"I AM WHAT I AM":

NARRATIVES OF EFFECTIVE CHANGE LEADERSHIP IN

UK SPORT COACHING SYSTEMS

by

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ABSTRACT

The role of the leader in UK sport coaching systems has rarely attracted attention, either academically or within sport policy in the UK. Yet, individuals holding these roles within National Governing Bodies of Sport play a critical role in creating the structures necessary for the development of effective sport coaching strategy and coach education across the UK. This research addressed this gap by examining the experiences of effective change leaders within UK coaching systems, with the intention of gaining critical insights to inform future developments within the sector. Adopting a constructivist-interpretive approach within a collective case-study umbrella, this research used life-history interviews to co-construct individual narratives to 'tell' the stories of six effective coaching systems leaders. These narratives were then analysed to identify key themes for each individual, followed by a template analysis to generate five cross-case themes: 'I know who I am', Curiosity, Great People, Nurturing Environments and Courage. The findings are also synthesised in a new 'Model for Coaching Systems Leadership in the UK'. It is argued that the sport coaching sector in the UK would benefit from a new leadership narrative that views authentic leaders as an integral component of coaching system development at every level.

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To Adrian. Without you I would not be here. Love me xx

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1.1   Starting with 'why?'

> "By WHY I mean what is your purpose, cause or belief?"
>
> (Sinek, 2009, p.39)

Sinek (2009, p.42) argued that 'people don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it' and 'if you don't know why, you can't know how' (p.70, emphasis in the original). Reflecting on such statements and acknowledging Sinek's belief that 'we can all learn to lead' (p.1), it feels appropriate to start this thesis on effective leadership by explaining my 'why?'. My epistemological and ontological standpoints for this research will be explored in the methodology chapter, however, they do not provide the full picture in terms of my 'why' for this study. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge this from the start of my writing because, after all, how I see the world inevitably affects the way I think, behave and research.

So, let me begin…

"I have been a sports and coaching development practitioner for over twenty-five years, and in that time have worked within a wide variety of settings from Local Authority to national agency. For ten years (from 2006 to 2016), I was 'Head of Coaching Systems' for The Professional Golfers' Association, where my responsibilities included writing a long-term strategy for golf coaching in the UK, developing new coaching qualifications, establishing a new coach educator and assessor workforce, and many other interesting (and often difficult) challenges.

I have always been a curious and creative individual who endeavours to explore new perspectives and ways of working; I have been described as a logical, resourceful and tenacious leader who always seeks to give of her best. In a sector with no set education pathway to support me, I shaped my own path and learned as I progressed. From the early days of developing my CV with coaching qualifications, through to an MBA and this PhD…my curiosity has continually driven me to learn and keep learning. The aim has been to ensure I can feel competent and confident that I am 'making a difference' through my work.

Yet despite my commitment to learning and continued endeavours to use research to inform my practice, I have never been entirely sure what 'good' looks like for my role. Equally, I often felt like every academic paper I read on coach education and development, was arguing that National Governing Bodies of Sport were getting everything wrong; something I took very personally at the time!

Whatever the intent behind the writing, the emotions stirred within me were those of frustration and anger. I felt like my endeavours to connect theory and practice were not visible enough, my efforts to shift culture were not good enough and my intention to create genuine changes in coach development were not quick enough. However, I knew that I always applied my best efforts within the challenging boundaries of small budgets and limited human resource. I also knew that there were great people making amazing things happen within sport coaching in the UK, and I was angry and frustrated that their voices were not being heard over the academic rhetoric and power games.

So I decided to take action through a PhD. My ultimate intention for this study was to explore and understand the stories of those I perceived to be 'great people' to help me to present an informed argument back to those who continue to suggest that sport has simply 'got coaching wrong'. I want this thesis to encourage a different way of thinking; I want it to demonstrate the powerful potential when theory and practice combine. In particular, I want to understand stories of success to better comprehend what good looks like, and ensure this insight can be shared within the wider profession and, importantly, in coach education."

1.2   Research purpose

The overall purpose of this research was to analyse, interpret and share the experiences of effective leaders within sport coaching systems in the UK. The research explored the personal experiences and perspectives of selected change leaders in order to understand how they initiated learning to lead and how they drew upon their personal prior experiences to help them develop. Exploring and analysing these personal 'stories', using a narrative approach, provided detailed critical insights into the lived processes of effective leadership in coaching systems development. These critical insights are now offered as valuable learning that can support individuals and organisations seeking to initiate and lead future systems development.

1.3   Context for sport coaching

The Wolfenden Report (1960) marked a significant 'turning point' (Hargreaves, 1986, p.7) for the governance of sport in the UK. Coaching featured heavily in this report, which arguably set the context for how coaching would be perceived, developed and funded in the ensuing years. In more recent decades, UK policy documents such as 'Coaching Matters' (Sports Council, 1991), the Coaching Task Force (DCMS, 2002), The UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008), and UK Coaching Strategy (UK Coaching, 2017) have continued to raise the profile and importance of coaching within sport. It is now universally recognised that good quality coaching has the potential to influence participation, development and retention within sport, (Lyle and Cushion, 2017), with this appreciation changing the ways in which sport coaching is viewed and developed, (Taylor and Garratt, 2010).

Since 2015, the sport coaching context for the UK has grown ever more complex with the publication of strategies including 'Coaching in an Active Nation; the coaching plan for England', (Sport England, 2016); 'Coaching Scotland: a framework guide to the development of coaches and coaching in Scotland', (sportscotland, 2017); 'UK Coaching Strategy 2017-2021' (UK Coaching, 2017); and 'Working in an Active Nation' (Sport England, 2018). With great coaching now presented as being 'at the heart of physical activity and sport' (UK Coaching, 2017, Our Mission section), organisations within the sporting landscape (including national governing bodies of sport) have been tasked with consistently building coaching systems that 'recruit, develop and retain a diverse coaching workforce that better reflects society and inspires an active nation' (UK Coaching, 2017, Our Strategy, section 2).

Whilst there continues to be significant focus on the need for 'modernisation' of the governance structures for sport (DCMS, 2000), there has been little focus on the need to develop and support the people within the organisations and 'systems' who bring such visions to life. Herold and Fedor, (2008, p.5), argued that the real problem with change is not the inability to create new ideas, rather the reality that 'proposed changes so often exceed organisations' capacity to digest them'. They also highlighted the importance of leaders of change adopting approaches that facilitate long-term change rather than delivering 'knee-jerk, copycat, or faddish trends' (*ibid*.). It is this thinking from Herold and Fedor that provided the insight for a number of critical questions that motivated this research. In a context where governing bodies face increasing pressure to respond to shifting political agendas for sport coaching, the need for effective leadership to facilitate change becomes paramount. Yet the importance of such leadership has rarely gained attention in either academic literature or policy documents. It is this 'gap' that this research study sought to address; reviewing how 'change' is perceived within sport coaching and whether a renewed focus on effective leadership could support the ongoing evolution of coaching systems in the UK.

1.4   Coaching Systems Development

Whilst the term 'coaching systems' (section 1.3) has been widely used in practical terms within the UK coaching sector since the publication of the UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008), a consensus definition remains relatively elusive. The UK Coaching Framework set out an ambitious vision that called for 'the creation of an ethical, valued, inclusive and cohesive coaching system that is a world leader by 2016', (*ibid.,* foreword, no page number).

It also referred to the notion of a 'coaching system' throughout the document; yet it did not specifically define what was meant by the term. Rather, the Framework (*ibid.,* p.12) included the diagram below (Figure 1) to highlight the scope of a 'coaching system':

Figure 1:   UK Coaching Framework – coaching systems scope
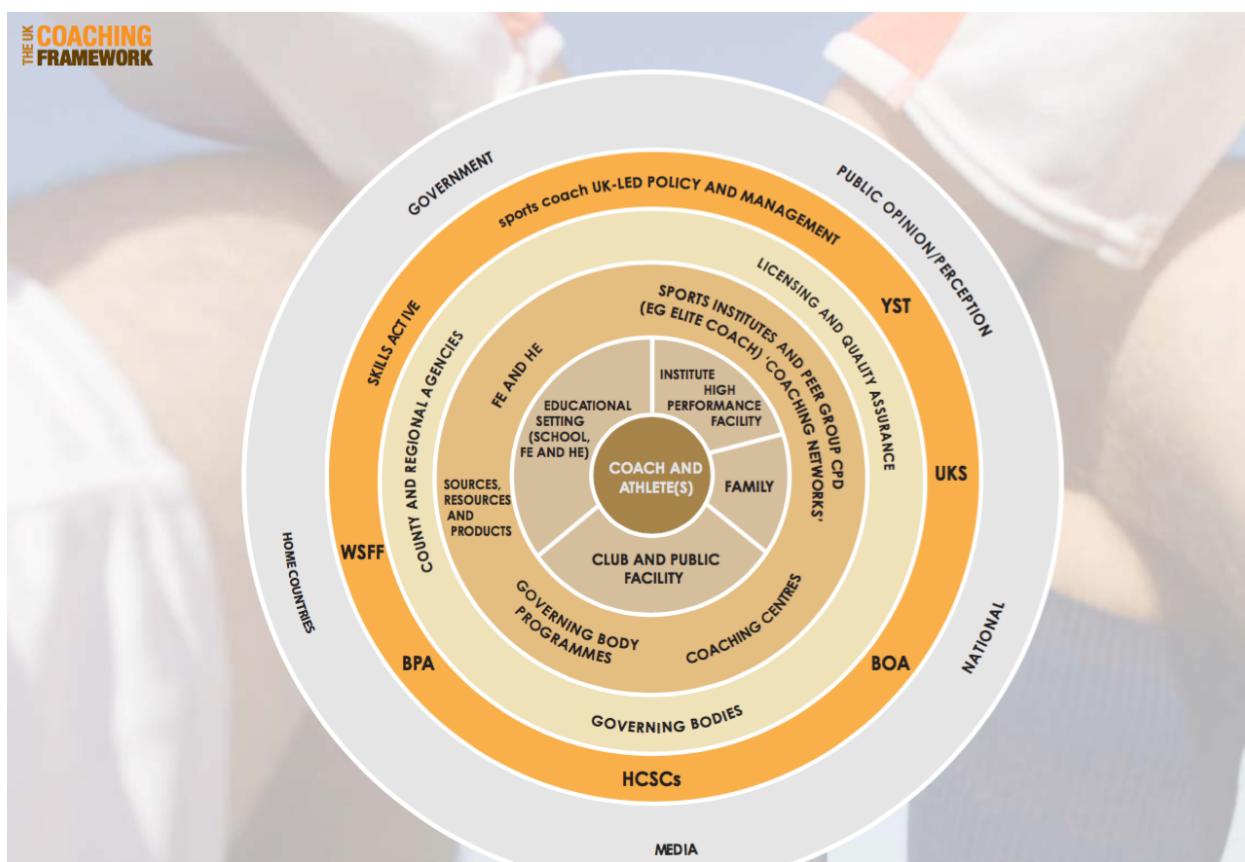
Figure 2: The Context for Sport and Disability Sport Involvement with the Coach Playing a 'Process Leader' Role 4

Colour	Meaning
	ATHLETE–COACH RELATIONSHIP
	COACHING ENVIRONMENTS
	LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENTS
	GOVERNANCE, AWARDS, LICENSING
	POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS
	WIDER POLICY AND SOCIETAL ENVIRONMENT

Key:

BOA:	British Olympic Association
BPA:	British Paralympic Association
HCSCs:	Home Country Sports Councils
UKS:	UK Sport
WSFF:	Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation
YST:	Youth Sport Trust

The UK Coaching Framework

The UK Coaching Framework detailed three phases of development (p.19-21), five strategic action areas (p.25-27), six management initiatives (p.31-35) and four key pillars (p.39) that would all be required to support the implementation of a world-leading coaching system. Of most relevance to this study was the key development pillar that noted the importance of the 'capacity of governing bodies of sport to design, deliver, support and quality-assure inclusive coaching and coach education systems on a local, regional, national and UK-wide basis', and that such 'capacity issues will be assessed for for all governing bodies of sport committing to further development of their coaching systems in the context of the UK Coaching Framework' (p.39). As will be explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis, there has arguably been little, or no attention paid to this crucial area of development identified as a key pillar for the UK Coaching Framework.

The sole definition of a 'coaching system' that appears in written literature is provided by Lara-Bercial *et al* (2017) in the 'European Sport Coaching Framework' (ESCF); a document that provided a further reference point for the development of coaching, coach education and coaching systems within Europe. The ESCF acknowledged that finding the most appropriate ways to support coaches and athletes 'does not happen in isolation but is the result of interactions between the constituents of what can be termed *The Coaching System*' (*ibid.* p.12). The ESCF subsequently defined the coaching system as 'the people, organisations, structures and processes that play a part in the recruitment, education, development, employment and recognition of coaches in a particular context' (*ibid.*). Figure 2 below shows the visual representation of this ESCF coaching system definition and the various constituents, which does have parallels with the UK Coaching Framework diagram in Figure 1 above.

Figure 2:   ESCF Coaching System – people, functions, organisations

Adapted from Lara-Bercial *et al*, 2017, p. 13
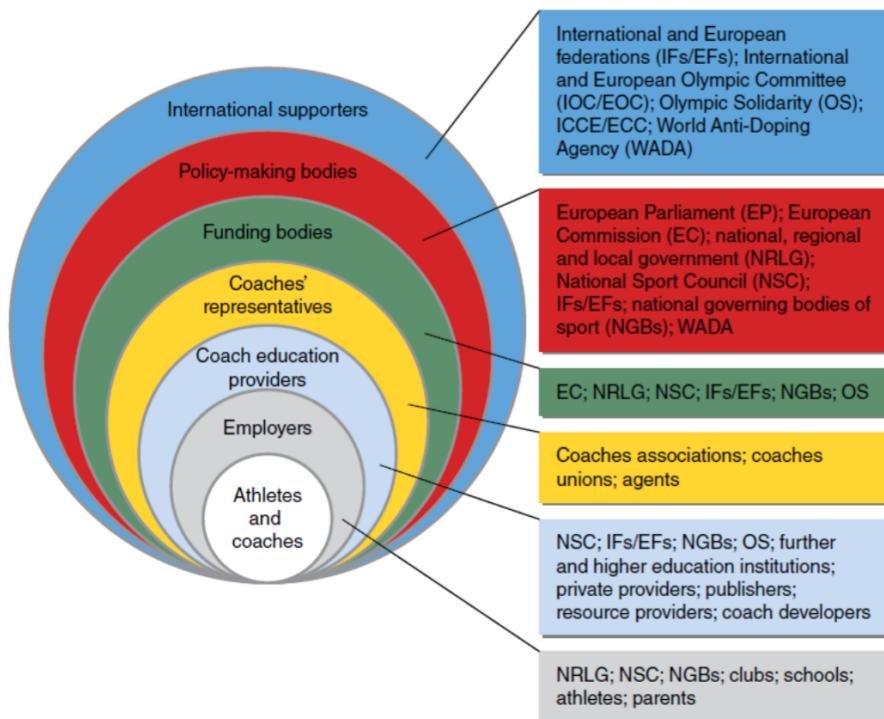
When reviewing the field of coaching within current academic literature, it is evident that the vast majority of research has, to date, focused on the 'act' or practice of sport coaching that is articulated at the centre of both the figures presented above, and introduced in section 1.3. As Callary and Gearity (2019, p.261) summarised, 'a sizeable amount of research and theorising exists on understanding, advocating for, and preparing quality coaches'. Authors such as Armour, Coté, Cushion, Gilbert, Jones, Jowett, Lyle, North and Potrac (to name but a few) have, over the past 40 years or so, made significant contributions to the body of work that explores coach/athlete relationships and coaching as a 'social non-linear process characterised by complexity and ambiguity' (Jones and Thomas, 2015, p.65). This research focus arguably reflects the emphasis of the wider 'coaching system' on the recruitment, training and retention of coaches as a priority area for development during this time.

During this period, however, there has been 'virtually no research examining the role of the coach developer/educator' (Abraham *et al*, 2013, p.175) and yet 'professional coach educators are key to the success of coach education' (Cushion *et al*, 2019, p.533). Interestingly, even in the past twelve months (2018 onwards), there appears to have been a noticeable shift in the field that recognised the need to study the skills, abilities and experiences of such 'coach developers' in order to really advance coaching practice. This again anecdotally reflects a similar move within the practitioner landscape. The publication of a special issue of the International Sport Coaching Journal (2019, Volume 6) dedicated to 'Global Perspectives in Coach Education for the Coach Developer' perhaps most vividly highlights the recognition that an effective coach developer workforce is necessary to support the continued growth, development and learning of active coaches. Yet, as Callary and Gearity (2019, p.261) argued in the introduction to this coach developer edition, 'there is much that this special issue accomplished, and yet much more to be done'.

This study argues that in order for the continued development of UK coaching systems, there is a need to expand this focus further and go beyond the coach developer remit to the 'coaching system leaders'. These are the individuals within sport governing bodies, and other sporting organisations, who are ultimately responsible for designing, developing, leading and co-ordinating the constituent parts of 'world-leading coaching systems'. In essence this focuses on the 'people' element of coaching systems as highlighted in the second key pillar of the UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008, p.39) and within the ESCF definition of coaching systems (Lara-Bercial *et al*, 2017, p.12).

1.5   Research questions

The main research question addressed in this study was:

- *What can be learned about effective change leadership in sport coaching systems from critical analysis of the narratives of selected change leaders?*

The following sub-questions then provided a logical structure for the literature review, data analysis and research outputs:

1. What are the stories of the individuals who are leading change effectively within sport coaching systems in the UK?

2. What common and/or contrasting themes can be identified and developed from within and across these stories?

3. How can the insights gained from this research inform future leadership development for sport coaching systems and other relevant contexts in the UK?

Chapters 4 and 5 provide the detail of the data collection methods employed to co-construct and analyse the stories of the selected change leaders for this study. Acknowledging the stated research paradigm (see section 4.2) Chapter 6 then presents an answer to sub-research question 1, with Chapter 7 answering sub-research question 2. Sub-question research 3 was approached in a different way as empirical data was not directly collected to answer this question. Instead, personal experience and researcher reflexivity was employed to consider how the research outputs and learning from this study could be collated, connected and presented in a way that could be utilised to support future coaching systems leadership development.

1.6   A narrative, case study approach

The rationale for this research was to learn about change leadership from detailed analysis of individuals who have been successful in effectively leading change within sport coaching systems. Constructing, analysing and sharing the personal stories of individuals who are actively influencing the coaching systems landscape within which they operate, could provide critical insights into factors that have resulted in success in the cases studied. The ways in which each case achieved success was personal and unique, reflecting both individual agency and the environment within which each operated.

Stake (1995, p.8) suggested that the purpose of a studying a case was to 'observe the workings of the case, to record what was happening and to examine it's meaning'. Equally, he proposed that 'the real business of case study is particularisation not generalisation' (*ibid.*) and noted the importance of understanding each case in 'both terms of its uniqueness and commonality with other cases' (Hemmestad and Jones, 2019, p.673). Thus, for this study, the choice was to adopt a collective case study approach (Stake, 2000) to allow for such insight and comparison.

The choice of a narrative case study approach for this study was influenced by research from Clandinin and Connelly (1996, p.24) on the teaching profession. They argued that 'it is not only an understanding of teacher knowledge and the education of teachers that will make a difference but attention to the professional knowledge context in which teachers live and work'.

Narrative methodologies have also been increasingly applied within a sport coaching context since the early 2000s (Jones *et al,* 2004; Toner *et al,* 2012; Carless and Douglas, 2013; Gilbourne *et al*, 2014; Hemmestad and Jones, 2019), as scholars have come to view coaching as a complex, non-linear social process (Jones 2007; Hemmestad *et al*, 2010; Purdy and Jones, 2011; Jones *et al*, 2018; Jones and Ronglan, 2018). In the absence of literature directly relating to the experiences of coaching systems managers, this body of sport coaching work provided a sound basis within which this study, its methodology and, ultimately conclusions, could be grounded.

Stake (2000, p.435) stated that the 'case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied'. The choice of what to be studied within this case was framed by the research questions outlined previously (1.4), with the methodology chapter expanding on how the study was conducted and presented. Each chapter of this thesis has been carefully constructed so that together they 'tell the story' of this research by addressing the 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' questions. This includes the research context, the methodological choices and the conclusions reached. There is also space for reflections on the research process and the presentation of a model that is presented to answer the 'so what?' question that accompanies any research study.

1.7 The reflexive researcher

'Reflexivity' is an essential ingredient in constructivist-interpretative research and 'many scholars practice and reflect upon reflexive research' (Mahadevan, 2011, p.150. Lincoln *et al* (2011, p.115) defined reflexivity as 'the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher' and emphasised that the constructivist approach requires the researcher to continually utilise reflection as a tool (*ibid*.). Hastie and Hay (2012, p.82) stressed that 'given the centrality of the researcher in the process of qualitative research, it is essential to recognise, acknowledge and account for the influence of the researcher's personal values, beliefs and experiences on the research process and its outcomes'. Reflexivity requires the individual to look back upon their experiences and consider their influence, involvement and how their presence may have affected a particular research outcome. Carter *et al* (2014, p.363) emphasised that 'the interpretative nature of qualitative research places researchers in a space where their own social and historical position is a vital element in the study process'.

Carter *et al* (ibid.) also highlighted that 'by making the substance of one's self and story explicit, we better understand how the researcher approaches research questions, interactions with participants and data, all of which ultimately shape emergent findings and discussions'. The qualitative researcher is not, and can never be, 'neutral'. However, if an individual understands that that the stories they uncover are constructed within the frame of their personal paradigm, and that each person within their research setting will also have their own paradigm, then appropriate levels of meaning can be drawn from the study. The position of the researcher within this study was briefly introduced in section 1.1. and will be further explored in section 4.5.3 below.

The researcher, however, is not the only source of reflexivity in a constructivist-interpretive research study. Mahadevan (2011, p.150) discussed the notion of 'participative reflexivity', in which the researcher chooses 'to trust the other and engage seriously with their view' (Hibbert *et al*, 2010, p.56). Hibbert *et al* (*ibid*. p.57) further identified that a participative reflexive approach requires the researcher to 'at least partially, give(s) over the direction and meaning of the research, and herself, to the other(s)'. Lincoln *et al* (2011, p.115) also recognised that studies conducted within a constructivist paradigm need to consider whose 'voices' are heard in the research findings; 'the author, the participants or the researcher through their inquiry'.

Mahadevan (2011, p.151) encouraged researchers to appreciate that the researcher, actors in the field and readers of the final work all have a role to play in the construction of any written text. Any research texts and outcomes, therefore, need to be created through an ongoing dialogue between researcher and participant, then presented in a manner which is useful to the broader audience. In essence, the reflexive process adopted throughout this research study sought to ensure that 'reflections offered by participants are…reframed as a way to help create a meticulous, robust, and intellectually enriched understanding through generating additional insights and dialogue' as suggested by Smith and McGannon (2018, p.177). Reflective paragraphs are included throughout this thesis and Chapter 5 (Data Analysis) is presented as a reflexive first person account to show a journey of trustworthiness and rigour throughout the research process. Consideration is also given in these paragraphs to researcher/participant relationships and how ongoing dialogues between researcher and participants shaped and guided the final research outputs.

1.8 Overview of this study

The following chapters will expand on this introduction and provide a detailed journey through this research process. The opening chapters review relevant change and leadership literature (Chapter 2) and the sport/sport coaching landscape in the UK (Chapter 3). The middle chapters provide detailed insights into the methodological approach (Chapter 4) and choices made on how to conduct the research (Chapter 5), with the final chapters reporting the findings (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) and conclusions from the research (Chapter 9). In summary:

- **Chapter 2** – reviews the concept of change and explores the sub-research questions of what is change and who leads it?

- **Chapter 3** – considers the context for sport/sport coaching in the UK since the 1960s and explores the approach to managing change during this time.

- **Chapter 4** – provides detailed insights into the methodological approach and specific research tools employed for this research.

- **Chapter 5** – reflects on the undertaking of the research and brings the research plan 'to life' with a first person account of the process.

- **Chapter 6** – includes the individual narratives co-constructed during the first phase of the data analysis (thematic analysis).

- **Chapter 7** – details the output from the cross-case analysis phase (template analysis) in the form of five themes that were developed from the data.

- **Chapter 8** - presents a new 'Model for Coaching Systems Leadership in the UK' that has been developed from this research.

- **Chapter 9** – draws the research to a close with a summary of answers to the research questions, key recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2:   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

The following two chapters present an overview of the literature that was reviewed for this study and provide a frame from which the overall study can be located and contextualised. Whilst the content and focus of each chapter is different, together they establish an overview of the core subjects, issues and theories related to this particular research. The chapters also reflect on the breadth of work in each area and consider any interesting variances in approaches, arguments or conclusions. Crucially, by reviewing relevant literature it was possible to identify existing gaps in the current research which enabled the effective positioning of this particular study in the wider body of work (sections 1.3 and 1.4 above provide the broad context).

With the context for sport coaching (section 1.3, p.5, coaching systems development (section 1.4, p.7) and the research questions (section 1.5, p.11) as a guide, the following two chapters explore the following key areas for this study:

- Chapter 2 – The context for change and change leadership
    - Defining, driving and managing change
    - Leading change and leadership development

- Chapter 3 - The changing sporting landscape and political influences for coaching within the UK since the 1960s:
    - Implications for the coaching sector or profession
    - The approach to managing change in UK sport coaching systems

2.2   Setting the context for change

The literature examining change provides a rich context within which the change researcher is able to position any new study. Traditional academic studies reside alongside practical management tools, each intended to help organisations and individuals operate effectively in the constantly shifting and increasingly complex landscape for change. The sheer size of this body of work presents a considerable challenge when reviewing the overarching subject of 'change'. Change in the abstract is a potentially infinite concept to grasp, however when placed in a specific context, the notion of change can more feasibly be studied. Establishing a relevant base for this study is therefore critical. Literature specific to the field of sport coaching systems in the UK is limited and it has, therefore, been necessary to draw upon relevant literature from wider, relatable contexts to provide a frame for this research.

Fullan (1993, p.vii) identified organisational change as 'ubiquitous and relentless', with Mullins (1999, p.821) stating that 'change is part of organisational life and essential for progress'. In more recent years Nordin and Deros (2017, p.310) argued that 'change is not an exception but an ongoing process', with others summarising that 'change has become the norm for organisations to sustain their success and existence' (Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015, p.234). The acronym VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) has been introduced into the change landscape (Saleh and Watson, 2017, p.705) and is now being consistently used to describe the constant shifts within the business world (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Sarkar, 2016).

Change is not a modern phenomenon and the desire to 'manage change' has been discussed in theory and practice for several decades. In the 1940s, Lewin (1947a, p.13) reasoned that 'change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change', and through his studies on Group Dynamics (1947a; 1947b), he proposed that the contrasting positions of social change and social stability should be analysed together to understand group life. This is the basis of 'Field Theory', which Lewin characterised as a method of studying the complex relationships between individuals, group behaviour and the 'field' within which they each exist (1943).

Whilst Lewin's studies focused largely on group and social behaviour, the connection of his theories to organisational development is relevant to this study. For example, Ghitulescu (2013, p.206) acknowledged that 'the success of organisational change increasingly depends on employees taking personal responsibility for change through effective adaptation to changing conditions and proactive anticipation of new challenges'. Such links between work environment (the 'field') and employee behaviour clearly reflects the principles of Lewin's 'Field Theory' in that forces in the 'field', however small or large, directly influence individual or group behaviour.

It is interesting to note, though, that Ghitulescu does not reference Lewin's work, despite the apparent connections. This may be a reflection that this was a 'period of time when the influence of Lewin in academic social psychology had declined' (Bargal *et al*, 1992, p.982) and when doubt was cast regarding the relevance of Lewin's work to modern change efforts (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Marshak, 1993).

Questions of whether Lewin's sequential approach to change can still be considered useful in the current complex world of organisational and cultural change continued in current literature (for example Bartunek and Woodman, 2015, p.158). Yet Burnes (2004, p.977) asserted that 'rather than being outdated or redundant, Lewin's approach is still relevant to the modern world', and a number of papers over the past five years have reinforced the value and relevance of Lewin's contribution to the organisational change domain (for example Burnes and Bargal, 2015; Cummings *et al*, 2016; Burnes *et al*, 2018).

2.3   The nature and scope of change

Perhaps reflective of the many ways in which change is perceived, there remains no one, common approach to categorising change. For example, Senior and Fleming (2006) considered change as characterised by the rate of occurrence, how it comes about and scale; Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) contemplated change in terms of scale and duration; Rosenbaum *et al* (2018) discussed change in relation to type or impetus; and Lewis (2019) defined change in terms of being planned or unplanned, small scope or large scope, and discursive or material.

A number of early management theorists, for example Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958), Bennis *et al* (1976) and Margulies and Raia (1978), proposed simply that change could be considered as either 'planned' or 'unplanned'; a categorisation that has attracted much interest. For example, Ford (2008, p.174) identified that planned change is 'goal-orientated, rational and intentional' whilst emergent (unplanned) change is 'processional, performative and emergent'. Interestingly, however, Fullan (1993, p.1) argued that change could be 'assumed, but not planned for' and argued that for even the most planned change, there would always be an element of luck influencing the outcome (*ibid.* p.25). Fullan's reflections highlight a key question for the management of change; that is whether or not any change can actually be solely attributable to a planned programme, or whether the new behaviour or outcome is due to a combination of planned and unplanned change?

This perspective suggests that even the best planned change programmes rely on an element of 'luck' in determining their outcome. With authors such as By *et al* (2016) questioning whether the term 'change leadership' is actually an oxymoron, it is relevant to pose the question of whether change can ever truly be 'managed' in a logical and systematic way when the nature of change itself is so 'changeable'? It is interesting to consider how the potential answers to this question impact upon the role of leaders and leadership within change programmes. There are also links to Lewin's 'Field Theory' and the inter-relationship between field forces and behaviour, which are inter-dependent.

Another way of viewing organisational change is to consider it in relation to magnitude, or the relative size of the change within an organisation (Robbins, 2001). The terms 'first-order' (small, incremental change) and 'second-order' (large transformational or radical change) have been frequently used within literature to describe the scope of change (Watzlawick *et al*, 1974; Golembiewski *et al*, 1976; Argyris and Schön, 1978), with Bartunek and Moch (1987) adding 'third-order' (continuous change) to the literature. It is interesting to note that many popular change models from the late 20th Century begin with the characteristics of first and second order change as their base, for example Grundy's 'variety of change' and the Dunphy and Stace 'scale of corporate change' (both 1993). Each model developed their own terminology to define change, but both viewed change as a continuum that ranged from minor, refining changes (first order) to major, radical, revolutionary change (second order).

Building on this simple continuum idea, Nadler and Tushman (1989) considered change in two dimensions. Their framework connected the 'scope of change' dimension (incremental or strategic change) with the 'external environment' dimension (reactive or anticipatory change) to better understand the extent to which change engages an organisation and the source of the impetus for that change. Nadler and Tushman (*ibid.*) then identified the four classes of change of *tuning* (increasing efficiency); *adaptation* (response to external events); *re-orientation*, (change occurring within an existing structure or frame of the organisation); and *re-creation* (change to the fundamental structure or frame of the organisation) across these two broader dimensions. It is possible to view the Nadler and Tushman model as a perspective that connects a number of the identified means of classifying change.

Table 1 below, (adapted from Nadler and Tushman, 1989, p.196) demonstrates these perceived connections.

Table 1:   Types of Organisational Change

	Incremental *(1st order/continuous)*	**Strategic** *(2nd order/discontinuous)*
Anticipatory (*Planned*)	**Tuning**	**Re-orientation**
Reactive (*Unplanned*)	**Adaptation**	**Re-creation**

Adapted from Nadler and Tushman, (1989, p.196)

2.4   Managing change – a model approach

As already highlighted, change 'has become the norm for organisations' (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015, p.234) and is 'a prominent feature of our lives and the character of many organisations' (Lewis, 2019, p.18). Yet, if the literature is to be believed, a high percentage of change initiatives consistently fail (Worley and Mohrman, 2014, p.217; Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015, p. 235); although it is noted that a growing number of authors, such as Hughes (2011) dispute this oft quoted statistic and label it as a myth that has become an 'accepted truth' (By *et al*, 2016, p.8). If, though, it is accepted that change is an 'inescapable part of both social and organisational life', (Mullins, 1999, p.821), and that life within groups is never without change, (Lewin 1947a; 1947b), the study of change from both social and organisational perspectives is one of great interest.

Why, though, has the desire to manage change in the context of 'organisational development' become such a keenly researched and practically applied notion? Perhaps Kippenberger (1998a, p.10) provide a simple answer when he summarised that 'because managers have to manage groups of people, they need to understand group dynamics and need insights into the desire for, and resistance to, specific change'? It is arguably this basic proposition that provides much of the rationale for the use of models in the field of change management and organisational development.

Since the early work of Lewin, a number of change models have been constructed to help 'plan and implement change in order to promote organisational effectiveness' (Asumeng and Osae-Larbi, 2015, p.29). Just as there are a number of different ways to categorise change, there are a variety of approaches to managing change, (Senior and Fleming, 2006, p.310). This review now presents a selection of these models and then compares and contrasts their respective approaches. The following models have been selected because they reflect a progressive timeframe, offer a range of perspectives and present a broad cross section of available change models. Equally, each of these models was prominent in the literature reviewed for this study, with research by authors such as Pryor *et al*. (2008), Lunenburg (2010), Mitchell (2013), Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) and Rosenbaum *et al* (2018) guiding final choices. For example, these papers reinforced the seminal position of Lewin's work, and highlighted Kotter's model (1996) as a widely recognised model for change within the business world. The following paragraphs do not intend to provide an in-depth description of each change model, rather to highlight key observations and points of relevance for this study.

2.5   Introducing five models for change

2.5.1 Lewin's Three-Step Change Model (1940's)

Lewin (1947a) proposed a 'Three- Step Change Model' built around the stages of *unfreezing*, *moving*, and *refreezing*. Authors such as Bargal *et al* (1992) and Burnes (2004) advocated Lewin's model as a base from which many modern change theories took their lead, whereas a counter-argument suggested that Lewin's model was too simple and outdated for the current fast-moving world (Marshak, 1993; Dent and Goldberg, 1999). In more recent years, however, interest in Lewin's three-step change model has been been reignited (Bartunek and Woodman, 2015; Cummings *et al*, 2016; Burnes at al, 2018).   Of particular significance is the conclusion reached by Rosenbaum *et al* (2018, p.299) that 'despite the voluminous research and material written regarding planned organisational change, Lewin's approach, when considered in its entirety, is as relevant now as it was during the time of his original writing'.

Lewin (1947a) argued that the initial *unfreezing* step was necessary 'to break open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness [that] is sometimes necessary to deliberately bring about an emotional stir up' (p.35). In other words, change needed a prompt for action. Within the *moving* step, Lewin (1942) believed that it was essential to view any change situation as a whole due to the complexity of the interaction between field forces and individual and group behaviour. This is an important point as Lewin believed that in order for change to occur, the change leader must consider all forces at work and identify all possible options on a trial and error basis (Lewin 1947a).

The third step of *refreezing* evokes a notable level of debate in the literature. Whilst Lewin (1947a, p.34) stressed that 'it does not suffice to define the objective of a planned change in group performance as the reaching of a different level' and that 'permanency of the new level...should be included in the objective', there is a view in contemporary literature that 'Lewin never wrote *refreezing* anywhere' (Cummings *et al* (2016, p.37). In fact, Cummings *et al* argued that the term *refreezing* had been created over time by the misinterpretation of Lewin's work, for example Festinger and Coyle (1950). Cummings *et al* (*ibid*.) noted the discrepancy between Lewin's cited belief that 'life was not static; it was changing, dynamic, fluid' and the principle of his 'unfreeze, move, refreeze' approach.

It is this debate that arguably underpins many of the theoretical criticisms of the Lewin three-step model as too simplistic for the dynamic environments of modern organisational life. As Bartunek and Woodman (2015, p.161) reflected, 'the problem with this formulation is that time keeps on moving, that is, continuous change is unceasing' and consideration has to be given the whether 'an organisational change will last long enough to (re)freeze'. Despite such challenges to Lewin's work, numerous studies over the past 60+ years have referenced Lewin and have critiqued its use as a model for change (Schein, 1996; Kippenberger, 1998b; Lunenburg, 2010; Cummings *et al*, 2016). Each author has offered their own views on the model and argued their position on whether or not Lewin's work has remained relevant.

As already noted above, the most significant challenges are related to the *refreezing* stage of the model, for example the acknowledgement by Kippenberger (1998b, p.13) that in order for change to really be sustained, there is a need for individuals to 'embed their new point of view in their own personality and in their relationships with others'. Kippenberger's point is particularly relevant for this study in relation to the challenges for management and development programme in supporting the transfer of new, learned behaviour from the training environment to the everyday workplace.

This issue of learning transfer is recognised as a consistent challenge throughout the professional development literature in a number of sectors, including teacher education, sports coach education and leader development. For example, Gurdjian *et al* (2014, p.123) recognised that 'burgeoning leaders, no matter how talented, often struggle to transfer even their most powerful off-site experiences into changed behaviour on the front line'. When viewed in these terms, it can perhaps logically be concluded that it is this notion of 'embedding behaviour change' that is the essence of Lewin's refreezing stage; in other words, change is only sustained if new behaviour is embedded in the culture of the 'field'.

2.5.2 *Lippitt, Watson and Westley's Phases of Change Theory (1958)*

Heavily influenced by the work of Lewin; Lippitt, Watson and Westley published their pioneering work on planned change in 1958. Lippitt *et al*. (1958) recognised that they were not the originators of many of the ideas in their research and their work evolved from previous concepts developed in change literature. Lippitt *et al* focused on 'planned change' and the importance of 'professional guidance' in organisational change, (*ibid.* p.4). Lippitt *et al* (*ibid.* p.3) argued that organisational change needed to be served by an external change agent (professional 'helper'); a view that has since been much discussed in the literature. This focus on the role and responsibility of the change agent as opposed to the continual process of change has been widely acknowledged as a point of difference in the Lippitt *et al* model (for example Kritsonis, 2004-2005). St. Clair *et al* (1963, p.291) reflected that this important feature of the Lippitt *et al* model was 'perhaps the greatest contribution of this book, [yet] also one of its limitations'. St Clair *et al* (*ibid.*) suggested that considering only the external change agent is needlessly restrictive (*ibid.* p.292) as it precluded the influence of internal agents of change (insiders).

Lippitt *et al*. (1958, p.123) presented their work as a seven-phase model that expanded on Lewin's original three-step model. Table 2 (below) illustrates the Lippitt *et al* model and highlights their perceived connections with Lewin's original work (*ibid.* p.130).

Table 2:   Comparison of Lewin and Lippitt *et al* change models

Lippitt *et al*. (1958)		Lewin (1940's)
Phase 1	The client system discovers the need for help, sometimes with stimulation by the change agent	Unfreezing
Phase 2	The helping relationship is established and defined	
Phase 3	The change problem is identified and clarified	Moving
Phase 4	Alternative possibilities for change are examined; change goals or intentions are established	
Phase 5	Change efforts in the 'reality situation' are attempted	
Phase 6	Change is generalised and stabilised	Refreezing
Phase 7	The helping relationship ends or a different type of continuing relationship is defined	

Adapted from Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958, p.130)

Whilst there are number of differences and similarities between the Lewin and Lippitt *et al* models, a key point of interest for this study arises from the seventh phase of the Lippitt *et al* model. This final step recognised that if an organisation became over-dependent on the change agent tasked with driving a particular change, or the individual remained in position too long, it was likely that the desired change would not be embedded in the behaviour of the organisation (1958, p. 142).

