17/6/2011)

Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) demonstrated the negative influence parents can have on the coach athlete relationship. However, during this study only one participant linked the parent to the dissolution of a coach-athlete relationship. In this case it was in agreement with

the athlete. In most cases it was the athlete demonstrating their desire to move on rather than a parent.

It was sort of a mutual agreement between me and dad that... when I was going to move from Charles. We sort of realised that he took us, took me to the max... that he could – (8A 25/5/2011)

The research identified that both parents were instrumental in establishing contact with the coaches early on in the athlete's life. As the athlete matured and dyadic realignment occurred, the parent's direct input on this decision making process was reduced, as highlighted by Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005). However, in many cases the parents still played an important role in influencing the decision making process. The athletes acknowledged that they still talk to their parents to seek advice on matters of coaching and development. With athlete (4A) this led to the renewal of his partnership with his first golf coach.

I said go back to Charlie, he knows your game he seen it from the basic stuff to where you are now and he knows it and sure enough he did... he got back in touch with him – (6F 16/2/2011)

Dad was there niggling in the ear just give Chris a go... you've done it before... and yeah it's paid off in some respects – (11A 17/6/2011)

One participant highlighted that in the last eighteen months he had changed coach numerous times. With the father playing a crucial role in the decision making process each time. Reflection from the athlete highlighted that he felt he had too many mixed messages coming into his game and that if he could do it again he would have stuck with one coach. This highlighted that even the best intentions may have negative consequences. Within this study group the overall view expressed by athletes highlighted the positive role their parents played in introducing them and encouraging them to stay within the game of golf and can be summed up in the comment shown below; this support has aided them in their development to their current level of ability.

When I was younger they were brilliant really trying to encourage me to get into golf, taking me to lessons.... Getting lots of equipment, paying for my membership –  
(4A 2/2/2011)

#### 4.2.2 Parental Support

Reflections from the participants on this project support previous research (Côté, 2002; Kay, 2000; Stein et al., 1999) by highlighting the significant role and sacrifice parents play in enabling their children to progress and develop within golf by providing emotional or tangible support. Stein et al. (1999, p.592) encapsulates this by stating “Parental involvement entails the time, energy, and money parents invest in their child’s sports participation.” Within the project three main themes of parental support emerged: financial, time and emotional support.

Financial support in golf is a crucial aspect that involves purchasing equipment and, if the athlete wants to develop, time and opportunities need to be provided on a golf course. Each parental group highlight the expenses that are entailed in golf from equipment to lessons and membership costs over a sustained period of time. This direct input further supports MacPhail et al.'s (2003) and Côté's (1999) argument that parents help maintain their child's sporting activity and without this direct support there would be limited opportunity to develop within the sport. This exposure can influence children's sporting skills and choices of activity (Fredricks and Eccles, 2004).

First half set we paid for, replacement half set we paid for, ladies.....when he was a bit older paid for and since then he has been custom fit...four....sets – (10F 17/6/2011)

Athlete (11A) highlighted the lengths parents go in order to provide the support in this case through lessons that their child needed to maintain their participation and to develop.

Dad sacrificed a lot for me to go to Charlie you know, he owned some greyhounds and.... gave that up so that I could go and have these lessons – (11A 17/6/2011)

Expenses involved in golf were identified by two of the parental groups as a cause of concern in allowing their child to develop. Both groups highlighted the importance of other family members contributing to the financial support for the athletes. This usually took the form of purchasing equipment.

He got his first set of clubs from his granddad... he bought him... a putter and a seven iron and then every week that dad got paid then he would go into the pro shop and buy him another club – (1M 8/2/2011)

As athletes develop the cost of equipment, competitions and membership and additional expenses (food, travel, and accommodation) increased. Some costs are offset by a reduction in the number of sports played (Kay, 2000). The research supported this theory with all athletes highlighting that as they became increasingly involved in golf they stopped playing other sports. Upon reflection many of the athletes wished that they had specialised earlier in order to be further along in their development today. Each group acknowledged the escalating costs of financing their children's sporting participation as they became increasingly proficient in the sport, although as discussed later in dyadic realignment the cost of equipment transferred to the athlete as part of the athlete's emotional development and search for independence.

As I have got better and... older costs have escalated... thankfully and obviously I am very, very thankful for the supportive parents that I've got – (8A 25/5/2011)

Parents highlighted that support went far beyond direct financial input. As athletes developed their skills the type and amount of support provided changed and increased, especially around time commitments. All the parents highlighted their role in providing transport, commonly referred to as the taxi service, to the club, competitions and lessons. This was identified as a significant time commitment, supporting Fredricks and Eccles (2004) argument that parents provide for their child opportunities to develop their skills.

The parents brought him along... and they were there... every time I taught him they were there... watching ... being with him... really supporting him in effect whilst he was having a lesson – (3C 25/2/2011)

During the summer holidays... you know, mum was taxi, taking him up to xxxx – (10F 17/6/2011)

This research identified an increase in time commitments by the parents as athletes become involved in higher level competitions, supporting Kay's (2000) research. In the early days the parents drove the child down to the local club for competitions and practice. As the athlete developed this commitment increased, highlighting Fredricks and Eccles (2004) comments that parents are providers of experience. Parents took time to discover new courses around the county. As the athletes became involved in inter-county competition, the length and time of journeys increased. One family highlighted that their holiday entitlement was utilised in supporting their child to enter national and international competitions. The 'family holiday' now revolved around the athlete's competitions, financial support changed from funding equipment to paying for hotels, fuel and food for extended periods of time.