Equally, it was acknowledged that if the relationship with the change agent was terminated too quickly, it was likely that the desired behaviour change would not have sufficient time to develop. This presents an interesting conundrum for any change leader and arguably links to the question raised by St Clair *et al* (1963) as to whether focusing solely on the external change agent in planned change is a too much of a dependence or restriction.

Another relevant point of note is that whilst they presented their phases of change in linear fashion, Lippitt *et al* emphasised that change does not necessarily proceed in a sequential manner with overlap between each phase likely (Lippitt *et al*, 1958, p.130). This suggests an interesting paradox given the wide recognition that change is constant (Lewin, 1947a) and that change is influenced by individual and group behaviour and how each interacts with their environment (Lippitt *et al*, 1958), and yet there is an apparently pervasive desire to control or 'manage' change. As Lippitt *et al* argued, change is unlikely to happen in a logical manner, yet the change literature is filled with models and management tools built on a phased or step-by-step approach. This apparent conflict is important to note for the context of this study.

It is interesting to note at this point, that the use of models in the sport coaching sector is a common occurrence as it provides a 'representation of the relational aspects of (usually) complex phenomena by using symbols or simplified descriptions that help conceptualise the phenomenon itself' (Lyle, 2002, p.80).

Such models (for example the Long Term Athlete Development Model, UK Coaching Certificate, UK Coaching Framework) are used frequently by practitioners to inform and develop coach education and development programmes. Anecdotally, however, there is an overreliance on such models, and a tendency to apply them in the linear (or literal) format in which they are presented. This arguably results in over-simplistic solutions that do not fully reflect the reality of the environment, (Cushion *et al*, 2006, p.83). In terms of change, there is arguably a need for change agents (in this study, coaching systems leaders) to be able to operate in a dynamic environment where effective solutions do not necessarily lie in following a 'step-by-step' model. The implications for coaching systems leader development of the future are discussed in Chapter 8 where the reference to development of professional knowledge around change is key.

2.5.3 Greiner's Change Process Model (1967)

Like Lippitt *et al* (1958), Greiner (1967, p.119) acknowledged the shifting pace of change within organisational development and recognised the central role of managers in influencing change within any organisation. Lunenburg (2010, p.7) stressed that whilst Greiner's model recognised the key role of leaders during change, it also noted that 'potential for change also exists at all levels of leadership and operating responsibilities in the organisation'. Greiner's model recognised that 'power' and relative distribution of 'power' throughout an organisation was highly influential within change programmes. Greiner argued that change is more likely to occur when *shared power* is more prevalent in an organisation.

As a result, Greiner's framework was built on two key principles; first that successful change depended on a re-distribution of power throughout the organisation (1967, p.126), and second that power re-distribution occurred through a development process of change (Lunenburg, 2010, p.7). Greiner (1967, p.126) argued that change was 'not a black and white affair occurring...through a single causal mechanism', rather change involved a number of inter-linking phases with multiple elements and causes provoking reactions that caused the next change to occur. This belief echoed the conclusions noted earlier of Lippitt *et al*. (1957, p.130) in terms of the cyclical nature of change.

Greiner proposed that change required an initial impetus to 'shake the power structure' at its very foundation, (1967, p.126) and that both internal and external factors contribute to the build up of pressure to change. When pressure reached an influential level, managers would take action to change.

Greiner highlighted that the need for change would be more readily apparent when internal and external factors combined to prompt change, as when one is absent 'it is easier for top management to excuse the pressure as inconsequential', (*ibid.* p.127). It is interesting to recognise that the notion of change requiring a stimulus or influence to stimulate action is present within each of the change models reviewed thus far – albeit each model describing and defining it in differing ways.

Greiner's model depicted change as a series of stimuli and reactions that lead to organisational change at different levels. Figure 1 (below) represents an abstract view of Greiner's model with the two principles in evidence.

Figure 3:   Greiner's Change Process Model (1967)

Phase 1

Pressure on top management

Arousal to take action

Phase 2

Intervention at the top

Reorientation to internal problems

Phase 3

Diagnosis of problem areas

Recognition of specific problems

Phase 4

Invention of new solutions

Commitment to new course of action

Phase 5

Experiment with new solutions

Search for results

Phase 6

Reinforcement from positive results

Acceptance of new practices

Stimulus on the power structure

Reactions on the power structure

Adapted from Greiner (1967, p.126)

Again, parallels can be drawn between the final phase of Greiner's model and Lewin's third stage of *re-freezing*. Greiner (1967, p.129) emphasised that if change is effectively embedded through the *shared power* approach, it is 'less likely that these organisations will "slip back" to their previous behaviour'. Whilst there appears to be collective agreement for the need to embed any change, there are mixed beliefs as to how long this phase will take and whether there is an optimal pace for change (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006, p.173). Greiner (1967) believed that change must be adopted gradually and through continuing practice rather than through a 'one shot method' (p.129).

2.5.4 McKinsey 7S Model (1980)

The McKinsey 7-S model developed by Waterman *et al* (1980) is noticeably different to the step-by-step change models noted thus far. In developing their model, Waterman *et al* worked with internal and external stakeholders at McKinsey and Company to identify areas of interest and need. Whilst there were nuances between the two consultation groups, there was a consensus of dissatisfaction with conventional approaches to change management and a shared scepticism for the contribution of behavioural science to change. The original 1980 publication lacked references and therefore it is not possible to make direct connection to any of the theories critiqued in the consultation process for this model. However, given that Lewin, Lippitt *et al*. and Greiner had behavioural science backgrounds, it is possible to surmise that these were the approaches being dismissed as irrelevant.

The core concerns appeared to have been grounded in the belief that a systematic approach to change within an organisation is not always possible. Waterman *et al*. (1980, p.16) concluded that 'in the face of complexity and multiple competing demands, organisations simply can't handle decision-making in a totally rational way'. It is therefore possible to understand the criticism levelled at change models that adopted a linear approach because if change is constantly evolving, it is arguably impossible to manage change using a sequential model.   This challenge was previously discussed under the paragraphs above on Lippitt *et al*.

The 7-S framework developed by Waterman *et al* (1980) also reflected the belief that productive organisational change is not simply a matter of structure, with the 7-S model reflecting the key elements of an organisation that Waterman *et al* believed were needed for effective organisational change. The seven resultant factors were divided into the 'hard' elements of strategy, structure and systems, and four 'soft' elements of style, staff, skills and super-ordinate goals. Hanafizadeh and Ravansan (2011, p.25) reviewed the McKinsey 7-S model and noted that 'successful organisations achieve a fit between these seven elements', however they also argued that the 'hard' elements are easily identifiable and understandable, whereas the 'soft' elements may be less feasible from a systems perspective.

Figure 2 (on the following page) depicts the 7-S model, which is visually different from the preceding step-by-step models. There is no obvious starting point or flow, which reflects the belief of Waterman *et al*. (1980) that different elements will be important to organisations in varying degrees at any point in time, (1980, p.19). Each element is a variable within any organisational change effort, with the consistent point that a change effort cannot be implemented by simply focusing on one or two of the factors (Leadersphere, 2008, p.15). Successful re-organisation will occur when the variables are aligned to become more congruent as a system.

Figure 4:   The 7-S Model
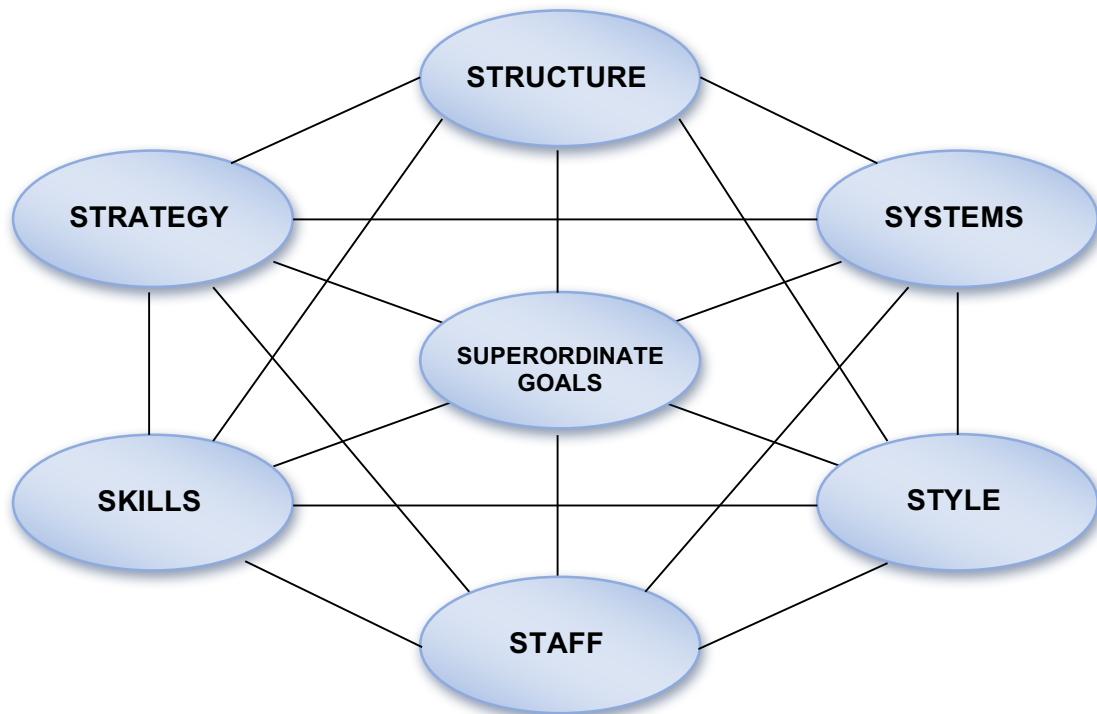
Adapted from Waterman et al. (1980, p.18)

Despite apparent differences, it is possible to draw parallels between the 7-S model and Lewin's Field Theory, namely that there is a relationship between the environment and individual/group behaviour. Reflecting Lewin's belief that individual behaviour is influenced by forces that exist within the group environment (1943 and 1947a), the 7-S model appreciates the connection between organisational environment and behaviour. However, criticism has been levelled at the 7-S model in that Waterman *et al* viewed the organisation as existing in isolation and only influencing inwardly, and did not consider how the structure of an organisation might need to respond to external pressures (Leadersphere, 2008; Hanafizadeh and Ravansan, 2011). This approach can, therefore, be considered limited as it does not recognise the potential impact of external change factors.

2.5.5 Kotter's Eight Stage Process (1996)

Kotter (1995; 1996) is a significant influence on the field of change, despite an apparent lack of academic or theoretical rigour throughout his work. In fact, he appeared as the most cited change author in publications referring to change and leadership between 1978 and 2014 (Hughes, 2015). It is interesting to note the lack of references throughout the majority of Kotter publications (similarly the Waterman *et al* work) and thus it is difficult to make connections between existing theoretical frameworks and the Kotter and McKinsey models, which would arguably strengthen the case for their relevance.

Kotter's model is built on his personal observations regarding change efforts and his fundamental belief that there are eight reasons why a change process will fail. Kotter used eight common errors to suggest an eight stage process to aid managers attempting to instigate a change initiative. These reasons and stages are summarised in Table 3 (following page), which has been adapted from Kotter's book 'Leading Change', (1996).

Table 3:   Eight reasons for failure and eight stages for change

Eight common errors within change	Eight stages of creating major change
Allowing too much complacency	Establishing a sense of urgency
Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition	Creating the guiding coalition
Underestimating the power of vision	Developing a vision and strategy
Under communicating the vision by a factor of 10 (or even 100 or 1,000)	Communicating the change vision
Permitting obstacles to block the new vision	Empowering broad-based action
Failing to create short-term wins	Generating short-term wins
Declaring victory too soon	Consolidating gains and producing more change
Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture	Anchoring new changes in the culture

Adapted from Kotter, (1996), Leading Change

Kotter placed great importance on the sequencing of any change process and argued that errors commonly occur when organisations 'jump ahead' in the process of change and try to achieve too much too quickly, (1996. p.23). This point is unique to the Kotter model and worthy of note as whilst the Lewin, Lippitt *et al*. and Greiner models are all presented sequentially, they did not place such specific emphasis on the step-by-step process. In fact, as noted earlier, Lippitt *et al*. (1957) identified that, whilst their model was presented in a sequential manner, phases will overlap and may not strictly always follow the process. This also contrasts significantly with the 7-S model (Waterman *et al*., 1980) that stressed the need for a more fluid and interactional approach to change.

Nonetheless, it is possible to draw a number of parallels between Kotter's model and those previously reviewed. For example, Kotter's first phase of 'establishing a sense of urgency' (1996, p.35) reflects similar themes from the initial phases of each of the previously considered models and the need for a 'prompt' or stimulus for change. The relative power of the leadership group in Kotter's second phase ('create a guiding coalition', p.51) echoed Greiner's (1967) recognition of the importance of establishing *shared power* across an organisation seeking to change. Kotter's eighth phase noted the need to anchor any new change in the culture of the organisation, (*ibid.* p.145) and Kotter heavily emphasised the concept of 'culture' and described change programmes success as where 'new practices replace the old culture', (p.154). This arguably reflects the *refreezing* stage established by Lewin (even if there is debate around the legitimacy of attributing this to Lewin), and the need to embed new behaviour into organisational culture pervades each model of change.

Finally, Kotter (1996, p.15) recognised that organisations are subjected to a constant pressure to change in order to survive in the evolving global landscape. Kotter believed that his eight-stage model offered individuals the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of how successful change occurs, what steps are involved, and the potential pitfalls of any change effort, (1996, p.20). It could therefore be surmised that helping individuals to better understand the process of change will be increasingly important in today's global marketplace, which has significant relevance to this study in the context of sport coaching in the UK.

2.5.6 Common themes and contrasts

Each of the five change models reviewed were shaped by differing beliefs and theoretical perspectives. Whilst all adopted their own particular approach, there are a number of common themes that run across two or more of the models. The themes of leadership, shared power, problem solving and the need to embed new behaviour into organisational culture are all evident throughout the literature reviewed. It is also important to note that the authors of all the change models considered acknowledged change as a complex and dynamic process created by the inter-relationship between several factors. It is therefore interesting that five of the six change models outlined above adopted a liner approach to depict their change model, albeit with contrasting views.

Whilst Lippitt *et al*. (1958), and Greiner (1967) acknowledged that change is non-linear and phases of change may overlap, they still chose to present their models in a stepped manner. In contrast, Kotter (1996) stressed that the phasing of his eight stage model was critical to change programme success and argued that many change programmes fail because they do not adhere to the logical steps (p.23). The McKinsey 7-S model (Waterman *et al*., 1980) is the only model reviewed that was depicted in a non-linear fashion. These contrasts present an interesting paradox whereby models promote a linear approach to managing change, yet there is consensus that change is non-linear. This is of particular interest for this study when considering criticisms of 'the 'sequential models approach to coaching' (Jones *et al*, 214, p.3) that are viewed as over-simplistic and not reflective of the socially dynamic nature of sport coaching (Jones and Ronglan, 2018). Perhaps, therefore, it is possible to perceive change, like coaching, as requiring 'orchestration' (Jones and Wallace, 2005, 2006) rather than re-culturing or remoulding 'people and practice' (Jones and Ronglan, 2018, p.907).

Of great significance for this study is the consistent recognition that leadership, or the role of the change agent, is an important element within each of the change models considered. Whether in terms of the 'top down', guiding coalition approach presented by Kotter, the shared power approach developed by Greiner, or the external change agent influence proposed by Lippitt *et al*, the notion that change requires effective leadership is one that pervades the literature. Worley and Mohrman (2014, p.221) summarised this most appropriately for this study as they concluded that in the future organisations 'must acknowledge the pervasiveness of change by insisting that both formal and informal leaders become competent change agents'.

2.6   Leading change

Regardless of their approach or perspective, each of the models explored in this study acknowledged the significance of effective leadership for change; albeit with contrasting views. For example, the Lippitt *et al* and Waterman *et al* models believed change to be led through a 'top down' approach and directed by 'managers' and 'change agents' working to implement new strategy in line with a planned change. Whether the end aim is behaviour change, social engineering or organisational development, these models present the perspective that planned change is led from the top. This approach is reflective of the views of more traditional change theorists with, for example, Haberberg and Rieple (2005, p.569) stating that significant change in an organisation was usually instigated by the chief executive, managing director or equivalent.

In contrast, Johnson and Scholes (1999, p.530) suggested that individuals responsible for organisational development are not necessarily those who lead the implementation of strategic change, and Vickers (2008, p.560) agreed that 'strategy can be diverted or altered by managers lower down the organisation'. Interestingly, Johnson and Scholes (*ibid.*) posited that the change agent did not necessarily have to be a part of the internal organisation. They proposed that if an external consultant was believed to have the full support of the leader(s) of the organisation, their presence could 'galvanise change' (p.537). This approach was reflected by Lewin and Lippitt *et al*, who each viewed the 'change agent' as external to the 'field' or 'organisation', but is in contrast to Waterman *et al* and Greiner, who acknowledged the importance of the internal organisational manager as the 'change agent'.

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This point is significant for the context of this study because many individuals within 'coaching systems' are not directly employed by the central organisation in which change is required, yet they still have a significant role to play in embedding any change within the infrastructure. Clubs, volunteer coaches, local authorities, county associations and schools are all integral parts of the sports coaching landscape for any sport and the respective governing body; yet are effectively external agencies. Without their commitment to new ideas or programmes, change is unlikely to be embedded within the core coaching system of any sport.

The need to involve all layers of an organisation in change appears to be a valid perspective because, as Fronda and Moriceau (2008, p.589) highlighted, 'by not including the voice of middle managers, higher management runs into problems in the implementation of the change process'. Greiner (1967) also advocated this approach with his notion of 'shared power' for change, and, despite their initial focus on planned change being managed from the 'top down', it is possible to see some elements of this more layered approach reflected in the Lewin and McKinsey models of change. For example, Lewin recognised that individual behaviour influences overall group dynamic and Waterman *et al* believed that all staff have a role to play in creating change. Interestingly, Kotter (1996) went so far as to argue that 'top-down' leadership was a 'very dangerous belief', (1996, p.51). This note of caution was also issued by Nadler and Tushman (1989, p,200) and Fullan (2001, p.1) who argued that such leaders 'inadvertently often do more harm than good because, at best, they provide episodic improvement followed by frustrated or despondent dependency'.

Despite, however, Kotter's warning over a 'top-down' approach to leadership, he did not appear to fully embrace the notion that leadership takes place at every level of the organisation. Kotter proposed that change must be lead by a 'powerful coalition that can act as a team' (1996, p.56), and argued that members of such teams should posses the four characteristics of *position power*, *expertise*, *credibility*, and *leadership* (*ibid.* p.57). Kotter believed that these four characteristics were necessary as leaders required a certain level of influence and authority within an organisation for change to be managed and sustained.

With a completely contrasting perspective, Meyerson (2001, p.13) argued that change agents are 'not just those characterised by bold visions and strategic savvy, but also those characterised by patience, persistence and resourcefulness'. She also identified change agents as 'sensitive improvisers who are able to recognise and act on opportunities as they arise'. By adopting the term 'tempered radical', Meyerson described how such individuals are often not the Chief Executive, president or senior manager of an organisation, (*ibid.* p.16), rather the 'everyday leader', (*ibid.* p.17), who makes a significant contribution to organisational change despite their lack of authority or power. The tempered radical always pursues change in line with their own values and beliefs on an everyday basis, and whenever an opportunity may present itself. They also consistently act in line with their own values and beliefs, particularly when they feel these are being questioned or under pressure.

The Meyerson view of the change agent appeared particularly relevant to this study as a number of the participants engaged in the research were not Chief Executives or senior managers, yet were consistently able to initiate and sustain change. Whilst major strategic change is often perceived as led by those in senior positions with authority and power, it can be argued that tangible change is only embedded when embraced by those within the inner depths of the organisation. For example, tempered radicals actively challenge conventional practice and push others to do the same in order to embed what they believe to be right into organisational culture (Meyerson, 2001). This contrasts to the view that change agents within an organisation usually operate in line with the vision of the organisation, as opposed to being driven by their own values. However, if individual beliefs are aligned with strategic change then this could be a powerful driver of change; questions will arise, though, if the tempered radical is pursuing an agenda that does not fit within the broader culture of that organisation. This is again an interesting and important perspective to note for the context of this study; particularly when exploring the identified theme of courage in the discussion section.

It is apparent from the literature reviewed thus far that there are many differing views of leadership and the role of the leader in initiating and sustaining change. Bennis (2007, p.2) reflected that 'it is almost a cliché of the leadership literature that a single definition of leadership is lacking' and O'Connell (2014, p.183) recognised that 'the quest to explain leadership as a concept and practice has generated a complex web of theories and frameworks'.

Dinh *et al* (2014, p.36) noted that 'scholarly research on the topic of leadership has witnessed a dramatic increase over the last decade, resulting in the development of diverse leadership theories'. However, despite the lack of a singular definition, there does at least appear to be agreement amongst scholars that effective leadership is a common factor within successful organisational change. In their extensive review on leadership theory, Dinh *et al* (*ibid.*) provided an overview of developing leadership trends and identified that whilst interest in some established theories was waning, other, more emergent theories, were gaining in popularity (*ibid.* p.42). One such theory that emerged from their study was Authentic Leadership; the perspective that now provides a frame within which to consider the role of the effective leader in this particular study.

2.7 Authentic Leadership

2.7.1 Construct definitions

Conceptions of authenticity in the leadership literature began appearing in the 1960s within the fields of sociology and education (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, p.320). Interest in the construct of authentic leadership surged at the turn of the 21st century with a demand 'for more positive, genuine and value-based forms of leadership' (Chaudhary and Panda, 2018, p.2071) to counter the 'corporate scandals and management malfeasance' (Cooper *et al*, 2005, p.475). Avolio and Gardner (2005, p.315) proposed that 'leadership has always been more difficult in challenging times, but the unique stressors facing organisations throughout the world today call for a renewed focus on what constitutes genuine leadership', with various articles (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Avolio *et al*, 2004; Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner *et al*, 2005) arguing strongly that 'existing frameworks are not sufficient for developing leaders for the future' (Cooper *et al*, 2005, p.476). Hence growing interest in authentic leadership.

Although 'the concept of authentic leadership has attracted considerable attention in both leadership research and practice' (Weiss *et al*, 2018, p.309), there is much debate over the validity of the 'root construct' (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018, p.1) and the potential 'theoretical confusion and empirical overlap' with other forms of moral-based leadership (Lemoine *et al* 2019, p.148). There is also uncertainty over 'how the construct is understood and measured' (Sidani and Rowe, 2018, p.623) and debate over whether 'the emergence of multiple practitioner and scholarly conceptions of authentic leadership has created ambiguity about what does and does not constitute authentic leadership' (Gardner *et al*, 2011, p.1120).

This study accepts these ongoing challenges and acknowledges that there are still areas of the concept requiring further consideration. Yet given the increasing academic and practitioner attention, there is an acceptance that the construct is valid and has much to offer the leadership theorist and practitioner. With the growing range of studies in the field, it is deemed that the level of support for this approach provides sufficient evidence of viability. Thus, this study adopts the perspective recognised by proponents of authentic leadership that is has the potential to reinstate 'confidence, trust, hope, resilience and optimism amongst stakeholders' (Chaudhary and Panda, 2018, p.2071).

Although several definitions for authentic leadership have been offered within the literature over the past twenty years, the 'most generally accepted definition of authentic leadership' (Banks *et al*, 2016, p.635) is the definition offered by Walumbwa *et al* (2008, p.94). They defined authentic leadership as 'a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalised moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development'. Banks *et al* (*ibid*.) noted this definition as having particular value as it built on original work, encompassed a wide range of pre-existing literature and offered appropriate refinements to relevant perspectives. It therefore feels apt that this definition provides a basis for this study.

2.7.2 Characterising an authentic leader

Shamir and Eilam (2005, p.396) proposed that 'any concept of authentic leadership has to include an authentic leader as one of its components' yet recognised that 'all definitions are arbitrary, reflect choices and cannot be proved or validated'. Whilst definitions for authentic leaders are, again, many and varied, there is a general consensus that authentic leaders are built upon an awareness of their 'self-concept; his or her self-knowledge, self-clarity, self-concordance, and person-role merger, and on the extent to which the leader's self-concept is expressed in his or her behaviour' (*ibid.*, p.395). Gardner *et al* (2005, p.347) shared this approach and suggested that 'by learning who they really are and what they value, authentic leaders build an understanding and a sense of self that provides a firm anchor for their decisions and actions, and we would argue a more authentic self'.

Of particular significance for this study is the need to differentiate between the terms 'authentic leader' and 'authentic leadership' because, as Shamir and Eilam (2005, p.400) identified, 'leadership is always a relationship between leader and followers' (p.400/401). The need for such differentiation is reinforced by authors such as Day (2000), Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) and Day *et al* (2014) who advocate that 'it is important to distinguish between the terms leader development and leadership development' (Ardichvili *et al*, 2016, p.276). The rationale for this is perhaps best described by Day *et al* (2014, p.64) who identified that 'leader development focuses on developing individual leaders whereas leadership development focuses on a process of development that inherently involves multiple individuals'.

It is interesting to reflect on these definitions and characterisations in terms of the relational nature of sport coaching (Jowett and Shanmugam, 2016; Jowett, 2017; Edwards and Jones, 2018; Jones and Ronglan, 2018). Such authors posit that sport coaching success and effectiveness are inherently influenced by the quality of the relationship between coach and athlete (Jowett, 2017, p.154) and others within the social system of coaching (Cronin and Armour, 2015). Jones and Ronglan (2018) referenced earlier work from Jones and Wallace (2005; 2006) and argued that coaches are 'prominent contextual figures who…are continually engaged in 'steering' or orchestrating practice towards desired goals' (Jones and Ronglan, 2018, p.905). This notion of 'orchestration' could arguably be applied to the construct of authentic leadership, whereby the authentic leader plays a similar role within their particular environment.

2.7.3 *Authentic leadership development*

Despite the recognition that 'leaders are central to fostering the development of healthy work culture' (Ardichvili *et al*, 2016, p.276) there remains 'a lack of interventions actually based on a theory-led process' (Fusco *et al*, 2015, p.133). Avolio *et al* (2009, p.722) argued that 'the way we are currently developing leaders in most organisations is typically accidental, by luck and happenstance' and concluded that whilst this was a challenge for the field, it also presented 'a huge opportunity for creating and validating what we have called authentic leadership development models and methods' (*ibid.*). This is echoed by Ardichvili *et al* (2016, p.275) who argued that the apparent research void resulted in many organisations 'experimenting with new approaches to leadership development in search for better solutions'.

In the past ten years there has been an increase in investment into leadership development programmes (Loew and O'Leonard, 2014; Fusco *et al*, 2015; Ardichvili *et al*, 2016). However, as Ardichvili *et al* (2016, p.275) reported, 'in many cases, organisations are dissatisfied with the outcomes and impact of their leadership development efforts' and a significant number of current programmes fail to achieve their aims (Kasier and Curphy, 2013; Gurdjian *et al*, 2014). Work is still required by the leadership research community because 'little is known empirically about the longitudinal process of leader development' (Day and Sin, 2011, p.545). Interestingly, there are similar criticisms that current sport coach education practices deliver 'very limited impact on coaches' actions and behaviours' (Morgan *et al*, 2013, p.486), with such programmes 'criticised for being divorced from the knotty reality of practice and not developing new, progressive knowledge' (Jones *et al*, 2011, p.1).

There are also calls within the literature for theoretical developments within authentic leadership development to 'constructively reflect on the progress made to date and offer ideas for how to further stimulate advancements' (Day and Dragoni, 2015, p.134). The outputs and learning from this study are therefore intended to contribute to both the academic and applied fields of authentic leadership development on the basis that, as Fusco *et al* (2015, p.133) concluded, 'leadership development interventions based on well-validated models and methods will provide a more authentic basis for developing authentic leaders'. Given the articulated challenges and gaps, and in order to effectively position this study, it is helpful to further explore the construct of authentic leadership and also the critical components of an effective authentic leadership development programme that acknowledges both leader and follower dimensions.

The following paragraphs do not offer a prescriptive, step-by-step approach to developing authentic leaders and leadership, rather they summarise the core concepts and approaches that arise from existing literature and have relevance for this study. This reflects the arguments summarised by Ardichvili at al (2016, p.278) that 'one size does not fit all in leadership development' and that development as a leader is subject to situational and contextual influence (Sosik and Cameron, 2010), thus any development programmes need to be cognisant of the environments in which the developing leaders will operate.

The areas identified from the authentic leader and leadership development literature as particularly relevant for this study are:

1. Leader identity
2. Life stories for development
3. Awareness of self and others
4. Learning environment and support

2.7.4 Leader identity

Day and Harrison (2007, p.365) proposed that leader identity should be considered as a critical component of leader development as 'how one thinks of oneself as a leader' is crucial. Van Knippenberg *et al* (2004), Day *et al* (2009) and Day and Dragoni (2015) also recognised the 'important role that identity processes play in motivating and supporting leaders' personal growth' (Miscenko at al, 2017, p.617). However, Miscenko (*ibid*. p. 605) argued that 'the development of leader identity over time and its association with leadership skills have not been addressed in any detail in the empirical literature'. Yet the idea that one is able to view or define oneself as a leader rather than waiting for leadership to be assigned is certainly interesting to consider against the notion of 'top down' leadership reported within the previous section. Leader identity therefore appears far more aligned with the shared power approach of Greiner (1967), the Fullan (1993, p.21) belief that 'every person is a change agent', and the Meyerson (2001) theory of tempered radicals, whereby every individual has the potential to create change.

Of notable interest is the proposition made by Day and Sin (2011, p.547) that 'if one does not think of oneself as a leader, or aspire to lead, then there is little motivation to develop or serve as a leader'. This perspective was further supported by Day and Dragoni (2015, p.139) who stressed that whilst 'leader identity can be formed through social and/or personal factors, [a critical] facet is that pertaining to how and to what extent a person views him – or herself - as a leader'. Arguably, therefore, the first step in becoming an authentic leader is to view oneself as such, or at the very least as someone with the potential to lead.

This point feels significant for sport coaching systems in the UK as currently there remains an unwritten perception that leadership comes from the top; particularly in terms of policy and strategy (Sport England, 2004, p.5). There is also a cultural acceptance that those with 'power' are the Chief Executives, senior managers and executive officers within the system, which reflects the observation by Byrne *et al* (2018, p.272) that 'individuals develop preconceived ideas about what a typical leader should look like'; ideas that are shaped by personal experiences and the pervading culture.

However, as is demonstrated by the leaders participating in this study, it does not always follow that leadership is connected with position or perceived power. For example, Crossnan *et al* (2013, p.291) proposed that 'our view of leadership is not focused on power or position, but rather on the capacity of individuals to bring the best of themselves to support and enable others, ensure the organisations they work with achieve at the highest level, and in doing so, contribute to society'. Therefore, as Byrne *et al* further proposed, (*ibid.* p.271) there arguably needs to be a 'different conceptualisation of leadership' for leadership within coaching systems in the UK to progress. This shift needs to begin by changing how leadership is viewed; by both existing leaders and those who have aspirations and potential to effectively lead in future – whatever their level.

2.7.5 Life stories for development

Studies using life-history or narrative based methodologies for authentic leader development have featured regularly in the literature over the past twenty years (Rae and Carswell, 2000; Gardner *et al*, 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Day and Dragoni, 2015). Such methodological choices appear logical given that identity 'is a story created, told, revised and retold throughout life' (Shamir and Eilam, 2005, p.402), and it is through the telling of stories that individuals 'shape one's identity as one seeks to answer the question, "who am I?"' (Gardner *et al*, 2005, p.348). Stories, or narratives, are also viewed as a powerful mechanism by which individuals can discover their values and self-concept; both important components of authentic leadership.

For example, Rae and Carswell (2000, p.225) concluded that using individual biographies to support learning enabled individuals to 'reflect on their life stories in a structured way, helping them to value their learning from their experiences and broadening their understanding of their personal resources'. Furthermore, Shamir and Eilam (2005, p.402) identified that 'the life-story provides the authentic leader with a 'meaning system', from which to feel, think, and act'; whereas Sosik and Cameron (2010, p.261) proposed that life experiences 'provide important information regarding self-knowledge, self-identity, and self-standards for leaders to better understand who they are'. It is also crucial to note that 'narrating an identity is a continuous work of configuring the past, the present and the future' (Nyberg and Sveningsson, 2014, p.441) and the leader development is 'a dynamic process in which identity is subject to ongoing changes' (Day and Sin, 2011, p.547).

Day and Sin (2011, p.548) acknowledged the link between authentic leader development and overall adult development in that 'developing leaders are also developing adults'. This perspective is significant for this study, and authentic leader development, in that leader identity is something that evolves and develops over time as ones' life experience progresses. Nyberg and Sveningsson (2014, p.441) concisely summarised that 'identity construction is an ongoing process of making sense of 'who I am', both lived and living'. It is therefore plausible to propose that authentic leader development programmes embrace the value of life history and view any intervention as requiring a longer-term approach if individuals are genuinely to grow as a leader.

Fusco *et al* (2015, p.139) made an interesting point in that 'identity is often considered to be something that we find reflected back to us from others, or that we find in comparison and contrast to others'. Their study involved participants sharing their life stories and key moments with others during their authentic leader development in a group setting. With participants in the study reporting such reflections as 'you learn about yourself from others' and 'others made me believe I was worthy as a leader' (*ibid.* p.142), Fusco *et al* proposed that 'the effectiveness of the group coaching approach to authentic leader development is due in large part, to the opportunity it affords participants to work on the development of the authentic self within a social context' (*ibid.*). Other studies also recognised the value in collaborative and social learning for authentic leadership development (Gardner *et al*, 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Day and Sin, 2011; DeRue *et al*, 2012), with Shamir and Eilam (2005, p.410) concluding that 'one of the major ways to assist people to develop their potential to become authentic leaders is through a guided reflection process'.

The prevalent use of narratives and stories in sport coaching is also interesting to note for this study (Jones *et al,* 2004; Toner *et al,* 2012; Carless and Douglas, 2013; Gilbourne *et al*, 2014; Hemmestad and Jones, 2019). Carless and Douglas (2011, p.3) advocated the use of storytelling in coaching and coach education as it provided 'an explicit link between the theoretical/abstract level and the practical level of individual lived experience; [and] allowing coaches the opportunity to reflect on and learn from events or moments in their own and each other's histories'. Utilising this methodology within an authentic leadership development programme would arguably add significantly to the framework of any such intervention.

2.7.6   *Awareness of self and others*

The theme of self-awareness is prevalent throughout the authentic leader(ship) literature, with authors such as Shamir and Eilam (2005), Gatling *et al* (2013), Day and Dragoni (2015) and Miscenko *et al* (2017) all emphasising that 'authentic leaders experience high levels of self-awareness' (Gardner *et al*, 2005, p.349). Self-awareness is considered 'an emerging process where one continually comes to understand his or her unique talents, strengths, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs and desires' (*ibid.*), and also concerns 'the degree to which one is aware of…one's impact on other people' (Chaudhary and Panda, 2018, p.2071). With much of the literature advocating self-awareness as the basis of authentic leadership, it is critical to understand why self-awareness is so fundamental. Fusco *et al* (2015, p.140) proposed that that greater understanding of cognitive, emotional and motivational awareness supports the 'gaining of greater insight into established behaviour patterns or potential alternatives'.

Baron and Parent (2015, p.41) emphasised this connection between self-awareness and behaviour and reported that 'identifying and trying out a new way of behaving can help deepen and strengthen the individual's new awareness or insight, and thus modify the subsequent steps in an ongoing loop'. In simple terms, self-awareness means having a conscious appreciation of ones' values, beliefs and drivers and understanding how these impact and influence thinking, behaviour and choice.

Gardner *et al* (2005, p.352) acknowledged that 'knowing oneself is more than simple awareness of one's thoughts, values and motives…self-knowledge also encompasses awareness of one's emotions', thus introducing the concept of emotional intelligence. Authentic leadership 'is co-created through a series of interactions among actors in which communication becomes the means through which leadership is socially constructed within a particular context' (Day and Dragoni, 2015, p.146); which again emphasised the relational aspect and the need for authentic leaders to be emotionally intelligent. Of significance for this study, and for leadership development programmes *per se,* is the proposal from Miscenko *et al* (2017, p.608) that 'participants' engagement with the development of interpersonal leadership skills in a leader development programme will strengthen their self-perception (i.e. identity) as leaders'. Building on the previous two sections, it is therefore proposed that an effective authentic leadership development programme will support individuals to develop an acute and conscious understanding of their own self and how they are able to interact with others in an emotionally intelligent way. This requires enhanced self-awareness and the ability to openly reflect on their identity and stories; thus connecting this section with the previous two on identity and life history.

2.7.7 Learning environment and support

One of the core challenges for an authentic leadership development programme is to address the issues identified by authors such as Kippenberger, 1998b, Nelson *et al*, 2011, Gurdjian *et al*, 2014 around translating learning from a training environment into the 'real' world of work. One part of any solution must surely therefore be to create a learning environment that supports individuals to effectively test, apply and evolve their newly learned behaviours in their workplace or everyday world. A growing number of studies within the field have explored how such an environment might be structured to best support leader learning (Kets De Vries and Korotov, 2007; DeRue *et al*, 2012; Baron and Parent, 2015; Fusco *et al*, 2015; Kiersch and Peters, 2017).

What becomes apparent from such literature is the variety of approaches being adopted to the structuring of authentic leadership programmes, with differing views on what an effective programme, learning environment and support should entail. This is not surprising given the complexities of authentic leader and leadership development, and the relatively nascent stage of theory and practice in the field (Chaudhary and Panda, 2018, p.2072). It is possible, however, to draw a number of commonalities from the literature around learning environment that provide a helpful reference point for future programme development. It is still crucial to acknowledge that there is not a 'one size fits all approach' because 'every individual will begin their development journey from a different starting point given their unique personal histories' (Gardner *et al*, 2005, p.347). The following paragraphs provide an insight to three commonalities identified as particularly relevant for this study.

Firstly, the value of group learning is recognised by Kets De Vries (2007), Baron and Parent (2015), Fusco *et al* (2015) and Kiersch and Peters (2017). As Baron and Parent (2015, p.39) proposed, 'the empathy, support, and encouragement of others all play key roles in the participants' enjoyment of experimentation and their eventual integration of new behaviours'. Equally, Kiersch and Peters (2017, p.152) acknowledged the importance of a 'supportive community' in aiding 'positive and lasting leadership growth'. Indeed, given that leadership inherently encompasses relationships between leaders and followers, it logically follows that group learning would be included in authentic leadership programmes as it enables 'the participants to work at both the intra and inter personal levels of experience, exploring and developing their self concept in the social context' (Fusco *et al*, 2015, p.146).

There is also recognition in the literature that individuals need to feel 'psychologically safe or interpersonally comfortable' (Day and Dragoni, 2015, p.147) for the group experience to be positive. Baron and Parent (2015, p.46) identified that effective programmes created a 'safety-net effect' whereby participants believed 'the programme offered a protected environment [that] fostered participants openness to the activities and led many to give themselves over to the process to a greater degree'. This notion of psychological safety reflects the work of Edmondson (1999, 2019) in recognising that when team members trust each other, they feel more comfortable taking interpersonal risks. Baron and Parent (2015, p.46) emphasised the value for participants of feeling that they belong to a 'learning community' so 'participants assist each other in their development' and appreciated that the mutual support created a beneficial 'context of transparency and influence' that provided motivation to learn.