The better he has become, the more expensive the more the strain....on time away... now there will be weekends or two or three day events where I've got to go or Margret has got to go... and your holidays are exhausted really – (7F 9/6/2011)

I was practising more... playing more, winning more competitions which was funded... sort of going around the junior... junior opens around [county], which obviously costs – (8A 25/5/2011)

Both Maccoby (1992) and Hellstedt (1987) indicate that child self-esteem is a crucial factor in sports participation. Further research also provides evidence that there are links between a child's self-esteem and the level of emotional support they receive from a parent, Babkes and Weiss (1999). Bois et al. (2005, p.382) sums up Eccles and colleague's research by stating "the beliefs that parents hold for their children influences the patterns of interaction with the child, such as extent of encouragement and the provision of opportunities." The common theme from all the groups was the amount of emotional support the mother in particular, but not exclusively, provided. The father in general terms could be viewed as the primary influencer into the physical activity (Hellstedt, 1995) whilst the mother (Bois et al., 2005) can be seen to provide the encouragement and opportunities to develop the athlete. The evidence from this research shows that the roles were interchangeable between the parents and therefore they do not necessarily have distinct patterns of influence. The importance of this emotional support was clearly demonstrated within one family group after the mother identified the numerous poor experiences that their child overcame in golf, due to negative perceptions of their child caused by diagnoses of Asperger's Syndrome. In this case coach, parents and athlete acknowledged that the support provided for the athlete by the parents enabled the athlete to stay and develop in the sport. This links with Babkes and Weiss (1999) findings of athlete's perceived perceptions of parental support which indicate the positive role the mother and father have. The father learnt to play the game after the grandfather could no longer play so that he could provide the emotional support



required on the course for the athlete, whilst the mother became a junior golf organiser to ensure that she would always be there to provide help if required. The support provided by the father goes against some of the findings identified in Bois et al. (2005) research on parental predictors of children's involvement in physical activity. It should be acknowledged that Bois and colleague's research was conducted on a younger age range and across genders groups.

Michelle: He's had some horrendous experiences but he, he's stuck at it...

Flynn: But we've had to be there for all those haven't we? You in particular, in the early days – (1M 8/2/2011)

Michelle: there was a parent who... waded in and... got Allen so worked up he couldn't even add his score card up properly

Flynn: So we have had to be there, we've wanted to be there as well – (1M 8/2/2011)

Athlete (4A) summed up the role his parents played in his golf development by highlighting the emotional support and belief that his mother provided, whilst acknowledging his father as the primary socialiser and opportunity provider. Both were seen to have enabled the athlete to enjoy the sport.

I guess the roles my parents took my mum was the listener, my dad... used to take me down to the golf club... after school or if he finished work early during the summer we used to come up here and play golf – (4A 2/2/2011)

#### 4.2.3 Sibling Influence

Both Larson and Richards (1994) and Whiteman et al. (2007) identified that siblings spend time together participating in a wide range of activities. However, it was only in the family unit with a significantly older brother and sister where evidence of sibling influence emerged from the interviews.

I've an older brother and sister and it has kind of.....it's always motivated me to.... I have always wanted to be as good as they were...as quickly as possible – (14 17/7/2011)

Within the family units where the athlete is the older brother to a younger sister, no interaction in shared activity emerged from the interviews. This could be in part down to the open nature of the data collection and had the interviewer asked questions on this area then further evidence based around sibling interactions may have emerged. The only acknowledgment from parents of sibling impact was the separation in duties between the parents.

I became the link person for Alex's sister with horse riding and we both got involved with that whilst the boys had the golf thing – (6M 16/2/2011)

The findings in this overarching theme of family support previous research (Bois et al., 2005; Côté, 1999; Fredricks and Eccles, 2004; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005; MacPhail et al., 2003; Papaioannou et al., 2008) in acknowledging that parental influence goes beyond

the initial input of socializing a child in to sport but also continues to help them maintain their sport participation. This can be identified by the parental support provided through emotional, financial and opportunity in order to maintain the athletes' participation in the sport. The nature and impact of sibling influences did not emerge in a credible way apart from to acknowledge that there was a division in time between the parents supporting the siblings. No new evidence emerged about the interrelationship between siblings.

### **4.3 Coach, Parent and Athlete Relationships**

Two main sub themes emerged from relationships, however, it is important to highlight that parent-athlete relationship came under the overarching theme of family:

- 1) Coach-athlete relationship
- 2) Coach-parent relationships

Dyadic realignment is discussed and the impact it has on the relationships within the triad of the parent, coach and athlete.

#### **4.3.1 Coach-Athlete Relationships**

Influences on the coach-athlete relationship occurred to support previous findings by Côté (2002), Jowett (2003), Jowett and Cockerill (2003) and Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005). These showed that the nature of the coach-athlete relationship is a fundamental part of the coaching process, affecting the athlete's self-esteem, performance and overall satisfaction. This research demonstrates the positive and negative influences coaches have on athletes

and the importance of the parents and athlete deciding upon the coach rather than external factors such as a county organisation.

A coach needs to be on my level...talk to me like on my level... they got be serious as Craig is. He'll tell it as it is... he'll tell me straight. He doesn't really hold back – (2A 2/2/2011)

Chris always made time for me... I can just give him a text and... he will give me a call back so... saying that was very good or... we need a lesson or something like that and it's... the same from him as well, he'll text me as well... saying how did you get on? – (8A 25/5/2011)

Coach (3C) highlighted the problems his athlete experienced when attending county coaching sessions. This demonstrated factors, that impact on an athlete's development and is covered later in the 'Environment' section. This also highlights the positive effect of a constructive coach-athlete relationship. This relationship enabled the coach and athlete to overcome external influences that were negatively impacting the athlete.

He won't go to anyone else. When he had county coaching he wouldn't listen to anyone he went to, [he said] 'my coach is Craig... I'm not going to anyone else...', He ended up getting vouchers so that he could use the vouchers with me rather than go on county group coaching... that's great respect for me isn't it – (3C 25/2/2011)

Jowett and Cockerill's (2003) and Kirk and MacPhail's (2003) themes of mutual respect, friendship, communication, trust and development between coach and athlete occurred throughout the interviews when discussing the current coach athlete relationship, indicating positive attitudes within the relationship.

It's just a great communication you know... you can see him more as a friend than a coach but when we get down to it, is that when we are on the driving range or the chipping green he's my coach and I respect everything that he says – (8A 25/5/2011)

Examples of the coach-athlete relationship developing beyond the bounds of the coaching environment were apparent, at times the coach become part of the athlete's social network and vice versa. Instances below range from providing work to playing opportunities. This highlighted how coaches incorporate the athlete into the coaches' social network. Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) refer to this overlap as the degree in which the coach and athlete share their social network. Examples of the strength of relationships between the coach and athlete are demonstrated by the coach finding employment for their athletes, playing with them socially, exchanging gifts at Christmas and inviting the athletes to compete alongside them in professional competitions. This appears to be in line with Potrac et al.'s (2002) findings which demonstrated that a coach can be viewed as a social being operating in a social environment.