This point feels particularly relevant for the coaching sector in the UK where pressure to embrace technology and online learning as a cost-effective solution to coach education is ever growing. Given the evidence advocating the value of group learning, it may be wise to keep hold of the benefits of 'face-to-face' learning interventions, particularly because leadership fundamentally involves the development of relationships with followers (and similarly coaching with athletes and others). It is arguably obvious that any authentic leadership development intervention should recognise the value of social learning and provide environments which enable participants to work on their own self-identity whilst also exploring how they interact and work with others in safe and supported environment (Fusco *et al*, 2015).

The second area of commonality in the literature is in relation to the positive impact of mentors, coaches and managers on the long-term development of an authentic leader. Gardner *et al* (2005, p.358) summarised that 'one of the primary mechanisms whereby authentic leaders influence the development of followers is through the modelling of positive values psychological states, behaviours and self-development, which they oftentimes learn vicariously through observations of other leaders.' If, as Gardner *et al* suggest, followers learn their behaviours through observing their leaders, it follows that aspiring leaders learn by observing the leaders with whom they work.   This perspective is supported by Dragoni *et al* (2014) and Day and Dragoni (2015, p.141) who recognised that 'transitioning leaders who have a current supervisor who models effective leadership and provides information about the leader's new job accumulate an understanding of the role at a faster rate and allocate more time toward motivating and inspiring others'.

It is interesting to reflect at this point on the work of Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Ilies *et al* (2005) around self-determination in leadership development. Such authors proposed that creating environments where individuals had autonomy for their actions and where relationships were built on trust and mutual respect, maximised the motivation and potential of individuals to progress as either leaders or followers. Perhaps, therefore, authentic leader role models are not only providing the positive modelling advocated by Gardner *et al* (2005), but are also creating environments that enable followers and developing leaders to take responsibility for their own progression? This is particularly relevant for this study and is explored further in Chapter 7 (section 7.3 and 7.4).

There is also recognition from DeRue *et al* (2012), Gatling *et al* (2013) and Day and Dragoni (2015) of the significant impact of ongoing support through coaching, mentoring or structured reflection for developing leaders. DeRue *et al* (2012) reported positive value in using structured reflection following a development intervention, particularly when individuals 'are conscientious, open to experience, and emotionally stable and have a rich base of prior developmental experiences' (p.997). In a similar vein, Gatling *et al* (2013, p.338) advocated the positive impact of coaching for authentic leader development because it provided a solution-focused environment and a coach who consistently role-modelled the authentic behaviours they sought to embed. Regardless of the mechanism, there is overall recognition in the literature for the 'importance of providing support to developing leaders during critical experiences' (Day and Dragoni, 2015, p.141).

Perhaps the choice of precise intervention will ultimately depend on factors such as the relative experience of the individual and their willingness to engage in the process? Again, this reflects that there is not one way to develop and deliver authentic leadership programmes, rather a need to adapt the final choice to the needs and relative positioning of the participants.

Finally, there is significant evidence from the literature to suggest that the development of authentic leaders and leadership is an ongoing process that 'by its very nature involves a process of change that unfolds over time' (Day and Dragoni, 2015, p.150). However, as Day and Sin (2011, p.548) acknowledged, 'there has been little or no attention paid either theoretically or practically in the leader development field to the importance of time or the proper specification of the timing of when things happen'. So whilst there is no consensus on just how long an authentic leadership development programme should be, the following words from Day and Sin (*ibid.*) provide a helpful basis from which to consider the question of length for such a programme: '…the question is how long is long enough? The present results do not provide any clear-cut answers but suggest that 13 weeks may not be long enough to bring about overall positive change in leader effectiveness'. This is worth noting for any future coaching systems leader(ship) development programmes, as the key point is that leader development takes time and individuals need time, and space and support, to learn to lead authentically. In an environment where personal development of coaching systems personnel is rarely prioritised, and when it is, interventions are often delivered over days rather than months, the need for effective leadership development programmes to be longer in length, is crucial.

2.8   Chapter summary

The intention of this chapter was to establish the foundations for this study in terms of the environment for change and the role of effective leadership in creating and sustaining change in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) landscape of the 21st Century. The literature reviewed in this chapter also provides a basis from which sub-research questions 1a and 1b may be answered. This chapter has explored a number of the classic models for change from the academic and practitioner perspectives, noting their commonalities and contrasts; then delved more deeply into the notion of leadership built from the context of these models. In places, connections have been made to the sport coaching sector and the context for this research. The ideas and themes introduced in this chapter will be further explored in the remainder of this thesis, as stories of effective change leadership within sport coaching systems in the UK are examined and investigated.

As a final point, there appears to be much synergy between the construct of authentic leadership and the discussions of the role of the coach within a 'complex social system' (Jones and Ronglan, 2018, p.905). A number of connections have been highlighted in the above paragraphs to provide insights into the links, yet there are many more links that became ever more evident to the researcher as this study progressed. These parallels are revisited in later chapters (Chapters 7, 8 and 9 in particular), but at this stage the reader is invited to note this overarching connection and keep it in mind as this study evolves.

CHAPTER 3:   THE CONTEXT FOR SPORT COACHING IN THE UK

3.1   Chapter introduction

Whilst the previous chapter established a grounding for this study within change and leadership, the following chapter sets the context from a UK sport coaching perspective. This chapter will explore how the landscape for sport and coaching has evolved since the 1960s and examine the significant policy and practice changes that have occurred during this time. This chapter will also touch briefly on the growing research interest in sport coaching in the UK. With an absence of literature directly relating to the role of leaders within sport coaching systems in the UK, it has been necessary to draw on this wider field of sport policy and coaching in order to effectively position this study.

3.2 The UK sporting context

3.2.1 Setting the scene

Sport in the UK exists within a 'complicated landscape of reserved and devolved powers' (HM Government, 2015, p.14). Whilst the nineteenth century witnessed early regulation of sport and the emergence of national governing bodies (Tacon, 2018, p.61); the 1960s brought 'systematic central government interest in sport' (Coalter, 2007, p.9); the 1980s saw the cementing of relationships between sport and government (Houlihan, 1991, p.262); and the twenty-first century signalled the drive for the modernisation of sport, particularly amongst public bodies (Houlihan and Green, 2009, p.678). It is interesting to reflect on an observation made by Hargreaves (1986) that sport policy over the years has witnessed a number of key 'turning points', or 'moment(s) in history when its movement takes a shift in direction' (*ibid.* p.7). Hargreaves also commented that 'change is continuous' and 'if the onset of each phase is compared with the end of the period...transformation can be observed to have taken place' (*ibid.* p.8).

With continual shifts in sport/sport coaching policy and practice appearing evident throughout the decades, the context is arguably one where 'change is not an exception but an ongoing process' (Nordin and Deros, 2017, p.310). The intention for this chapter is therefore to reflect on how the nature and structure of the sport/sport coaching landscape has changed in the UK since the early 1960s and to consider what the implications may be for the coaching sector or profession (sub-research question 2a).

3.2.2 Establishing the UK context

Whilst it is not the intention of this chapter to provide a detailed commentary on the history of sport in the UK, it is helpful to reflect upon some of the most significant 'turning points' during that time (Hargreaves, 1986, p.7). Accepting Tacon's perspective (2018, p.61) that 'government involvement in sport was extremely rare' prior to the 1960s, this review begins at the point of the Wolfenden report of 1960 (The Wolfenden Committee on Sport, 1960). This report has frequently been referenced within the sport policy and management literature as a significant influence in the way sport in the UK is governed and managed, (Hargreaves, 1986; Houlihan, 1991; Geen, 2006; Jeffreys, 2016; Tacon, 2018), and therefore provides an appropriate basis from which to build this chapter.

The Wolfenden Report (1960) covered wide areas of the sporting landscape including facilities, the influence of the press, coaching, organisation and administration. Focussing on these latter elements, it is interesting to note the observation that 'the first thing that strikes the inquirer into the way in which sport is organised in this country is the complex and variegated pattern it presents' (*ibid*. p.52). Having identified that two hundred bodies had affiliation to the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR) and a similar number to the Scottish equivalent organisation, the Wolfenden Committee questioned 'whether all of such rich and varied resources are used to the maximum of their individual and collective effectiveness?' (*ibid*., p.53).

This question led the report to call for 'greater integration in the sense of making Britain's pattern of sport more of a unity' (*ibid.*). Interestingly, the report also identified that despite many variations in how sport was organised and administered across the home countries, 'the essential factors affecting the development of sport are the same in all four countries' (*ibid.*, p.89). This recommendation for 'greater co-operation and integration' (*ibid.* p.109) between the bodies responsible for sport in the UK has arguably remained a challenge in the intervening years. For example, Houlihan (1991, p.263) identified that 'the foremost problem is the degree of rivalry and fragmentation among the major national sports organisations', with Green (2004, p.369) later acknowledging the 'continuing fragmentation and disharmony between the various bodies involved in lobbying for sports' interests'. Similarly, when reviewing collaborative sport governance, Shilbury *et al* (2016, p.482) mused that 'therein lies the greatest challenge; how to harness the intellectual capital, energy and focus of each individual association into one cohesive direction for a sport'. It thus appears that the call for greater collaboration from the 1960 Wolfenden Committee Report for Sport has yet to be fully realised.

A major recommendation from the Wolfenden Report was the formation of an independent Sports Council to distribute grant funding to sports bodies and be established 'at the centre of a web of information and consequent action, with a chance of taking a view at once synoptic and objective which no existing body is able to take' (*ibid.* p.103). This was a key part of the aforementioned attempt to better co-ordinate sport across the UK; a core strand that remains in evidence today.

Despite a change in government, the Advisory Sports Council was introduced in 1965 and 'quickly became regarded as a dynamic force, building a sense that sport was being taken seriously in government circles for the first time' (Jeffreys, 2016, p.77). Again it is interesting to note the question raised around the devolved nature of sport in the UK and the question of whether 'there should be separate Councils for Scotland and Northern Ireland?' (Wolfenden Committee on Sport, 1960, p.104). The solution was that the main Council had a British remit, whilst Regional sub-councils were established for Scotland and Wales to allow for some co-ordination across the UK, but to also recognise the need for regional variation (*ibid.*).

Sport in the UK experienced another 'turning point' (Hargreaves, 1986, p.7) in 1970 with yet another change in government (Jeffreys, 2016, p.77). Recognising the already positive impact of the Advisory Sports Council (*ibid.* p.78), the new administration quickly restructured the advisory body and subsequently granted it executive powers through a Royal Charter (Green, 2004, p.367). This resulted in the formal constitution of the GB Sports Council in 1972, along with the Scottish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Wales (also 1972). This was followed by the Sports Council for Northern Ireland in 1973. In principle, this shift to executive bodies meant that the new GB (and Home Country Sports Councils) 'would be free unlike its predecessor to deploy the annual grant made available to it by parliament as it deemed best, rather than under the shadow of ministerial guidance' (Jeffreys, 2016, p.78).

3.2.3 The changing landscape?

It is apparent from reviewing the literature (Green, 2004, 2006; Houlihan and Green, 2009; Jeffreys, 2016 and Tacon, 2018) that developments from the 1970s significantly influenced the shape of sport in the UK. The events of the 1980s then played a 'vital role in paving the way for change' (Houlihan, 1991, p.95). The emphasis on 'Sport for All' in the 1980s (Jeffreys, 2016, p.79) gave way to 'Sport in the Community' in the 1990s (Green, 2004, p.370), the modernisation agenda in the 2000s (Houlihan and Green, 2009) and the call for 'An Active Nation' in 2015 (HM Government, 2015). There were also re-branding interventions for the four Home Country Sports Councils adopting new trading names (Sport England, Sport NI, **sport**scotland and Sport Wales) around the time of the Millennium. It is striking to note that Sport England and UK Sport 'have been reviewed at least seven times in the last two decades' (Houlihan and Green, 2009, p.678).

Despite the evident changes in UK sport policy over the years, there is arguably much that remains constant. Sport remains largely funded through government money; governing bodies remain responsible for the development of their particular sport; Local Authorities maintain their roles in providing local facilities for participation; and organisations like the British Olympic Association continue to deliver their role in elite sport. However, perhaps less obvious, are consistencies in priorities and challenges for sport in the UK from the 1960s to date. There are a number of core themes that pervade the strategies throughout the decades; which raises the question as to how much progress, or change, has really been made within the sport sector in the UK?

For example, the Wolfenden Report (1960, p.25) introduced 'the gap' in sport, identified as the 'sense of inadequacy of the provision made for post-school sport and the weakness of the links between schools and adult clubs'. Albeit using varying language, focus on youth sport, schools and education has since been included in the 1995 Conservative Government policy statement 'Sport: Raising the Game' (DNoH), the Labour Government's Strategy for Sport 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 2000), and the HM Government plan for sport, 'Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation' (2015). On one hand this consistency could be viewed as positive recognition of the importance of engaging children and young people in sport throughout their lives; an alternative perspective could argue that these issues remain because solutions to date have not been fully effective.

It is possible to trace consistencies in other areas, for example the desire to create a more active nation, the drive to engage people from under-represented groups in the community, the need to stimulate greater co-operation and collaboration between the bodies involved in the governance of sport, and the recognition of coaching as a critical influence in sporting participation. Whilst emphasis on such objectives arguably provides a degree of consistency in an otherwise complex and ambiguous world (Saleh and Watson (2017), it is reasonable to ponder whether the current sporting system is effectively equipped to deliver on such repeating goals? Perhaps it is time to consider alternative interventions in order to create the change required at individual, organisational and systemic level to deliver on these persistent objectives?

3.2.4   A focus on England

Whilst it is recognised that sport is a devolved responsibility and each of the Home Countries adopts their own approach to sport policy and development, 'the essential factors affecting the development of sport are the same in all four countries' (Wolfenden Report, 1960, p.89). Each Home Country has taken a different approach to strategising and investing in sport over the years, however, the essence of what each country has sought to achieve has arguably been consistent, with objectives often aligned. Thus focussing on development in England since the early 2000s is intended as an example of the scale and pace of change within sport as directed by policy, in order to demonstrate how the sporting landscape continues to change.

The New Labour Government strategy for sport, 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 2000), outlined a vision for widening participation in sport and greater success for English sports teams at the highest level. It also highlighted the need to address the fragmented organisation and management of sport within England with 'modernisation'; that is the need for 'radical change' in relationships between the Government and National Governing Bodies, (*ibid.* p.47). In 2001, the 'Government's Plan for Sport' (DCMS, 2001) re-affirmed the need for strong partnerships between these bodies but also referenced the need for a greater sharing of power from UK Sport and Sport England to the Governing Bodies in order to support the required modernisation of structures, management and communication. This devolution of power marked a shift in roles for the agencies concerned, with UK Sport and Sport England becoming more strategic in focus and NGB's focussing on the delivery of sport targets and programmes, (Houlihan and Green, 2009).

The need for organisational reform was further emphasised in the 2002 'Game Plan' strategy (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002) with a call for change to the overly complex and highly traditional governance structure of English sport (*ibid*. p.162). interestingly for this study, this plan also included recognition that 'the potential of staff at all levels is not being maximised' (*ibid.* p.165). There was the suggestion that 'many staff do not possess the right skills…neither are staff developed or trained to have the capacity to lead sport at local level' (*ibid.* p.166). Most notably was the recognition that 'there is not a professional qualification system for sports administrators and volunteers' and 'overall the sports 'industry' is not training its future leaders to run and manage a system containing large amounts of public and private money' (*ibid.*). Such statements suggested that investment into developing the workforce might follow. However, a glance at the 'First Game Plan Delivery Report: April 2004 (DCMS)' indicates that this broader investment did not come to fruition. This interim report referenced funding of the National Association for Sport Development (NASD) in support of 'entry level workshops for new Sports Development Officers, national and regional conferences, and the drive to revise the national qualification in Sports Development' (DCMS, 2004, p.16); however, this is the extent of the progress.

In 2004, Sport England published their 'Framework for Sport in England: A vision for 2020' as a direct response to the 'Game Plan' agenda. This framework outlined Sport England's vision for England to become the 'most active and the most successful sporting nation in the world' (Sport England, 2004, p.4) and introduced the concept of a 'single system for sport' that would provide a more co-ordinated approach to the development of sport in England.

Notably, the singular reference to leadership within this new system was that Sport England would 'provide strategic leadership for sport in England' (Sport England, 2004, p.5). Beyond this, the only other reference to workforce was for the coaching and volunteering requirements of implementing the various programmes in place at that time (for example the DfES/DCMS PESSCL programme), (*ibid.*, p.24). So, despite the apparent acknowledgement in the Governments 'Game Plan for Sport' of the need to invest in the administrative staff and leadership within sport (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002), this appeared largely forgotten in the 'Framework for Sport in England' (2004).

Since the publication of the 'Framework for Sport in England' (2004), the following strategic documents and plans have been published by Sport England:

- Sport England Strategy: 2008 to 2011

- Sport England Strategy: A Sporting Habit for Life (2012 to 2017)

- Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (HM Government; 2015)

- Sport England: Towards and Active Nation Strategy (2016 to 2021)

- Volunteering in an Active Nation: 2017 to 2021

- Coaching in an Active Nation: The Coaching Plan for England. 2017 to 2021

- The Talent Plan for England (2018)

- Working in an Active Nation: The Professional Workforce Strategy for England (2018)

The themes of children and young people, community sport, transition from school to club, and the need to address the governance of sport are recurring areas of focus throughout the above listed document. What is striking is the absence of focus on leadership or the development of leaders in sport until the most recent strategy (Sport England, 2016a). Even then, only two commitments in this strategy (from a total of over sixty) referenced leadership, despite acknowledgement that 'leadership remains essential' (Sport England, 2016a, p.36). The two stated commitments were very specific in terms of developing 'future' leaders (also referenced in DCMS/Strategy unit, 2002) and seeking to address the need for greater diversity in the leadership workforce.

3.2.5 The leadership 'gap'

Given the significance of leadership for effective change, it is surprising that recognition for, and investment into, leadership in sport has not featured more prominently in UK policies and strategies. It is also noticeable that the few references to leadership are in line with the more traditional 'top-down' approach to leadership. For example, whilst there is recognition that 'leadership takes place at all levels in the workplace, not just at the senior executive level' (Sport England, 2018b, p.15), the associated key actions refer to 'leaders and managers' through actions such as 'implement a cutting-edge programme of support for leaders and managers in prioritised organisations' (*ibid.*).

As identified in the above paragraph, leadership does take place at every level of an organisation, and such leadership is arguably necessary for organisations to thrive in times of change (Saleh and Watson, 2017). This study argues that change and leadership in sport in the UK need to be viewed through an alternative perspective in order to create the behavioural, cultural and organisational changes that are being demanded by shifting policy and investment focus.

There is also a strong indication that the positioning of leadership development will be within less traditional organisations whose focus is on physical activity rather than sport *per se*. None of the eight case studies presented in the Workforce Plan (Sport England, 2018b) represent a National Governing Body perspective, rather the emphasis is on 'sport for confidence', commercial sector developments, and a charity partnership. The exclusion of more traditional organisations within sport is reflective of the general Sport England approach to seeking alternative solutions to the broader Government agenda of tackling inactivity. This shifting focus is potentially concerning from a 'sport' view where National Governing Bodies and clubs remain major components of the system. For sport to thrive and evolve in the ever-changing political, social and economic environment, there is arguably still a need to support leadership within all areas of the system, including governing bodies of sport.

3.3　The landscape for sport coaching

3.3.1　Evolution of sport coaching policy in the UK: 1960 to 2000

Having established the wider context for changing sport policy in the UK, the following paragraphs focus on specific changes within the sport coaching landscape.　This section will not reference every coaching related government or home country strategy; instead it is focused on publications and policies that are most relevant to the development of coaching systems in the UK.　The intention of the ensuing sections is to build a picture of how change in sport coaching systems has been approached over the decades, which primarily has been through a 'top-down' approach of policy and/or strategy leading practice.　The following paragraphs provide the basis for answering sub-research question 2b.

The Wolfenden Report (1960) again provided a logical starting point, as prior to 1960 sport coaching policy was primarily free from government intervention (Taylor and Garratt, 2008).　Coaching featured heavily in the Wolfenden Report, with a detailed review of the state of coaching leading to a number of recommendations for future development.　The report reflected on a range of coaching issues, including the definition of 'coaching', the role of governing bodies in leading coaching development, the characteristics of a good coaching scheme and the need for certificated coaching awards (The Wolfenden Committee for Sport, 1960, p.50).

As recommended by the Wolfenden Report (1960, p.46-47), subsequent investment into coaching was directed towards governing bodies to support the employment of sports coaches delivering quality coaching schemes. Coghlan and Webb (1990, p.5) noted that this style of investment set the pattern for funding into coaching for the ensuing two decades and highlighted the continued presence of central funding to employ sports coaches up to the time of their publication in 1990. Sixty years later, evidence of this approach remains with sport and physical activity organisations still in receipt of government funding to deliver coaching schemes; albeit with focus shifting towards investment into less traditional organisations such as those referenced in the 'Working in an Active Nation' document (Sport England, 2018b).

Coaching slowly gained significance in the sporting context from the 1980s onwards, with the publication of 'Sport in the Community: The Next Ten Years' (Sports Council, 1982) highlighting the need for improved coaching and administration to enhance sport performance. The strategy mid-term review (Sports Council, 1987) expanded the emphasis on coaching and made additional commitment for better coaching and support for performance and elite athletes. A major development during this period was the establishment of the National Coaching Foundation in 1983 (DaCosta and Miragaya, 2002) with a primary function to lead the development of sports coaching across the UK and to 'professionalise the amateur game' (*ibid.* p.500). It is interesting to note the apparent worldwide admiration for the early work of the National Coaching Foundation (*bid.*), as their work in more recent years around the professionalisation of coaching has often been questioned (Taylor and Garratt, 2010).

In 1989, the then UK Sports Minister, Hon Colin Moynihan, instigated a review of coaching in the United Kingdom and tasked the National Coaching Foundation and British Association of National Coaches to collaborate and consider the future of coaching. The resultant publication was 'Coaching Matters' (Sports Council, 1991). This document again highlighted the key challenge for sport in the UK as the complexities of the governance system, which was described as 'fiendishly hard for anyone...to understand' (*ibid.* p.5). The report also emphasised the need for better co-ordination between regional and national frameworks for coaching and recognised that 'while the value of coaching is increasingly being appreciated, many initiatives at local and national level remain largely unstructured. Their innate value has been reduced by the lack or paucity of any generally accepted policy for the identification, training, employment and deployment of coaches' (*ibid.*).

With a focus on promoting the value of coaching to a wider audience, the Coaching Matters report concluded that the 'actual and potential contribution of coaching to the development of sport at all levels has often been overlooked and underestimated' (p.45). A total of 68 report recommendations for the way forward made a clear statement of intent about the future of coaching within the UK, with seven fundamental recommendations:

1. The need for improved forward planning
2. Increased awareness of the role of the coach
3. Improved coach training
4. Improved deployment practices, including initial and in-service training

5. The development of consistent accreditation procedures for coach education

6. The creation of one strong, central organisation overseeing improved coach education and coaching

7. A closer working relationship among all organisations with an interest in coaching

It is useful to reflect on the parallels between these recommendations and the criteria suggested by Lyle (2002) as defining a coaching 'profession'. Lyle argued that for sports coaching to fulfil its ambition to become a full 'profession', it required a number of elements, including professional education, clarity and definition of roles and remits, and opportunities for continued professional development. There are interesting connections between the Coaching Matters recommendations, Lyle's criteria and earlier documents such as the Wolfenden Report. For example, the consistent call for improved education, deployment, ongoing training and clarity of role. Given that these themes pervade the literature they are arguably core issues that remain relevant.

However, whilst the Coaching Matters report discussed the 'Professional Coach' it did not make any overt reference to developing coaching as a recognised profession. It instead emphasised the importance of voluntary coaches and their pivotal role in supporting British Sport (Sports Council, 1991, p.18). However, it could be argued that 'Coaching Matters' took the first step in the process of professionalisation for sports coaches, particularly in terms of raising the profile of the coach and increasing understanding of both role and position of coaches in UK sport.

3.3.2 Coaching into the new millennium

In 1998, UK Sport established a review group to reflect on progress from 'Coaching Matters' (Sports Council, 1991). The subsequent document, 'The UK Vision for Coaching' (UK Sport, 2001), argued that while a great deal had been achieved since 1991, there remained a number of critical areas for development. The Vision also referenced the dramatic changes that had been experienced by sport since the publication of Coaching Matters. Specific recognition was given to the introduction of Lottery Funding and UK Sports Institutes (UK Sport, 2001, p.2). However, the UK Vision for Coaching recognised that 'whatever else changes, coaches and coaching will remain at the heart of every sporting performance at every level' (*ibid.*).

The 'Vision for Coaching' (UK Sport, 2001) stated that:

- By 2012 the practice of coaching in the UK will be elevated to a profession acknowledged as central to the development of sport and the fulfilment of individual potential.

In addition, the Vision articulated that going forward, coaching would have:

- Professional and ethical values and inclusive and equitable practice
- Agreed national standards of competence as a benchmark at all levels
- A regulated and licensed structure
- Recognition, value and appropriate funding and reward
- A culture and structure of innovation, constant renewal and continuous professional development.

There were clear connections between 'Coaching Matters' and the more focussed 'UK Vision for Coaching'. Previously vague objectives, such as 'improved coach training' (Sports Council, 1991), were replaced with stronger, more measurable targets such as 'agreed national standards of competence as a benchmark at all levels' (UK Sport, 2001). Of noticeable difference was that whilst The Vision also articulated a significant number of objectives (59), each objective was assigned to the inter-agency contributors responsible for activating the objective. The number of inter-agency contributors remained high, though, and as Peter Radford reminded the sector in 1991, 'no-one, surely, would ever plan a system that had so many administrative variants and such a complex regional and national framework?'. It is reasonable to question whether the lack of accountability within 'Coaching Matters' contributed to the lack of reported coaching change?

Equally, whilst both the 1991 and 2001 documents focused on the 'outputs' of coaching and what would be delivered, neither gave any consideration to the underlying systems, or people within those systems who would be required to deliver the plans. As noted in the opening chapters of this thesis, change requires effective leaders(hip) to initiate and sustain it for the long term, therefore it is reasonable to also question whether the reported lack of obvious progress could be attributed to the absence of investment in the people within the system who would ultimately lead and deliver the required changes.

The Government's Plan for Sport (DCMS, 2001) continued to recognise the importance of coaching and coach education and noted that 'without them [coaches] there would be no medals and most performers, whatever their ability, would fail to reach their potential' (*ibid*., p.31). This formal recognition of the connection between coaching and wider sports development (echoed by authors such as Cote *et al*, 1995; North, 2007; Piggott, 2015) demonstrated a significant step forward for the strategic development of coaching systems.   It could also be suggested that this recognition escalated the urgency for the coaching sector to collectively consider the large-scale changes necessary for the 'professionalisation of coaching'.

The key coaching recommendation from the government's plan was the establishment of a 'Coaching Task Force' to examine strategic development for coaching and consider specific proposals relating to the 'development of a high quality professional structure for coaching', (DCMS, 2001, p31). As Taylor and Garratt, (2010, p123) noted, the establishment of this 'Coaching Task Force' group was the first time that the 'need to recognise coaching as a profession, with accredited qualifications and a real career development structure' had been articulated. The final Coaching Task Force report, (DCMS, 2002, p4), identified the two priority areas of coach development (initial education, training, CPD, assessment and qualification) and coach employment/deployment.   It also highlighted the lack of 'equivalence' of coach education programmes across sports, inconsistencies in assessment procedures, absence of a 'recognisable professional framework (for coaching)' and 'poor public recognition of coaches and coaching' as key matters for concern (*ibid*, p.5).

It is interesting to reflect on the recurrence of themes first raised in the Wolfenden Report (1960). However, as the 'Coaching Task Force' (DCMS, 2002, p.5) concluded that previous developments had 'resulted in an inconsistent coach education and qualification programme that is confusing to coaches, employers and customers', it is questionable as to how much progress had actually been made over the years.

Overall, the 'Coaching Task Force' report made a number of significant recommendations for the development of coaching (DCMS, 2002. p.9-15), yet arguably the most important recommendations came under the heading of 'Funding and Phasing of Proposals' (*ibid.*, p.16-17). For the first time within a coaching related strategy or publication, commitment was made for significant investment into coaching in order to implement the identified proposals. Over £60million was identified as the likely investment required to bring about the required 'step-change in coaching', (*ibid.*, p.17), with justification for such additional investment made by emphasising the link between coaching, sports participation and the impact of sport on other Government policy objectives such as health, youth engagement and regeneration, (*ibid.*).

In the drive to establish 'coaching as an acknowledged profession' (DCMS, 2002, p.18), the 'Coaching Task Force' recognised the need for specific investment and declared that 'for the first time we will have in place the right kind of resources to effectively identify, nurture and develop talent' (*ibid.*, p.18). Acknowledging that little progress in coaching had been demonstrated in the decade since publication of Coaching Matters (*ibid.*, p.5), perhaps it was perceived that the key ingredient required to transform the coaching system in the UK was dedicated investment.

Taylor and Garratt (2010) acknowledged the impact of 'increased accountability to central Government' (p.123) in the drive to establish coaching as a profession and suggested that the increased accountability associated with central investment could lead to more effective implementation of coaching strategy. For the context of this study it is again interesting to note that it was investment in the functions of coaching, rather than investment in leadership in the wider system, that was perceived to have the most influence on progress.

Following the publication of the 'Coaching Task Force' in 2002, sports coach UK (formerly the National Coaching Foundation) were tasked with strategically leading the development of coaching and coach education across the UK, and with being the 'enabler' and 'facilitator' for other agencies rather than a 'direct deliverer', (DCMS, 2002, p.15). Leading on from the successful implementation of the UK Coaching Certificate in the mid-2000s (recommended in the Coaching Task Force), sports coach UK was mandated by key partners across the UK (including home country sports councils and national governing bodies) with the development of a consistent framework for coaching across the UK. The outcome of this work was the UK Coaching Framework; an industry wide, collectively agreed, vision for coaching in the UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008, p.11), which was to:

'Create a cohesive, ethical, inclusive and valued coaching system where skilled coaches support children, players and athletes at all stages of their development that would become world number one by 2016'.

This vision was built on the belief that effective sports coaching was central to the development of sustained participation and performance within sport (North, 2007). Five strategic action areas were identified as critical to the success of delivering the vision (sports coach UK, 2008, p.26):

1. The UK Coaching System

2. Front-line Coaching

3. Support for Coaches

4. A Professionally Regulated Vocation

5. Research and Development

Again it is interesting to note the consistencies between the UK Coaching Framework and the previous coaching related reports and policies/strategies. Areas of coach recruitment, coach training and coach retention are particularly noticeable as common themes across the years. Thus it is again relevant to question the relative overall progress in achieving the collective aim summarised under the term the 'professionalisation of coaching', particularly reflecting on the overall aim of the UK Vision for Coaching (UK Sport, 2001) (see page 71 above).

3.3.3 The shifting nature of coaching

The UK Coaching Framework emphasised the need to 'build, deliver and transform the coaching system', (sports coach UK, 2008, p.18-22) and, for the first time, there was a sense that a coaching publication recognised the need for change to be facilitated on a longer-term basis. This approach suggested, at least, that the process of change was understood and future actions were intended to create and sustain the required change. It is relevant to note that during the lifespan of the UK Coaching Framework (2006 to 2016), no further strategic coaching documents were published, although the home countries did all publish their own strategic interpretations of the UK Coaching Framework during this time to direct coaching within their areas of devolved responsibility. Even so, this was a relatively stable period for sport coaching in the UK. Whilst there were some minor shifts in how the framework was explained and communicated, generally speaking, the UK Coaching Framework provided a clear reference point for the full eleven years of its timeframe.

Yet commitment does not necessarily equate with success. For example, Nash and Sproule (2011) argued that the modernisation agenda for coaching in the UK remained significantly behind schedule, whilst Taylor and Garratt (2010, p.136) attributed this lack of progress to 'resistance from local stakeholders'. Reflecting on the impact of the UK Coaching Framework, Bolton and Smith (2013) noted the increased pressure that the new developments had placed on lead coaching officers (Coaching Systems Managers) within National Governing Bodies of Sport. Bolton and Smith (*ibid.*) argued that the expectation for lead officers to 'deliver' on the UK Coaching Framework actually resulted in increased stress and reduced collaboration between sports.

This acknowledgment is interesting for this study as it recognised the importance of the people within the 'system' to create and deliver change. Bolton and Smith (*ibid.*) reflected that individuals (Coaching Systems Managers) were once again required to work to new and different targets and were being held accountable for very different objectives, yet did not receive any specific support to develop the skills necessary to facilitate these new ways of working. It feels somewhat ironic that individuals tasked with developing coaching and coach education were not themselves being provided with education or development that helped them to become more effective in their work.

What was evident during this period was a noticeable growth in the number of academic studies exploring the process and impact of effective coaching (Griffo *et al*, 2019) with enhanced interest in the coaching field providing the profession with valuable insight (*ibid.*, p.211). However, there is also recognition that whilst 'coaches have received growing attention in the sport literature' (Allan *et al*, 2018, p.47), 'coach education research remains remarkably coach centric with little attention paid to the coach educator or the broader role of the socio-cultural context that frames the learning process' (Cushion *et al*, 2017, p.1). An important point, not just for coach education, but for the individuals who are tasked with developing coaching and coach education in line with the agendas set in publications such as the UK Coaching Framework.

Of similar significance is the acknowledgement that, perhaps due to the significant increase in sport coaching related literature since 2005 (Griffo *et al*, 2019), 'coaching has been increasingly recognised as a social non-linear process characterised by complexity and ambiguity' (Jones and Thomas, 2015, p.65). It is perhaps no surprise that there remains 'no clear consensus about the nature of coaching itself' (Cushion *et al*, 2006, p.84) and that 'there are no cohesive definitions of effective coaching or coaching expertise' (Coté and Gilbert, 2009, p.308). This ambiguity around the definition of coaching is also reflected within the practitioner landscape, as the way coaching is defined seems to be growing wider and arguably more complex as time progresses.

Sport coaching in the UK is now no longer being considered by organisations such as UK Coaching and the Home Country Sports Councils as 'a process of guided improvement and development in a single sport at identifiable stages of athlete development' (ICCE, 2012, p.10). Rather, it is being defined in much broader terms. In their most recent strategy (2017 to 2021), UK Coaching declared that 'we don't mind whether you call yourself a coach, activator, facilitator, instructor, leader, teacher or trainer. Whatever the label, the end result is always the same: By coaching, you are inspiring others and making a positive difference' (UK Coaching, 2017, 'Our Purpose' section). Equally, Sport England now consider that there is a 'growing coaching family' and define coaching as 'improving a person's experience of sport and physical activity by providing specialised support and guidance aligned to their individual needs and aspirations' (Sport England, 2016b, p.6).

As the definition of coaching continues to evolve and reflect the wider participation agenda of UK government, the pressure on existing coaching systems to evolve increases. There is an expectation that coaching systems will be able to quickly adapt to meet these newly defined constructs. Without support to change, or the development of leaders who are capable, competent and confident to operate in these increasingly complex environments, it is doubtful whether effective change can ever be embedded and sustained. This study, therefore, argues that there is a need to focus on authentic leadership development within coaching systems if these various strategic ambitions for sport coaching in the UK are to be realised.

3.4   Chapter summary

The intention of this chapter has been to reflect on the changing sporting landscape and political influences for coaching in the UK since the 1960s. The aim was not to provide a detailed, step-by-step guide to the evolution of policy, rather to note a number of key publications, reflect on significant 'turning points' (Hargreaves, 1986, p.7) during this period of time, and to identify issues pertinent to the context of this study. Primarily these issues are linked to the recognition that 'change is continuous' and determined by 'forces propelling change...by resistance to change and by struggle' (Hargreaves, 1986, p.8), but that the desire for change in sport coaching has not been accompanied by investment in leaders who can effectively and efficiently navigate such continuous change. It is, in fact, only in the most recent of years that any sports related policy or strategy has acknowledged the need to invest in developing leaders within sport (HM Government, 2015; Sport England, 2018). Even then, the recognition for leadership is limited and arguably focuses on a 'top-down' approach as reference is consistently made to 'leaders and managers' within both the aforementioned documents.

Indeed, even with the rapid increase in sport coaching related publications since 2005, there remain significant 'gaps in the coaching profession literature' (Griffo *et al*, 2019, p.206). For example, Abraham *et al* (2013, p.175) argued that 'there is virtually no research examining the coach developer/educator', whilst Griffo *et al* (2019, p.205) reported that 'although there have been several systematic analyses of the research literature in physical education, no evaluation of sport coaching has occurred'.

More significantly for this study, there is a dearth of research into the role of individuals within Governing Bodies of Sport (Coaching Systems Managers) who are responsible for developing, delivering and implementing the changes required for coaching to evolve as a profession. In trawling the literature for this study, for example, only two papers were uncovered that made reference to the role of the 'coaching systems manager', or equivalent. Taylor and McEwan (2012, p.39) briefly considered 'the possibilities for inter and trans-professional workings for coaching systems and individual practitioners within the UK', whereas Griffiths *et al* (2018, p.288) paid attention to the role played by such individuals in terms of the way in which they 'conceptualised, legitimised and communicated' coach education programme knowledge.

3.5   Literature review – concluding remarks

Reflecting on the nature of change within sport and sport coaching in the UK since the 1960s it appears that much has changed. The Wolfenden Report (1960) signalled the beginning of greater government involvement in sport, with a number of government sport policy documents being published in the decades since. There have also been numerous strategies and plans produced by the various Sports Councils and UK Coaching (in its various guises) during this time. As Hargreaves (1986, p.8) reflected 'change is continuous' and it must be assumed that this pace of change will continue.

However, whilst much has changed in the landscape, in terms of the priorities and areas of focus for sport and coaching, much remains constant. For example, the need for quality coach education and development is still recognised, as is the central role of the coach in initiating and sustaining participation in sport. Equally, the desire to 'professionalise' coaching first appeared loosely in 'Coaching Matters' (Sports Council, 1991), was explicitly prioritised in 'The UK Vision for Coaching' (Sports Council, 2001) and was reinforced in the 'UK Coaching Framework' (sports coach UK, 2008). Yet, progress towards this aim is questionable, particularly with the most recent coaching strategies (Sport England, 2016b; UK Coaching, 2017) deliberately removing the term 'professionally regulated vocation' (or equivalent) from their content.

A clear consistency since the 1960s has been the call for the governance structures of sport to 'modernise' (DCMS, 2000) and change the culture of how sport is managed. With this drive still visibly present in recent government policy (HM Government, 2015), progress is again questionable.

It is also notable that little attention has been paid over the years to the individuals within the sporting bodies who have consistently been expected to transform National policy into practical activities (Piggott, 2015, p.294). There has been a lack of support for, or investment in, the individuals tasked with this interpretation, translation and implementation. From a sport coaching perspective, it is the 'Coaching Systems Managers' who are responsible for translating coaching policy into action, and, given the complexities of this landscape in the UK, there is a need for these individuals to be provided with the space and time (and development) (Singh *et al*, 2013, p.478) they need to be able to develop their skills as effective leaders in change.

This study begins to address the current literature gap in relation to the development of Coaching Systems Managers. By presenting critical insights from the experiences of effective leaders of change within current coaching systems in the UK, the intention is to provide a starting point from which an alternative approach to managing change in coaching systems in the UK can be considered. The opening two chapters in this thesis have established a foundation from which the research outputs from this study can be positioned and considered going forward.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Chapter introduction

The methodological options for a qualitative researcher are wide-ranging as the field of qualitative research is dynamic, ever changing, and 'the faster we put a period at the end of some substantive proposal, the faster the text moves beyond all punctuation more swiftly than we can print it' (Lincoln, 2010, p.5). With no singular methodological practice favoured over another because qualitative research has 'no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own' (Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.6), the opportunities for the qualitative researcher are arguably endless. Kahlke (2014, p.13), for example, reasoned that 'the need for innovation and adaptation in methodologies to fit the researcher, the discipline, and the questions posed outweighs the difficulties in conducting generic studies'.

All qualitative researchers, however, 'have a clear responsibility to ensure that research is undertaken rigorously, using the most appropriate design, methods, analysis, reporting and dissemination strategies' (Armour and Macdonald, 2012, p.5). All qualitative research must also comply with 'increasingly exacting ethical standards' (Armour and Macdonald, *ibid*.) and thus it is essential that the qualitative researcher has a sound understanding of the broader issues and influences surrounding their field. It is through developing this understanding that the qualitative researcher is able to effectively describe the framework, or paradigm, within which the particular research is conducted, and then make appropriate research design choices.

4.2   Framing the research approach

4.2.1 Research paradigm

The ontological and epistemological beliefs of a researcher 'shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.13). These beliefs subsequently influence the type of questions a researcher asks, the approaches they adopt to pursue a particular project, and the framework, or paradigm, within which a piece of research is positioned. Research is evolutionary, with new findings meaning that 'one conceptual world view is replaced by another' (Kuhn, 1970, p.10). It is this continual evolution to which Kuhn referred as 'paradigm shift'. Guba (1990, p.17) acknowledged the importance of a research paradigm but suggested that whilst the looseness of Kuhn's definition did have some 'intellectual usefulness', the more generic definition of a paradigm as 'a basic set of beliefs that guides action' was a more useful starting point for all.

Barker (1992, p.32) described a paradigm as 'a set of rules and regulations' that establish or define boundaries and provide guidance on how to behave successfully inside such boundaries. Tinning and Fitzpatrick (2012. p.55) noted paradigms as 'frameworks that orient and represent particular ways of thinking...grounded in certain assumptions about nature and reality.' Whilst each definition varies slightly, there is a consistent understanding that every research paradigm is shaped and influenced by the way in which the researcher views the world and considers their place within that frame. As Carter *et al* (2014, p.13) acknowledged, 'the interpretive nature of qualitative research places researchers in a space where their own social and historical position is a vital element in the study process'.

Guba (1990, p.18) proposed that research paradigms are framed by simple questions relating to ontology, epistemology and methodology, and it is through answering these questions that a researcher is able to identify the most appropriate 'paradigm' for their study. As Guba (*ibid.*, p.19) acknowledged, there are many different ways to answer such questions and it is also not possible to prove, or disprove, any particular paradigm as fundamentally they are 'human constructions'. However, the lack of 'right or wrong' in terms of a research paradigm does not mean that the researcher is able to take short-cuts when identifying their particular research framework. As Tinning and Fitzpatrick (2012, p.64) concluded 'even if you are not aware of it, you already have views of the world...[and] attempting to excavate or expose those assumptions and challenge your thinking is the first step'.

4.2.2 A Constructivist-Interpretive Approach

A constructivist approach assumes a 'relativist ontology' that perceives multiple realities, and a subjectivist epistemology where the 'knower' and the 'respondent' co-create understandings and a 'naturalistic' methodology that exists in the 'real world' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.13). More simply, constructivism stems from a belief that there are multiple possibilities within every context, (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Constructivism acknowledges that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences, thus the constructivist researcher adopts methodological processes that aim to understand knowledge and experience within the relevant setting. Constructivists seek to develop authentic and credible 'reconstructed understandings of the social world' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.92). Importantly, researchers operating within a constructivist paradigm appreciate that there may be multiple interpretations of any single experience (the relativist ontology) and therefore understand that broad and sweeping generalisations cannot be made from their findings.

A subjectivist epistemology and relativist ontology present a number of challenges for the qualitative researcher who is continually conscious of this need for care when drawing conclusions from their work. The qualitative researcher is also acutely aware that 'subjectivity guides everything from the choice of topic that one studies, to formulating hypotheses, to selecting methodologies, and interpreting data' (Ratner, 2002, paragraph 1). Within a qualitative research paradigm, it is therefore necessary to find ways of developing an acceptable level of agreement (or objectivity) in order for the research to have meaning beyond the individual case or study in question.

There are a number of ways to address the issue of subjectivity (for example, Bavelas, 1995; Matusov, 1996; Drapeau, 2002; Ratner, 2002). Drapeau (*ibid.*, p.3) identified the importance of the researcher 'owning' their own subjectivity and highlighted a number of difficulties that may arise in the research process if the researcher does not recognise the extent of their own internal influences. Simply acknowledging personal perspective, epistemology and ontology, however, does not directly lead to a more objective way of knowing because, as Ratner (2002, paragraph 5) identified, all viewpoints are simply another way of approaching a thing…but none of them delivers any information about the thing itself'. The qualitative researcher must therefore take further steps to address the multiple realities that exist within a relativist ontology.

A useful way of working within multiple realities is to develop a shared understanding of an experience or situation through the use of 'intersubjective agreements'. Bavelas (1995, p.52, emphasis in original) proposed that 'the best working definition of objective is *intersubjective agreement*' and argued that reliability of knowledge was closely connected to the degree to which agreement between differing viewpoints could be made. Matusov (1996, p.25) challenged the more traditional view of intersubjectivity (that he identified as 'a state of overlap of individual understandings') and argued that intersubjectivity could be better considered as 'a process of a co-ordination of participants' contributions in joint activity'. This view was helpful for this study as it viewed intersubjectivity in a dynamic manner that involved both researcher and participant working together in pursuit of an accepted version of the 'truth'. The ongoing dialogue and co-construction of the narratives (Chapter 6, p.168) allowed time and space for such agreements to be reached throughout the research process.

A constructivist researcher employs an interpretive methodology to explore their particular area of interest. Using appropriate methods, a constructivist-interpretive researcher attempts to uncover meanings, values and explanations from their studies. They seek to understand emotions, feelings and experiences from the 'inside' in order to make sense of situations or studies. The role of the interpretive researcher is not 'merely to celebrate the story or narrative' (Gabriel, 2008, p.165), but rather to reflect upon experiences in order to establish a real understanding of the issues, problems and outcomes of a situation or context.

Elliot (2005 p.18 and p.19) noted that constructivist researchers seek primarily to understand 'how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction' (*ibid.*, p.18). Elliot (*ibid.* emphasis in original) also highlighted the that 'the social world is constantly *in the making* and therefore the emphasis is on understanding the *production* of that social world'. It is for these reasons that the constructivist researcher is mainly concerned with 'how' questions that 'identify meaning making practices' (*ibid*, p.19) and help develop an understanding of how individuals participate in, and construct, their own lives and realities. In this study, the intention was for the retelling and analysis of stories of those effectively leading change within coaching systems to generate critical insights into how and why effective change has been initiated and sustained. As explained by Gratton and Jones, (2004, p.20), 'the rich description and interpretation of experiences [is] more informative than simply measuring and statistically analysing variables'.

4.3   Narrative Inquiry

4.3.1 Setting the context

The research questions (Chapter 1, section 1.4) and the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm for this study provided a strong guide to research design choice. The final framework needed to provide a means of mapping and analysing each participant's journey, in order to illustrate ways in which individual and professional landscape knowledge interacted and led to change. Research design also had to ensure that it was possible to compare and contrast each story, and to ultimately explain and communicate relevant findings and outcomes to the reader. As O'Sullivan (2007, p.250) suggested, reflecting on the research questions provided an effective guide as to choices regarding data collection and analysis. Given that the research questions for this study centred on what could be learned from the stories of effective coaching systems leaders, a narrative form of inquiry appeared to be a logical choice for framing and structuring the research.

Narrative research is essentially a literary form of qualitative research that focuses on the uncovering and re-telling of individual stories (Creswell, 2015, p.502). Proponents of narrative inquiry (for example Clandinin and Connelly, 1996; Riessman, 1993; Lieblich et al, 1998) recognised the prevalence of stories in everyday life and suggested that 'if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense for us to study the world narratively' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.17). Or, as Smith (2010, p.88) more recently identified, narrative inquiry has a place within the qualitative research landscape because 'stories are a key means by which we know and understand the world'.

Despite this seemingly straightforward rationale, however, narrative inquiry has often been considered difficult to define (Hall and Gray, 2016, p.368). In part this can be explained by the adoption of narrative research approaches across such broad disciplines as literature, history, anthropology, sociology, socio-linguistics and education (Creswell, 2015, p.502). Equally, however, confusion sometimes arises around narrative research because, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.18) recognised, 'narrative is both the phenomenon and the method of the social sciences'. In other words, it is possible to define narrative research in terms of 'the overall design (e.g. narrative inquiry), a means for collecting data (e.g. asking participants to share stories), or a platform for disseminating the findings (e.g. presenting the findings as narratives)' (Hoeber and Shaw, 2017, p.5).

It is important to note that for this study, the term 'narrative' encompassed the full range of terms explained by Hoeber and Shaw (*ibid*.). The overall study was designed within a narrative inquiry frame (see section 4.3.3 – Narrative design, p.107), participants were invited to share their stories through a series of interviews and ongoing communication (see section 4.6 – The research plan, p.124), and the findings were presented in the form of participant narratives (chapter 6). It is also crucial to note that the participant narratives presented in Chapter 6 were created through co-construction between research and each participant. This reflects a key characteristic of the working definition of narrative inquiry offered by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.20) in that 'it is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus'.

4.3.2 *The value of narratives and stories*

The value of narrative as a methodological approach has been widely recognised across a range of subjects and professions. For example, Green (2013 p. 62) highlighted that 'narratives have always been a path to knowledge' within nursing, and Elliot (2005 p.5) identified the use of narrative within the fields of health and criminology. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the use of narrative-based research in sport, exercise sciences and coaching has become increasingly popular with authors such as Jones *et al* (2004), Jones (2006; 2009), Smith and Sparkes (2009), Smith (2010), Toner *et al* (2012), Carless and Douglas (2008; 2013), Gilbourne *et al* (2014), Hall and Gray (2016) and Hemmestad and Jones (2019) all turning to narrative inquiry in varying forms.

Researchers such as Donnelly *et al* (2013. p.6) discussed the use of narratives in organisational research and, significantly for this study, highlighted that 'there is much to learn from our tales of the field' and great value in sharing experiences and stories of 'real-life'. They argued that through 'a reflexive and critical stance' (*ibid*.), stories can be presented in a meaningful way that enables readers to engage with, as well as learn from, them. Equally, as was established in section 2.6.5 of the literature review, the use of narrative and life-history based methodologies frequent the authentic leadership literature as a they are believed to offer a powerful mechanism by which individuals can discover and express their self-concept and approach (Rae and Carswell, 2000; Gardner *et al*, 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Day and Dragoni, 2015).

Early authors in the narrative field (such as Mishler, 1986; Denzin, 1989; Riessman, 1993), viewed story and narrative as the way that 'social actors' produce, represent and contextualise their experience and personal knowledge. In more recent years, authors such as Creswell (2015) reported that telling stories is a natural part of life and hence provided a relevant choice for studies that seek to understand the experiences of research participants in a given context. Creswell noted that procedures of narrative design are still developing and highlighted that there remains relatively little mention of narrative methodology in the literature. An observation that arguably allows the narrative researcher a good deal of creativity and flexibility. Holloway and Jefferson (2013, p.29) explained that the narrative approach to research centres on the researcher's responsibility to be 'a good listener' and that the 'interviewee is a story-teller rather than a respondent'. The intention of this research study was to do just this; to explore and report on the experiences of a number of effective leaders within the coaching systems landscape and to uncover what had enabled them to lead in such a way. As Holloway and Jefferson (*ibid.*) identified, 'in the narrative approach, the agenda is open to development and change depending on the narrator's experiences'.

Each of the arguments advocating for the use of a narrative approach to research highlighted in the above section have, to some extent, been recognised within the wider field of sport, sport management and sport coaching in recent years. For example, Hoeber and Shaw (2017, p.5) acknowledged that 'storytelling is an engaging communication tool and makes is easier to connect and share research with different audiences'.

Stride *et al* (2017) explored this further and proposed that 'adopting narrative inquiry, and more specifically stories as a medium to represent research findings' could have significant benefits for developing research in sport management. Earlier publications such as Jones *et al* (2004) established a basis from which future narrative-based studies such as these could develop, and also began a discussion around for the 'potential of 'life-story' research into coaching, both in its practical application and its potential for further inquiry' (p.3). More recent studies such as Hall and Gray (2016) and Allana *et al* (2018) provide positive examples of how narrative inquiry is continuing to be explored within the field of sport coaching.

In drawing on the early work of Jones *et al* (2004), this study sought to apply a narrative inquiry approach in order to elicit and present the individual stories of the selected coaching systems leaders and to then critically analyse each story in order to develop common and/or contrasting themes across each story. Just as Jones *at al (ibid.)* sought to achieve through the exploration of coach life stories, this study aimed to communicate the data in a way that will 'allow us to characterise the processes that experts use in their performances', in order to 'gain a deeper understanding and description of complex interactions' (Strean, 1998, p.446). The intention for this study was then to consider how these deeper insights could be applied to future leadership development in the sector.

4.3.3 Narrative design

In terms of design, the structure for the data collection phase of this study largely followed Creswell's seven steps to 'doing narrative research' (2015, p.516). These steps, which are outlined below, provided a thread from which the specific research plan (detailed in section 4.6) was built.

1. Identify a phenomenon to explore that addresses a problem; the research questions (Chapter 1, section 1.4);

2. Purposefully select an individual from whom you can learn about the phenomenon; selecting the cases and identifying the research participants (sections 4.6.1)

3. Collect stories from that individual that reflect personal and social experiences; life history interviews (section 4.6.2)

4. Re-story or tell the individual story; transcribe the interviews and share (section 4.6.2)

5. Collaborate with the participant storyteller in all places of the research; co-construction of narratives (section 4.6.3)

6. Write a story about the participants personal and social experience; the final narratives (Chapter 6)

7. Validate the accuracy of the report; participant reflection on transcripts and narrative at all stages (section 4.6.3)

In further exploring ways in which narrative-based studies can be devised and conducted, Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Riessman (2008) and Creswell (2015) made a number of additional points that were considered when devising and conducting this study. These included noting the need to provide a rationale for the selection of particular case studies, and the importance of acknowledging the active collaboration between researcher and participant in shaping the final narratives. Interestingly, they also each suggested that stories should be presented in a chronological order, regardless of how stories were told.

For this study, however, less attention was paid to this point of chronology. Whilst the order of a story does clearly have some relevance, for example when noting that decisions today are influenced by past experiences, there are times in this study where the message or theme of a story took precedence over the specific timing. These are choices of presentation and whilst each participant had opportunities to amend and influence how their story was told, structuring the narrative by theme rather than chronology often appeared to be more effective in telling a particular story. As Magill *et al* (2017, p.220) reinforced, 'the ultimate concern of the stories was the explication of meaning making and social process, as opposed to a "factually correct' re-telling of any experience'.

4.4 The case study

4.4.1 The value of a case

The case study was defined by Yin (1994, p.13) as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context', with Flyvberg (2011, p.301) noting 'the decisive factor in defining a study as a case study is the choice of the individual unit of study and the setting of its boundaries'. Case studies, by definition, therefore require a clear demarcation of the 'unit' of study and must be intensive in terms of detail, richness and depth of study. They also typically evolve over a period of time and have a connection to the environment, or context, in which they take place (*ibid.*). The case study most certainly has value as a research choice and allows the researcher to 'describe and analyse deeply' then explain the choices made, (Ellis, 2004, p.92). Case studies also provide the basis from which theory can be refined, further studies identified and options reviewed.

Stake (2000, p.443) pondered the question of 'what can be learned from the single case' and proposed that is was possible to consider a number of case studies alongside one another in the collective case study approach. In this approach a number of individual cases are considered under the umbrella of one research project in order to analyse both general and specific elements (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.245). In a collective case study model, the ability to consistently define each individual case within the study is important if valid analysis is to be carried out, either on a specific or general basis. The research questions (Chapter 1, section 1.4) provided a strong guide that this research would ultimately be conducted within a collective case study approach as described by Stake (*ibid.*).

As with all qualitative research, questions arise regarding the reliability, objectivity and generalisability of the case study as a methodological choice (Armour and Griffiths, 2012). It is important that a collective case study approach recognises that data gathered from one case can only be attributed to that particular study and that each case is unique. Flyvberg (2011, p,302) recognised that whilst case study research is often held in low regard, if a researcher properly understands case study methodology, it does provide a valid research choice. The case study enables the researcher to gain an 'holistic understanding of a set of issues' to describe and explain a particular case or situation, (Gratton and Jones, 2004, p.97). It is crucial, though, that the case study researcher avoids temptation to generalise in pursuit of common theory as this may detract from the overall value of the study (Flyvberg, 2011).

Smith (2018) explored broader issues of generalisability in qualitative research in sport and exercise sciences and argued that 'it is a misunderstanding to claim that qualitative research lacks generalisability' (p.137) and a mistake to presume 'that a weakness or limitation of qualitative work is lack of generalisability' (p.146). Smith encouraged researchers to 'be aware and respectful of the differences in underlying epistemologies, ontologies, approaches and methods that inform research when dealing with generalisability' (*ibid*.). It is therefore essential for the qualitative researcher to maintain a clear methodological paradigm for their research and understand the perspective from which their research is presented. It is also important to take care in defining and selecting cases for inclusion in a study, identifying an appropriate research protocol, and effectively analysing and reporting the findings (Armour and Griffiths, 2012, p.209-211).

4.4.2 *Defining the case(s)*

As identified in the preceding section, it is important to define the case study unit of analysis and to recognise the contexts within which they exist, (Yin, 2004; Flyvberg, 2011; Armour and Griffiths, 2012). For this study, it was evident that the unit of analysis was the individual leader with whom personal life story narratives would be constructed and the context was the environment in which each leader positioned their own story. In the broadest sense this was the coaching system within which each were acting as a leader, however, as the case study included a life history, each story inevitably referenced other environments in which the individual operated. Whilst these may not have been directly related to 'work', they remained relevant to this study in that they formed part of the personal experience of the individual in question.

In terms of selecting the specific cases to be examined, Armour and Griffiths (2012, p.210) recognised that this choice is often challenging for researchers. Stake (2005, p.451) suggested that case studies should be chosen for their 'opportunities to learn', with Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.245) encouraging constructivist researchers to 'seek out groups, settings, and individuals where (and for whom) the processes being studied are most likely to occur'. In considering how to identify the particular cases for this research, the work of Heath and Heath (2010) provided strong insight and direction. Heath and Heath (*ibid.*, p.27) discussed the notion of 'finding the bright spots' as an important approach for any programme that seeks to create behavioural change. They described 'bright spots' as 'successful efforts worth emulating (p.28) and framed the pursuit of 'bright spots' (p.45) as an approach that considers the question of 'what's working, and how can we do more of it?'

Heath and Heath also recognised the important role of the leader in any change effort and recognised that in order 'for individuals' behaviour to change, [leaders must] influence not only their environment, but their hearts and minds' (*ibid.* p.4). The desire to understand 'what worked' within successful coaching systems in the UK, with a particular focus on the skills of the successful change leader, was at the heart of this study. The 'bright spots' approach therefore provided an appropriate and effective guide to the identification of relevant case studies; cases that that all offered 'opportunities to learn' (Stake, 2000) and could ultimately help answer the research questions.

4.4.3 Identifying the cases (research participants)

The initial intention for this study was to recruit research participants by working closely with 'sports coach UK'. The plan was to use the 'Coaching Scorecard' tool (that captured progress against the UK Coaching Framework; sports coach UK, 2008) to highlight a number of organisations within which coaching system change was occurring. The second step would then be to identify the individual(s) within each organisation who were leading work on coaching. Individuals from this group would be invited to participate, with final participants selected from this wider 'pool'. Care would be taken to manage the confidentiality of each research participant so that anonymity was retained within the final study (hence, all names used within this paper are pseudonyms). 'Sports coach UK' would not know the identity of the finally selected research participants; but participants would be free to disclose their participation should they wish.

During the period of study for this research, 'sports coach UK' underwent a restructure programme and subsequent rebranding exercise. In 2017 they became known as UK Coaching and experienced a shift in focus that is highlighted in the coaching definition change in section 3.3.3 above. Preceding this change was a gradual reduction in focus on the UK Coaching Framework and associated 'Coaching Scorecard' tool. Therefore, efforts to identify thriving coaching systems within the governing body infrastructure became more challenging as there was less pressure on organisations to fully engage with scorecard reviews.

An altered approach to identifying relevant 'cases' for this study was therefore adopted. Personal knowledge of the industry was utilised to identify areas where positive change was occurring (researcher positioning is considered in section 4.5.3 below), with key individuals behind these changes identified and invited to participate. Whilst deviating from the original plan, this approach actually enabled the prospective pool of research participants to be widened as it was no longer restricted to sports or organisations who had signed up to the UK Coaching Framework. The breadth of participants in the research arguably ended up better reflecting the broader definition of coaching as described in section 3.3.3, with some research participants coming from less traditional areas of the sport coaching system now being acknowledged as central to coaching development by UK Coaching and Sport England (UK Coaching, 2017; Sport England, 2018b).

4.5   Strategies for enquiry

4.5.1 Establishing the base

All research should be designed to directly answer the respective research questions, and for case study research 'the questions...should determine both the initial selection of a case study approach and the specific methods used to investigate the case' (O'Sullivan, 2007, p.250). With clear research questions in place for this study, it was a relatively straightforward process to identify specific methods that would be employed to effectively implement the research plan. For example, in terms of gathering life story narratives, tools such such as life history grids (Elliot, 2005, p.31) became meaningful, whilst in order to gather the overall narrative data, the use of interviews became a core consideration with Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.246) recognising that the case study 'relies on interviewing, observing and document analysis'.

The decision was made that the interview, specifically the life story interview, would be utilised as the primary tool with which to gather data for this study. However, as Lambotte and Meunier (2013, p. 88) stated, 'a biographic interview produces the narrative, but it cannot be reduced to it...narrating is a retrospective sense-making exercise'. The decision was therefore taken to present the output of each interview in the form of a co-constructed narrative. Narratives that were created by researcher and research participant working together to construct a story with which the participant was comfortable and for which they felt a sense of ownership. Each narrative then provided a base from which themes could be developed and compared/contrasted during the analysis phase.

4.5.2 The life story interview

'I interview because I am interested in other people's stories' Seidman (1998, p.1), or because there is 'an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience', (*ibid*. p.3). For the qualitative researcher, the interview is a method through which information can be collected about an individual's life and experiences as relates to the specific focus of the study. Elliot, (2005, p.22) defined the interview as a 'site for the production of data and an opportunity to explore the meaning of the research topic for the respondent'. With a key aim of this research to uncover and construct narratives from identified individuals, the life story interview became a logical choice of method as it provided a 'method for understanding individual lives and really connecting with another's experience, there may be no equal to the life story interview' (Atkinson, 1998, p.24).

It is also important to note that the qualitative interview is 'an active process in which participants and researchers take part in a situated co-construction of meanings and memories' (Gemignani, 2014, p.127). This connects back to the notion of participative reflexivity as introduced in section 4.2.3, in that it emphasises that the relationship between participant and researcher is meaningful in a qualitative research process (Mahadevan (2011, p.150).   This relationship, and the relative position of the researcher, will be further explored in section 4.5.3 below, as an important consideration for this study.

Having identified the use of life-history interviews as an appropriate method to generate data for a qualitative research study, focus then turned to the process by which the interviews would be conducted, recorded and analysed. There are varying views as to the degree of 'structure' required for an effective interview. At one end of the spectrum is the view that narratives will naturally emerge during in-depth interviews, with the other end arguing that even with a detailed interview structure, it is possible that some interviews would never reveal the stories or detail that is sought by the interviewer (Elliot, 2005, p.29-30).

Atkinson (1998, p. 26) proposed a simple, yet robust, guide to developing an effective interview protocol involving the three steps of planning, interviewing and transcribing/interpreting. However, with the complexities of employing the in-depth interview as a primary method of data collection, it was also helpful to reflect on further guidance developed by Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2006, p.17), who each recommended using a series of three interviews within an overall data-collection process. Elliot (2005, p.32) also supported this structure as a practical way of organising and implementing an interview framework, which comprised a series of three connected interviews. The first interview focused on establishing the life-history of the participant, the second interview took a closer look at the participant's current experiences, and the third interview provided a space for the participant to reflect on the research findings that had been constructed through the first two interviews.

Seidman (2006, p.19) stressed the importance of adhering to the planned structure within the series of the three interviews and challenged the researcher to maintain the required focus of each interview. However, given the recognition that, in telling their stories, it was highly likely that the participant could wander away from the core focus at any time, it appeared challenging to adhere so rigidly to a set structure. Validity of the interviews is therefore a key concern, and Seidman argued that the structure of the three series interview would allow the researcher to check emerging themes and stories throughout the interview process.

In contrast, Elliot (2005, p.31) argued that 'if the primary aim of carrying out qualitative biographical interviews is to obtain individual's own accounts of their lives, it is clearly important not to impose a rigid structure on the interview'. However, Elliot also recognised that some individuals could find it 'very difficult to respond if simply asked to produce an account of their life'. One way to mitigate against such challenges is to use a 'life history grid' (Parry *et al*, 1999). Since its' first use in 1988, the life history grid has been developed into a respected methodological tool for the collection of retrospective data. Berney and Blane (2003, p.18) highlighted that 'the life grid method has been shown to enhance recall with a wide range of subjects and on a broad range of topics'.

A life-history grid can help individuals recount the story of their lives, starting from whichever point is most appropriate for the purposes of the research. Equally, the grid can enable researcher and participant to work together to construct a 'guide' to provide a reference point as the participant recounts their story (Elliot, 2005).

Richardson *et al* (2009, p.1) proposed that a life-history grid could be used in the interview process to help explore particular events and experiences in order to elicit meaning and influence for the context of a study. Richardson *et al* also acknowledged that the use of life history grids helped the researcher to see the individual stories in a 'clear temporal order...and into the story they [the research participant] tell of their life'.

There are many noted advantages to the use of the life history grid as a tool for collecting data, as well as a number of acknowledged challenges. For example, they are reported to alleviate the influence of 'recall bias' or memory fade during the recounting of stories (Parry *et al* 1999; Berney and Blane, 2003). They also offer a solution to the problem of timing in the collation of retrospective data as the life history grid is a visual tool that provides an interactive and engaging method of collecting data. Richardson *et al* (2009, p.2) recognised that the use of life-history grids can potentially relieve the pressure of participants feeling that they have of 'to tell their story chronologically'. It is important for the retrospective researcher to acknowledge that 'although the story itself will be chronological, it does not necessarily have to be told that way' (*ibid*.). The life history grid allows flexibility for the research participant to recall information and experiences in any order, but to present them in a logical manner that can then further explored through the ongoing interview and research process.

Arguably, the most interesting advantage of the life history grid method is that it offers a means of stimulating discussion between interviewer and interviewee in an often informal manner.

Parry *et al* (1999, section 4.3) found that 'because the grid involved the co-operation of respondents who collaborated in the reconstruction of their biographies, a high level of respondent engagement was necessitated'; a potentially significant benefit for the constructivist-interpretive researcher. The completion of a life history grid also offers an immediately visible output from early research conversations. Parry *et al* (*ibid*.) acknowledged that the completion of a life history grid 'could be rewarding for respondents because, although at times the task was quite difficult, the completed grid became evidence of successful joint accomplishment'. As Berney and Blane (2003, p.19) concluded, the life history tool can contribute to the development of positive rapport between the interviewer and interviewee which can help to establish a sound base for the ongoing research relationship.

4.5.3   The researcher/participant relationship

Kral (2014, p.144) recognised that 'the relationship between researchers and the researched is at the centre of qualitative research' with Rossi and Tan (2012, p.257) arguing that 'building rapport...is important in order to establish the trust and understanding required'. Roulston (2014, p.278) recognised that 'both successes and failures in generating rich and detailed reports from interviewees are commonly understood as prompted by the interviewer's actions'. Gemignani (2014, p.128/129) acknowledged that 'the openness and possibilities related to the rapport between researcher and researched can be a rich source of information, reflexivity and even personal growth for both parties' because the qualitative interview 'extends beyond data collection to allow the possibilities of the telling, the told, and the understood' (Gemignani, *ibid.* p.131).

Lippke and Tanggaard (2014) focussed on the complexities of the researcher/participant relationship during the interview process. They acknowledged that whilst the 'mud' that sometimes resulted from the interactional tensions in a research interview could be problematic; embracing it can equally 'serve as an analytical tool generating knowledge and insights that would not otherwise emerge' (p.142). However, Gemignani (2011, p.703) argued, 'when contexts, data, and experiences of a study become increasingly meaningful for the researcher, they influence the ways in which she situates, interprets, and experiences herself as subject of her own practice'. It is interesting to reflect on the recognition and acceptance of the 'mud' described by Lippke and Tanggaard (2014) alongside the discomfort of Seidman (1998, p.80) who argued that the development of a full relationship can result in the research process being 'critically confounded'.

Seidman also recommended 'erring on the side of formality rather than familiarity' in a research relationship and emphasised the importance of controlling the level of 'rapport' within the interviewer/interviewee relationship and argued that 'too much or too little can lead to distortion of what the participant reconstructs in the interview' (p.81). This approach, which Seidman likened to the teacher/pupil relationship in that it can be 'friendly but not a friendship' (*ibid.*), appears in complete contrast to the open admission of 'a desire to care' for her research participant reported by Lippke during her research study, (Lippke and Tanggaard, 2014, p.141).

These different views on the 'correct' role of the interviewer lead to further questions around the relative position of a researcher and highlight the importance of reflexivity for qualitative researchers. Berger (2015a, p.220) identified that 'questions about reflexivity are part of a broader debate about ontological, epistemological and axiological components of the self, inter-subjectivity and the colonization of knowledge'. He also suggested that this debate has taken a more prevalent place in the literature in recent years as 'employment of communication research methods continues to evolve and the use of the self expands in a diverse plethora of research strategies'. Perhaps then, the researcher/participant relationship is rarely as straightforward to manage as Seidman (1998) proposed.

As has been noted repeatedly in this chapter, it is essential for the researcher to acknowledge that any research process is 'shaped by one's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting', (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.5). Berger (2015a, p.220) also argued that 'researchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal'. Collins and Cooper (2014) took this concept further and explored the notion of emotional intelligence and the researcher. They argued that 'emotional intelligence can strengthen the ability to connect with participants, skilfully listen during the interview process, and more clearly understand the life-worlds participants articulate' (p.88).

Arguably the 'tension' reported by Lippke and Tanggaard (2014) demonstrated a strong awareness of self in the position of researcher. Lippke (*ibid*. p.136) described how she 'became aware of struggling to manage my identity as a psychologist and align it with my present position as a qualitative researcher' and concluded that 'this approach contributes to transparency in qualitative research, opens up the data in a new way and generates insights and results that would not otherwise emerge'. Leigh (2014, p.429) described a similar position in her social work study and noted that she researched from an 'assumed position of knowing' and 'was convinced that my status would enable me to generate data that would be rich and original'. The position that Lippke and Leigh adopted in their respective studies is best described by the term 'insider', although there are different levels to which 'insider' knowledge extends.

There is much debate on researcher positioning and the merits and issues arising from both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. Southgate and Shying (2014, p.225) reflected that the insider/outsider debate focused on 'the relationship between these categories; epistemic privilege in terms of access to and interpretation of knowledge; and the ethics and politics of representation'. Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p. 59) offered a definition of insider research as 'research by complete members of organisational systems and communities in and on their own organisations', which they contrasted with a description of 'outsider' research as 'organisational research that is conducted by researchers who temporarily join the organisation for the purposes and duration of the research'. Southgate and Shying (2014, p.225) proposed that insider researchers 'are simultaneously the subject and object of study', whereas 'outsider researchers are those who are not personally connected to their field of research'.

It is evident that this study was conducted from an 'insider' perspective within a system in which the researcher had significant professional knowledge and experience (Lippke and Tanggaard, 2014). The research was approached from an 'assumed position of knowing' as described by Leigh (2014, p.429). Kacen and Chaitin (2006, p.212) argued that there are both advantages and disadvantages to being part of the field in which the study is conducted and offered a number of insights into the opportunities and potential pitfalls. For example, for this study it was acknowledged that an acute awareness of the language and culture of the sport coaching world resulted in the in-depth 'position of knowing' that Leigh (2014, p.429) described. Kacen and Chaitin (*ibid*.) proposed that this might prevent 'the researcher from being able to look at the context with fresh eyes, as it were, in order to gain new insights concerning what might still be hidden from understanding, yet needs to be uncovered'. Thus it is possible that researching from a 'position of knowing' may result in cultural acceptance that 'this is just how things are' rather than adopting a more objective, questioning view.

Berger (2015a, p.231) advocated that insider research is valid providing the researcher understands the 'potential ramifications of (their) position on their research' and appreciates that the insider researcher must strive to 'continually ask themselves where they are at any given moment in relation to what they study'. Yelland (2013, p.138) advocated the need for continual reflexivity throughout the qualitative research process and concluded that 'I have interpreted this in my career to being reflective and reflexive about where I have come from'. Being an insider researcher is an acceptable position, provided that the researcher acknowledges this perspective, is reflexive and consciously aware of their position relative to the participants and the environment.

4.6   The research plan

4.6.1 Participants

Following the initial interview with research participant number one, it was agreed that six research participants would be sought for this study. The level of depth required for each interview was believed to be such that 6 participants would provide rigour, integrity and validity.   This final number presented a small enough cohort to be manageable in a narrative methodology, yet broad enough to provide sufficient opportunity for cross-case analysis. The final case study participants included:

- Two individuals engaged in National Governing Body coaching systems at a strategic level

- One individual strategically responsible for coaching systems in a non-governing body context

- Two individuals involved in shaping coaching systems at an operational level

- One individual who had been involved in UK coaching systems at a variety of levels and now working on an international level

Each series of interviews occurred over an eighteen-month period with an ongoing dialogue maintained throughout (email, telephone and face-to-face contact) in order to allow the researcher/participants to continually reflect on the emerging stories over time. Recognising the opportunities and challenges around the researcher/participant relationship (section 4.5.3), the ongoing researcher/participant dialogue was a critical part of the research process as researcher and participant worked together to construct a personal story that could be shared within the final study.

Significantly, the ongoing researcher/participant dialogue was critical in providing rich, reflective detail that, at times, was surprisingly insightful. Whilst not originally a formal part of the research plan, the opportunity for researcher and participant to engage in meaningful conversation in a less formal structure was invaluable. Providing space to reflect on transcripts and the early narrative drafts allowed participants to take their time to reflect on how they had described particular events and to consider whether their meaning had been interpreted in an appropriate and acceptable manner. The level of interaction between interviews varied between participants, with the majority of such communication occurring through email exchange. There were, however, additional phone conversations and 'in person' informal discussions on occasions when researcher and participant met in non-research related ('day job') circumstances, for example coaching conferences, workshops or meetings.

Whilst these informal exchanges were not always fully documented, recorded or transcribed verbatim, the researcher sought to record field notes after each 'in person' conversation to capture a reflection of what had been said or discussed. Any email correspondence was treated in the same level of confidence as the transcribed interviews and individual emails were saved securely alongside other participant data. Ethical approval was granted for both the formal interview and ongoing researcher/participant dialogue, therefore all communication was treated as participant data and collectively considered within the construction of the narratives and the subsequent analysis processes. In essence, the co-construction of each narrative took around eighteen months and could be considered as an ongoing conversation punctuated by three formal interviews that provided a consistent research structure.

The 'between-interview' communication initially served as a mechanism to confirm agreement between researcher and participant on interpretation and written perspective. To view this process in this limited way would, however, not fully reflect the significance of these ongoing dialogues. For example, it was in an informal conversation that one of the participants expressed surprise over the amount of times they used 'er' or 'um' in their interviews. Quotes used within the initial draft narratives were taken from original interview transcriptions and thus included such 'stumblings', and this participant was concerned that these verbatim quotes made them sound hesitant and unsure, which they did not like. As a result of this conversation, quotes within their narrative were edited to remove the unwanted 'ers' or 'ums'. Equally there were times when whole paragraphs were amended or deleted based on email feedback from participants, and several micro-adjustments of the themes within each narrative right up to the final 'check-in' (post Interview III).

As will be explored further in section 5.3 (p.136) and section 5.8 (ethics, p.159), managing the researcher/participant relationship did, at times, prove challenging, particularly given the 'in-depth' nature of the conversations. It was essential for the researcher to continually reflect back on the research purpose and methodology throughout the study in order to 'check' that the research process was robust and trustworthy. Ongoing researcher reflexivity around personal positioning, perspective and relationship with participants was a key part of maintaining robust data collection. This reflexivity extended to participants, particularly in the 'between interview' communication, with the ongoing researcher/participant collaboration (as described above) helping to secure appropriate intersubjective agreement within each narrative.

4.6.2 Structure

The original plan was to apply the following basic framework for each case study:

1. Initial meeting - completion of a life history grid

2. Research interview I – 'The here and now'; current experiences and actions

3. Research interview II – Reflection on personal progression

4. Research interview III – Agreement of 'the story'

However, following completion of the initial interview with participant number one, the actual framework employed was:

1. Research interview I – completion of a life history grid and exploration of life experiences, learning and development

2. Research interview II – Reflection on interview I; current context/here and now

3. Research interview III – Agreement of 'the story'

Research interview I – introduced the rationale for the research and the reasons for gaining an overview of the participants' life history. The primary purpose was to encourage participants to share stories from their life that they viewed as important and/or relevant to their current work role. This interview had a loosely structured approach with the only set question being the opening prompt of 'tell me about your life' (in the context of the explanation of the research purpose). A similar structure was followed for each case study, but the exact final detail for each depended on the specifics arising from each conversation. The interview evolved as the participant dictated the final direction with their story.

This revised interview and data gathering plan combined the initial meeting with research interview I. From experience of interview 1 with participant one, using the life history grid (and giving the participant a choice of whether to complete it themselves, or for the interviewer to complete) provided a helpful framework for the conversation. Using the grid as an integral part of the conversation prompted the research participant to think about, and articulate, different phases of their lives, whilst also providing the interviewer with a reference point from which to question further.

Having the life history grid appeared to provide a degree of comfort and confidence for the interviewee. It also helped them feel that it was acceptable to jump back and forth between different periods of their life. Interestingly all participants elected for this to be complete by the interviewer whilst they talked. Interview length varied between participants, from 45 minutes to in excess of 2.5 hours. The interview participant was given the freedom to talk for as little or as long as they wanted, and they dictated the terms of the interview and length of conversation. All commented that they found the process interesting and it provided them with a welcome opportunity to reflect on their story and development in a way that they rarely experienced. There was an overall recognition that the reflective process of telling their story was a helpful one personally as well as for the study.

Research interview II – encouraged the participant to reflect back on their life history (from initial meeting) and consider how their experiences have shaped their current approach in their work role. This second interview was an opportunity for interviewer and participant to review the transcript of the initial interview within a contextual frame, again with final structure and length determined by the participant. The interview participant was sent the transcript from interview I shortly after the interview had been completed, and asked to review the content (the audio version was also provided) with the following in mind:

- What in particular strikes you about your life story as you reflect on interview I?
- Is there anything obvious that you feel you missed in interview I? If so, what?
- As you reflect on your story shared in interview I, what connections can you make between your life story and experiences and how you operate in your current role/context?
- What else came to mind as you reviewed your transcript?