You know I even help Allen out, who worked in my wife's café.... to give him a job, in effect to give him some money – (3C 25/2/2011)

Athlete (11A) indicates the strength of the coach-athlete relationship by including the athlete in the coach's social network. In this case the coach allowed the athlete to be exposed and to interact with the coach's social network. This relationship can have a positive influence on the athlete's participation and development in the sport, firstly by providing a wider group of people to play golf with, as well as providing opportunities that would not normally occur during the coaching sessions. For example, playing with a professional on a golf course enabled them to discuss shot selection and course management. It also enabled the coach to observe the athlete in an 'on course' situation as opposed to an artificial training environment.

I have a great relationship with him [coach], he's taken me off golfing with his friends and things like that so it's more of a friendship relationship, but then, if I wasn't doing something right then there would be a clip around the ear – (11A 17/6/2011)

All athletes expressed satisfaction with their current coach relationship, as evidenced through positive communication, goal setting interaction outside the coaching environment and the positive impacts it has had on their development as identified previously by Jowett (2003), Jowett and Cockerill (2003) and Côté (2002). Interestingly some evidence came out supporting Lorimer and Jowett's (2009) findings on meta-perspectives of the coach-athlete relationship. One coach acknowledged that he had a good working relationship with his athlete but he found the athlete to be a challenge. The coach felt that he had to mask his inner feelings towards the athlete in effect 'act the part' in order to provide a positive environment for the athlete to develop and build a trusting relationship with the coach. The

coach viewed this relationship as a challenge and as one of the reasons why he started to work with the athlete in the first place. This seems to agree with findings which Lorimer and Jowett (2009, p.209) identified when stating “coaches’ satisfaction may not depend upon interpersonal factors, it may be related to intrapersonal factors.”

I find Adrian a challenge because of his rapport generally... I think the other coaching that he had or the previous coaching that he had was something that the coach wasn’t able to get on his wave length – (9C 18/8/11)

I would like to think that he’s improving himself as a person, yet I still find it a challenge...in his case you’ve got to be very skilful in not letting your real emotions... come out ,you know, to take them further – (9C 16/8/11)

From the athlete’s perspective there was no indication that he understood his coach’s true feelings towards him. The athlete’s main criterion for a positive relationship is based around trust and respect; in this case the athlete reflected that his relationship with his coach was great, further endorsing research put forward by Jowett and colleagues.

You have to have a good relationship and you have to have some trust in... what they are saying... the hardest thing for me was to find a coach that I could trust – (8A 25/5/2011)

The positive perception of the coach-athlete relationship enabled athletes to work closely and develop with their coaches. Research by both Martens (1998) and Côté (2002) indicate

that coaches teach key skills as well as social values and guidance in order to help their young athletes become confident and self-reliant. In effect coaches can be viewed as substitute parents (Smoll and Smith, 2002). This is identified by some of the coaches within who refer to some of the interactions with their athletes as a parent-child relationship.

I am always managing the knocks... especially with someone like Adrian, you know the building blocks and say right we've just got to dust ourselves off and go again... what do you think we can improve?... I think that's more of... it's like a parental thing isn't it? – (9C 16/8/11)

The strength of the coach-athlete relationship can be highlighted by one parent (7F) who acknowledged the role the coach now plays in his child's development especially around golfing issues. A role previously filled by the parents.

He works closely with Chris... any discussions around golf as far as he's concerned I'll talk with Chris and nobody else you know, it's that, that sort of relationship – (7F 9/6/2011)

Comments on respect, trust and communication are frequently mentioned from all parties when discussing the coach-athlete relationship, supporting previous research (Jowett, 2003; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005; Potrac et al., 2002). However, findings from Smoll and Smith (1993) (cited in Papaioannou et al., 2008, p.125) and MacPhail et al. (2003) on coaches influencing athletes' continued participation through enjoyment did not emerge in any meaningful way, especially during the specialising and



investment stages of the athlete development as defined by Côté and Hay (2002b). This could be due to the retrospective nature of the research or the nature of the discussion areas presented to the subjects during the interviews or due to the fact that the participants were now well into the investment stages of their development where the focus might be commitment to intensive training and sporting success and therefore fun and enjoyment might not be reflected upon by the athletes. Comments such as motivation and encouragement were identified in the themes and highlighted the roles that coaches play in supporting their athlete's involvement and development both physically and mentally (Côté, 2002).

He was always able to motivate him wasn't he? Even if he wasn't playing very well  
– (10M 17/6/2011)

Our relationship, built... around the fact that we've got to work hard... you can't  
come and buy a game... you have to go and work at it – (12C 16/8/2011)

#### 4.3.2 Coach-Parent Relationships

Themes emerged highlighting the nature of the parent-coach relationships within this study. Previous research points to the crucial roles parents and coaches play in a child's sports participation and development (Brustad, 1993; Côté and Hay, 2002a; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005; Stein et al., 1999). Yet there is little research to demonstrate the nature of the relationship and how they interact (Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005). Parents are seen to socialise their child into a physical activity. Part of this process is in identifying and selecting the coach, especially in the sampling stage of a

child's development. This research highlights the nature of the relationships between the parents and coaches and the impact these relationships have on the coach-athlete relationship. This ranges from supporting and influencing a child into the sport to establishing the first coach-athlete relationship.

Dad... suggested Craig... about ten... because... that was the stage he [athlete] started to take an interest in it – (1M 8/2/2011)

Whilst Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005), demonstrate that parents are often involved in establishing coach-athlete relationships, Jowett (2003) also highlighted that coach-athlete relationships can be unstable. This study highlighted that parents are involved in the dissolution process of a coach-athlete relationship. This indicates that a constructive parent-coach and coach-athlete relationship is crucial for the coach. This research demonstrated the characteristic influences of the three person system. On one hand a three person system can provide increased stability in the relationship (Hellstedt, 1987). However, on the other one part of the system can provide a negative influence and can be responsible for the dissolution of the coach-athlete relationship (Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005).

I was very reluctant to leave him [Coach]... dad was there niggling in the ear just give Chris a go – (11A 17/6/2011)

However, parents can also have a positive influence in maintaining or re-establishing an old coaching relationship as well. Parent (4A) demonstrates the two sides of both a positive and negative parent-coach relationship, that impact upon the dynamics of the triad.

- 1) In influencing the athlete to dissolve the current coach-athlete relationship
- 2) In encouraging the athlete to re-establish a previous coach-athlete relationship

Dad has always been quite friendly with Charlie, if anything I would say he is probably the one who encouraged me to go back and have lessons with Charlie – (4A 2/2/2011)

Arguably it is in the best interest of a coach to establish a constructive relationship with the parents as well as the athlete in order to increase the stability of the coach-athlete relationship. Both parents and coaches highlight the benefits of having positive relationships with each other. Parents felt able to communicate with the coach about the progress their child was making as well as areas they felt should be developed.

Because I was able to talk... and explain to Craig what I thought was wrong... he would either tell me no, it was this or yeah you actually got it right and that's where the communication side has come in – (1F 8/2/2011)

Chris is prepared to listen and makes a point in showing an interest in what I have to say – (7F 9/6/2011)

Coaches expressed the benefits of incorporating the parents into the coaching process, in effect creating a coaching triad. In the parent-coach relationship coaches highlighted the benefits of communicating with the parents about the athlete, as they often felt that they were not getting the whole truth from the athlete. Therefore communicating with the parents

allowed them to focus on key areas in their coaching, thereby potentially enhancing the quality of the coaching session. Similarly Jowett and Cockerill (2003) and Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) identified that coaches value the information parents provide thus enabling the coach to adapt to the needs of the athlete. Parents can be seen to help the coach gain trust and respect with the athlete, further developing the coach-athlete relationship.

I get feedback from his dad... he will be on the course watching quite a bit... he does give me a lot of good feedback... probably... with a bit more honesty than Adrian – (9C 16/8/2011)

Several coaches felt that their relationship with the parents could be better. One coach echoed Kirk and MacPhail's (2003) comments about freeloaders. This indicates relationships with parents can be both positive and negative. However, coaches often felt ill equipped to change the nature of the relationship, highlighting some of the difficulties Hellstedt (1987) identified in parent-coach interactions.

Personally I felt that he [dad] was... quite happy to drop Adam off but was not massively involved in trying to find out how Adam was doing ... One can only suggest but it's quite... awkward to bring it up, you can't tell the parents what to do – (5C 2/2/2011)

I think if the parents had a bigger understanding of what it takes to be a good golfer, things might have been a bit different. I think Adam would be two or three shots ahead of where he is now – (5C 2/2/2011)

This theme discusses issues faced in parent-coach relationships, and the lack of understanding in how both parties can work together (Hellstedt, 1987) to maximise the athlete's potential. The issue of the coach talking to parents about the athlete's development is highlighted by the coach feeling 'awkward' and unable to 'tell the parents what to do'. This in turn emphasises the point that coaches should be empowered not only to coach the athlete but also to interact with the parents. This supports Hellstedt's (1987) conclusions that coaches need to coach more than just an athlete; they are involved in a family process. Failure to communicate in a positive way between all members of the triad might lead to a delay in performance attainment. Coaches often felt ill equipped to address the perceived problem directly with the parents. Despite many of the coaches having a social relationship with the parents, they still felt unable to discuss issues that potentially affected the performance of the athlete. This became increasingly difficult for the coach when the issues revolved around perceived parental interactions with the athlete, for example, the effects of differing levels of parental support towards the athlete. One coach identified that the parents often did too much to support their son. The coach saw this 'over support' as a limitation in the development of the athlete. Despite this observation the coach acknowledged that he never discussed this issue with the parents.

I couldn't believe when Michelle used to pick his balls up... it's part of learning how far you are hitting the ball, how well you've grouped them – (3C 25/2/2011)

Several coaches, however, felt that it was their responsibility to develop a positive parent-coach relationship in order to communicate with and educate the parents in a way that would allow the athlete to develop. Gould (1982) (cited in Hellstedt 1987, p.151) stresses

the importance of the coach educating the parents and developing good levels of communication. This research showed that several parents felt ill informed about how to support their child's development into elite performance programmes through their lack of understanding of the process or they felt that it was a closed shop because they came from the wrong club or were not part of the establishment. Positive communication from coaches through this period could be an avenue for coaches to support and develop the parent-coach relationship.

I want the parents to feel comfortable with me teaching their boy, that's probably the way I would have it and I know that they are, so the relationship is a good one and they can ask me anything at any time so... my main aim in the coaching is to make sure that they are happy with what their son's getting – (9C 16/8/2011)

Coach (12C) felt it was his responsibility to educate the parents so that he could create the best possible environment for the athlete.

Sometimes you... have to educate the parents – (12C 16/8/2011)

#### 4.3.3 Dyadic Realignment

Influences on the parent, coach and athlete relationship occurred to support the findings of research conducted by Jowett (2003), Jowett and Cockerill (2003) and Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005). All this research showed dyadic realignment occurring between the parent-

athlete, parent-coach and coach-athlete dyads and the impacts it has on interpersonal relationships and athlete development.

Dyadic realignment primarily occurred with the athletes around the time they started to gain greater independence or freedom through the car. As soon as the athletes started to drive themselves the relationships in the triad started to change.

Michelle: he's sort of like, that's it, we are surplus to requirements now I think.

Once he learnt to drive

Flynn: As soon as he was getting himself to lessons, it kicked in at the same time –  
(1M and F 8/2/2011)

Dyadic withdrawal was observed from the parents point of view through the interdependence demonstrated in the athlete-coach relationship. Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) identified similar findings where parents identified a reduction in their influence and an increase in the coach's influence. This transition can lead to a period of heightened tension between the athlete-parent dyad. If there had been a greater emphasis on creating constructive triadic relationships between the parents, athlete and coach then this transition could have been easier to manage. The parents could still have felt involved through constructive conversations with the coach.