Atkinson (1998, p.57) identified that 'the next stage in the transcribing process, after you have reviewed it yourself, is to offer the transcript to the interviewee to look over himself or herself'. This is because the life story narrative that will eventually be produced belongs to the interviewee and therefore 'it is their privilege, even their right' to review the transcript as essentially it belongs to them (*ibid*.). This step was not included in the original structure and thus it felt as if a critical step was being missed. This also moved the methodological approach further towards meeting the demand for 'rigour in qualitative research' as prompted by Smith and McGannon (2018).

It is also important to note that the original plan following interview I was to produce an interim research text that identified emerging themes and questions from the initial conversation. On reflection, this 'leap' from interview to narrative was too significant and missed out a valuable opportunity for the interviewee to review the initial interview transcription. This added step also provided a period of reflection for both researcher and participant, and an opportunity for interviewer and interviewee to review the text together within interview II. This small, but significant, alternation to the methodology allowed greater opportunity for the interviewee to engage in their own narrative construction and for the research process to more effectively capture/identify critical points and/or perspectives before the co-construction of the final narrative.

Research interview III – was a final opportunity for the researcher and participant to jointly reflect on the 'story' that had been co-constructed (the narratives – Chapter 6). The researcher shared with the participant the themes that had been evolved from their narrative in order to 'test' them within the context of the individual case.

4.6.3 Researcher/participant interaction

After each meeting, the participant was provided with the transcript of their interview, an audio copy of the recording and a copy of any notes (including life history grid in interview 1) from the conversation. After the second interview, each participant also received an initial draft of their reflective narrative (research text). The purpose of these written accounts between interviews was to stimulate an ongoing dialogue between researcher and participant that allowed the relationship to continue to develop, and the participant to continue to 'tell their story' between meetings. Ongoing researcher/participant interaction throughout the duration of this study was a critical part of the process as effectively this was an ongoing research process, punctuated by three key, structured interactions as identified in the above framework. Regular communication allowed ideas to mature and develop over time and ensure that, as much as possible, the story elicited from each case participant was as 'true' to their intent and meaning as possible. Reflection of both researcher and participant throughout the research process was an essential component.

Researcher reflections considered the overall research process (is it still effective? Should it consider other aspects? Does it need to evolve further?), as well as the evolving discussions/stories within each case. The researcher also reflected upon how their own perspective may be influencing the research process and findings and became particularly conscious of the need to avoid unduly influencing any individual participant. The ongoing dialogue and opportunity to discuss (via email or phone) the interim research texts provided open opportunities for the participant to challenge or question researcher interpretation or analysis.

The researcher encouraged the participant to reflect on their life story between formal study interactions. The interim research texts (transcripts and subsequent narrative) provided a formal mechanism to prompt this reflection, with the ongoing dialogue allowing participants to consider their stories and add to the 'rich descriptions' being co-constructed through this study. Researcher/participant interaction did present a challenge! There was a real balance needed between curiosity and the ongoing desire to learn as much as possible about the interview participant and their story, and the structure needed to maintain a robust research framework. This dilemma caused much confusion in the early days of the research study; with the revised interview structure attempting to mitigate against the desire to continue an informal dialogue outwith the research structure.

4.6.4 Co-constructing the narratives

Research choices on exactly how to portray these individual stories were made as the stories were constructed. Consideration was given to the professional integrity and reputations of the individuals involved and decisions on sharing these stories was made jointly. As Clandinin *et al*, (2010, p84) recognised, the nature of narrative inquiry as relational practice means that early field texts are shaped into research texts through negotiation with research participants, and that the resulting conversations allow the texts to be shaped and refined as well as opening up new questions for both the researcher and participant. It is through this process of discussion and negotiation that decisions were made on exactly how best to 'tell' the stories of the individuals engaged within this research.

Consideration was also given to the audiences for which this research was intended. Individuals within the coaching systems landscape often have backgrounds as coaching practitioners with the value and relevance of narrative and story-telling within coaching well documented, (for example, Jones *et al*, 2004; Jones, 2006; Cassidy *et al*, 2009; Carless and Douglas, 2011). Choices on the point of view from which this research was presented, considering elements such as person, omniscience, narrator reliability, narrative voice and authorial distance (Coulter and Smith, 2009), were made with due consideration to both the research participants and the intended audiences. A copy of the detailed research plan is provided at **Appendix A1** in this document, along with copies of the participant information, consent and details form used to collect permission, and basic participant data.

4.6.5 Reflective note

As I headed from the planning to the 'doing' phase of my research, a number of key concerns remained at the forefront of my mind. The narrative nature of my study weighed heavily on my mind and I felt a real sense of pressure to ensure that I heeded all methodological principles around rigour, trustworthiness and validity. I was conscious of my responsibilities (ethically and morally), and as I began to gather my data and work with my participants to co-construct their story, I was acutely aware of the need to ensure we all found ways to reach agreement on our individual understanding and recollections of particular stories and experiences. Chapter 5 presents detailed insights into my journey through the data collection and analysis phases and is intended to provide evidence of the rigorous processes, reflection and thinking that I undertook throughout these challenging phases of the research.

CHAPTER 5:   DATA ANALYSIS

5.1   Introduction

My writing in this thesis thus far has largely adopted a traditional academic style and been been communicated using a 'third person' approach. This style felt appropriate for the initial chapters of this study as it sought to position this particular research within the relevant theoretical and methodological contexts. What makes this research unique, however, is me and my individual positioning as a researcher. As detailed in the previous chapter, my work has inevitably been influenced by the experiences, knowledge and emotions that have shaped me, my perspective, and my epistemological and ontological standpoints. It therefore felt essential to somehow bring this more personal lens to my research.

As a result, I have chosen to present this next section in a 'first person' account. As I contemplated the most effective way to articulate and explain the analytical choices I made along my research path, I was constantly reminded of the deep and often complex thinking that accompanied my data analysis journey. I recalled the mist and fog that regularly filled my head when seeking an appropriate, robust and rigorous way in which I could make sense of the stories and narratives that I had collected through the lengthy life history interviews. I also remembered the sense of excitement at reaching a moment of clarity; and equally the feeling of frustration when those moments slipped away into further confusion.

5.2   Ethics

I conducted this research within the ethical guidelines suggested by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011; 2018) and in accordance with the ethics approval that I received from the University of Birmingham in 2015. I was also influenced in my thinking on ethics by papers such as Wiles *et* al (2006), Adams (2008) and more latterly Reid *et al* (2018) and McGrath *et al* (2019). On reflection, it feels relevant to note that at the time of submitting my ethics approval form and associated documentation (Appendix A2, p.342), I perhaps naively viewed this as a purely procedural step that must be completed before progressing with the 'actual' research.

As I began to actually conduct my research, talk with participants, transcribe their interviews and slowly start to analyse my data, the relevance of the ethical framework within which I was operating became more and more evident. Equally, I developed a much greater sense of the importance of how I behaved as a researcher and how my ethical approach and beliefs were an integral and highly significant aspect of my ongoing research process. I began to fully appreciate that for me and my study, ethics was about the way in which I heard, translated, understood and then portrayed the stories that my research participants shared and that I had a 'duty of care' to protect their integrity and rights. Equally, I realised that I needed to ensure that I brought these stories to life in a way that reflected the 'human' behind the narrative, but that I also needed to take care not to reveal anything overly personal or inappropriate that may compromise their identities or break our agreed confidentiality. It was a privilege to share in the rich detail of these stories and I had a moral responsibility to my participants in re-telling and analysing their words (Adams, 2008).

From a practical perspective I realised that I needed to constantly consider how I would demonstrate respect for my participants, understand my responsibilities around communicating the knowledge I developed through my research, appreciate the ways in which I showed respect for the field of sport coaching, and considering how I would protect myself as a researcher (adapted from Wiles *et al*, 2006, p.284). I equally became evermore conscious that my ethical framework was not simply providing me with a step-by-step process that would simply direct my research, rather that I needed to utilise it as a secure reference point to guide dynamic choices in a balanced and fair manner. It was at this point that I truly recognised that my initial view of research ethics had been limited to procedural ethics, that is 'the formal approvals required for a study to commence' (Reid *et al*, 2018, p.70) rather than appreciating the true meaning of research ethics as requiring the ongoing application of other areas of ethical consideration such as situational, relational and after the study (Reid *et al,* 2018).

Behaving as a reflexive researcher became increasingly meaningful as my study progressed. I continually needed to be cognisant of my positioning and relationships with participants. As Wiles *et al* (2006, p.13) acknowledged, being an 'insider' in a research context may result in increased levels of trust from participant to researcher, allowing participants to feel more comfortable sharing personal insights and experiences. I was also aware, however, that my 'insider' positioning within sport coaching could 'equally bring assumptions and biases which have ethical implications but which are not commonly made explicit' (Reid *et al,* 2008, p.70). I sought to manage these challenges firstly by regularly reviewing my position and the issues I needed to consider, and secondly through an ongoing commitment to co-construct each narrative with as high a level of intersubjectivity as each participant and I could agree.

5.3   What are my data?

It became apparent as I began to explore the '*how*' and '*what*' of my study, that my '*data*' would be words, sentences, paragraphs, with my raw '*data*' being the life history interview transcriptions and narratives that were co-constructed along the way. I did, however, initially find it really difficult to view these stories simply as 'data' which I needed to analyse and interpret. Throughout the various interview phases I felt privileged to be hearing powerful tales of challenge and hardship; of failure and success; of growth and deeply personal development. To class these recollections and reflections under the single term 'data' felt far too simplistic; almost like I was doing the storytellers a great injustice.

It subsequently took a great deal of time during the research process to become comfortable viewing the detailed insights and experiences of my research participants as my research data! I cannot, however, pinpoint the precise moment when I began to refer to the interview transcripts and growing narratives as data, or the catalyst that created this shift in my thinking. It feels more like a gradual realisation that I needed to view these raw stories from a more removed perspective if I was to be able to analyse them in a robust, systematic way. I think that living with the research over a period of months and years gave me the time and space I needed to understand theory and process, and also enabled me to find my own ways of making sense of what I was finding.

5.4 My positioning

As I commenced the interview process, I found myself wrestling with the complexities of the researcher/participant relationship in ways described by authors such as Gemignani (2014), Lippke and Tanggaard (2014) Milligan (2016), O'Boyle (2018) and Hemmestad and Jones (2019). Listening to the stories that were being shared with me with an openness and honesty that I did not initially imagine, I became caught up in the desire to know and understand more…and more…and more. I began to think that my initial plan for three interviews with each participant would not be enough, and that I needed to allow the conversation to evolve much more freely in the form of an ongoing conversation from which meaning and reflection could continuously be drawn. I recall spending hours wrestling with my desire to find a way to capture the intricacies of an ongoing conversation that might potentially take place over a number of weeks, months and even years.

During this time the research felt all-consuming. I already knew at the start of the process that the subject was very personal to me and that I cared deeply about what I had chosen to study; this feeling just seemed to grow as I ventured further into the research process. When it then came to finalising my data analysis plan, I became increasingly conscious of my responsibility to produce a piece of work that was meaningful and robust, despite my 'insider' position. Knowing that the stories I was uncovering would be constructed within the frame of my own personal experience and reference added to the pressure I felt to ensure that my data analysis choices had academic rigour and could be viewed as 'valid' in the traditional sense (this is explored further in section 5.4 below).

I regularly reminded myself that my position as a researcher in this area could never be 'neutral' as I was an 'insider' in the research I was undertaking (Chapter 4, section 4.5.3). So whilst this research was chosen, influenced, designed, studied and analysed by me, and this thesis is presented as an expression of the particular version of the 'truth' that I uncovered and interpreted at this particular time and in my particular context; I needed to ensure that I made sense of the data within a robust framework. The next paragraphs detail the methodological choices I made, research principles I applied and analytical framework that I adopted to make my sense of the data.

5.5 Developing my framework for narrative analysis

As I navigated my way through various literature on narrative analysis and enquiry, I found myself contemplating seemingly endless dilemmas on how I should make sense of my data. I pondered whether my unit of analysis would be categorical or holistic (Earthy and Cronin, 2008); whether the focus of my analysis would be content or form (*ibid.*); whether my research questions were 'small q' or big Q' (Kidder and Fine, 1987); whether my research paradigm was feminist, post-positivist, reflexive, constructivist, post-modern, or something else entirely. For a while I lived in a murky, grey fog that got thicker as I read and learned more, and which, every so often, would clear to reveal an onward path as I thought I had gained an understanding.

On several occasions, this lighter patch quickly returned to misty cloud as I reached another insight or theory that lured me towards a slightly different path of enquiry, or I hit a dead end that forced me backwards with an abruptness that I hadn't imagined possible. Yet, as I trawled through more and more literature and spent time familiarising myself with my data, I slowly and surely uncovered a path that felt both appropriate and exciting.

As Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007, p.557) emphasised, 'one of the most important steps in the qualitative research process is analysis of data', where the process can simply be thought of as the 'systemic search for meaning' (Hatch, 2002, p.148). Despite this apparent simplicity, however, the choices I faced when contemplating how to analyse and interpret my data seemed to have become more complex in recent years with a rapid expansion of the landscape for qualitative research. Particularly, as in my case, within the field of sport and exercise (Smith and McGannon, 2018). It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that I found it challenging to know where to start when looking to develop a relevant and robust approach that delivered the necessary rigour for quality. Thankfully, with such rapid growth in popularity of qualitative research, there was no shortage in the existing literature of 'step-by-step' guides for analysing qualitative data (for example, Robson, 2002; Miles *et al*, 2014; Creswell, 2018).

My first step in developing my analysis framework was to remind myself of the various aims of qualitative research. This provided me with a checklist to help me keep the things that I wanted to gain from my research uppermost in my mind.

My research questions were clearly a crucial guide at this point in time, as was the summary from Flick (2013, p.5-6) that highlighted three overarching aims of any qualitative data analysis:

1. Describe a phenomenon in some or greater detail;
2. Compare several cases on what they have in common or on the differences between them;
3. Develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of empirical material

These three points helped me to create clarity and enabled me to identify the following three 'outputs' from my research. In turn, this clarity also allowed me to make informed choices on the appropriate method(s) of analysis.

1. 6 'case' narratives telling the individual stories and 'themes' for each research participant (Chapter 6);
2. An overall 'cross-case' analysis piece identifying the commonalities and/or differences across the individual cases (Chapter 7);
3. A tentative and grounded model or approach to understanding and informing leadership within UK coaching systems (Chapter 8).

At this point (and more recently as I reflected on my research process), I turned to Creswell (2014; 2018) for guidance on the process of data analysis, with three particular points drawing me towards his work.

The first was that he likened the process of making sense of the data to the feeling of 'peeling back the layers of an onion' (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.191). This resonated as, with every re-read of a transcript or further interview, I felt like I was gaining more understanding of, and empathy for, the life histories of my participants. I also felt that I was growing my levels of research thinking and becoming more comfortable with the regular uncertainty that I experienced along the way.

The second of Creswell's points that helped me comprehend the process was that 'data analysis in qualitative research will proceed hand-in-hand with other parts of developing the qualitative study, namely, the data collection and the write-up of findings' (*ibid.* p.192). This felt significant for me and most definitely helped to allay the confusion I was feeling about the seemingly 'haphazard' nature of my research process. For example, having initially written my research plan, I had rather naively assumed that the actual process would be logical and one step would follow another as I had written on paper. Yet the reality of qualitative research is, as Creswell emphasised, 'unlike quantitative research in which the investigator collects the data, then analyses the information, and finally writes the report' (*ibid.*).

Thirdly, I liked Creswell's observation about the non-linear nature of data analysis. Whilst he presented a 'step-by-step' framework for data analysis (2014; 2018) that might suggest that the research process should be linear and hierarchical, he stressed that in reality it is more of an interactive process where 'the various stages are interrelated and not always visited in the order presented' (2018 p.193). This reminded me of the change models that I had reviewed (Chapter 2).

Finally, in terms of working out my analysis framework, my attention turned to the issue of qualitative research validity (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Lincoln *et al*, 2011; Smith and McGannon, 2018). I knew that it was essential to address issues around rigour and credibility as these are discussed at length in the associated literature, particularly in more recent years (Thorne *et al*, 2004; Braun *et al*, 2018; Smith and McGannon,2018). Given my position as a research 'insider' and the ongoing nature of the relationships between myself and my participants (Chapter 4, section 4.5.3), I was very aware that I needed to be continually cognisant of the credibility and validity of my research.

Lincoln *et al* (2011, p.120) posed a number of questions that were helpful for me to consider when contemplating validity in my research. These questions challenged me to consider whether my findings would be sufficiently authentic that 'I may trust myself in acting on their implications?' and also encouraged me to contemplate whether I would 'feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them'. In exploring the various approaches to methodological rigour, Lincoln *et al* (*ibid.*) prompted me to question if I was being 'interpretively rigorous' and helped me to continually reflect on whether my 'co-created constructions [could be] be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon?' According to Guba and Lincoln (1989, p.245-251), the 'hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigorous, or 'valid' constructivist inquiry' were the five 'authenticity criteria' of fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. These all felt highly relevant to me as I endeavoured to build a study that could be trusted and viewed as 'valid'.

The word 'trust' became somewhat of an anchor and provided me with a helpful reference as I contemplated the quality of my research. I began to appreciate that credibility and validity were not 'things' that would be achieved through simply stating an approach or citing existing research; rather they would be outcomes I created with a number of actions. I realised that maintaining the integrity of my research was critical, not just in ethical terms, but also with regards to how I conducted the entire process and how I treated my data with fairness and consistency. Levitt *et al* (2017, p.9) identified 'methodological integrity as the basis for trustworthiness in qualitative research' and this really helped me to understand that adopting and applying a rigorous approach throughout my research would, as Levitt *at al* (*ibid.*) explained create the basis from which confidence and research trustworthiness could be built.

I came to believe that a rigorous process would be more likely to equal trustworthiness in the eyes of the reader, or, as Nowell *at el* (2017, p.1) concluded, 'to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematising, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible'. I also concluded, however, that rather than adopt one perspective on how to develop validity and trustworthiness in my research, I utilised a combination of techniques to provide this assurance for the reader. I felt comfortable with this considered, connected approach, particularly when realising that even approaches that were generally recognised as robust within the sport and exercise field (for example Smith and McGannon, 2018) still had their challengers who argued for an alternative view (Ronkainen and Wiltshire, 2019).

With Creswell's words around non-linear progression ringing in my ears, I began to take stock of where I was in the whole process and reflected on the progress I was making. I also now noted Smith and Gannon's (2018, p.118) challenge to qualitative researchers and reflected on how, throughout my process, I had attempted to better 'understand the various problems with certain methods and move to other possibilities to enhance the quality of [my] qualitative research'. As I looked back over my research plan and progress, I felt comfortable that the processes I had developed provided the necessary space to continually check for accuracy and also allowed sufficient time for the relationship between myself and the participants to develop. All of which gave me confidence in the rigour of my research, but also reinforced the relational aspect of narrative enquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

5.6   Making my choices

The analysis choices available to me were unsurprisingly vast given that 'qualitative approaches are incredibly diverse, complex and nuanced' (Holloway and Todres, 2003). In my journey of exploration through the depths of the literature I encountered options such as narrative analysis, discourse analysis, framework analysis and grounded theory. I also considered models offered by authors such as Labov (1972), Mishler (1986), Riessman (1993) and Cortazzi (1993), all of which I rapidly rejected as none felt quite 'right' in terms of the 'fit' for my research. My first serious exploration into an appropriate method of analysis was to look at Grounded Theory; however, this was short-lived.

With my research philosophy firmly rooted in a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, once I discovered that Charmaz (2005, p.509) described Grounded Theory as a 'template for doing qualitative research stamped with a positivist approach', it was obvious that this was not a method that I could employ. Also, having acknowledged the significance of my position as an 'insider', it felt wrong to adopt a method of analysis that did not recognise the potential influence of the researcher on data collection and analysis. I equally realised that as Grounded Theory offered a complete methodology for qualitative research, and I was now seeking specific methods for data analysis alone, this was not a valid choice.

Guided by increasing familiarity with my data and my deeper understanding of my whole research paradigm and approach, I was able to answer the questions that had been floating round my head. I became more sure that my unit of analysis was holistic (that was looking at the complete life story and examining the content) and that the focus of my analysis would be content (Lieblich *et al*, 1998). I also grew more sure that my research questions were 'Big Q' questions that acknowledged contextual meaning, the existence of multiple realities and the relevance of researcher subjectivity (Kidder and Fine, 1987). The answers to these questions helped to significantly narrow the focus of my search.

So, where next? With greater clarity, I reflected on my reading within the broader narrative analysis field and found myself drawn to the work of Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) on Thematic Analysis.

5.7   Thematic Analysis

There was something about Thematic Analysis (TA) and the approach that it offered that immediately captured my attention and imagination; I even felt excited to have opened the door on this method of data analysis. One of the things that initially drew me towards TA was the notion that this was a method rather than a complete methodology. It therefore offered me a way to analyse the data I was collecting and beginning to make sense of, within the parameters of the research plan and methodology that I had established. Listening to Clarke (2017) discuss the emergence and rationale for the adoption of TA as a method, and following this up through initial reading (Braun and Clarke, 2006), I began to see how TA would provide me with the sensible, logical and robust approach that I sought. By this stage I had already decided on narratives and a form of narrative analysis, and as I went through the process and saw the data, I was able to make a more informed choice about the best approach within the narrative analysis options.

TA offered me a broad approach that enabled me to identify and define themes within my particular datasets; it is this broadness and flexibility that really captured my imagination. As Braun and Clarke (*ibid.* p.77) suggested, TA 'offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data'. I felt equally inspired when noting the sentiment of Brooks *et al* (2015, p.206) which expressed that 'we feel that it is crucial that researchers are not precious about their ways of working with thematic analysis'.

I became confident that TA was the answer to my data analysis questions even though in the mid 2000s it was an area that Braun and Clarke (2006, p.77) identified as 'poorly demarcated and rarely used'. However, given the increasing recognition of Braun and Clarke (*ibid.*) and Willig (2013, p.179) for TA becoming 'recognised as a qualitative research method in its own right', this choice of method did not feel like too much of a risk. I was also able to refer to the growing number of studies using TA as method (for example Joffe, 2011; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013; Gomes *et al,* 2018) as exemplars for how the process can be effectively applied.

It did, of course, take time to work through the various forms and approaches available within the TA literature and to explore the three main schools of TA in the context of my research. However, it did not take long to identify that my analysis work fell into the reflexive, or organic, TA approach. I did not believe I was looking at a *coding reliability* approach because, although I did have overarching research questions, they were directing my overall research rather than any specific themes that would be evolved. Equally, the *codebook* approach did not provide the extent of the flexibility I needed when identifying potential themes.

A reflexive approach, on the other hand, offered me an organic and iterative way in which to code my data and gave me confidence that it was acceptable for my codes and themes to evolve and change as I became more familiar with my data. The other key point that resonated with me, was the recognition of the active role of the researcher in producing knowledge from the emergent data.

A reflexive TA approach embraced the idea that it is the researcher who is interpreting and creating the analysis structure, coding and themes, and also that any interpretation would be carried out within the lens of the researchers own cultural and contextual perspectives and philosophies. This felt important for me. It was also very motivating that reflexive TA is often employed when research seeks to give voice to a group to contribute to social change (Clarke, 2017). Given the intent of my overall research question, (to identify what the coaching sector can learn from individuals successfully operating within existing systems), the lure of a data analysis method recognised as positioned within a social justice setting, felt impelling. Of real, practical help at this stage was the stepped approach to TA offered by Braun and Clarke (2006). The following paragraphs provide a summary of my application of the TA process to my participant datasets (adapted from the Braun and Clarke guide, *ibid.*).

Step 1 – Familiarise yourself with the data

This was an ongoing process throughout the entirety of my research study. From the initial task of transcribing the data, to the final task of producing the themed narrative report, every aspect of reading, reviewing and re-reading the data was a vital part of getting to know my data. The time between each interview provided the necessary space for reflecting on, and becoming more familiar with, the data I was gathering; i.e. the stories that were being told and the stories I was hearing. The process of co-constructing the narratives was also critical to gaining a deeper understanding of what was being said, and perhaps sometimes what was not being said. The longer I spent with the data, the more I felt I was getting to know my research participants.

A prime example is the hours that I spent listening and re-listening to each initial interview as I slowly and painfully transcribed them. In hindsight this was hugely meaningful in helping me to become ever more familiar with my participants and their stories. My frustration at the slowness of my transcription was often high; but the endless hours of 'play, pause, rewind; play, pause, rewind', were a significant part of the research process that provided me with a really strong foundation from which my later detailed analyses would develop.

Step 2 – Generate initial codes

I began to generate codes at an early stage of the analysis process as I needed to identify key messages, experiences and stories from the interviews that would become part of the final narrative. The first phase of code generation happened as I reviewed the interview transcripts from interviews I and II and began working towards producing the first draft of the participant narrative. Coding was basic at this stage, using coloured highlighting of the text to identify broad areas (codes) within each interview transcript that I could bring to life in the narrative text. Transcripts and field notes from Interviews I and II were slowly coded to produce the initial narrative draft. At the time I did not necessarily see this as coding, just highlighting core areas of interest, but on reflection it was a crucial step in coding and segmenting the data.

Step 3 – Searching for themes

This was an iterative process building on from the codes identified in step 2. Initial areas of interest that had been highlighted in the first narrative draft, slowly began to merge into wider themes as the initial narratives came together. It was really important to note my active role as a researcher in identifying and creating the themes. At this stage of the process it was me, as a researcher, viewing the data to look for themes and so it was crucial to recognise that I was viewing the data through my own epistemological standpoint. Also, I was inevitably being influenced by wider things like my emotions on that particular day, my relationship with the research participant, papers I had read in the days/weeks previously or even events happening around me at that point in time. The search for themes at this stage therefore reflected my particular positioning at that time, but did not yet encompass or acknowledge the influence and/or perspective of the research participant in the process. However, I was very aware that whatever I presented back to the participant in terms of my writing and theme identification would be likely to create an impact and/or emotional response from the individual.

Step 4 – Review themes

This step encompassed a lengthy time period, starting when the initial narrative draft was presented back to the participant after Interview II, and ending when the final narrative and thematic map had been shared back with each participant (some time after Interview III). The process of reviewing and agreeing the themes in each dataset was a collaborative one between myself and the research participant.

I shared my initial thoughts with the participant, allowed them time to reflect on what they were reading, and then we came back together to discuss. In reality I had also started talking about the themes I was seeing during Interview II as I floated ideas and verbal summaries with each participant. On reflection, this felt like a first 'check' to hear any initial reactions in a less formal manner. At this stage I needed to acknowledge that it was not only my perspective influencing the constructing and shaping of the themes, but also the perspective, epistemological standpoint and reality of each research participant. Together we agreed the key themes that felt 'right' at that particular point in time; then I, as the researcher, was trusted by each participant to refine and define the emergent themes in the next step of the process.

Again this step was an iterative process comprising of three main, identifiable elements all articulated within the initial research plan. First, there was the sharing and reviewing of the initial narrative draft with each participant; second there was my reflection and review of the output from Interview II which gave rise to a second narrative draft, which was then forwarded to the research participant; finally, there was the thematic mapping process for each participant/case. For the mapping I used handwritten notes in the form of a spider-diagram, which I reviewed and refined as many times as necessary to reach a point whereby I had a clear idea of the themes for each participant, how they all linked together and how they collectively would tell the stories arising from each narrative (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.92). See APPENDIX B (p.347-358) for digital images of the thematic mapping/reviewing process for each participant.

Step 5 – Define and name the themes

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.92) identified that this phase 'begins when you have a satisfactory thematic map of your data' and stressed that this phase involves the need to go 'back to collated data extracts for each theme, and [organise] them into a coherent and internally consistent account with accompanying narrative'. This meant that I needed to check my themes made sense in the context of the research and I knew how I would link them to tell the overall story for each participant. This phase was a lengthy and, at times, painful process, but a very necessary one in ensuring I produced strong final narratives that enabled the reader to easily follow the main threads and 'hear' the key messages.

In order to achieve this, I revisited the final narratives that I had co-constructed with each participant. In every case this final narrative was lengthy, contained significant amounts of 'commentary' and generally told their life story in chronological fashion, albeit structured under the broad individual themes that had been collaboratively identified. The way I conducted this step was therefore to go through each final narrative highlighting the key story points from each piece of writing. Next, I mapped them onto one side of A4 paper and finally reviewed the narrative to highlight the essential parts of the original writing that would tell the story. I then disregarded any narrative that was not essential for the final report. I was now in the position whereby I had clearly named themes, a refined description of each, and the relevant content for producing the final report.

Step 6 – Produce the report

This step was simply the output from the work in step 5. Each of the respective narratives are included in Chapter 6 of this thesis. It is worth highlighting that my view of what these final reports would look like shifted during the course of conducting this TA process. My initial thought was that the final reports for each participant would be the final narratives that I had agreed with each of them after Interview III. However, having reviewed each of these in the ongoing desire to familiarise myself with my data, and having completed the work under step 5 of this process, I realised that there was another piece of work to complete. I needed to write a final, and in each case shorter, version of the narrative that brought to life each theme identified, refined, defined and named in steps 4 and 5. As Braun and Clarke explained (2006, p.92), I needed to 'tell the complicated story of [my] data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of my analysis'. Without this step, the reports would remain almost as interim field texts, rather than a robust and detailed thematic analysis, and I would have missed a critical part of the interpretive process that is a core element of TA.

TA Summary

Having applied the TA process to each of my participant datasets, I now found myself having completed the first 'output' from my research plan, and had 6 'case' narratives telling the individual stories and 'themes' for each research participant. This phase had been lengthy and challenging at times, but still I only had the initial output that I needed from my research in order to be able to begin to answer my research questions. My thoughts were now focused on the second and third outputs for my study, which led me to contemplate how I could best compare and contrast the results and themes across each of my six cases in order to identify any similarities or marked differences. I therefore needed to evolve my methods of analysis to allow me to produce the second and third outputs of my research, that is the production of:

1. An overall 'cross-case' analysis piece identifying the commonalities and/or differences across the individual cases (Chapter 7);

2. A tentative and grounded model or approach to understanding and informing leadership within UK coaching systems (Chapter 8).

5.8   Template Analysis

My search for an appropriate method for this next phase brought me to template analysis (TempA), a relatively recent development.   TempA offered a method of analysis that could be applied to 'rich, unstructured qualitative data following the primary data collection phase' (Waring and Wainwright, 2008, p.85) and is recognised as a 'form of thematic analysis which emphasises the use of hierarchical coding but balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study' (Brooks *et al*, 2015, p.202). TempA continues to evolve within the UK as a credible method, particularly in the fields of health and psychology.

As a form of TA not wedded to a particular methodology or epistemological stance, TempA works well in applied research and is considered useful if you are developing a model. It evolves by developing an initial template from one dataset and then, through an iterative process, building and refining the development of the template by applying it to each ensuing dataset. TempA allows for the use of '*a priori'* themes in the initial stage, from which the template can be built, rather than using preliminary coding and then having to go back to the beginning each time (Waring and Wainwright, 2008; King, 2012; Brooks and King, 2014; Brooks *et al*, 2015). I knew that I needed/wanted to find a method that provided me with a structure of '*how*' to approach the analysis, but equally I did not want to be constrained by a method that told me exactly 'what' I needed to do. Again, I was able to take reference from a 'step-by-step' guide to 'doing template analysis' (King, 2012; Brooks *et al*, 2015), which provided a helpful framework for my thinking.

The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the key phases of TempA as described by King (2012) and Brooks *et al* (2015), and highlight the points that I found particularly interesting and relevant to this phase of my research.

Step 1 – Familiarise yourself with the data

- Read and re-read the data and don't rush into coding.
- Reflect on what the data is suggesting and consider questions such as 'what do I think this means, given this particular context'?

I had already completed this phase with the TA of each of my participant datasets. I was extremely familiar with each narrative and, through the TA process, had a clear sense of how I, and my research participants, had interpreted their stories thus far.

Step 2 – Preliminary coding

- Carry out preliminary coding in a practical way on a subset of the data to identify things that look interesting.
- This phase can include some *a priori* themes, depending on the approach, and if this is done it should be acknowledged.

I had again completed this stage through the previous TA work. I had preliminary codes through the individual narrative themes and therefore considered that I had some '*a priori*' themes that had been identified via a robust and methodical process.

Step 3 – Develop an initial template

- Define an initial template based on a subset of the data, rather than looking at the whole dataset at this stage.

- Select an initial account to analyse to provide an initial starting point.

Having completed the initial TA process on each participant dataset, I had an obvious base from which to develop an initial template. The crucial choice I needed to make was which participant narrative/TA output to use for developing the initial template. I considered a number of options, for example making a random selection, using the participant with the least/most number of themes, before opting for the simple option of using the TA output of my first research participant. Therefore, my initial template was made up of the themes identified for this participant through the TA process.

Step 4 – Apply and modify template

- Use the initial template to code further data and modify the template where it 'doesn't fit'.

- Apply the initial template to subsequent datasets and consider whether any of the themes are relevant for this next dataset.

- Where themes do not fit, modify the template to encompass the new dataset. New themes may be inserted, existing themes refined or redundant themes deleted.

I decided to apply the initial template across the remaining datasets in the order in which I completed the interviews. This felt like an appropriate way to reflect the need to build a final template, with my decision largely influenced by the belief that as my knowledge and understanding grew with every new participant, then applying the template in this same order would reflect the iterative and evolving nature of this research. I applied the initial template to the second participant themes, then the third and so forth. I adjusted, amended, deleted and merged themes as necessary as I worked through the six datasets, and also kept re-applying my adjusted template to previous datasets to keep checking that the template remained relevant and worked across each of the six participant narratives/thematic outputs.

Step 5 – Produce the final template

In some respects, there is never a 'final' template as the process of reviewing could continue indefinitely and there will always be refinements that could be made. Equally, the perspective of the researcher will influence such decisions as TempA, like TA, recognises the active role of the researcher in creating and defining themes. The choice of when the template can be considered 'final' is completely in the hands of the researcher and there is no definitive guidance on when this point is reached. However, Brooks *et al* (2015, p.204) helped with this decision by suggesting that 'development of a template cannot be seen as sufficient if there remain substantial sections of data clearly relevant to the research question(s) that cannot be coded to it'.

I reached the point of having a final template after applying the developing template across all six sets of participant data. With the ongoing cross-checking, I was comfortable that I now had a template that worked for all six participant narratives and that no significant chunks of data had been ignored. It was challenging to produce a final template that could sit across each dataset, and alterations, amendments and adjustments to theme titles and descriptions were needed on several occasions. The robust TA process definitely helped at this stage, firstly because I really felt like I 'knew' my data and was familiar with each participant; and secondly that I had confidence that the themes for each participant had been identified using a robust and logical process.

Step 6 – Apply final template to the full dataset

- Use the final template as a kind of 'map' to your thinking and to aid the overall interpretation of the data. It also helps to articulate and identify the important aspects to the data.
- Note, there may be overlap in some of the themes within the template, and this step will help to clarify those links and highlight where any connections in the template occur.

Put simply, the output of this step of the template analysis process is the production of the overall 'cross-case' analysis piece identifying the commonalities and/or differences across the individual cases (Chapter 7). The final template provided a clear structure for the writing of this section and also for the recommendation around a future leadership model for the coaching sector (Chapter 8).

5.9   Worked example

The tables below provide an example of how I conducted the data collection and analysis process. The intention of this section is to provide further insight into how each analysis phase progressed and the timing of the steps detailed in the preceding sections on Thematic Analysis (section 5.6, p.145) and Template Analysis (section 5.7, p.154). The data analysis phase was, at times, a complicated process due to the often non-liner progression through the various steps (Creswell, 2014; 2018) and the challenge of combining two similar, yet different, analytical techniques for the 'within case' and 'cross-case' phases. These tables should be read in conjunction with the various paragraphs as referenced to help the reader appreciate the full context. Table 4 demonstrates when each phase of analysis occurred and how a single case progressed, and Table 5 shows the progression of the 'cross-case' Template Analysis processes. The detail of what actually happened and why provided is included in the specific sections above.

N.B. A copy of the full research plan is included at Appendix 1.

Table 4:   Worked case example (Thematic Analysis – single case)

Research participant identification and recruitment
Participant invited to participate and forwarded 'Participant Information Sheet' (see Appendix 2 for copy)
Participant signed 'Statement of Consent' and completed 'Participant Information Questionnaire' (see Appendix 2)
Research preparation
Initial 'face-to-face' meeting arranged and information sent to participant on structure of interview, including outline of life-history grid. Participant invited to begin to think about, or start to complete, grid if they wished (not essential)

Research phase (see Appendix A1 – p.340)	Thematic Analysis (section 5.6) STEPS					
	1 p.147	**2** p.148	**3** p.149	**4** p.149	**5** p.151	**6** p.152
Interview I						
Post-interview I	█					
Interview I reflections	█	█				
Interview II	█	█				
Post-interview II	█		█			
Interview II reflections	█			█		
Interview III preparation	█			█		
Interview III	█			█		
Post-interview III	█			█	█	
Final narrative produced (see Chapter 6)						█
Research output = 6 'case' narratives telling the individual stories and 'themes' for each research participant (Chapter 6)						

Once all six narratives and the thematic analysis phase had been completed, my focus turned to the template analysis phase. It is important to note that the first two steps of the TempA process overlapped with the first two steps of the TA process. This is visually summarised in Table 5 below:

Table 5:   **Worked case example (Template Analysis – cross case)**

Research phase (see Appendix A1 – p.340)	Template Analysis (Section 5.7) STEPS					
	1 p.155	**2** p.155	**3** p.156	**4** p.156	**5** p.157	**6** p.158
Interview I	▓					
Post-interview I	▓					
Interview I reflections	▓					
Interview II	▓					
Post-interview II	▓					
Interview II reflections	▓					
Interview III preparation	▓					
Interview III	▓					
Post-interview III	▓					
Final narrative produced		▓				
Initial template developed Using narrative 1 – Grace			▓			
Apply & modify template …to subsequent narratives, in chronological order of interview; then re-apply as necessary				▓		
Produce final template Re-applied & modified template until no substantial data remained 'uncoded'					▓	
Apply final template to full dataset Used the final dataset to interpret the data and produced the thematic discussion in Chapter 7						▓
Research output = An overall 'cross-case' analysis piece identifying the commonalities and/or differences across the individual cases (Chapter 7)						

5.10   In summary

The combination of TA and TempA as methods helped me to make sense of the large and often messy datasets that I found myself grappling with throughout this process. Both methods allowed flexibility in how I proceeded at every stage, and ensured that my position as the researcher was acknowledged and recognised alongside the involvement of my research participants. I was always clear on my research paradigm and epistemological stance, and finding analysis methods that aligned with both of these gave me a real sense of ownership of my study and method. The literature around both methods, including numerous practical examples of method application, gave me confidence to explore TA and TempA in the context of my study as I particularly embraced the notion that TempA 'may offer a more flexible technique with fewer specified problems, allowing researchers to tailor the approach to the requirements of their own project' (Brooks *et al*, 2015, p.217).

However, this added flexibility did not come at the expense of rigour and quality. The logical processes associated with TA and TempA provided a robust way of keeping track of progress along the way. Equally, both methods encouraged and provided opportunities for quality checks at every point. Being iterative and constructionist in nature, each phase builds on the previous, and I used these opportunities to check my thinking along the way. With the TA process, there was also the added step of checking the transcripts, narratives and themes being constructed with research participants along the way. Not that this alone would guarantee validity and rigour (Smith and McGannon, 2018).

Interestingly, there was recognition from several of my participants as to the subjectivity of their accounts. To paraphrase a number of respondents, there was deep acknowledgement that 'if we had this conversation on a different day, I would probably tell you a different story'. At first it surprised me that participants were self-aware enough to acknowledge this, but as the study progressed, it became more evident that this level of self-awareness was present in all my participants and 'knowing who they are' became a core element of one of the overall themes.

The remaining sections of this thesis are given over to the reporting of the three outputs from this research study:

1. 6 'case' narratives telling the individual stories and 'themes' for each research participant (Chapter 6);

2. An overall 'cross-case' analysis piece identifying the commonalities and/or differences across the individual cases (Chapter 7);

3. A tentative and grounded model or approach to understanding and informing leadership within UK coaching systems (Chapter 8).

As you read these outputs, I invite you to also acknowledge your perspective and position in this process. After all, you are the third corner of the research triangle alongside researcher and participants. I present the following outputs in the awareness that each has been influenced by my values, beliefs and place in the world. I do not present these as definitive, nor propose that these themes will always be present in any situation; rather I suggest that there is something to be learned from looking at how these six, successful individuals have navigated their way through their particular contexts. This is one version of the 'truth' in a world of multiple realities that I have developed within this particular reflexive, case study framework. I believe that there is something for the coaching sector to learn from this research and I now endeavour to articulate and communicate this learning in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 6:   THE NARRATIVES

6.1   Grace

6.1.1 Sport and people…a tale of two passions

Grace is an inspiring leader whose love for sport has guided her throughout her career. Widely recognised as a coaching innovator across the UK and beyond, Grace's passion for supporting people to achieve their dreams has continuously driven her forward and motivated her to explore new opportunities. Grace believes that she was 'born to coach' and her extensive experience as a coach, educator, manager and pioneer have enabled her to develop a strong reputation as a respected and highly influential leader. This is Grace's story.

It was obvious from the start of our conversation that Grace's was a story filled with passion for sport and a fundamental love of learning new skills in the sporting environment. Her memories were recalled with ease and she instantly engaged me in her life with boundless enthusiasm and perpetual reference to sport as 'just something I love'. Her open body language, constant laughter and the odd glint of mischief in her eyes captivated me as I listened to her talk expressively about how sport came to play such a central part in her life. She recalled some of her earliest memories as:

*"…it would have to start when I realised I was PE and Sport mad…in terms of year and age that would be as far back as my recollections. it's probably, I don't know, less than 10, maybe, 'cos how far back do we remember? Maybe 7, 8, 9, when I was a kid. My first recollection of, I suppose, **organised** sport, 'cos we did everything in the garden, you know. Or in the countryside or on the beach whatever it was; run, jump, throw, sail, did everything."*

Grace remembered the informality and fun of early sporting experiences, but also the very early influence of coaches in her life:

"And where we lived when I was about 8 or 9, there was a couple next door who I really liked – they were funny – and the guy was, must have been, one of the first coaches, you know, as a professional. And I remember one day, going off down the road with him with my sister. And I remember having a sort of lesson, which was great!"

Grace talked at length about how the freedom of childhood merged into more structured school years, which subsequently opened up a whole new area of opportunity. She had amazingly clear memories of trying new sports and how helping her PE teachers gave her a great first taste of teaching and coaching. She also recalled with hilarity how she would try out her emerging coaching skills on her younger sister:

"I had a younger sister, who's 9 years younger than me, and as soon as she was born I was teaching her to do somersaults or football or something in the garden. And whatever I learnt at school, I went home and was teaching her to do. Much to my mum's dismay, because she often would land on her head when I hadn't understood how to catch someone in a backflip. We would be hours and hours in the garden just hitting balls and…I remember entering her into a tournament, she'd never been on a tennis court. So I was whispering through a fence what she had to do.   'Now, you serve'…'change ends'…you know, all that stuff."

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As she recalled further anecdotes about her early 'coaching' experiences, she acknowledged just how big an influence they had on her future career decisions. She remembered developing a fundamental appreciation of coaching in terms of its potential to influence individual development and talked of her experiences 'messing about in the garden' as being the start of her long-term coaching apprenticeship. In particular, she highlighted the importance of the people around her at this early stage who enabled her develop some basic teaching and coaching skills:

"I was probably born to teach or coach. Because then I never had any other desire to do anything except to teach and coach. Nothing anyone could even do to persuade me or suggest otherwise, because I just wanted to learn how to do it better. And I suppose in those years I was learning about the impact that other people were having on me. So whether it was that coach or the PE teachers, you know how important they were - although probably I didn't understand then. I knew there was a significant other that was needed to help you improve."

She also remembered how these early experiences ignited a real passion for helping other people:

*"And I guess that's where my **love** of wanting to help people improve and do things in sport came about."*

Grace recognised too, though, that her sporting goals have never only been about winning. She recalled her joy at learning how to master a skill and reflected that for her, being good was never just about being the best:

"And also in those times, I loved skill.   So I wasn't the best competitor because I just wanted to perform rather than compete. But if I could perform, say, the best free-kick into the top corner of the goal, effectively – whether it was the right shot or not was irrelevant…I just loved to be able to produce skill. And it was the same in all sports. I always wanted to learn more about that and then I instinctively translated that to help other people perform it."

It was not hugely unsurprising to learn from Grace that her career choice when leaving school was teaching. With a twinkle in her eye and frequent laughter, she remembered her time as a PE student with great affection:

"I had the time of my life! You know in those days it was PE college where that was just all you did. Play. From morning to night."

But for Grace this period was so much more than just play. She talked with passion about the relaxed environment created by her college lecturers and how the feeling of belonging to 'something special' made a lasting impression. As we journeyed through her memories together, Grace frequently mentioned the positive influence of the people around her on her learning and the development of her own approach to coaching. She talked fondly of the 'brilliant mentors' and great people who supported her personal development by offering a challenge or an opportunity.

As she remembered:

*"…and learn from some **fantastic** experts. You know, coaches, and people who ran the coaching awards to help me develop my knowledge and experience in teaching and coaching."*

"And I think I shaped my coaching style, based on a variety of people that I had experience of in those days. I knew what I liked when I was being coached. And because of it, I suppose I am a reflector and I also know that I learn through observation, then I sort of developed those sides of my coaching style."

What became really intriguing as I listened to Grace, was that most of the 'brilliant' and 'great' people she mentioned as supporting her during her career, still feature in her life somewhere. It was apparent that Grace has sustained long-lasting and significant relationships with the majority of individuals with whom she has meaningfully connected along the way, many of whom have become close friends and confidantes over the years. Be they people who simply 'let her learn from them' or people who helped her develop confidence by trusting her to just 'have a go' and put her own ideas into practice, they all hold a notable place in Grace's memories, and she shared many examples:

"So, I suppose I've had a series of mostly informal mentors through my career, who I instinctively chose. So, initially they were people like PE teachers, college lecturers, and then someone who trusted me and empowered me, which was amazing."

*"…so, I met this wonderful guy, who I had been building my work on. We fell in love…not literally! (**laughs**) well, I fell in love with him!"*

"… and from minute one we formed a bond and I ended up working with her 'til, you know…"

What was also evident listening to Grace recall her career journey, was her proactive nature. She talked about creating her own opportunities and making things happen and remembered how she has always jumped at every chance to try something new, attend something new or meet someone new. She also reflected that there have been many times when she made personal changes or choices simply because something did not feel 'right'. Grace shared many examples of times when she had found the courage to follow a different path, but remembered one time in particular:

"I was going to stay on there, in fact I was offered great job, but something deep inside suddenly…you know a trigger went off and said 'no, you don't want to stay in this organisation' which I'd been in, you know for a long time. And I decided to go, I still had a house elsewhere so I decided to go back to my house and just take some time out and be a coach. I had no idea how I was going to earn money or anything like that, but I just knew it was right for me."

Interestingly it transpired that Grace remembered this period of time not because it brought her great success, but because of the opportunities that eventually opened up for her as she connected with new people. She recalled that:

"I was absolutely hopeless on my own. I didn't know how to set up a business or anything like that, so I floundered for a few months!"

However, it was a chance meeting through her unsuccessful business that she remembered above all else:

"Through my coaching I met someone who worked for an amazing organisation. And she introduced me, at some event, to the guy who was Director of Coaching. Another massive opportunity through circumstance. I shared with him what I did and it just happened to be the right moment."

Grace recalled this whole experience with energy and talked with appreciation for the willingness of this new connection to 'take a chance' and give her a job. Her gratitude for the kindness and vision of this individual, who went out of their way to make an opportunity for her, was still evident all these years later, and this moment in her career clearly held much significance for Grace. She noted:

"So he took me on for 6 months to help him look at re-shaping their programme. And I ended up in a full time role. Again, opportunity. A person who had vision. He gave me that, you know, room to explore and experiment and it meant so much."

As I listened to Grace talk about this time in her life, I was struck by her determination to progress and make the most of the opportunity that had been afforded to her. There was a clarity to her memories as she recalled her emerging sense of ambition and drive to achieve and succeed. Yet whilst she was immensely grateful to her manager for giving her an initial chance, she remembered quickly becoming frustrated at the lack of further opportunity in this role. As Grace described:

"…I was banging my head on this ceiling and my boss wasn't able to help me to do anything else because there was nowhere to go."

Grace became restless she as she talked about reaching this early 'standstill' in her career, but her body language quickly changed as she then talked of making a decision to seize the initiative and look for her own 'next step' on the ladder. She smiled as she recalled seeing a job role become vacant in an organisation for which she would have loved to work, but recalled missing her chance as she did not have enough self-confidence to apply at the point:

"…and I'd heard about this person who I thought was amazing. And funnily enough, without thinking about it I'd followed their career because I remember when that job had come up and I looked at and though 'wow' that'd be great, but I haven't got the experience or skills to apply for that. So, I just sort of looked at it from afar."

Grace's momentary wistfulness at opportunities missed, turned to excitement as she remembered feeling certain that she would find a way to work for this individual. It did not surprise me to learn that Grace made this happen within the a few months. She talked of being driven by growing ambition and a real desire to work for, and learn from, someone for whom she had admiration and respect. She joked that she felt a little 'stalker-like' as she recalled this experience!

Yet seeing the obvious joy with which she recounted her next career adventure, it was easy to understand why she had been so determined to find a way to work within this environment. As she delved deeper into her memories from this time she told me about the thrill of working with like-minded individuals where ideas were allowed to flow, and 'big thinking' was actively encouraged. Grace talked of the strong bonds and relationships built between team members and how her inspirational manager created an environment that enabled each member of the team to grow in their own way and learn from each other. She remembered especially, the real sense of motivation from just being in this place with such brilliant people:

"So together we really pushed things forward. And all this time, I was now transferring my coaching skills and the whole experience and philosophy to creating change in a place where I felt unbelievably supported. I guess that without all the experience I'd had before and the skills I'd learnt, I would never have been able to it, but I also know that I was only able to do it because of the environment around me and the way in which we were being managed."

Grace paused at this point and took a moment to reflect on the memories shared with me so far in our conversation. She had suddenly become very conscious of how many times she had talked about the significance of having great people around her. Her thoughts turned to how this has not only been important for her own development, but also that this has had a huge impact on how she behaves as a leader and manager in her own environments:

"…I think that's significant, because it's about people – like-minded people, having that space and time to think things through and shape them in a way that can be a sustained model of something. 'Cos quite often people create things but they stay in their own little backyard…I think that's another thing I've always done, I always make sure I'm with people or I employ people, or I work with people who have different skills to me."

As Grace took me through the rest of her career pathway, she came to increasingly focus on the many times she has drawn on her coaching expertise in her leadership roles. In particular, Grace recognised how powerful her belief in developing strong relationships has been on her success as a leader. In her own words:

"I mean that's what leadership is about. People. Yes, we are talking about coaching, but in your life, if you really connect with them, and have the same values and you are on the same wave length, those are the conversations that you can have, that help you to be clear about what you are trying to achieve or why you are doing something."

Grace also emphasised the importance she placed on being her 'authentic self' as a leader, and talked about how, as her confidence grew she became less afraid to openly recognise her frailties or areas of perceived weakness.

She remembered seeing others in similar leadership positions trying their damnedest not to appear ignorant or lacking in some way, but Grace stressed her belief that it is always better to acknowledge the things you don't know rather than plough on regardless. She recognised that this belief is now a fundamental part of her own leadership approach and style:

"So I think the thing is I've never been, I've never known…I don't know all the answers but I know there is a question to be answered and it is getting other people to find those answers. I think that's probably my style and philosophy is that I empower others to do things and facilitate, so in all these things that I was doing, I didn't have to be recognised for it, but I just knew I was shaping and creating change because I wasn't the expert."

As we neared the end of our conversation, Grace's began to identify her own threads that weaved through her stories. There was profound appreciation for the deep connections she has formed with various people over the years; people who have subsequently played a significant role in enabling her to ultimately become the leader she is today. She recognised that had it not been for the mentors, the friends, the former 'bosses' and the colleagues she had met along her journey, then she would most probably not be in the position she is today. Grace shared with me a deep reflection that people had always been at the heart of her big career decisions:

"...with any change you've got to have some sort of uneasy feeling somewhere in you that is not right about where you are, although it might not manifest itself in anything major at the time. But I know when I look for something different, for something to change in a work context, there has always been some sort of relationship aspect to my moves; not always to do with work. That's interesting isn't it?!"

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And yes, it was interesting. Intriguing in fact. Mainly because I felt it showed that, during our time together, the level of reflectiveness Grace was able to reach. The more she talked, the more she was able to make sense of her own story and identify the experiences and influences that had meant the most to her, both at the time and with hindsight. Grace shared her stories in a way that captivated me and she had great ability to paint detailed pictures of her memories through her words. Her self-awareness was acute and as she neared the end of her story it was absolutely evident that she knew 'who she was' and how she has reached this point. One particular reflection around making big decisions really resonated with me as she said:

"But it's having that courage and confidence to say 'OK, no, this isn't me."

So who is Grace? From what I heard in her story, she is someone who works best when she is passionate about what she does and when she works with people with whom she has a great relationship. Grace is someone who needs to be in an environment filled with positive relationships in order to bring her best self to the fore and someone for whom a higher purpose has emerged through the years spent with great people, great friends. However, most evident of all is that Grace is fundamentally a great coach, as she summarised:

"But all I do is coach; coach people to be better at what they do."

6.1.2 Themes

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
Love of learning	Curiosity	The drive to always ask 'why' and work out how things work
	Passion	Caring deeply about the things I do and the people with whom I share the experiences
	'Just have a go'	Having the confidence to just go with something and see what happens
	Love helping people to improve	Supporting others to learn, grow and believe in themselves
Higher purpose	Values and philosophy	I know what is important to me and why; my actions reflect my values
	Seeking new challenge	Being brave enough to put yourself in situations where you are not certain of the outcome, but believe that great things might happen
	Creating opportunity	Don't wait for things to fall at your feet, go out and make it happen
'I know who I am'	Self awareness	I know who I am and how my behaviour impacts on others
	Authenticity	I know who I am and behave consistently in line with my values and beliefs, whoever I am with
	Courage	Prepared to give things a go, even when the outcome is not certain
	Growing confidence	The more I know myself, the more confident I become
Great people	Family and friends	Compassionate people everywhere; family, friends, sport, life
	Teachers and coaches	Great people who have taught me and helped me learn, and for whom there is a strong sense of admiration and respect
	Brilliant mentors	People who are willing to listen, give their time, share, mentor, and offer friendship
Strong relationships	Having empathy and genuine care and kindness for people; belief in building rapport	
Environments	Belonging	Feeling happy and safe in places where I am accepted and welcomed for being me
	Fun	Believing that people learn best when they are enjoying what they do
	Community and team	The love of being in, or working within, a supportive and high-performing team
	Freedom to explore	…and let me find my own way (although they are there if I need)

N.B. The original thematic analysis 'maps' produced in the process of developing the themes for each of the participants, are included in APPENDIX B.

6.2   Jo

6.2.1   Same story; different meaning

From successful international sports star to pioneering manager and coach developer, Jo is a brilliant and inspiring leader who is always willing to stand up for the things in which she believes. With vast experience of working within UK coaching systems, as well as internationally across a number of sports, Jo is a passionate individual with a deep understanding of how her personal values and beliefs have become more meaningful over time and with experience.

Jo is a complex, self aware leader who completely understands that she functions best when part of a high-performing team and surrounded by supportive people. She thrives on the nurturing and positive environment created by a great team (in any aspect of life) and loves to feel the buzz generated through shared experience and success. Yet, the moment that Jo feels that her individuality is being 'drowned' by the weight of the collective, or that her own sense of perspective is becoming lost, she is not afraid to make a change and head in a new direction. Throughout our conversations, Jo revealed a real sense of fear at 'losing herself' and was adamant that she never wanted to only be defined by one aspect of her life. Jo's story is complicated and interesting and weaves around a number of themes such as family, sport, belonging, support, teams, individuality, success and a sprinkling of self-doubt.

From an early stage in our interviews it became evident that Jo had a very strongly developed sense of what is important to her personally and professionally. She consistently shared an acute appreciation of how her values and beliefs have been shaped and become more meaningful over the years. Jo was also very clear that whilst her core values have not really shifted (if anything, she feels they have become clearer), the direction that her life has taken thus far, and will take in future, will continue to evolve. In her words:

"…and potentially the threads that might come out of it now, for me anyway, may involve the same story, but they mean different things now. Or maybe even elements of the same story because it's obviously a big significant piece that has changed."

Right from the start of our conversations, Jo was keen to talk about the notion of 'multiple perspectives' and her firm belief that every individual has their own 'version of reality'. As she shared her stories and experiences, this idea of 'multiple perspectives' provided Jo with a clear 'lens' from which to reflect upon her life history. She emphasised that whilst she was telling her story as she remembered, it may well have been that others in those same situations would recount and recall those same events in an altogether different way. As she highlighted:

*"And I suppose inevitably because I was 18, 19, 20, your biggest experience at that point of how you've grown up is your family. And absolutely my family would be, **is** a fundamental part of who I am, but I still now, when we're all together… still think sometimes that we've all got such **different** recollections. If you actually hear us all talking, you'd think we can't all possibly have grown up in the same space, but we obviously have!"*

"… we are extensively all on the same page and not on the page at the same time."

Jo frequently referred back to her experiences of family life and described in detail her memories of a busy and lively childhood in the middle of a large family. She painted a vibrant picture of a loving family where there was always something going on and something to get involved with. Her family was a sporting one and she remembered her dad as an active participant in sport throughout her youth and fondly recalled how both her parents actively encouraged and supported her, and her siblings, to take part in sport from a very early age. It was little wonder that Jo remembered being 'naturally sporty' and just wanting to join in with whatever activity was taking place.

"……how did I come to do sport? Because the others played. Because my dad played. You know, it was join in or…and I wanted to be like them really, I wanted to be able to play with them. And that's how it started but also we were a sporty house really, and I was naturally sporty so was always encouraged in that really."

Jo often returned to her family memories, particularly when she began to share more about her later sporting experiences in a supportive and high-performing team. Team sport became a very comfortable place for Jo and she readily made the connection between sport and family life as she acknowledged that her chosen environments as an athlete were always team-based, or at the very least not a completely solo endeavour. Jo also talked of workplaces that provided the safety net of a welcoming, passionate and challenging team environment and was particularly animated when remembering departments, schools, coach educator teams and mentoring programmes that all provided the same sense of belonging and shared purpose that she associated with her family and within successful sports teams.

What was most significant for Jo in these environments was the connections she made with the people with whom she shared these team and group experiences. She talked passionately about the amazing people who provided support, challenged and motivated in equal measures. She recalled inspirational role models who aroused admiration and aspiration, and most crucially she paid tribute to the people who were willing to listen, give their time, share and extend the hand of friendship. Hearing Jo recount the numerous stories of 'great people', it was easy to see that being in places filled with people who shared a common aim or purpose is where she has felt most at home and able to be at her best. She particularly remembered:

"A significant number of very capable people, who I just massively admired because they looked after me, and stretched me and challenged me and all those things. You know I was back in a team environment. I was back feeling part of something bigger than me. Not just the department, but the whole organisation."

As we ventured through her memories together, Jo happily shared that many of the great people she has met along the way have become lifelong connections. She talked with sincerity about those that have become close friends and have continued to provide support and challenge throughout the ups and downs of life, and embraced the memories of others who have come back into consciousness because of a particular event or shared experience. Whatever the relationship or the occasion, there was a constant thread to Jo's story that vividly highlighted her belief that (to quote Mark Twain) '…the really great people make you feel that you, too, can become great'. As Jo reflected:

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*"And **** really. Being absolutely fundamental at that point. A bit scary! And, amazingly driven and seemingly remarkably confident. This is how he would have appeared to me! But hugely inspiring really. And god, he got us working!"*

"So that's also been a very productive professional, and, you know, a friendship relationship. But being able to work with someone you know you're pretty in tune with makes a big difference. And I think we work quite well together."

However, for all the positives of being part of a big family and larger community, Jo also reflected on the challenges that she faced in these environments. She frequently talked about her need to maintain a sense of 'self' within the bigger group and how often she felt caught up in a battle to 'not lose sight of me' amongst the multiple voices and competing tensions in any large team or group. There were times in this story where the safety of the team or group became suffocating, almost too overwhelming to bear for Jo, which resulted in a complete loss of identity and a struggle to remember her sense of self and personal purpose. Jo, sometimes painfully, recalled times when the voice of the collective began to drown out her own individual perspective:

"…there have been moments of thinking, hang on a minute, where have I gone?"

"…I wasn't picked for a couple of things. I didn't like the environment actually. A couple of times when I'd gone along as a sort substitute or went along to get a bit of an experience, I found it quite a threatening place that I didn't really feel comfortable!"

However, in a work and leadership context, this loss of identity within a previously safe and valued environment always seemed to provide Jo with a trigger point for change. In that uncomfortable moment when she no longer felt fully confident with who she was, Jo would begin to work out that it was time to move and find new horizons.

"…and it was by contrast to and in reaction to this feeling, where I'd begun to be where I felt that I was, I was beginning to be fish out of water really. And it was a very uncomfortable space to be. So that was a significant turning point."

In these moments of self-doubt when the fear of losing her identity arose, Jo talked of her worries about how other people would perceive and define her. There is an overwhelming, yet often understated resentment at ever being pigeon-holed or simply defined in one role or by one aspect of her life. Jo showed a strong desire for others to recognise the multiple layers of her personal identity and demonstrated that she has actively 'fought back' if ever she has felt limited by one facet of her persona or life. She stressed this element particularly strongly, for example:

"…and again I come back to the fact that I do not want to be defined by ONLY that part. Which is not to say I'm not really pleased that I did what I did and when people want to know about it, that's fine; but...."

This need to be '*not want to be defined by ONLY that part*' was a repeated pattern throughout Jo's story. Even though her career path contained many different aspects, from athlete to coach, coach to administrator, administrator to leader, Jo still worried greatly about being defined purely by one of her experiences. She acknowledged that sport has been hugely significant in her story, and is something that has enabled growth and progression and provided opportunity, but she has an obvious fear of becoming identified by only this strand. Jo has both a strong desire to 'fit in', be part of a team and feel a sense of belonging, yet also a fear of being excluded or 'pigeon-holed' because of her strong allegiance to sport. This is something that Jo continues to battle with as she strives to find her own path through life:

"By the time I got to University I was quite embarrassed about it, and I didn't want people to know very much about it because I became defined as 'you're that ****'. And it was odd. And I didn't want to be odd."

Listening to Jo talk about her fears and recollections of her different experiences in life, her high level of emotional intelligence became obvious. Jo is acutely aware that she tends to be very sensitive to emotions, both her own and other peoples, and acknowledged that sometimes this can cause her unnecessary and unwanted challenge. There is a caring side to Jo, a genuinely empathetic aura that quickly taps into how others are feeling, perhaps even before they themselves are aware. With such a drive to support and help others, Jo openly reflected that it is probably no surprise that her career has been built around teaching, coaching and mentoring.

Even as a very young child, Jo remembered being a sensitive soul who often felt moved by things that happened to others. As she thought back to her school days, she described a young child that cared deeply about the feelings of her classmates and was able to empathise with them on a very striking level. She shared some typical childhood stories of running home from school in tears because the class teacher was 'terrifyingly scary', but also remembered one particular example where her tears were not for herself:

"Oh its Miss Jones... "
"What did she do to you?"
"Nothing…she didn't do anything to me. I'm crying because she hit, she slapped one of the others"

This part of the story was told with much self-deprecation and amusement, but behind Jo's laughter was her recognition of something much deeper. She reflected on her ability to empathise with others and see things from their perspective, and again referenced her belief in the notion of 'multiple perspectives'. Jo was a youngster who was, in some ways, mature beyond her years, yet also acknowledged that her younger self would often struggle to deal with the depth of feelings awoken through her ability to understand the emotions of others. As we explored her later career together, she recognised that she has been able to enhance and develop this skill over the years and now realised that it was an important part of her approach to leadership.

"I think I have the capacity to be quite emotionally sensitive, sometimes overly so, and sometimes (in the past) it has stopped me making decisions because I was so bothered about everybody else. I'm reading a situation and being aware of what I think…and it would have stopped me doing things or saying things."

As Jo shared more of her life history with me, it became evident that she felt a great weight of responsibility in being so aware of other peoples' feelings and emotions. She talked about the sense of commitment that comes with coaching or mentoring someone else, and how her inner drive to support, be there, have the answers and guide has often become all-consuming. It was noticeable that Jo's sense of empathy had much evolved over time, and had matured alongside her increasing sense of self-awareness and self-confidence. This had arguably resulted in her becoming the great coach, mentor and leader she is today. Having an enhanced appreciation of the power of her own emotional intelligence has helped her become more aware of her own sensitivities, as well as the feelings of those around her, in a much more meaningful and constructive way.

"…I am aware, but I think this came out a little bit differently in the previous conversation, about sometimes that, my perceived awareness of people and their feelings and their thinking is sometimes a complication or difficulty, I'm too aware, too sensitive or too something…"

Throughout her story, Jo talked with passion about many areas in her life. From her joy at endless sport in the back garden with family, to the thrill of helping someone to see their potential through mentoring, Jo oozed warm enthusiasm and infectious energy. She was fiercely passionate about the things she did and the people with whom she worked, and Jo never entered into anything half-heartedly or took on something that was without personal meaning. Even though she hasn't always been consciously clear about her decisions to try something new or take on a new challenge, particularly in her early career, she was able to look back and recognise that there was always a purpose to each new chapter and a meaning for her; even if that purpose was not always fully understood at the time.

As she contemplated what value and purpose really meant to her, Jo reflected on some of her more recent, and most influential career experiences.

"Being part of a team and the energy that came from being within that week and that group and seeing the energy change as the week went on, and feeling that you'd had a little bit to do with it. It's that instant feedback, it's an energy thing, it's a bit of a drug really. So that was a real re-affirmation that I could do this stuff."

"…but again someone having that belief and saying yes, you've got something to say. Yes, you can do this. Yes, you've got a different voice. So, that belief that other people have in you being quite important."

From these words and through the overall clarity that Jo brought to our conversations, it was obvious that she understands the significance of her values and purpose, and appreciates how these have been gradually shaped and refined over time. Her resulting personal philosophy provides her with a sound and solid reference point from which she will continue to make any future decisions on work or in life.

"Actually feeling that you've got a purpose, a significant purpose and I do think that in a way all avenues have been beginning to head here. And why wouldn't they and why have I kind of resisted it? To be developing and supporting people within sport, and beyond sport. And that's where my experiences have been, not only significant because it was a great piece of work, but because it kind of helped articulate that this is something that was something hugely powerful to be involved with."

Jo acknowledged that sometimes things have happened that have had an enormous and often emotionally disruptive impact on her life; yet these experiences are what has shaped her and will ultimately determine the choices she makes in life. What Jo's story emphasises is that the way in which we view things depends on who we are, where we are and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. As a leader with a passion for people, a clear sense of purpose, a firm belief in the things that really matter, Jo has huge ability to make great things happen, and whilst her direction or perspective may shift, her values and strengths will remain constant.

"…and then potentially, the threads that might come out of it now, for me anyway, may be, may involve the same story, but they mean, it means different things now, or elements of the same story 'cos it's obviously a big significant piece, you know has changed…but I suspect my purpose is going to be very different and that some of those threads, that are evident in my work, my sporting life will come back...but in another guise."

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6.2.2 Themes

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
Multiple perspectives (self and others)	Same story; different meaning	People may share an experience, but remember or recall it very differently
	Emotional awareness	Sensitive to others feelings, often before they are aware themselves
	Empathy	The ability to share the feelings of others; 'to walk around in their shoes'
	Deep understanding	There is so much more to every individual than what may immediately appear obvious
	Caring	Showing kindness and concern for others
Personal identity (self)	Values, belief and purpose	I know what is important to me and why; my actions reflect my values
	Sense of self – strong	I am at my best when I know who I am and believe in myself
	Sense of self – lost	I know it is time for change when I begin to forget who I am; even when it is hard
	Individuality	I am comfortable being me and standing up for what I believe
Part of something bigger (self)	Family; sport; community; team	The love of being in, or working within, a supportive and high-performing team
	Belonging	Feeling happy and safe in places where I am accepted and welcomed for being me
	Shared experiences	Thriving in environments where great people share a common goal and purpose
	Passion	Caring deeply about the things I do and the people with whom I share the experiences
Supportive people	Inspire	Being surrounded by people who help me believe in myself
	Enablers	People who are willing to listen, give their time, share, mentor, and offer friendship
	Confidence givers	They believe I can do it
	Role models	Great people for whom there is a strong sense of admiration and who create aspiration
	Friends, family, colleagues	Compassionate people everywhere; family, friends, sport, life
Supporting others	Shared purpose	Great things happen when people share a belief, desire or value
	Coaching	Supporting others to learn and grow
	Listening	Really hearing what is being said; and often what is not being said
	Inspiring	Helping others believe in themselves simply by 'being me'

6.3 Karl

6.3.1 'I'm going to prove you wrong!'

Karl is a leader with a variety of experiences across the sports sector including significant expertise in driving change within a sports specific national coaching system. Karl has consistently made brave decisions throughout his career, and has confidence to 'trust his gut' when it comes to making those choices. Although still relatively early in his leadership career, Karl has demonstrated a rapidly growing maturity in terms of understanding his own values, philosophy and reflections on his path to this point.

It is a summer term scene familiar in every primary school in every village, town or city across the UK and beyond. The one afternoon per year when the entire school decamps to the grassy playing field, complete with PE kit, pumps, plastic cups of squash and parents. Adopting varying formats, only one thing is consistent; and that is sport. The annual school sports day is an institution remembered by many, hated by some, yet loved by others; and it is on such a day that Karl's story begins:

"I can actually picture everything about that day! So, I suppose I just sort of went 'do you know what? Actually, you're as good as these guys, you've got a chance of beating them'. And it was just a motivation to do that. So that was the motivation. So I just thought 'do you know what? Actually, I can win this whole thing'."

And 'win this whole thing' he did! Karl described his memories of that day in detail, and how, with quiet determination and an underdog mentality, he ended up achieving an overall victory. He remembered being driven on by an inner belief that he could succeed if he really applied himself and it was amazing to hear the richness of his description as he recounted his entire day. As Karl recalled:

"OK, I mean, I was doing it to prove people wrong, but I didn't actually want the adulation, it was just like, do you know what, I'm going to prove that if you apply yourself, and actually be pretty good at this and you can win things."

Karl remembered how early experiences such as this had ignited his deep passion for sport and competition, and that taking part in sport quickly became a way of life; something that defined him throughout his early years. Karl also remembered, though, that being a sport obsessed, multi-talented youngster did often bring some interesting and testing challenges. He particularly recalled being forced to make an early choice between two sports that he loved:

"Then basically there was a sit down with my parents where the coach said 'look, I think that…I know he's playing a lot of this one sport, but I think that if he really focuses on my sport, you know, he's got a lot of potential here. And there's no money in that.'"

Yet despite the significance of the choice he faced, Karl vividly described making his decision quickly and without any hesitation:

"On the way home, I chose my route and I actually said 'right, I'm just going to stop playing that sport'."

Karl remembered being faced with a similar choice about sporting participation a few years later, when recreational participation in one sport was conflicting with competitive progress in another. Whilst for a time there had been harmony between the two environments, Karl talked of a significant conflict between the two sports and he reflected wistfully on the tension he experienced when feeling pressured by coaches to make a particular choice.

"…the only thing I can remember from the whole thing was them standing up in front of us and sort of saying 'right, we're going to be selecting people to train for the European junior championships and if you're not prepared to sleep, eat, drink and have sex with[1] this sport for the next three years then we're not interested' kind of thing. And it was just like 'this will be your life, there will be nothing else, and we're only going to invest time in those people'."

Karl shared his unease and discomfort at these words, and whilst he openly acknowledged his competitive nature and will to win, he remembered feeling that sport meant more to him than just winning. He talked of his passion and belief that sport was about improving and exploring what was possible if he applied himself. Karl also recalled that there was something really important about the environment in which he played his sport, and when he felt as if the environment wasn't conducive to learning and developing and improving, he knew it was time to stop. As he explained:

"As a result I just decided to stop playing. I remember I came home one day and I told mum and dad, I was like 'look, I don't want to play anymore'. And they were like 'what? You don't want to play at all?' And I was…just remember saying 'I don't want to play anymore'."

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[1] Post-narrative reflection from Karl: *"I am 99% certain they didn't actually use these words to a room full of 15 year olds, but for some reason that was always the memory I have of what they said, maybe it was a national coach jokingly saying it or something?"*

So Karl stopped. He remembered going home and packing his sports kit into a bag and throwing it into the bottom of his cupboard.   Then, as quickly as his kit started to gather dust, he turned his focus towards something else. Karl recalled immediately setting himself a new challenge in his other sport, and decided to focus his time and energy on seeing how good he could become in what had previously only been 'just for fun'. As he Karl reflected on this part of his story he talked about the significant influence of his coach at the time:

"I remember that every session I went to, I would come away feeling amazing and I'd know exactly what I needed to work on. And really, it was just 'cos he was talking to me the right way, he was asking me why I was taking certain decisions."

As Karl shared his sporting experiences, he began to openly wonder why he had been able to make such quick and instant decisions on changing sports on so many different occasions. As Karl debated this with himself, he realised that there was something critical in each decision about moving towards a positive opportunity rather than, as he initially thought, escaping a negative experience. He recalled that it wasn't necessarily that one sport wasn't particularly enjoyable anymore, it was just that the other opportunity somehow felt more appealing to him, or perhaps, as he acknowledged, it was just about passion:

"…and I just loved the sport. There was so many things I loved about it. So I just decided to go down that route."

It was not, therefore a great surprise to hear Karl talk of yet another shift in sporting participation in his student days. This time his change in direction was prompted by a chance re-connection with a former sporting team-mate. Karl remembered this connection as significant, but could not really explain why it had prompted yet another complete change in direction.

In his words:

"And all I remember, really, really clearly, was I pulled my bag out and it was sitting exactly the same way I'd left it for 2 years. Like I hadn't even looked at it, or anything. So I'd obviously just shut the door on it. But I get that all out, go along to the club, and then I ended up playing a lot."

The influence of others in motivating his decisions came up a number of times in Karl's story. For example, Karl remembered a number of great individuals who motivated his decision to apply for University. As someone who, in his own words, '*hated studying*', the thought of University was not an appealing one. Despite having a father with '*like 26 letters after his name*', University was not a particularly obvious post-school choice, but Karl described how a series of conversations with inspirational people had played a big role in changing his perception that 'University was not for me'.

"… it was a real inspiration. And I wouldn't necessarily say that they inspired me to go to Uni or anything, but he as a guy…he was probably my inspiration to think 'right, I'm going to try this'."

Karl reflected on his time at University with great fondness, and talked about how his experiences as a student provided many life lessons for leadership, way beyond his expectations. Whilst Karl did talk briefly about the importance of getting his degree, it was the opportunities and experiences that took place alongside his studies that he remembered most clearly. Karl recalled that at times he struggled with motivation for his work, however, he also reflected that for him, student life was never simply about the qualification. He talked about really enjoying learning, improving, seeing how good he could be and his joy in finding great support from new people along the way. Karl singled out one memory from a particularly challenging period of student life:

"I would say that it was probably during that year, that there was, again, another person who was quite influential and to be honest I am very thankful to her because we did a lot of bouncing ideas off each other and studied together a lot in the library and stuff and that kind of dragged me along and made me realise the level that was required to actually pass a lot of the stuff."

Taking part in University sport was a core part of Karl's student life and he talked of how these experiences had resulted in lifelong friendships and great experiences beyond the sports field. Karl became animated when he shared the story of how he ended up nominating himself for a leadership role in the Student Union after a last-minute phone call from the sister of a friend. His eyes lit up as he recounted:

"But I got a phone call from her the night before and she was just like, 'do you know what? I've been thinking about this and I think you should go for this.' And I remember going, 'oh, I know but it closes tomorrow'. And she was like 'so what?' She's like, 'all you need is something like 20 signatures from students at the Uni to put in your application.' And I was like 'you know, but do you really think…?'"

Karl explained that a really good friend was the current post-holder and this last minute phone call had ignited a familiar feeling of 'if they can do it, then so could I'. So despite initially having no intention of running for the position, his competitive spirit came to the fore and pushed him to take that last minute decision. He also remembered, however, a strong feeling of wanting to 'make things better', and a genuine desire to continue what his friend had started because he believed that it was the 'right thing to do'. He recounted his excitement at this opportunity to make a difference and build on foundations that had been started by someone for whom he had a huge amount of respect, care and friendship.

"Sounds weird in a way, because it was a selfish cause, 'vote for me because I'm going to do this.' But I genuinely…the reason I was running was because my friend had started something and it wasn't quite finished."

Interestingly, though, Karl also remembered feeling very uncertain about the decision to stand for this role and observed that he didn't exert the same decisiveness that he showed earlier in his story with his various sporting decisions. Yet he recognised that once he had made the decision, any initial doubt disappeared and he returned to the same determined certainty he had shown in making other key choices in sporting life. As he recalled:

"From the point where that bit of paper went in, I was like 'I'm going to do this.' And I just totally focussed myself on the fact that it was going to happen. And I could…I can honestly say that I could visualise it. For sure I could visualise it at that point."

Karl remembered winning the election thanks to much hard work and effort. His year in a first leadership role then began, and he talked of learning a huge amount during this period of time, both practically and on a personal level. It was fascinating to hear Karl's reflections and notice how he recounted this part of his story with enormous energy. He talked of the team work that brought everything together and recalled how important the sense of collaboration became amongst the committee he subsequently formed. Karl had a real sparkle in his eyes and there was much laughter as his memories of campaign material and approach was recalled. He oozed genuine pride as he talked of all the people that came together to help make things happen:

"…it's actually overwhelming when you think about it. It makes me emotional thinking about that stuff, because that experience, of everyone coming together like that was just phenomenal."

Karl's leadership story then leapt forward a couple of years, as his studies were completed and he took time out to contemplate what the future could hold for him. Karl remembered real uncertainty about what route to take and eventually, somewhat reluctantly, accepted a place on a Masters degree course. He then recalled a huge sense of frustration that after he started his course, an opportunity arose to work on a major sporting event. Feeling like both were opportunities too good to miss, Karl reached a collective agreement that he would undertake the role in a part-time capacity, alongside his Masters study, which worked for a while but then:

"I started to struggle with the motivation for the Masters, and I also felt really isolated when I was doing it and it wasn't for me…it was not very inspirational and I just kind of felt a bit alone."