You make the suggestion but whereas in previous, well.....we would just say I am going to book you a lesson and we would phone and it we would book it, now you can only... suggest – (1M 8/2/2011)

Flynn: As far as he's concerned I'll talk with Chris and nobody else you know, it's... that sort of relationship

Margret: Yeah that started to happen over the last twelve, eighteen months – (7F and M 9/6/2011)

Athletes also demonstrated an awareness of the changing relationship in the athlete-parent relationship. However, there seemed to be little thought to the impact that this change in relationship might have on the athletes development or to the impact that this might have on the parents who have provided opportunities and support along the developmental journey.

The last six months have been.....predominately just been me and Chris, I quite like that because I like the independence – (8A 25/5/2011)

Dyadic withdrawal and realignment also affected the quality of the relationship formerly displayed between the coach and parents. However, as identified earlier in parent-coach relationships even if the parent's direct influence has diminished the athletes still talk with them and therefore parents can still influence an athlete's decision making process.

It's only really been this year since I've been driving that dad hasn't had....contact with Chris – (8A 25/5/2011)

I will come back in and.....explain to dad this has happened and this is what we are working on – (8A 25/5/2011)



For coaches the athlete's withdrawal from the parents influence displayed positive and negative outcomes. For some of the coaches there has been an increase in dyadic realignment. However, some coaches noticed that as the parents' influence and support diminished so did the commitment displayed by the athletes in their on-going development in golf. This has led to a diminution in the quality of the coach-athlete relationship and a plateauing of the athlete's development, which agrees with previous research (Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005) on parental effect on relationship quality.

His lessons have dropped off as he's gained his own independence – (3C 25//2/2011)

Coach (5C) reflected upon the increase in overlap in their social networks once the athlete increased his independence from the parents, highlighting that they visit the pub now to discuss ways to develop the athletes' game, as well as playing golf recreationally together.

My relationship with Adam changed massively when he took over paying for the lessons... our relationship has grown where we can discuss that sort of thing in the pub – (5C 2/2/2011)

#### 4.4 Environment

Environment refers to county, club and friends. In this research 'environment' identifies some of the factors outside the direct family and coach that the interviewees referred to as having an impact upon participation and the development of the athletes.

#### 4.4.1 Friends and Peers

None of the participants identified friendship groups as a factor in socialising them into the sport. Parents and athletes identified that the athlete often formed friendship groups once they were involved in golf, either through attending coaching sessions, or meeting other children in the club environment. Both the athlete and the parents highlighted the positive impact that friendship groups had in maintaining participation. This links with MacPhail et al.'s (2003) research which suggested that by providing an enjoyable environment to develop within, or, as identified by one player providing competition for the athlete to match his skills against his peers, helped to maintain participation.

He has got a good group of friends that help him out you know and encourage him – (6F 16/2//2011)

I found it really fun... I went out to xxxx made some friends out there – (8A 25/5/2011)

#### 4.4.2 Organisations

The research demonstrated the impact of environmental factors, in this case the influence of organisational structures (club, college and county). In this research the county structure was often seen to impact upon the development of the athlete. In many county structures within England, the athlete is assessed and coached by a county coach who is selected by the county Men's Union. Two athletes highlighted the negative experiences when receiving coaching from county coaches.

The county coaches....we're like chalk and cheese, you know. We don't get along at all and it's got to the stage where... pre-tournament... he'll look at everyone else's swing bar mine – (8A 25/5/2011)

This demonstrated the danger of removing the choice on who the coach should be from the athlete and or parents. As demonstrated earlier in coach-athlete relationships, influences on the coach-athlete relationship supported findings by Côté (2002), Jowett (2003), Jowett and Cockerill (2003) and Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005). This research highlights that the nature of the coach-athlete relationship is fundamental in affecting athlete's self-esteem, performance and satisfaction. In cases where the coach is chosen for the athlete there is potential for the experience to be negative. This was further demonstrated in this research by an athlete who attended a sports college to develop his golf, where he was coached by three coaches. The athlete also attended county coaching where he received coaching from another coach, whilst still seeing his home coach. During this period the athlete identified that he often felt confused, this coincided with the athlete's handicap rising from 1 to 5.

Having fewer coaches not... not getting my head filled with lots... of information... where I am now I would've had three maybe four years earlier - (11A 17/6/2011)

In coach-athlete relationships where the athlete and parents established the relationship there is the opportunity to walk away from a perceived negative relationship. Where an organisation is involved there is limited opportunity to move on, the environment has led to poor coach-athlete relationships. This has led to the exclusion of the athlete from an

organisation or to a dip in performance. In one case the refusal of the athlete to receive county coaching may have led to the athlete no longer representing the county.

#### **4.5 Chapter Conclusion**

The findings of this research demonstrate both the positive and negative effects of the interrelationships between, parent, coach and athlete and their impact upon the development of the athlete. The parent-athlete relationship appears to be crucial in providing the initial introduction and continued support of the athlete in the sport. However there are times when this relationship can provide a negative influence upon the athlete. The athlete mentally and physically develops as they move into their late teens, leading to changes in the nature of the relationship with the parents and coach. Subsequently the positive and negative issues created by this change in relationship can be viewed within the interactions of the coach-athlete, parent-athlete and parent-coach relationship within the triad. Coaches and parents within the study demonstrate the complexities of the parent-coach relationship as the athlete moves away from confiding in the parents to confiding with the coach. Parents have felt increasingly isolated as the athlete realigns with the coach, whilst the coaches have often felt ill equipped to deal directly with the parents. Ironically as the coach-athlete relationship has developed and the parent-athlete has diminished, this has impacted upon the athlete's commitment to the sport, indicating that the coach-athlete relationship is perhaps not as strong as it should be.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to examine the triadic relationship between the parents, coach and athlete and its influence on athlete development. This chapter sums up the findings of this research project whilst addressing the limitations of the project. Implications of this research project are identified and discussed based on the social networks in place around developing young golfers, before finally addressing areas of potential future research.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

Chapter 4 examined some of the emerging themes from the data sets and related them to previous research based on socialisation, social networks and relationships in sport based around the athlete. This research study supported the findings of previous research (Côté, 1999; Côté and Hay, 2002a; Hellstedt, 1987; Maccoby, 1992; Stein et al., 1999) in that parents in particular play an important role in first introducing their child in to a sport, in this case golf, and then in maintaining their continued participation in the game (Stein et al., 1999). This study further demonstrated that both the mother and father influenced and supported their child's participation in the sport. No evidence could be found that the mother (Bois et al., 2005) or the father (Hellstedt, 1995) was the significant party in their child's participation. Instead within different family groups either the mother or the father is seen to be the main socialiser of the child into golf. Within all family groups parents

demonstrated their commitment to provide emotional, financial, time and informative support in order for their child to maintain their participation and to develop within the sport, supporting research by both Côté and Hay (2002a) and Fredricks and Eccles (2004).