Karl shared with me an unfamiliar sense of worry and stress as he found it increasingly difficult to fully commit to both areas his work areas. He talked particularly about his own inner pressure to 'not quit on something for the first time in your life'. Equally, his strong sense of loyalty and desperate desire to 'not let anyone down' was obscuring his ability to make a brave decision. Karl reflected:

"…and even to this day, I feel like a debt to those people that feel I've let them down because I didn't even finish the study. And they will not care but I feel like I've let them down."

This sense of loyalty and drive to 'finish what I started' was also in evident in later workplace experiences as Karl talked in greater detail about his early career. He recalled his excitement at working in a sport that he loved and expressed his immense sense of satisfaction at being able to positively contribute to new, ambitious developments. However, Karl's memories of some fantastic first working experiences were somewhat tainted by significant challenges with senior colleagues and others in positions of power. Despite what he recalled as a great team at 'ground level', he revealed that he felt the overall leadership culture at the time did not provide an environment that actively encouraged his personal development or support his professional learning journey.

"But from that whole experience…if it wasn't a sport that I loved, I would never have stayed as long. But I really felt a duty to stay and say 'we need to sort this out'."

Karl now found himself at a crossroads and with another difficult decision to make. He talked to me about feelings of insecurity and fear and a range of emotions that engulfed him as he contemplated leaving a sport for whom he felt a great deal of personal connection. At this time of uncertainty, he recalled a conversation with a trusted colleague that helped him view this decision objectively and allay his fears by providing a safe space in which he could make sense of his thoughts.

"…and he convinced me just to have…to take a punt on it. So I did because this opportunity might not come up again. I never regretted it."

Karl took me back to his feelings of excitement at a brand new challenge and talked about how motivated he felt by the chance to work on something completely different. What stood out in his memories of this transition, was the supportive nature of the environment into which he moved. He talked with warm appreciation for all the great people who managed, supported, coached and mentored him in this new role. Karl remembered how all of these people had their own, individual style, with some providing structured management and guidance, some more gentle encouragement, and others simply willing to share honest feedback and have open conversations. Karl spoke passionately about these experiences and it was clear that he loved working in this team and felt that he was really able to flourish, thrive and develop as a leader in this workplace. In his words:

"It feels like they've all been mentors in their own way and we've never used that word, or had that agreement, but I would definitely say that's what it's felt like. I think, it's felt like, with all of them, they recognised that I was keen to learn, keen to be better and I was happy to ask questions and they actually wanted to help."

Karl then began to talk more deeply about his development as a leader as he developed growing confidence in this fantastic team. He acknowledged that leadership had always felt like a very comfortable place for him and that being viewed as a leader is something that motivated him since his days as a school sports team captain. Karl talked with delight and pride at being nominated for a formal leadership programme and was excited at being given the opportunity to more formally 'learn to lead'.

"I suppose from the outside I might seem like someone who wants to be in position of power, but it didn't ever feel like that at all. It always just felt like every time I went for one of those things it was because something needed to be better in my opinion. And I thought we could be doing them better. And I quite enjoyed the process of organising things and in one of those roles it gave you the scope to do some of that stuff."

Karl noted that this leadership course marked a key turning point for him. He relished the opportunities it offered and reflected that his participation in this programme allowed him to make some real shifts in his perspective and appreciation of what leadership is really all about. He welcomed his time away from his 'day job' and felt like he had a responsibility to use this space to really contemplate how he could continue to evolve his own leadership philosophy. Karl talked about how the supportive and nurturing environment of the course had enabled him to develop an enhanced level of reflective practice that subsequently helped him make sense of previously unconnected strands in his values and beliefs. He recognised that this time provided him with an invaluable opportunity to think about future career developments and what 'being a leader' actually meant for him.

"But the one thing I've realised recently is just because we're on a course about leadership, it doesn't mean you have to be a leader of that…or it doesn't mean you have to be a CEO. For me, you know, leaders can be leaders in all sorts of different ways."

Which brings Karl's story to the point at which it pauses. As our interview concluded, Karl talked with increasing certainty about his sense of purpose and recognised that this has been shaped through all of his experiences, both good and bad. He also feels much more comfortable with his own 'sense of self' and is sure of the things that matter to him, and are important in life and in work. As he reflected:

"And just getting to know people better and actually realising that all of that stuff is as important and powerful as writing a strategy document. It's like if you can't build that, kind of, team spirit and that real positive culture, you're really not gonna achieve anything particularly big."

As we ended our conversations, I wondered what was next for Karl? His answer:

"And I've been sensing for a wee while now that something new, a change is required. I'm going to prove that I can make something work on my own. And my gut instinct has been correct on many occasions, and maybe I should just trust it more often. Maybe it's time to go and explore other options?"

6.3.2 Themes

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
I'm going to prove you wrong	Will to win	'If they can…so can I'
	Motivated and determined to succeed	'I believe I can, so I will'
	Commit and apply myself	'Anything is possible if you really apply yourself and work hard'
Brave decisions	Conscious vs unconscious	Being reflectively aware of the unconscious influences on decisions (e.g. family)
	Guided by passion	Choosing the things I feel most passionate about
	This 'feels' right; trust my gut	Having the confidence to just go with something and see what happens
	Moving towards the positive; an exciting new opportunity	Prepared to make big changes when something sparks my interest
Leadership	Desire for better	Wanting to make a difference and leave something in a better place
	Caring about the team	Building team morale is a critical part of being a leader
	'Natural leader'	I just feel really comfortable being seen as a leader
	Finding a common purpose	Great people all working together in harmony towards a common purpose
Desire to learn	Personal challenge	Life is about learning, improving, seeing how good you can be, and also sometimes about proving people wrong
	The 'right' environment	Feeling happy and safe in places where I am able to be myself
	Need to understand	The drive to always ask 'why' and work out how things work
	Continuous improvement	Always striving to develop and 'be better'
People power	Inspiration	Being surrounded by people who help me believe in myself
	Collaboration	The love of being in, or working within, a supportive and high-performing team
	Significance of team	Thriving in environments where people go the extra mile for each other
	Nurturing relationships	Compassionate people everywhere; friends, team mates, managers
Sense of self	'I know what matters'	I know what is important to me and why
	Self awareness and reflection	I know who I am and how my behaviour impacts on others
	Emerging sense of purpose	The more experienced I become, the clearer I am about my purpose
	Maturity	The ability to appreciate how beliefs and behaviours have evolved over time
	Growing confidence	The more I know myself, the more confident I become

6.4   Tom

6.4.1 Care and compassion

Tom is a recognised leader who has worked extensively across sport and coaching
development in the UK and internationally. Whilst not necessarily always a leader in
terms of job title, Tom has a quiet, calm approach to leadership that inspires and
motivates those with whom he works. With significant experience of coaching systems
as a coach, educator, developer and systems builder, Tom has evolved his philosophy
over time and is very clear about the things that matter and why they are important.

This narrative is all about compassion; compassion for others and a genuine desire to
help and support people to be the best version of themselves. To help people discover
their core values and better understand where they want to be or who they really are.
An absolute and genuine belief that being a coach, a mentor and a developer entails
a fundamental care for others and a strong drive to help people learn to help
themselves. In Tom's words:

*"I truly believe it's because it is the compassion for people not just the system of
development and I think coaching is a person centred activity. Yeah, care and
compassion - a genuine care about people."*

Yet, this critical piece of the story very nearly remained untold. The importance of compassion only emerged as the interviews progressed, there was time for contemplation and reflection, and the story began to take shape. As we journeyed together through Tom's anecdotes and life history experiences of success, learning, travel, and self-doubt, it became apparent that something fundamental to his values and beliefs was present yet hidden.

"One thing that doesn't come out here is perhaps, is my compassion... and I do, I do think I'm actually more compassionate now than I probably was 20 years ago and yet that doesn't come out in this at all…"

It was as if the interview and reflection process had triggered a realisation about a core personal value that had been a lifelong driver and motivator for both work and life. Looking at the bigger picture, there is little doubt that compassion is at the heart of this story. As Tom reflected, he pondered that:

"I reckon if you interviewed me, say today, I might be able to tell you a completely different story, because, I think I have been hugely influenced over the years, by such a range of different things. And on the day that we had the interview, these were the things that here I had identified as priority - I'm sure that they would all still be there in some way, the priorities would be slightly different or their significance might be slightly altered, and... there might be other things that I might not have thought of as that significant because of, you know, personal circumstances that week or that month, might have come to light more."

Listening to Tom talk about his memories of childhood and family, it was easy to see how compassion had become such a strong influence in his life.

From early family life through to current work colleagues and personal connections, Tom's story was characterised by a consistent sense of learning and being influenced by compassionate people who went out of their way to provide help and support. In family terms, for example, there was a step-parent who took genuine interest in Tom's school work and instilled a sense of pride in hard work; someone who never shied away from challenges and made it feel acceptable and 'right' to stand up for personal beliefs. Then there was a sibling who had completely opposing interests yet helped to develop a sense of tolerance and appreciation of difference.

Ultimately, Tom's family environment and its pervasive sense of support provided Tom with a place where personal growth was strongly encouraged. The family was where an appreciation for hard work was nurtured and an understanding of the need to apply yourself positively in order to learn was developed. Tom recalled an abundance of kindness, understanding, challenge and empathy, alongside a willingness to listen, help and support. It became clear that these family experiences played a significant role in shaping the values, beliefs and behaviours that are evident throughout this story. As Tom recalled in one particularly significant memory:

"So…in terms of education and learning, I can crystallize one moment when I bought some homework home, sat at our dining room table. Did this homework and they said 'can I have a look at that?'

They said 'You're not serious at handing this in are you?' And I said, you know, quite naively 'yeah that's my homework done'. They said 'well, let's sit down and go through this'. And we probably spent two hours going through a short essay and they would ask me questions and prompt me. And in the end I had rewritten it all.

And I probably learnt more in that two hours about how to apply learning than I had at any point of my education. And I never forget that I got A+ from the piece of homework. And then I thought, right, I know how to do this.

And, you know, as I got older, in my 20s I looked back and I thought do you know what? Just giving somebody some attention, giving them some one-to-one time doesn't half make a difference. And so I think that has influenced me in my coach educating side of things."

When the time came to think about life after school, Tom's thoughts turned to a University adventure. Even though only two people from Tom's school had previously 'gone away' to University, Tom's encouraging family environment made him feel like anything was possible. There was another motivation too:

"… if you really like sport, you could do it at university and you could play loads of it at university".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tom's university story was not so much a tale of academic prowess, rather a story built around sport and the value of the sporting environment. Tom recalled learning continuously from his experiences and the influential people that he met along the way. He also remembered excitement at being part of a vibrant team, motivation of first coaching experiences, and horror at the naivety of his youth in terms of coaching and leadership. There was also the significance of learning to lead and the realisation that the social interactions between a team off the pitch are relevant to successful performance on the pitch.

"…and I just remember we had a really great team atmosphere – socially, in the game, and I think that element of the social being quite important to how you perform, and the fact that people getting on actually did matter to performance, I think again became something quite core to me."

The theme of making connections with amazing people is another core to which this story kept returning. Tom recounted the importance of spending quality time with people who really understood him, and how he gained confidence from people who showed faith and trust in his ability. He remembered learning from great people, and then supporting others to be great and to unearth their own potential. These connections mattered greatly to Tom and again reinforced the importance for him of compassion, caring for others and showing a genuine interest. Tom described it as:

"…and I think it's about being a bit open to watching other people, and even on the mentor trips, you are helping somebody else, but you are thinking, really, I'm making connections then, I'm thinking, well yeah, that's really interesting - that's something I could use further down the line - what I'm not very good at, is the recording and maybe, properly recording my own reflections is perhaps something I need to be better at doing."

As Tom's story flowed from his undergraduate days into life as a postgraduate, his love of coaching became ever more apparent. His compassionate nature, care for others and deep appreciation for the value of human connection were continually evident as he recalled numerous stories of coaching experiences, including several humorous stories of his first forays into coaching! Coaching played an increasingly significant role in Tom's life over the years and he credits these early, often challenging, experiences as providing really strong foundations for his future career in coaching and leadership.

Tom's enthusiasm, desire for new experiences and appetite for learning enabled him to quickly develop as a coach and create positions where he could take on more challenging coaching roles. He also recognised that his thirst for learning and logical approach gave him the confidence to seize every opportunity that emerged, whatever the environment. He talked of University teams, a County team and the local Caribbean team. He also recalled excitedly a fabulous opportunity to head out to the Caribbean for a summer to coach a national team!

"…and it was while I was at University we had a guy that came over from a small island in the Caribbean. And he was doing some some research - he was a minister in their government - and he said 'did I want to go and do some coaching one summer, in the Caribbean?' And I said 'Well, why wouldn't I? Of course…of course I would!'

So I went over for one summer and coached. And wow! Culturally…such a really good cultural insight for me."

Despite the obvious excitement, it took enormous courage for Tom to take such a big step into a complete unknown, and he talked with pride at the personal bravery he demonstrated in saying 'yes' to the chance on offer. He described trepidation at heading off on this new adventure, yet happily recalled the tin shack and dusty sports field complete with roaming goats (whose 'litter' had to be swept off the fields prior to each training session), that awaited him in this totally foreign coaching environment. As Tom ventured further into this part of his life, he described the scale of the leadership learning journey that he undertook during this amazing summer opportunity.

Being an organised coach who always planned, Tom spent the weeks prior to this trip sourcing drills and session plans that he thought would be useful in the formal coaching structure into which he thought he was heading. However, as his first sessions unfolded it became apparent that these organised and structured sessions were not going to work. The group that faced Tom in training were simply not motivated by his deliberately planned structures and he quickly realised that they were never going to respond enthusiastically! This presented a significant challenge, as Tom recalled:

"…and I'd come from a place where everybody did things in sets and it was very drill based and you know, if you said, I need you to sprint from X to Y and then do this at the end, they would sprint from X to Y. In the Caribbean, 'why would I sprint from a cone to a cone?' But what these, what that team did have was amazing physical ability, and I had to really think on my feet and I really had to adapt what I was doing. I was really out of my comfort zone!"

Tom shared that one of the biggest challenges he faced in the Caribbean was the dilemma of how to create a sense of 'one team' within a disparate group. A group that at first glance did not share anything in common, other than living on the same island. Tom remembered being desperate to create a positive environment for the group so each individual felt as if they were 'part of something bigger'. In the end, he recalled that what worked was going back to his core coaching philosophy by showing his caring side and simply being interested in the people who were in front of him:

"And I think it was also, you know, again it's that thing about somebody showing an interest in them. Because I would be amazed and in awe at their physical ability and would let them know that….and the fact that somebody had shown a belief in them, made a big difference I believe."

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It was evident that this Caribbean experience had a significant impact, although Tom acknowledged that he probably didn't recognise the full extent for a number of years. Tom reflected that despite this experience, organisation remained an important aspect of his coaching toolkit. He also felt that planning has taken on a different meaning in more recent times in his roles as coach, coach developer and on a systems level. In his words:

"… when I look back yes I am still a big believer in planning. However, I know if I lose a plan, some people go to pieces, you know, if it's not going to plan. But I like to think I've come to recognise that actually I can be quite intuitive with a group and I'm quite intuitive at recognising 'this isn't quite working' or recognising 'it's not working and that's not a bad thing because I think we can get through it' or recognising it's not working and it's never going to work and I need to change it."

It was clear as he spoke, that that Tom's confidence in unplanned and unfamiliar situations had grown significantly over the years. His growing confidence had not negated the need for a plan, rather he had developed a better understanding of how planning really supports his practice. In particular, he now feels that when he is comfortable with knowing the needs of a group, he is better able to adapt and recognise the times when something different might better serve the group at a particular point in time. As he described it:

"But I just a got a sense that the group were really engaged on a particular topic. And there was no need for me to shift them on and, and move on. But it wasn't because somebody put their hand up said 'oh, can we spend longer on this?' I just, you know, it was one of those things where actually it was okay not to complete what we said we were going to complete at the beginning, and spend time on something much more relevant and meaningful."

"…if I'm going in and working with a group, and it's from an organisation or a group that I have no experience of, I think it is really important that I get an understanding of what it's like in their world and operating in their world. I am in some way empathising, but absolutely trying to tailor what I am doing to fit with their world and not making assumptions…I am properly hearing what they are saying".

These are words that Tom shared on many occasions during our conversations. He talked passionately about the importance of 'properly hearing what they are saying' and of the need to demonstrate and develop empathy for and with others. Whether preparing for a coaching session in the Caribbean, delivering a coach education session in the depths of rural England, working with a group to grow a regional development plan or supporting a national governing body in reviewing their coaching strategy, his approach remained incredibly consistent. He continues now to always take time to understand the 'world' of the people with whom he is working, and he uses this insight to build an appropriate plan of action. Yet he now also recognises that sometimes the plan will need to deviate in order to respond to an important human reaction, maximise a learning moment or take time to reflect the things that are important to the person or group. Tom's ability to react and respond to the shifting needs of a group is a recurring theme in his story.

The importance of human connection for Tom was again reinforced when our conversation turned to his own personal development. Tom talked in depth about learning through, and with, others. He placed great value on what he defined as 'the privilege' of spending quality time with someone who is prepared to support his personal learning.

He talked of experiencing the same feeling he had when his step-parent helped him

work through that early school assignment, time and time again with other key people

throughout this career. He remembered many people from different sectors and areas

of life who were all willing to give their time and share their experiences, knowledge

and skills in order to help him learn and develop. Tom also realised that in many cases,

the people who shared their time so freely probably didn't have any idea of how

significant an impact that they had on his own personal development

*"I worked with some immense people there and at the time didn't really know how
immense they were, but I now think well 'yep, how lucky I was at that point in my life'."*

*"I think actually in **** was quite a good influencer, at shaping and managing things
strategically, so I think they helped my strategic thinking."*

*"And I would say all slightly different with their styles and approach. I would say ****
was more was more, was more formalised, and that 'at this point I'll give you some
feedback and these are the expectations."*

It also become apparent that Tom gained much confidence from instances when these

great people placed their faith and trust in him and encouraged him to experiment, to

try, to 'go for it' and just see what happened. He spoke with appreciation and

enthusiasm about the times when managers or senior leaders set him a task and then

just handed over the challenge that needed to be solved. He recalled that sometimes

there was some initial direction, but more often than not, he was simply allowed to take

responsibility for the job in hand and trusted to manage it in an appropriate manner.

Tom acknowledged the significance of these experiences, particularly those slightly

pressured situations that generated a degree of apprehension, fear and self-doubt.

"They were very, very supportive and we wanted to perform and get it right for them and they'd give us feedback at the end of every day and we'd go and eat together and then during that eating we'd be talking about coach development. So you'd really burn the midnight oil. Great learning environment, though. And when I look back at that now, I think that was huge in shaping some of the discipline that I have now as a tutor."

"And I was quite nervous about doing it because I had to assess people as part of the process as well. But the fact that they had confidence in me and thought I could do it, I think in turn gave me confidence in thinking that I could do it."

Tom spoke passionately about what the people 'sitting behind him' have brought to his learning journey; creativity, strategy, reflection or confidence building. From Monday morning discussions with lecturing colleagues in his early career and their insights into the world of high performance coaching, to more recent experiences of sharing a simple coffee with friends. He reflected that it is moments when he has been able to articulate his challenges freely and without judgement, and the valuable reflective conversations with trusted connections that have helped him to make sense of experiences, learning and failures. The impact and influence of such people on Tom's development was obvious, and as Tom explained:

"They thought differently. Or I don't know if they thought differently, but what what they produced was different and new and novel and the workshops they produced were quite different from anything else that was being produced, so they stood out because they were different to what I would usually see in that environment."

"…providing people with opportunity to stop, and properly look and make the connections and I think connecting up with, and properly working with them has been a really nice confidence giver."

In the early days, Tom remembered leaping at every chance to experience something new, whatever the situation, but now, as an experienced leader, he has developed an awareness of how to use his personal values and beliefs to help him to make better decisions. For example, as he progressed through his career, Tom felt that he became better at recognising the people from whom there is something valuable to learn:

"…I don't shy away from challenge, I think I'm quite…I can be quite swift at saying 'I don't think I'd work with that person, and 'I'd love to work with that person'."

Tom's story is one of an individual who is able to lead as they do because they care and know what is important to them. Tom has the skill of making the other person feel valued, trusted and cared for. So as Tom's story begun, it ends with this sense of care and his compassion.

"I'll probably be saying there's a sequel to this, which is great! And it'll be a story, or rather a documentary…an ongoing documentary that moves on, and then it's somebody else who's had a significant influence but the back story stays pretty stable."

6.4.2 *Themes*

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
Care and compassion	Interested	A genuine care for people
	Empathy	The ability to share the feelings of others; 'to walk around in their shoes'
	Understand their world	The importance of seeing things from their perspective
	Belief in potential	Desire to support others to be the best version of themselves
Reflexivity	Self aware (knowing myself)	I know who I am and how my behaviour impacts on others
	Understanding my values	I know what is important to me and why; my actions reflect my values
	Time to reflect	Making time for personal development and giving it priority
	Making sense of learning	Being able to connect ideas, insights and theories; applying them to practice
	Memory is subjective	'Ask me the same question on a different day, I will give you a difference answer'
Amazing people	Connection	Spending quality time with great people…
	Willing to share	…who are warm, accessible and open their world to me
	Have faith in me	They believe I can do it…
	Time	…are generous with their time and give me the space I need to try for myself
	Interested	They fundamentally care about me as a person
Nurturing environments	Surrounded by amazing people	Compassionate people everywhere; family, friends, sport, life
	Trusted	They create space spaces for learning and development…
	Freedom to try	…and let me find my own way (although they are there if I need)
	Challenging	I am encouraged to push boundaries and see what may be possible
Learning	For self	Inherently curious; continual self-development
	Through and with others	Embracing collaborative learning; formal and informal
	Through experience	'Just do it'; try, learn and adapt
	Coaching	Supporting others to learn and grow
Bravery	Confidence through the trust of others	When others believe in me it helps me believe in myself
	Driven by purpose	Motivated by the things I care about
	Willing to try	Prepared to give things a go, even when the outcome is not certain
	Courage of convictions	'I believe therefore I will'

6.5   Rob

6.5.1   'Sport changed my life'

Rob is a senior manager within the world of sport. His route to this point has been adventurous and Rob has extensive experiences in coaching and leadership as an instructor, assessor, administrator and manager. He now uses his significant coaching abilities and understanding of people to guide his leadership philosophy and style. His story is one of following his heart and never being afraid to take on new adventures.

"If you can crack a joke alright and get a laugh, then actually that's a really good indicator that you have got good empathy with the people around you."

Rob began our conversation by recalling some of his early working memories, and in doing so remembered how humour had become an invaluable tool in navigating the tricky environments within which he worked as a youngster.   He talked of challenging jobs, often working with people for whom English was not a first language, and yet recalled these experiences positively and with a great sense of fun. Rob remembered how he quickly realised that his ability to connect with others through finding a shared sense of amusement was a really valuable life skill. I immediately felt at ease in Rob's company and as I got to know Rob a little better, I began to appreciate how, in his opening statement, he had beautifully captured a core element of his philosophy on life and work.

Rob swiftly moved his story onwards from early work experiences to memories of his first 'proper' employment. He remembered a feeling of security in having landed a 'decent job' with an obvious career path; however, he also quickly realised that:

"In terms of the life I wanted to live, it wasn't going to tick those boxes."

The realisation that this 'proper' job was never going to provide complete fulfilment or the drive and motivation he craved for his lifelong career was significant for Rob. He recalled his romantic notion that if it was raining outside, he wanted to get wet, walk barefoot through damp grass or paddle through white water, and remembered recognising that the inside of a dark, dingy office was simply not going to deliver the lifestyle he craved.

"I started to realise that every time I left that concrete block at the end of the day, it took my eyes twenty minutes to adjust to daylight."

With this realisation swirling round his head, Rob recalled that he found the lure of adventure and sport too much to ignore. However, he also remembered that whilst he had always loved sport, he had never considered it as a career option when he left school.

"I couldn't tell you what exactly it was about sport, but I kind of had this epiphany moment when I knew it had to be my career. I didn't mind what it meant in terms of reward, I just knew I needed to pursue it."

However, having made a decision to make a change, Rob laughed as he admitted:

"…and so I pursued a sporting career, but I didn't know how to start!"

Without any ideas of his own, Rob turned to trusted friends for help in working out how to take his next steps. Following advice from one friend, he made a speculative phone call to an organisation who seemed to work in the area in which he was interested. He then recalled his delight at how this random phone call lead him to apply for a sporting apprenticeship programme. Rob talked of a sense of anticipation as he awaited news on the outcome of his application, and remembered becoming more and more inspired by the possibilities that could lie ahead for him. He easily described a heady mix of excitement and trepidation following his interview and how he had felt time slowing as he continued to trudge to his office every day. The motivation he felt on finally receiving the letter for which he had been waiting was obvious as he shared:

"I can still remember with great clarity opening the letter that said I'd got a place on the Trainee Scheme. When I look back on it, what is clear in my mind is that it wasn't just the job. It was actually the door opening on this life."

Rob remembered his first twelve months being filled with learning, developing, mistake making and spending time with pioneering individuals with incredible abilities to work with people. As Rob reflected on these experiences and challenging environments, he recalled often feeling a huge sense of disbelief that he had actually made his own adventure happen.

In the reflective space of our conversation Rob recognised how important these early experiences had been in shaping his own personal values and leadership style:

"Through that year I started to shape something of what I might call my own style now. Part of that is stealing good ideas from the coaches and leaders that were working with us, but also dropping the bad ones. Sort of defining what you don't want as much as anything."

As Rob reached the end of his apprenticeship year, he faced a difficult decision in terms of 'what next'? He realised that having this taste of what life could be had given him a real sense of ambition and aspiration about what else he could achieve within his new environment. Starting out with a simple aim to just 'get my feet wet', Rob felt that his first year of training had given him confidence to push on further and achieve much bigger things.

Rob described the next phase of his career as being defined by development as a coach, gaining practical work experience and progressing through the coach education pathway. It became clear as he talked, that Rob had a huge thirst for learning and a burning desire to really understand why and how things worked. He recalled this period of time as an enlightening one that he now recognised as highly significant in his development. He continually repeated his appreciation of the invaluable time he spent on courses with brilliant tutors who invested their time in helping him to learn. He particularly emphasised the value he placed on the time and space he was afforded to contemplate his own identity, abilities and how he could develop.

Rob shared many memories of how he felt his confidence grow during this time and he really began to believe that he was finding his own path through the complex world of coaching. Whilst he remembered embracing the technical aspects of his work and enjoying learning about new skills and drills, he talked more passionately about how coaching was really about helping people to achieve their goals, and about the value he placed on embracing the human side of coaching:

"I like the idea that if you can start to engage somebody and have a connection, not necessarily deliberately find one, just be yourself…I think that is important in coaching."

This profound realisation that coaching was all about people and helping them develop is best summarised through Rob's own words:

"…and I remember finding myself in a bit of an awkward position on one particular expedition when we were faced with a difficult section. I remember that my instinct was to move sideways and avoid this particular challenge, as there was only maybe a fraction of our group that would be able to so it. Anyway, we were going back and one of the guys in the group says, 'I really want to do it!' It would have been really easy for me to say 'no I don't think you should, we're just going to step around this', but I thought 'gee I think you can do it as well!'.

So we got set up, and the guy did it really well and we sort of just supported, whatever that's worth! And on we went with the day. And it was really interesting in the evening over a drink, he just come up to me quietly and said 'I couldn't have done that without you'. And, that, you know, going from a feeling that I hadn't done anything at all, I thought somehow I'd really succeeded in all of this."

Yet Rob also remembered feeling uncertain and confused about what his coaching input really offered and what it meant to really be a great coach. He shared examples of times when words of thanks from course candidates prompted him to undertake much self questioning as to what it was that he had really done to help. Rob remembered feeling puzzled by how his actions could result in such positive responses from others and often did not quite know how to respond, for example:

"…and I'd had a bit to do with this guy, but never in a technical context. I think it was the faith that I showed in him through the experience, and the bit of encouragement that I gave. Anyway, he took me to one side and just thanked me profusely for what I'd done. And I thought I haven't done anything! I didn't say it, but I was quite, okay…thank you very much!"

It was interesting to listen to Rob talk of his doubt and uncertainty in such an open manner, and it was refreshing to hear such honest reflections on his development as a coach, and subsequently as a leader. Our conversations always felt very authentic and there was a warmth to the way in which Rob shared often deeply personal reflections about his life history. At one point in our journey together he reflected on what he felt was his 'lack of ego' in situations of coaching, leadership or assessment. I loved his thoughts on managing difficult conversations and how he always appeared to consider the feelings of the person with whom he was working. In Rob's words:

"And I like the notion that your starting point with anyone is 'you're okay and I'm okay and that's it and we'll go from there'. And that's pretty much in anything really. And I think some of the part of assessing is telling people how they've done, you know? And part of those conversations - particularly when it's gone wrong – has stood me in really good stead for being here now."

As Rob continued to talk about his career development, he came back to this point on a number of occasions and it was evident that this notion of 'you're OK, I'm OK' continues to underpin his leadership style today. There was a calmness and quiet reassurance about Rob that accompanied his story and he demonstrated an understated confidence that reflected his belief that he was not driven by ego. He talked about how he found real satisfaction in seeing individuals with whom he worked grow, develop and gain their own confidence. As Rob shared a number of anecdotes about his experiences as coach and leader, he continually returned to the fact that he does genuinely care about the progress of the person in front of him, regardless of the context. He also recognised how this inner belief in people and his absence of ego had frequently helped him to navigate potentially tricky situations:

"So I don't shy away from difficult conversation. I just think 'no, you're okay I'm okay'. As long as I say it in those terms, we get through this, you know? And I think it helps me in that dialogue with anyone if I've got bad news, it's not the end of the world, you know? And we'll just move on."

Rob smiled wryly as he explained that even though he loved actively coaching everyday, as he grew older he realised that he probably couldn't keep doing what he was doing for another ten years! Although reluctant to think about the future doing anything other than what he loved, he remembered realising that there were other avenues for him to explore. Just as he was starting to contemplate his other options, Rob recalled excitement at the opportunity of being offered a year long secondment with a partner organisation, even though much of the new role would involve sitting behind a desk!

There was a sense of genuine happiness in Rob's voice as he remembered how much he had enjoyed his secondment year. He talked of it as '*one of those incredibly challenging passages of time, that delivered amazing reward and satisfaction*' and reflected that even though initially he felt completely out of his depth, he realised that this was a brilliant opportunity to explore and develop other aspects of his skill set. Rob particularly recalled working alongside the head of the organisation, who became a real role-model figure for leadership and helped Rob to uncover his abilities as a leader. Almost with an air of surprise, he recalled:

"…and I thought I was a pretty decent coach you know? But actually, I felt I was a better leader though, funnily enough."

Inspired by his time on secondment, Rob decided to sign up for a management course to help him continue to grow his knowledge and understanding. Whilst initially feeling daunted by the prospect of entering a new and unfamiliar environment, Rob remembered feeling strangely 'safe' as he realised that the subject of management was actually mostly about people. Given his coaching philosophy was all about supporting and guiding people, Rob felt confident in his growing skills as a manager and remembered feeling excited by what his leadership future may hold. Interestingly, when he talked about his current position and how he ended up in this role, Rob recalled how it had never really been his ambition, but when the opportunity arose to apply he just couldn't imagine working for someone else. As he put it:

"I never planned to be a leader, by the way! It wasn't sort of, a life goal or anything like that, but I realised that I just didn't want to watch somebody else do this!"

Once his decision was made, Rob embraced the application phase with determination and reflected that he had found it quite an affirming process as it enabled him to look at the skills and experiences he had amassed over the years. As he recalled:

"…I had that training from college and I had all this experience and so ultimately, yeah, I kind of felt like I found my way. I found a bit of who I was, and I was able to express that through the recruitment process."

Rob remembered that the recruitment process for this role felt like it took an age. His recollections of this time, however, including the potentially stressful final interview, were positive and he talked of how he felt more and more confident as he progressed deeper into the recruitment. He described discovering feelings of clarity, calmness and comfort for himself and for those conducting the interviews. Rob could not specifically pinpoint exactly where these feelings came from, but he reflected that probably his coaching experience, particularly his love of working with, and supporting other people, played a crucial role at this point in time. As he recalled:

"I couldn't walk into the room and be somebody else, so I stuck to my guns and thought, I'm going to walk into this room, I'm going to be very authentic, I'm going to look people in the eye and be very honest about the things I can do and the things where I need more support around, and again, within that, I had real moments of clarity around being interviewed by people that knew nothing of my world and they needed me."

This strong desire to always 'be himself' was evident as he talked with pride about being offered the leadership role for which he applied. In particular, he emphasised the importance of maintaining his authenticity when developing different relationships with existing colleagues:

"I think in the beginning, if you had asked any of them, I'd not become someone different and that's really important to me. That they saw me. There was a lot of me that they didn't know, so I wanted to introduce other parts of who I was and my background so that they understood that I hadn't changed, they're just seeing more of me because I'm in a different role now."

What was noticeable about this period in Rob's life was how his stories kept returning to his relationships with the people around him. He talked of spending hours wondering how to navigate the change in relationship dynamics as friends and colleagues became 'his staff' overnight. He also remembered feeling very strange when swapping the staff room for the boss's office. Again and again his reflections returned to his fundamental desire to be seen as authentic to those around him:

"And my great hope is that if you were to ask the team, they would say, no, Rob has remained really authentic to who we believed he was and all I ask is the same of them. They stay true to who they really are."

Rob recognised the significance of his coaching experience in helping him manage the transition into leadership. He particularly highlighted his belief that management, like coaching, was fundamentally about people, and creating environments in which people feel safe to try new things. In his words:

"And that's where coaching piece was really good for me because I sat in this room of people going 'ah! It's like that'. There is no Pandora's box that, you know, everyone else has looked in but I've not seen. Its the same as before, it's a little bit of 'roll up your sleeves and just get on with it', you know?"

Rob spoke at length about how much he valued the trust and faith that others have placed in him throughout career. For example, he acknowledged the faith that the interview panel showed in appointing him to such a significant leadership role, appreciated the trust he was then given to 'just get on with things' by his senior manager and expressed gratitude for the mentoring role that this individual has continued to play over the past few years. Rob summarised this as:

"…it's not so much what he says, it's the faith he shows in me, which I find really compelling."

With great support around him, from informal mentoring to a growing personal network, Rob remembered loving his new role. He used amusing anecdotes to describe his feelings of trying to create and define new strategies. I was fascinated as he laughingly recalled feeling as if he was initially faced with a field of galloping horses, all heading in different directions, and his challenge was to find a way to lead all horses in the same direction. He again reflected on how his development and growth as a coach really helped him during some of his challenging times as a leader when he was trying to decide on strategy or approach:

"So its like when you paddle a white water rapid, it requires complex movements, it's a complex environment. But because you can see the line you want you just say 'right, OK, I'm going to put my paddle here, put my boat there'. But as the water gets bigger and bigger and bigger, that environment becomes more and more complex, and more random. And eventually it gets to a point that you can't see any of that at all. Any of it at all. And in the biggest environments when you're in a boat, all you have is 'I want to get over there, I just want to get over there'!"

And this is where this story pauses for now. At a point where Rob is successfully applying his broad range of skills learned from construction, instructing, coaching and assessing in a formal leadership environment in an innovative, successful and authentic way. For now, whilst he is able to bring himself to his role, and continue to lead others in the direction he believes is appropriate, he feels that great things will continue to happen. However, just as in his sporting adventure days, much remains uncertain in his ever shifting personal environment, and he talked about knowing when the time will be right to begin the next chapter of this adventure.   This is best described in Rob's own words:

"I worry about sitting on plateaus and for myself in terms of development it's a bit of 'what's next?' I know that I'm kind of entering another period of development. I've had some good stuff that has carried me to this point here, but I know it will tail off and won't carry on much further. I need the next thing for me and to move it on, 'cos that one big idea just isn't enough, so do I look to the next challenge and when do I do that? What I do know is that I have to keep developing personally, and whatever comes next I have to feel that I am making an impact out there."

6.5.2 Themes

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
Curiosity	About myself	Always learning more about my drivers and motivations; continual self-development
	Desire to learn; understand why and how	A thirst for knowing 'more' and being hungry to learn. Always wanting to understand why things work, or don't work
	Seek new experiences through adventure and challenge	Being brave enough to put yourself in situations where you are not certain of the outcome, but believe that great things might happen
Follow your heart	Passion	Caring deeply about the things I do and the people with whom I share the experiences
	Courage to make big decisions; trust myself	Prepared to make big changes when something just 'feels right'
	Knowing what is important	I know what is important to me and why it matters
	Create opportunity	Don't wait for things to fall at your feet, go out and make it happen
Being me	Clarity of purpose and values	I know what is important to me and why; my actions reflect my values
	Leadership	Helping you grow as a person by being authentic and sticking to me core values
	Consistency	I know who I am and behave consistently in line with my values and beliefs, whoever I am with
	Confidence to grow	I know that who I am and where I am at today does not completely define what I can potentially achieve tomorrow
Great people	Role models	Great people for whom there is a strong sense of admiration and who create aspiration
	Make me feel supported	Being surrounded by people who are willing to help me and go the extra mile as I navigate my own path
	Trust and have faith in me	When others believe in me it helps me believe in myself; If they believe I can do it…
	Learning through them	Embracing collaborative learning; formal and informal
Authentic connections	Empathy and listening	The ability to share the feelings of others; 'to walk around in their shoes'
	'You're OK; I'm OK'	People matter. How you treat people matters. Two-way respect is important. No ego.
	Constructive conversations	Helping people develop through effective two-way dialogue
	Humour	If you can make people laugh it is a good indicator that you are developing good rapport
Supporting others	Care	A genuine care and kindness for people
	To realise their potential	Desire to support others to be the best version of themselves
	Creating a safe environment	The importance of nurturing places where others can safely learn and develop
	Coaching	Supporting others to learn and grow

6.6 Rose

6.6.1 Right question; wrong time

Rose is a leader with a lifelong passion for learning. From an early experience in education and teaching, through to extensive work within the UK coaching sector, Rose's story is filled with an infectious energy that quickly captures your attention. Though her path has not always been smooth, her commitment to adventure and growth is obvious, and her desire to keep learning grows ever stronger.

Rose's story is one of curiosity, compassion, courage and more than a little determination. She has a burning desire to learn, a non-stop need to understand and a constant drive to be better. Rose recognises that her personal experiences continue to mould and shape her philosophies in life and work, and she has a deep appreciation that with age has come wisdom. Not necessarily wisdom in terms of knowledge, but wisdom in terms of knowing when times are right to ask questions, trust herself and make tough decisions.

Rose is also resilient. She has consistently demonstrated the ability to pick herself up and keep moving forward as she battled personal challenge, professional confusion, emotional upheaval and constant change. Yet throughout all the turmoil, she has always taken comfort from being guided by, and remaining true to, her personal beliefs and values.

It was, however, a little surprising that Rose began our first conversation together with a deeply personal statement:

"…so what's probably driven me, unconsciously, for a while and now consciously, is, I think, having a disability".

As we gently explored this opening sentence, it emerged that Rose had first been diagnosed with a disability as a young child and had subsequently struggled to understand what this really meant for her. Fighting against what she perceived as a negative label, she initially chose to ignore and discount it as an influence. However, in more recent years, Rose has made a conscious choice to view her disability as a gift, and something to be embraced and appreciated for the positives it brings. As Rose explained:

"…but in that ten years, there was a point probably seven years in, where I started to see the benefits that it can give - it is why I think analytically, it is why I stop and look at things from a different perspective…so that hardship, in my own journey has led me to want to truly understand what learning is."