Parents identified their crucial role in selecting coaches early on in the athlete's golfing career, especially during the sampling and specialising stages of sports participation (Côté and Hay, 2002a). However, in line with previous research (Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005) parents' direct influence on coach selection decreases as the athletes demonstrate their growing independence or go through withdrawal from their parents. This falls in line with Côté's (1999) research in that there is a change in parental roles from a leading role in the sampling stages to a supporting role in the investment years. However this study indicates that parents still play a leading role in the investment years of the athlete. The parental movement away from a leading role to a supporting role appears to occur in line with dyadic realignment (Jowett and Timson-Katchis, 2005). Findings within this research indicate that this might be linked to the growing independence created through the athletes learning to drive. Further research in this area needs to be undertaken in order to establish connections.

The coach athlete relationship can be seen to be crucial in developing the athlete within the game. The findings from the research identified that respect, trust and mutual understanding are crucial to the wellbeing of the relationship (Jowett, 2003; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003). For some of the athletes the relationship developed with the coach to the extent that matters relating to golf were discussed with the coach and not the parents. Stability within coach athlete relationships was linked to an improvement in performance either mentally or

physically by the athlete. Athletes who identified having utilised multiple coaches linked this to an increase in conflicting advice leading to confusion and a decrease in performance.

Dyadic realignment supported previous research by Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) in identifying an increase in overlap of the athlete's and coach's social networks. However, whilst the athletes expressed respect, friendship and trust as crucial elements of their current positive coach-athlete relationship, this was not always the case from the coach's point of view as previously identified by Jowett and Lorimer (2009). One coach identified that he hid his true feelings in order to meet the needs of the athlete but found the athlete's personality a challenge. The coach identified this as the motivating factor for him; he wanted to succeed where the athlete's previous coaches had failed. Further research into this area is warranted.

This study also highlighted that it is in the coach's and parents' best interest to establish a positive working relationship with each other. Parents have the potential to develop or destroy the coach-athlete relationship through the opportunities, support and information they provide. This supports Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) findings. However parents can be seen to become increasingly marginalised if the coach athlete relationship strengthens which, as identified previously, can be a difficult time of adjustment for some parents that can lead to increases in conflict in the parent athlete dyad as identified by Stein et al. (1999). Both Hellstedt (1987) and Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) identify the benefits of having a positive relationship within the triad. Whilst parental influence appears to diminish as the child matures, this research identified that parents can still influence athletes, for example they can encourage the athlete to see other coaches or to go back to an

original coach. This process is acknowledged by the athletes; despite gaining independence from their parents they still seek advice from their parents.

The research identified that athlete sporting activity and coach interaction can decrease during this period of dyadic withdrawal from the parents. This therefore impacts upon the coach-athlete relationship. Factors affecting this decrease in participation should warrant future research. One athlete mentioned incompatible work commitments, girlfriend and other factors in the decrease in his sports participation despite wanting to progress on to the next level within the sport. The decrease in participation seemed to be more evident in the groups where parents had until that time arranged all coaching sessions or had provided all the athlete's needs. If the parent-coach dyad understood the potential consequences of dyadic withdrawal they would be in a better position to manage the process. This therefore might decrease the likelihood of the athlete reducing their participation in the sport.

No evidence from the project could be found to support Larson and Richards (1994) and Whiteman et al. (2007) research that siblings either socialised the athlete into the sport, or spent time playing and practising with each other. This could be due to the limited sample size of the research project and the wide variety of family variables. In all the groups the athletes either had significantly older siblings or the siblings were younger sisters. The apparent lack of interaction between siblings would seem to indicate that age, gender difference or family functioning variables play an important role in determining sibling interaction as discussed by both Fallon and Bowles (1997) and Videon (2002) and could be an area of future research. One athlete identified his older siblings as positive influences, in that he wanted to surpass his sibling's achievements, whilst another family identified a



division in resources due to differing sibling's demands therefore impacting upon support provided by the parents. In this case the mother focussed her support primarily on the daughter whilst the father supported the male athlete, highlighting some of the positive and negative effects of siblings discussed by Côté (1999) and Côté and Hay (2002a).

The research highlighted a few examples of friends and peers supporting their participation and enjoyment in the sport. However there was no evidence to suggest that these groups socialised them into golf in the first place. Parents and athletes instead indicated that the athlete formed golf orientated friendship groups from the game whilst attending coaching sessions or from meeting together within the club environment. None of the athletes referred to these groups as a direct factor for staying in the sport but rather as an extra factor leading to enjoyment within the sport and as an opportunity to test their skills. Therefore the impact these groups had in maintaining participation is hard to determine. However, these findings appear to link with MacPhail et al.'s (2003) research which indicates that by providing an enjoyable environment for a child to develop within and to match their skills against peers aids in maintaining their participation in the sport.

The implications of this and other research (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003; Jowett and Meek, 2000) suggests that parents and athletes are more likely to seek advice and support when they feel a connection with that person. The research also suggests that parents are influential in supporting or undermining coach-athlete relationship but that many of them are unsure on how to best support the athlete, especially as the athlete develops. This underlines the importance of developing the social skill set of coaches' training within the PGA coach education programme. This was endorsed by coaches within the study who

identified the importance of educating the parents as well as identifying their own limitations in interacting with parents in order to improve the parent-coach relationship, themes identified previously by Hellstedt (1987). Parents from this research project identified a need to be better informed of the opportunities to develop their child. The coach is ideally placed to meet that need and develop the relationship with the parent in order to aid the athlete's development.

This research also highlighted some of the negative and positive interactions that occurred between the parties within the triad. Evidence arose that demonstrated the ability of positive relationships between the coach, athlete and parents to influence both coach selection and athlete development. However, little evidence could be found to suggest that any formal or informal process occurred that was specifically developed between the parties within the triad in order to maximise the potential of the athlete. No plans or discussions between the parents and coach, parents and athlete or coach and athlete were referred to by any of the parties. It would seem that in these cases relationships occurred between the three key parties in the triad by accident rather than by design.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the project warrant discussion. The research employed a retrospective review of the parent's, athlete's and coach's memories of the athlete's socialisation and development within the sport going back over 15 years in some cases. It is therefore possible and likely that these perceptions have faded due to the time periods involved. Such

issues have previously been identified in retrospective research as shown by Jowett and Cockerill (2003).

Whilst parental support and influence were investigated in the research, the impact of parenting style was not a focus of the research. Conclusions of parenting style were taken from observations during the research and from the anecdotal evidence that occurred during the interviews. This could be addressed in the future by assessing parenting styles in conjunction with parental influence and support to see if there is a link between parenting styles and the amount of support and influence that is provided.

This study also failed to provide significant evidence of triadic relationships beyond informal social interactions, based around football or the weather between the parent, coach and athlete. It was hoped that in the pursuit of trying to develop elite amateur players, that some evidence of a developmental plan for the athlete involving the three members of the triad would emerge from the interviews. This however did not occur, perhaps because this never took place or because the research methodology utilised did not encourage this information to emerge. On reflection, the study could have brought the coach, athlete and the parents together to form a focus group after the one to one interviews had taken place. These focus groups may have provided a more accurate picture of the socialisation and development processes through shared experiences. This may have limited any inaccuracies created by memory recall. By comparing group and one to one interviews as well as observation of participants the researcher would be better placed to identify key individuals involved during the developmental process (Patton, 2002). Focus groups have the potential to enhance the quality of the data as highlighted by Patton (2002). However, focus groups

tend to work best when the participants do not know each other. This is especially true if private and personal issues are involved.

This research was also limited in the size of the study, context, gender, culture and the people studied. Research in this area should look to study multiple contexts, cultures and genders in order to develop a larger picture of how these triadic interactions affect the development of the athlete. This could be addressed in the future by conducting research in this area utilising mixed methodology. This would provide a larger sample size through the quantitative research as well as providing meaning to the quantitative research measurements through qualitative enquiry (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

#### **5.4 Future Research**

In summary several areas of future research can be developed to further our understanding of athlete development and the impacts of the social network upon athlete development. In order to address some of the limitations as identified earlier, research should be conducted on multiple age groups as they progress through the talent development pathway. This would limit the degradation of memory recall that occurs over time. Alternatively future research in this area may involve a longitudinal study that would enable us to measure behaviour over an extended period of time. However as Gratton and Jones (2004) highlight, issues of attrition, participant dropout and costs are linked to this type of research design. Furthermore, the younger the group with which the research starts the harder it becomes to predict who will make it as an elite athlete.

Further attention to family influences is warranted. Whilst research has been conducted upon the 'family structure' in terms on one and two parent families and its impact upon athlete development (Kay, 2000; Kay and Spaaij, 2011; Quarmby and Dagkas, 2010), little is still known about family dynamics (Fraser-Thomas et al. 2008; Videon, 2002) such as number of siblings, gender and age differences, the impact of multiple siblings on one and two parent families and their impact upon athlete development. This is highlighted by both Kay (2000) and Quarmby and Dagkas (2010) who suggest that research highlights that family dynamics are changing faster than ever before. Furthermore it would be interesting to analyse the factors that lead parents to move from a leading role to a supporting role of the athlete. Is it linked to the athlete's attainment levels within the sport or are other social and environmental factors influencing the process such as puberty impacting upon time spent with parents as identified by Fallon and Bowles (1997) or learning to drive creating greater independence?

Future research should also study the effects of differing levels of parental support. One coach identified this 'over support' as a limitation to the progress of the athlete. The coach acknowledged that he never talked to the parent about this perceived limitation, despite having a good relationship with the parents. This highlights that coaches may feel comfortable talking to the parents about non personal issues for example, football and the weather, but feel ill equipped to talk to them about issues that affect performance linked to the parent-athlete relationship.

Finally, future research should also look to analyse the effects of developing the coach's social skill sets and understanding of the issues and influences that occur between coach,

parent and athlete. Would the development of a triadic relationship, focused on the development of the athlete, provide greater developmental opportunities for the athlete? Would it address some of the negative issues that were identified by the groups within the study?

## **5.5 Concluding Remarks**

This brief study highlighted the importance of the parent, coach and athlete relationship upon the development of the athlete, whilst acknowledging that other factors also influence the development of the athlete. The study highlights the importance of developing the skills of coaches to meet the needs both of athlete and parents who are shown to play a crucial role in the development of their child. This research indicates that coach education programmes should not focus purely on technical, physical and tactical development of the coach's knowledge but should also incorporate the social skills development to develop effective relationships with their participants, as Potrac et al. (2002, p.184) identifies "coaches operate as social beings within a social environment."

## **Chapter 6: Appendices**

### **6.1 Appendix 1: Example of Information Sheet**

**Project Summary:** A qualitative study on the role parent, coach and golfer interactions have on player development.

This information sheet will explain the project in which you have been invited to participate. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with your family and friends if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

#### **Purpose of the Project**

This project looks to analyse the major relationships that form around the golfer, the parents and coach.

- All participants in the research will be interviewed.
- These will be to find out the nature of the relationships that form around the golfer, coach and parents.

It is up to you to decide whether or not you take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop taking part at any time and without giving a reason up to the point of data being anonymised. Your anonymity will be protected by switching your names for number codes. This information will be kept confidential to the researcher and Investigator and will be kept on a password protected computer for up to five years from the completion of the research.

### **What will happen next?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be invited to meet with me to participate in a face to face interview or telephone interview. The face to face interviews should last about an hour depending on how much you wish to say and will be held in a place of your choosing, wherever you feel comfortable.

I do not want to miss any part of the discussion, and so I would like to tape record it. I will provide you with transcribed copies of the interviews so that you may report back any inaccuracies.

### **Risks/ Benefits**

It is possible that talking about experiences, thoughts and feelings may be upsetting for you. If this should happen there would be no pressure to continue with the discussion.

On the other hand, you might find having someone take an interest in your experiences as useful. You may also feel pleased to have the chance to help influence the support other families; golfers and coaches receive from the findings of this study.

### **Confidentiality**

All information that is collected during the research will remain strictly confidential.

The tape recording and my notes will remain safe on a password protected hard drive. The notes will remain anonymous which means that your name will not be connected with anything you say – a pseudonym will be used instead. Anonymous quotes from the discussion may be used to illustrate general themes in the final report.

### **Further Information**

If you have any questions or require further information please contact:



Researcher: Justyn Branton, Home 01761 220158, Mob: 07827 944522, Email: justyn.branton@pga.org.uk

Supervising Tutor: Dr. Martin Toms: University of Birmingham, Joint Director of Education, Tel: 0121 415 8392/8285, Email: m.rtoms@bham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you would like to take part, please return the slip on the letter attached in the envelope provided. Once I have received this form, I will contact you to arrange a suitable time to meet.

**You are advised to keep a copy of this information for future reference as well as a copy of your signed consent form.**

## 6.2 Appendix 2: Example of Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

**Project Title:** A qualitative study on the role parent, coach and golfer interactions have on player development.

Researcher: Justyn Branton

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated ..... for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	Yes/ No
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up to the point of data being anonymised, without giving a reason.	Yes/ No
I agree to the discussion being audio-taped and notes to be taken about the discussion.	Yes/ No
I understand that what is said in the meeting will not be discussed with anyone else.	Yes/ No
I understand that anonymised quotes may be taken from the meeting to illustrate general themes.	Yes/ No
I understand that I will be able to receive a copy of the study's conclusions when it is completed.	Yes/ No
I agree to take part in the above study.	Yes/ No

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Name of participant

-----

Date

-----

Signature

-----

Independent Witness

-----

Date

-----

Signature

## **6.3 Appendix 3: Interview Topics and Example Probe Questions**

### **Research Interview Topics**

**Project:** A qualitative study on parent, coach and golfer interactions and their impact upon player development.

#### **1. Involvement:**

**Parents/Coach-** Describe your involvement with the athlete from your earliest recollections?

**Athlete –** How did you become involved in golf?

Prompts:

- Timeline?
- Socialisation?
- Lessons?
- Club?

#### **2. Relationships: Describe the nature of your relationship with the following (Coach/Parents or Guardians/Athlete).**

Prompts:

- Introduction?
- Communication?
- Support?

#### **3. Development: Describe the development/progress of the athlete?**

Prompts:

- Time Lines- Lessons group/individual, coaches, handicaps, clubs, county, regional

#### **4. Support: Describe the support provided for the athlete?**

Prompts:

- Transport
- Time
- Equipment
- Lessons
- Financial
- Emotional

### **Example Probe Questions:**

#### **Parents:**

1. Describe in detail how your son became involved in golf?
2. Describe your role in your son becoming involved and what type of impact you feel this has had on their development?
3. What types of relationship have you had with your son's past and present coaches?
4. How do you think this relationship has impacted on your son's development in golf?
5. Upon reflection is there anything more you think could have been done to maximise your son's development in golf?

#### **Athlete:**

1. Describe your memories on how you become involved in golf and what motivated you to play?
2. Describe the role your parents play in your involvement in golf?
3. Describe your relationship with your past and present coaches?
4. What were the reasons behind changing your coach?
5. How do you view the relationship between your past and present coaches and your parents?
6. How has the parent-coach relationship impacted upon you during your time in golf?

7. On reflection is there any type of support you think would have aided your development?

**Coach:**

1. Describe how you became involved with the athlete?
2. What areas have impacted on player development?
3. What role do you think the coach should play in supporting and developing the athlete?
4. Describe your relationship with the parents and athlete?
5. Do you think your relationship with the parents and athlete has impacted on the athlete's development?
6. Is there anything else you think could have been done to maximise the athlete's ability?

### 6.3 Appendix 4: Example of Coded Interviews

5	C	130-133	Family	Parent-Athlete Relationship	If you go up to xxxx where there are loads and loads of good players the parents their see the other kids and know exactly what's got to be done. So the environment that they learn to play in also has a massive impact, if Adam parents really wanted the best for him that's the sort of research they should have been doing
12	C	105-108	Family	Parent-Athlete Relationship	they say love is blind, and I think this, this is what happens with parents is that... they think he's going to be a world beater or they think he's going to be a great player, and they miss the basics about... you know... if he wants to be a world beater, is he really doing enough to be a world beater?
3	C	148-150	Family	Parent-Athlete Relationship	his mum would always pick the balls up with him would always put the clubs back in the car erm... and I don't think that helps him develop personally, you know he's got to be, he's got to things more for himself.
3	C	185-188	Family	Parent-Athlete Relationship	You know they've done everything for him. Michelle done everything for him, I think Flynn pulled his hair out with him, you know. Michelle been such an obviously caring loving parent, she's done absolutely everything for him, tried everything possible.
13	M	115-116	Family	Parent-Athlete Relationship	he feels totally comfortable with the fact that he knows that we would support him no matter what
12	C	154-156	Relationships	Coach-Athlete Relationship	It's about making them aware of the consequences and I try to do that with Andrew, but ultimately it's up to them to make the choice... give them the opportunity yeah.
13	M	164-166	Relationships	Coach-Athlete Relationship	Tony was never that encouraging in so much that he had been on the professional circuit himself and he was always just saying it was one hell of a hard job.
13	M	172-175	Relationships	Coach-Athlete Relationship	I think maybe because we were such close friends he wanted to make sure that we weren't going forward with something that could have caused him some big disappointments.

## Chapter 7: References

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