Rose talked at length about how she has never wanted to be defined by something that is externally perceived as a disability. She also repeatedly reinforced that she hates being singled out as needing support or additional help, particularly because there have been many occasions when support has been offered in a less emotionally intelligent way than she felt it could have been, for example:

"…and the way they attempted to offer help wasn't supportive, so I was emotionally reactive to that and it wasn't healthy, so again it was something that I dampened down rather than learned to embrace."

Yet despite the challenges, it became evident that Rose had developed a profound understanding that many of her personal abilities associated with this 'label' can be viewed as positive. As we talked, it became clear that Rose had always been inherently curious about why things work or are presented in a certain way, however, in recent years she has become more accepting of her need to think analytically. Rose laughed as she recalled driving 'grown-ups' mad as a child by constantly asking 'why?', and also remembered being naively willing to challenge and question her lecturers at University. One particular example was shared with a real sense of frustration:

"There was loads statements that shaped me - one was a lecturer when I was at University which was around that question thing. I remember going to them with an assignment and going 'I'm not sure this is the right question to answer' and they basically looked at me and said 'well whilst you are doing your degree, you will answer the question we give you - when you get to doing a PhD, you might be able to construct your own questions'."

Rose readily acknowledged that there were many times during her career and pathway of development when her need to understand, to question and to analyse had been perceived as overly challenging by peers, colleagues and managers, for example:

"…and one of the things that held me back - wrongly I think - was that I would often question the task and some people would see that as me 'being challenging' and see it as being a pain."

In the reflective space of our conversations Rose began to make sense of why her need to think analytically had often been negatively perceived by others. As we delved more deeply into her life history, Rose pulled on recent experiences and explained that she now understands that there is usually an appropriate time and place for deeper analysis. She now appreciates that sometimes things just need to 'get done' and asking questions is not appropriate, particularly in situations when the person setting the task, or doing the asking, is in a position of seniority.

"A Director of a company at a certain time said to me, 'sometimes you ask the right question but you ask it at the wrong time', and maybe I didn't have the maturity to know when to ask the question or how to frame the question so that it was safe for them to respond to or manage, and I take some responsibility for that."

Throughout our conversations Rose referred to greater maturity and experience as a significant factor in her journey as a leader. She consistently emphasised that the time she spent 'learning on the job' alongside inspiring colleagues was invaluable in helping her continually develop many of her personal skills, particularly her ability to know when and how to apply her unwavering curiosity. Rose wasn't able to identify one specific influence or big defining moment that resulted in her more measured, calm and balanced way of thinking. Rather she attributed her growth to a gradual accumulation of knowledge and experience over time. For example, learning from every time a 'wrong' question was asked, or a 'right' question was posed at the seemingly 'wrong' time.

As we talked about how she had learned to be more effective in her use of questioning Rose diverted our conversation to the subject of research. Whilst it initially felt like a huge leap, I could slowly see her logic as she described how she now really values the importance of properly understanding methodology and research validity in her quest for more knowledge. She talked passionately about how she has come to realise that, if taken in isolation, individual pieces of research or information do not tell a whole story. Rose animatedly recalled a particular time when she had seen research taken out of context and applied in an inappropriate manner, and her frustration was clear as she shared this story with me:

"So basically, someone presented this methodology and everybody bowed down to it, and was like 'this is amazing' and they all starting telling everybody about it as though it was the world - and I get very, very tetchy when it's like that because I think it might be right, but has anybody checked it? Has anybody checked it?"

Rose then brought our conversation back to her point on knowing when to ask the right questions. She talked of how her enhanced understanding of research has helped her develop confidence to more thoughtfully question and critique 'new' ideas. She was proud that she has developed her ability to apply questioning techniques appropriately so that they help make informed decisions, rather than hindering the process as it had often done early in her career. Rose readily acknowledged the role that other people, including peers and managers, have played in helping her to better understand how to connect her thinking and approach to the reality of the workplace.

Throughout our conversations Rose continually referred to the *'probably hundred's'* of great people along the way who have helped shape her personal and professional development and enabled her to better understand how to navigate the complexities of work and life. Friends, family, line managers, colleagues and peers were all acknowledged for the time they have taken in gently, but often firmly, helping her to develop her confidence, experience or skill. Often this has been in the formal workplace setting, but there have equally been chance meetings that have had enormously significant impact. For example, Rose recalled the importance of placing her trust in one particular work colleague:

"I made it a purposeful thing to work out who I could trust and count on, versus who I couldn't, and she is an example of one that I could absolutely trust."

Rose mentioned two managers in particular during the telling of her story. She warmly described these individuals as *'people who were fiercely supportive, yet very prepared to call out instances where my behaviour did not quite elicit the desired response'*. Rose credits these two managers with significantly helping her to develop the understanding that the 'right question asked at the right time' can be tremendously powerful, just as the 'right question at the wrong time' can be highly detrimental. This was particularly important for Rose when learning to work with senior leaders, something that Rose recalled these managers helping her to comprehend:

"So I might not be able to change the Director in how they see things, but I can change how I present to them, but I needed help with that because I had never done it before and I didn't think I had to do it - I felt that I just had to be good. I didn't know I had to be good at sharing it with someone else."

Rose also remembered positive experiences where challenging work situations had been made better by the great people with whom she shared those experiences. She reflected on times where individuals in positions of authority had made an effort to get to know her as a human being and subsequently shown great trust and faith in her abilities to deliver. Crucially these authority figures also visibly demonstrated their trust by protecting Rose in moments of crisis, or vocally 'defending' her actions by standing up for her in times of conflict. This personal support and trust made a significant impact on Rose, particularly in terms of confidence in personal capability, her willingness to 'go the extra mile' and also her commitment to sometimes just 'getting things done'.

"…he really had my back and I questioned it, and if you question somebody who's got your back, you suddenly realise that actually, you have crossed the line; this person has had your back - they've covered, they've worked had to make sure you can work and you have betrayed their kindness or trust and I was very quick to apologise and roll over and know that actually don't question this man because he believes in you."

The feeling that somebody trusted and believed in her was obviously important to Rose and was a theme that recurred throughout our conversations, particularly when remembering times of self-doubt. Rose talked about the value in having someone who absolutely believes in you, and highlighted how this support has often helped to reignite her internal confidence and rediscover courage to trust in herself. On many occasions during our journey together Rose shared thoughts on 'apprenticeships' and 'guides' that had helped her navigate new roles or workplace complexities, for example:

"I feel that in the old sense of the word, a true apprenticeship needs to be given to people, maybe not in terms of mastery of a skill or a knowledge area, but mastery in sharing the idea with different people at different times, based on how that person is best able to receive the information."

"I think every environment should have a guide for someone – everybody."

Rose also recognised how having other people around has often helped her see the value in taking a step back and considering things from a different perspective. Rose seemed acutely aware that how she sees the world and experiences it, is very different to how others may perceive the same thing, yet she was at pains to stress that because of her personal experience, she never wants different to be viewed as negative. Rose talked of how she came to realise that being aware of others having a different perspective is not always a comfortable place to be, but that it is important to openly discuss those differences:

"Not to say that my perspective is right, but the conflict of a different perspective often creates a better solution so it's not that I come with the solution, it's just the perspective that I see it from creates a debate that leads to a solution."

This fascination with difference and individuality is an underpinning theme to Rose's recent, current and future work plans. She talked of how developing a deeper understanding of why different people have different perspectives, even when they share many similarities, helped to shape her personal leadership and learning philosophy. She reflected that her strong belief that there is not one 'right' way to view the world, has often enabled her to evolve innovative solutions to complex problems.

Yet Rose does not just use theory to develop new thinking. She talked of loving opportunities to apply theoretical learning into practical environments and how she has, over the years, developed the confidence to be truly creative in her work. She talked of now feeling able to 'just try things' and see what happens, rather than feeling pressured to always stick to a pre-prepared plan. Interestingly, Rose commented that she now believes that in order to truly explore a situation or problem, the best conversations often arise from the conflict evoked through individual difference:

"…and how, when you understand that we all make very different choices and very different decisions, how you've got a group of 30 people in a room and you are trying to deliver the same content but actually they all see it differently and that was - that was a real eye opener to try and understand individual difference."

Which brings Rose's story to its final strand; the desire to truly understand what learning really is all about. Not only did Rose convince me through her stories of her insatiable desire to know more, understand more and be able to make more sense of theories, ideas and research, she also left me with the distinct impression of someone who is not satisfied until she feels that she has fully explored and understands a subject. She talked consistently about always finding value in the process of learning and what that can teach her, rather than simply defining success by finding an answer to a particular problem. As Rose explained:

"I think I spent a lot of my time having conversations with people about stuff and they couldn't tell me why, and also I wanted to have more depth of conversation with people about why. So to do that, I needed to know more."

This fascination with learning was evident as a University student wanting to explore her subject rather than simply 'pass the test', and also realising at an early stage that a lack of knowledge of learning meant that she didn't really have any idea how to do her job! It was also evident that Rose's curiosity had helped her navigate the challenges of adulthood, such as being faced with the daunting prospect of becoming a parent for the first time. This thread of learning, of wanting to learn how to be better, and of wanting to really understand the concept of learning, is something that clearly links each phase of Rose's life. Driven by this desire to truly understand, she recalled feeling particularly frustrated with learning as an undergraduate:

"…so basically I'm just here to pass the test? I'm not here to learn? And they basically intimated 'Yeah!' And I just suddenly realised that University for me was going to be a waste of time so I needed to find other ways to get a good experience from it because if all I was doing was passing the test, I was never exploring and learning - not learning the relevant stuff - I was just knowledge gaining, which was less relevant."

Rose acknowledged that it is her unique and personal experiences of learning, and her regular frustrations at not being able to learn, that have given her the courage to lead and support others in their learning. What began as a drive for very personal reasons with her fight against the the negative label of disability, has now evolved into a professional approach to support others in their learning. Rose talked with pride as she recognised how her early experiences have driven her on to continue to learn and achieve, and she is particularly proud that she continues to be motivated by wanting to make things better for others.

"I remember I used to drive to work on regular occasions with anxiety about not being able to do the job that I was being asked to do. So to stop that, I obviously went forward and learnt a bunch of stuff that was going to be helpful. And then what I realised is that I wasn't the only person driving to work with anxiety so whatever I create, has to alleviate that anxiety at the very least... but hopefully give them skills to do their job - because we didn't go on a course to do our job - nobody taught us how to do our job - we learned on the job badly with a few mistakes, so yeah - a big driver was to help other people drive to work and drive home without anxiety."

"We learned on the job badly…"

Rose's story was punctuated by reflections about 'learning on the job' and a perpetual feeling of being plagued by great uncertainty, doubt and anxiety about whether she really possessed the skills she needed to be able to do the job in front of her. At times she talked about a sense of internal conflict and tension between her strong belief in her core capabilities, experience and her ability to learn, versus a great fear that this was simply not enough for her to be able to do a job effectively. However, she now recognised that even the 'bad' experiences when she felt that she had absolutely no idea how to do a job, helped her to learn and further develop her knowledge or experience. As she described one particular experience:

"What's drawn me to learning is being a bad teacher - I was a bad teacher for a while, as in I thought I was creating good learning and I wasn't - and I needed to go and learn more about it to feel morally comfortable with having a job as an educator."

So for now Rose's leadership story pauses. Where she goes next is uncertain, but she trusts in a number of core threads that will continue to help guide and direct her choices and progress. She acknowledges that her ability to think analytically, her appreciation of individual perspective and her fundamental desire to understand learning all form core strands to her philosophy that will always be evident wherever she works. Rose also fundamentally believes in the idea that everyone would benefit from having a guide in any new environment who could help you to navigate the unfamiliar culture of an organisation, and show you how to avoid any danger and pitfalls in the early days.

Finally, and as Rose reflects on her own period of apprenticeship as a leader, there is the acknowledgement that the quality of experience matters. Whilst she did not necessarily appreciate it early on her career, the learning and 'wisdom' she gained along every step of her development has really come to make sense and matter in more recent years.

"…you learn stuff before you are ready to know its value. So first year at University, I can recall now, I had to do a critical analysis of articles - we learnt the process of, not the value of. If I had learned the value of that, I wouldn't have probably been so worried about other people's research because I would have understood the value of critically appraising their work and not see it as judging them or having a go at them, but that's their perspective, and this is how they have built it and this is what sits behind it - I understand it, rather than spending all this time feeling fearful."

6.6.2 Themes

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
Know more: be better	Inherent curiosity and the need to understand	The drive to always ask 'why' and work out how things work
	The more I learn, the more I realise there is to know	Never feeling satisfied until I have fully explored a concept or idea…but even then realising there is still more to discover
	Optimal learning environments	Knowing what I need around me in order to learn and grow
	To make informed decisions	Wanting to understand, to fully grasp a concept or topic in order to make appropriately informed decisions
Growth	Apprenticeship	'Learning on the job'; learning the 'tools of your trade' over time and with great support
	Analytical thinking	The need to understand why something works in a certain way
	Right question; wrong time	Developing the ability to know when to question and/or when to just 'do'
Shaped by the past	Disability: a gift not a label	Something to be embraced and appreciated for the positives it brings, rather than feel defined and restricted by it
	Different perspectives	We may share an experience, but will remember or recall it very differently
	Me and you	Our actions impact on each other and how you treat me influences how I feel; perception may not always match intent
	Good and bad	I learn from all my experiences; the good and the bad. The 'bad' just prompt me to learn even more
Courage	To question, listen and learn	A thirst for knowing 'more' and being hungry to learn. Always wanting to 'know more and be better'
	To explore and find new adventures	Being brave enough to put yourself in situations where you may not know all the answers, but believe that great things might happen
	To acknowledge and embrace failure	It's OK to make mistake along the way; it helps me to learn, grow and develop
	To 'be me'	I know who I am and understand what motivates and inspires me; I listen to my 'gut'
Be me	True to my values	I know what is important to me and why; my actions reflect my values
	More emotionally aware of myself and others	I have become more aware of how I feel and am sensitive to the feelings of others
	Determined to make an impact	Wanting to make a difference and leave something in a better place
	Through maturity and experience	The ability to appreciate how beliefs and behaviours have evolved over time

Great people	Support me and others 'to be better'	By providing a supportive environment and visibly demonstrating trust, actions which actively ignite self-belief and grow confidence
	Guides	People who help you successfully navigate new environments or experiences; people who are there when you need them
	Faith and trust in me	They believe I can do it…

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1 'I know who I am'

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
I know who I am	Values, beliefs and purpose	I know what is important to me; my actions reflect my values
	Self awareness	I know who I am and how my behaviour impacts on others
	Authenticity	I am comfortable with who I am and trust my sense of identity, even when times are tough

The theme of 'I know who I am' was clearly evident across the six narratives, albeit defined uniquely by the narrator of each story. The theme name was taken from the story of Grace, whose thematic analysis map was used as the starting point for the template analysis process.

It is interesting for this theme to reflect back to the literature on authentic leadership (section 2.6) that suggested 'by learning who they really are and what they value, authentic leaders build an understanding and a sense of self that provides a firm anchor for their decisions and actions' (Gardner *et al*, 2005, p.347). There are obvious connections in the narratives with, for example, Jo highlighting how difficult experiences had sometimes caused her to change direction, but that her fundamental values had remained and provided a sense of security. There was also a recognition that values need to be consistently translated into actions and behaviours. Grace, Karl, Rob and Rose made links between their enhanced self-knowledge and growing sense of confidence. Equally, Karl and Rose emphasised the impact of maturity on being able to more fully appreciate how their values and beliefs had evolved and become more prevalent in their thinking.

Sub-theme - Values, beliefs and purpose

Whilst each set of values was unique and shaped by personal life history, there was consistency in that in each individual had conscious awareness of behavioural drivers and a deep understanding of personal motivations. For example, Tom summarised:

"I truly believe it's because it is the compassion for people not just the system of development and I think coaching is a person centred activity."

Tom (*Chapter 6.4; p.203*)

During the construction of this sub-theme, the data revealed that whilst values may be present from an early age, it took time and deliberate reflection for the participants to really understand and be able to consistently articulate their values. For example, Tom attributed his caring nature to his early family experiences, whilst Rob acknowledged that working with people for whom English was not a first language shaped his ability to use humour to navigate difficult situations. Grace repeatedly highlighted how her experiences helped her to work out what was important, while Jo acknowledged that whenever she felt a little 'lost' in terms of identity, having strong values allowed her to rediscover a sense of direction. Such observations reflected the link between authentic leader development and adult development as noted by Day and Sin (2011, p.548) in their comment 'developing leaders are also developing adults'.

In the absence of significant research surrounding leaders within coaching systems, it is interesting to consider this sub-theme in the context of coaching philosophy and practice (Cassidy *et al*, 2009; Jenkins, 2010; Carless and Douglas, 2011). Such studies argue that coaches need to understand that what they 'do' in practice is directly shaped by their personal values and beliefs (Carless and Douglas, 2011, p.1), and that coaching effectiveness is linked to the degree to which coaches can articulate their own coaching philosophy (Cassidy *et al*, 2009). Whilst there does not appear to be a consensus definition of the term 'coaching philosophy', Cushion and Partington (2016) noted the broad recognition that coaching philosophies are 'purposefully and singularly' driven by developing an understanding of personal core values (*ibid.* p.854).

Analysis of these case narratives suggested that effective leadership in coaching systems was founded on a clear understanding of personal values and beliefs, which then translated into consistent behaviour. Interestingly, there are suggestions in existing literature that for some coaches there is a potential 'mismatch' between the 'theory' and 'practice' of coaching philosophy (for example Cassidy *et al*, 2009; Jenkins, 2010). Yet for the successful leaders in this study, the 'match' between philosophy and behaviour became closer over time and with experience. Indeed, it could be argued that the leaders in this study hold philosophies that are based on 'legitimate philosophical thinking' as described by Cushion and Partington (2016, p.863). In this respect, therefore, the findings from this study advance some of the suggestions made in the existing literature.

Sub-theme – Self awareness

Cushion and Partington (2016, p.859) acknowledged that the development of a coaching philosophy 'assumes reflexivity, the ability to see oneself as object, as a defining characteristic where this self-awareness can generate valid knowledge'. Yet, Cushion and Partington (*ibid.*) argued that this need for reflexivity is often problematic in the development of individual coaching philosophies, especially when little attention is paid to the process of reflection within coaching and coach education. What was evident in this study was that each participant demonstrated high levels of self-awareness and was able to engage in meaningful reflective practice. In all cases, there was a deep appreciation of the ways in which their life histories had shaped them, which is reflective of the literature reviewed in section 2.6.6, whereby self-awareness was identified as a critical element of authentic leadership. It is plausible, therefore, to argue that this study supports the argument that all 'authentic leaders experience high levels of self-awareness' (Gardner *et al*, 2005, p.349).

Much has been written about the importance of self-awareness in the psychotherapy and counselling literature, particularly in relation to the therapist/client relationship. Existing literature in this domain suggests that self-aware individuals are able to see themselves as they are and are conscious of their strengths, their weaknesses and how their behaviour impacts upon themselves and others. For example, Chavoix and Insausti (2017, p.1) argue that 'accurate self-awareness is essential for optimal daily life activities, as it allows adapting individual behaviour to different situations according to one's actual abilities. Accurate self-awareness thus prevents risky or withdrawal behaviour'.

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Oden *et al* (2009, p.442) concluded that self awareness in mental health professionals is essential because 'therapists need to be aware of their own biases, values, stereotypical beliefs, and assumptions in order to appropriately serve culturally diverse clients'. The findings of this small study match the current literature from both psychotherapy and authentic leadership with regards to the importance of conscious self-awareness. In turn, this adds weight to the argument that self-awareness matters in coaching leadership; arguably an advancement of thinking from this study that can be applied within the wider coaching sector.

It was interesting to note the recognition by four of the participants in this study that 'memory is subjective'. In the process of recalling their life stories, Tom, Rob, Rose and Jo each recognised that their current experiences and emotions could have an influence on the way in which they chose to recall their story.

As Tom described:

"I reckon if you interviewed me, say today, I might be able to tell you a completely different story…"

Tom *(Chapter 6.4; p.204)*

Kondrat (1999, p.457), argued that 'any self-observation or self-critique is shaped by the identical social conditions that influence all learned characteristics of the self, including the very behaviors being observed'. With Tom's quote as a reference, it is interesting to reflect on the interview method employed to elicit the life history accounts at the heart of this study.

There were several occasions during the data collection phase of this study where participants commented on how helpful the overall research process had been in enabling them to reflect on their experiences in a semi-structured way. One participant noted that it had been particularly useful to have an external voice asking questions and highlighting emerging themes throughout the process because it freed them up to focus purely on their 'objective self' and 'subjective self' (Silva and Duval, 2001, p.230), rather than also having to be the 'person who prompts reflection'.

Interestingly, Carless and Douglas (2011) adopted a similar approach to that used in this study through their use of 'stories' as personal coaching philosophy. They subsequently argued that creating accounts which help coaches understand 'what they do and why they do it' could have real benefit in supporting individuals to question and understand their values and how these drive or determine their behaviours. The data from this study illustrates that structured reflection of this type can indeed help coaches, and it is suggested that this activity could usefully be included in coach education and, more broadly, in the development of effective leaders in coaching.

Sub-theme - Authenticity

The third sub-theme arguably provides 'evidence in action' of the overall theme and acknowledges the repeated occasions when the leaders talked of 'trusting my gut' or 'knowing instinctively that it was time for change'. Having a strong sense of self, an acute self-awareness and deep understanding of personal values, provided an 'anchor point' for these participants. For example, this extract from Karl's narrative reflected on his ability to make a tricky decision without hesitation because he trusted himself:

"On the way home, I chose my route and I actually said 'right, I'm just going to stop playing that sport'."

Karl *(Chapter 6.3; p.191)*

It is also important to note that their strong sense of identity helped participants understand why they sometimes felt uneasy with their current situation. For example, Jo recalled a time she felt 'lost' in an environment and realised that her anxiety was largely due to losing sight of her own identity. From a sport coaching perspective, Jones (2006, p.1018) referenced the importance of 'personal acceptance of "who I am"' as well as the need to follow Denison's (2002) lead in "trusting myself" when contemplating his own development and maturity as a coach. From the six narratives in this study, there is evidence to support much of the existing literature around authentic leadership. Each of the research narratives revealed a strong sense of self and a deep personal desire to bring authenticity into their leadership roles, alongside an acute awareness of how they have developed their personal understanding over time. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that being authentic is an important characteristic of leaders within coaching systems, although there is certainly a need to further explore this from a coaching leadership perspective.

Summary

Findings under the theme of 'I know who I am' align with existing literature in the fields of coaching and coaching psychology, particularly the importance of having a clear understanding of personal philosophy, the ability to be consciously self-aware, and to then behave consistently in line with personal values. The three sub-themes each draw on different aspects from the literature and together construct a strong argument for further research on this topic given the lack of existing research in the specific field of coaching systems leaders. Rob's narrative in 6.5 provides a good illustration of the importance of authenticity in his leadership, particularly when he says:

"…if you were to ask the team, they would say, no, Rob has remained really authentic to who we believed he was and all I ask is the same of them. They stay true to who they really are."

Rob *(Chapter 6.5. p.225)*

It is possible to conclude that for the participants in this study, being an authentic leader with a clear and obvious philosophy matters, and that this strong sense of self has developed over time and through experience. In terms of future recommendations from this study, it is interesting to note the potential that 'a leadership development programme using appropriate methods in the right training environment can "foster" the development of authentic leadership' (Baron, 2016, p.306). Whilst it is arguably challenging to 'teach' authentic leadership *per se*, the findings from this study suggest that, just as Baron argued, supporting individuals to better understand their personal philosophy, develop enhanced self-awareness and appreciate how they translate their values into consistent behaviours, could help to develop authentic leadership within coaching systems in the UK.

7.2   Curiosity

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
Curiosity	About myself	Always learning about my drivers and motivations; continual self-development
	About others	I care about others and want to know what makes them 'tick' so I can help them grow

Built upon Grace's original theme of 'love of learning', this strand was formed and adjusted through the template analysis process to better reflect the underlying sense of curiosity that drove each of the participants' desire to learn. The two sub-themes reflected that the inherent curiosity of these effective leaders manifests itself in two main directions; a desire to learn more about oneself, and through a passion for supporting others and their learning.

*"And I guess that's where my **love** of wanting to help people improve and do things in sport came about."*

Grace (*Chapter 6.1, p.169*)

Berger (2014), Dyer *et al* (2011), Leslie (2015) and Sontheimer (2018), discussed the need for leaders to retain their child-like sense of curiosity if they wished to be successful in modern business practices. For example, Sontheimer (2018, p. 7) proposed that 'the curious practicing physician who relishes (rather than just tolerates) the ongoing requirement for continuing medical education throughout their career will be able to better provide their patients with the most up-to-date medical care.'

Berger (2015b, online) suggested that curious leaders adopt a '"beginner's mind" approach to old problems and stubborn challenges' and that 'they continually examined and re-examined their own assumptions and practices, asking deep, penetrating "Why" questions, as well as speculative "What if" and "How" questions'. This was demonstrated by each participants' burning drive to 'always ask why and understand how things work' (theme descriptor from the narratives of Grace, Rose, Karl and Rob).

A number of recent studies (Fernández-Aráoz *et al*, 2017; Teodorescu *et al*, 2017) proposed that curiosity can help identify leadership potential in aspiring leaders with a high degree of curiosity linked to leadership competencies like collaboration, influence and inclusiveness (Fernández-Aráoz *et al*, 2017). Other studies such as Song *et al*, (2017) and Dametto and Noronha (2019) explored connections between the character trait of openness (McCrae and John, 1992) and effective leadership, particularly within the current digital age. Such studies suggested that people with a high degree of openness (people who are artistic, curious, imaginative, insightful, original and have wide interests; McCrae and John, 1992, p.179) are likely to demonstrate a strong propensity to love learning, lead and be able to influence others.

It is apparent that each of the participants in this study exhibited a number of the traits associated with openness. For example, being original in their approaches to problem solving, having the ability to share insightful personal reflections, and a broad range of expertise and interests (*ibid*.).

It would be interesting for a future study to explore this notion and consider whether there are any particular character traits that can be linked to leaders within coaching systems as has been explored in sectors such as technology (Song *et al*, 2017; Dametto and Noronha, 2019).

Building on the findings of Vallée and Bloom (2005, p. 18), Mallett and Lara-Bercial (2016) uncovered a central theme from their research around 'learning and personal growth' for 'serial winning coaches' (*ibid.*, p.301). They also identified that the high performing coaches have an 'insatiable thirst for knowledge and need to prove self' (Lara-Bercial and Mallett, 2016, p.26). Whilst this research was focussed on practicing coaches, it seems reasonable to suggest a positive connection with this study. All six participants were curious, had a desire to learn and wanted to understand why and how things work; with Karl and Rose also displaying the element of 'needing to prove self' as identified by Mallett and Lara-Bercial.

"…I'm going to prove that if you apply yourself, and actually be pretty good at this and you can win things".
<div align="right">

Karl *(Chapter 6.3, p.191)*
</div>

About self

This sub-theme is inextricably linked to 'I know who I am' (section 7.1) and can be viewed as a precursor for gaining in depth self-knowledge and understanding. This sub-theme describes an inherent and powerful inner drive for an individual to want to better understand themselves. Without this curiosity, it is doubtful whether any of the participants in this study would have developed their acute self-awareness and understanding of their own values, beliefs and behaviours. Alongside their strong sense of self-awareness, each of the research participants exhibited a passionate commitment to continually grow their understanding of self, and an ongoing drive for self-development.

"I found my way. I found a bit of who I was, and I was able to express that…"

Rob (Chapter 6.5, p.224)

It was again necessary to lean towards coaching practitioner research when considering how this study could contribute to wider knowledge. Particularly the number of studies that have examined the underlying characteristics or behaviours of effective coaches (Bell, 1997; Tan, 1997; Gilbert and Trudel, 2001, 2004, 2005; Coté and Gilbert, 2009; Nash *et al*, 2012; Collins *et al*, 2015; Cooper and Allen, 2018). A consistent finding has been the prevalence of 'strong self monitoring skills [and] a desire for lifelong learning' (Gilbert and Trudel, 2005, p.32). Building on such research, Coté and Gilbert (2009, p. 310) identified three domains of coaching knowledge necessary for coaches to be effective.

One of these domains is 'intrapersonal knowledge', or 'the understanding of oneself and the ability for introspection and reflection' (*ibid.* p.311), which aligns with this 'about myself' sub-theme. Throughout each of the interviews there was a sense of the 'constant introspection, review and revision of one's practice' that Coté and Gilbert (2009, p.310) identified as a critical element of coaching effectiveness. For example:

"*I suppose I am a reflector and I also know that I learn through observation, then I sort of developed those sides of my coaching style.*"

Grace (*Chapter 6.1, p.171*)

Gilbert and Trudel (2005, p.35) introduced a 'stages of learning' continuum through which effective coaches progress as they develop expertise, with more experienced coaches adopting a more constructive approach to their own learning. There is some evidence from this study to support this idea, with Tom (Chapter 6.4, p.210) in particular reflecting on how his abilities have evolved over the years:

"*But I like to think I've come to recognise that actually I can be quite intuitive.*"

Given the links to existing coaching literature, it would be interesting for a future study to consider the influence of a practical coaching background on effectiveness as a coaching systems leader. Four of the six participants in this study (Grace, Tom, Jo and Rob) talked at length about the impact of their coaching experiences on their personal philosophy and approach as a systems leader. As Rob reflected (Chapter 6.5, p.255):

"*…and I thought I was a pretty decent coach you know? But actually, I felt I was a better leader though, funnily enough.*"

About others

Each of the six participants articulated a strong desire to help and support others to become 'better' or to develop confidence in their own abilities. Underpinning this curiosity about others appeared to be a genuine concern for others, with the words 'care' and 'compassion' occurring frequently throughout their stories. Tom had the strongest conviction for compassion, but Jo, Grace, Rob and Rose all generated a sense that empathy and kindness were critical to their philosophy. Interestingly, Karl also talked about caring in terms of building a successful team with positive morale, yet did not quite demonstrate the depth of compassion in evidence in the other five participants.

The six cases in this study suggested that showing care and compassion for others is an inherent part of effective leadership within coaching systems. It is interesting that caring has been identified as a core ingredient in effective coach-athlete relationships whereby the process of caring involves a variety of relational activities (Jones, 2009). It is therefore interesting to ponder whether the curiosity of the coaching systems leaders in this study stems from their experiences as a coaches (each participant had experience of coaching at some level)? However, regardless of where this ability was derived, the leaders engaged in this study showed genuine empathy for, and understanding of, the people with whom they work. As Karl (Chapter 6.3, p.201) reflected:

"(It is about) just getting to know people better and actually realising that all of that stuff is as important and powerful as writing a strategy document."

The inter-relational dynamic of the coach-athlete relationship is a much studied subject within the fields of coaching and performance development (Bowes and Jones, 2006; Cushion *et al*, 2006; Jones and Wallace, 2006; Jowett, 2017). The literature describes coaching as a complex activity that has often been over-simplified in models that do not reflect the dynamic nature of the relationship between coach, athlete and others (Jones *et al,* 2014). Coté and Gilbert (2009, p.310) recognised the need for successful coaches to effectively navigate the 'multi-directional' nature of relationships with athletes (and others) in a 'domain' that they called 'interpersonal knowledge'. They advocated the need for successful coaches to 'continuously develop their interpersonal knowledge so that they can communicate appropriately and effectively with their particular athletes and other people' (*ibid.*). In some areas of the literature, this 'navigation' has been described as requiring 'orchestration' (Jones and Wallace, 2005, 2006; Jones and Thomas, 2015; Jones and Ronglan, 2018). Whatever the perspective, the critical point of note for this sub-theme is that the effective coaching systems leaders in this study appeared to acknowledge that leadership 'has to do with people, the interaction that occurs between them and the subsequent relationships they engender' (Jones, 2009, p.377-378).

Summary

The outcomes of this theme are strongly linked to discussion points in the previous theme ('I know who I am'). Together, these two themes/sub-themes suggest that self-directed curiosity is a pre-cursor to developing a greater sense of self, which supports an ability to consciously reflect on personal values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps for future development, it is necessary to consider how this underlying curiosity can be sustained in order to help individuals build the self-awareness that is critical for ongoing personal growth.

In terms of being curious 'about others' and being genuinely interested in their motivations and development, the findings from this study echo much of the research around caring and effective coach-athlete relationships (Jones, 2009; Jowett, 2017). They also support literature that advocates the need for authenticity and connection between leaders and followers within the authentic leadership domain (for example, Shamir and Eilam, 2005, p.400; see Chapter 2, section 2.6.6). Going forward, the challenge for the coaching sector will be to consider ways in which curiosity can be developed and enhanced in order for developing leaders to maintain and sustain their childhood levels of curiosity throughout adult life. The advancement in knowledge suggested by this study is that current research on coaching and the coach-athlete relationship can also be applied to the development of coaching systems leaders. This study raises awareness that these are critical roles for coaching systems development and focuses attention on the skills and experiences that need to be developed for such individuals to be effective in creating, leading and sustaining continuous change.

7.3   Great people

Major theme	Descriptor
Great people	Caring and compassionate people who make me feel safe and believe in, inspire, trust and support me to learn, grow and become the person they know I can be. Supporting me…so I can support others.

Whether recalling the support of parents and step-parents, the teacher who inspired a love of sport, the coach who went out of his/her way to help, or the leader who trusted them with something new; all six of the participants in this study acknowledged the crucial role that 'great people' played in their development over time. Often these 'great people' were behind the scenes and made little direct input into tasks taken on by the participant. Rather, these were people who created safe spaces for individuals to learn and 'give it a go'. With three of the six narratives all revealing a major theme entitled 'great people' it was not difficult to construct and name this overall theme in the template analysis phase. As Grace noted (Chapter 6.1, p.173)

"He gave me that, you know, room to explore and experiment and it meant so much".

Grace, Jo and Tom talked about the strength of family support through childhood and the feeling of safety and security generated through their relationships with parents and siblings. Karl and Grace highlighted the influence of inspiring coaches who had supported them along the way and helped them feel like anything was possible, whilst Jo, Karl, Tom and Grace remembered powerful feelings of belonging when part of a vibrant sports team. All six participants shared stories about 'brilliant' leaders who showed complete faith in their abilities and helped them find an inner self-belief.

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Psychological attachment theory (originating from the work of Bowlby in the late 1950s and 1960s and Ainsworth in the late 1960s and 70s), is based on studies of the interactions between children and their parents. Bowlby defined attachment as a 'lasting psychological connectedness between human beings' (1969, p. 194) and believed that 'humans evolved to form strong emotional bonds with their primary care-givers because doing so increased the probability of survival, especially in childhood' (Finkel and Simpson, 2015, p.6). One of the underpinning tenets of attachment theory is that provision of a 'secure-base' by the primary care-giver 'affords the child a haven of safety and provides the confidence necessary to explore and master ordinary environments' (Waters and Cummings, 2000, p.167).

Whilst this early work from Bowlby (1958) and Ainsworth (1969) focused on parent-child relationships, research into adult attachments has revealed similar secure-base dynamics in other aspects of life. Authors such as Hazan and Shaver (1987) and Rom and Mikulincer (2003) explored Bowlby's attachment theory in the context of adult relationships and uncovered similarities in the emotional bond between parents and their children, and the development of emotional bonds between partners in romantic relationships. A central theme to findings from adult based studies is the feeling of safety generated through the relationship and the belief that each provides the other with a secure base from which to grow (Gillath *et al*, 2016).

Attachment theory has had its critics (for example, Field, 1996; Harris, 1998). For example, Harris (1998) argued that peers have more influence over the development of a child than their parents. This is an interesting argument, as whilst many of the 'great people' referenced by the participants were family members recalled in childhood memories, there were also 'great people' stories of teachers, coaches, managers or colleagues. However, despite such criticism, attachment theory remains relevant and has recently been considered within the leadership field around 'leader-follower' dynamics (Eldad and Benatov, 2018; Mayseless and Popper, 2019). Within this field, there is growing empirical support for a 'perspective of leadership based on attachment theory' (Wu and Parker, 2017, p.1043), where the heart of this approach is the belief that 'leaders, like parents, are figures whose role includes guiding, directing, taking charge, and taking care of others less powerful than they and whose fate is highly dependent on them' (Popper and Mayseless, 2003, p.42).

Research in this field also reports links between leaders who create a secure base environment and positive outcomes for followers in terms of career development (Crawshaw and Game, 2015), engagement (Byrne *et al*, 2017) and self-efficacy (Parker *et al*, 2010). Harms *et al* (2016) suggested that having 'a secure base to fall back on leads individuals to be more willing to engage in exploratory behaviours such as meeting new people [and] exploring new ideas' (p.1855). This perspective has also been adopted in the applied literature with Kohlrieser *et al* (2012) coining the term 'Secure Base Leadership' whereby a secure base is 'a person…that provides a sense of protection, safety and caring and offers a source of inspiration and energy for daring, exploration, risk taking and seeking challenge' (p.8).

Similar conclusions are being reached in the sport coaching literature in terms of secure base attachments and coach-athlete relationships (Davis and Jowett, 2014; Felton and Jowett, 2015). Emerging evidence is suggesting a positive link between relationships built on a secure base and success for the athlete in terms of performance gain, personal outlook and unleashing potential. It is particularly interesting to note the Jowett and Shanmugam (2016, p. 472) suggestion that an athlete's hidden potential can be released when 'coaches and athletes start to form a genuine working relationship, where they trust, respect, believe, commit and work together toward one goal'. Also of noteworthiness for this theme is the role of a 'more capable other' in the learning process (Jones *et al*, 2018, p.4). Connecting the work of Vygotsky to the act and process of sport coaching, Jones et al recognised the 'necessity for someone 'more-able' to guide someone less able through a learning task' (*ibid*.). It is plausible to apply this approach to this study and suggest that the 'great people' behind this theme adopted the role of the 'more capable other' for these participants.

Given the findings of this study, and existing research, it is reasonable to conclude that relationships built on secure bases may be important for the development of leaders in coaching systems. The insight from this study identifies that each of the leaders had several secure bases around them throughout their lives, including relationships with family, friends, team mates, colleagues and perhaps most interestingly in the context of this research, with significant leaders throughout their career. Rose described such people as 'guides' who helped her to navigate new experiences, Rob talked of a senior manager who continued to play a 'mentoring role' in his life, whereas Grace reflected on a 'visionary guy' who still played a significant role in her life.

Layering the findings of this theme with the aforementioned literature, it appears plausible to suggest that in order to develop effectively as leaders, coaching systems managers would benefit from being surrounded by 'great people' who provide a secure base. Given that the six individuals in this study all report positive attachments in their childhood, it is also reasonable to wonder how disrupted or insecure developmental experiences might affect an individuals' ability to become a leader.

An argument also worthy of consideration in the context of this question is the view of Kohlrieser *et al* (2012, p.9) that 'you can only be a secure base for others when you have multiple secure bases yourself'. For future research, it would be interesting to examine the life history experiences of the 'great people' who were referenced in this study. Equally, it would be useful to examine the relationships between the research participants from this study and individuals for whom *they* would be considered a leader. This triangulation of evidence would enable greater understanding of the significance of 'secure base leadership' within coaching systems, particularly when reflecting on the work by individuals such as Jowett (2016; 2017) who have already explored this concept within the coach-athlete dynamic.

It would also be helpful to further examine the attachment styles of the leaders and followers within the various relationship dynamics. For example, Wu and Parker (2017, p.1046) argued that it is possible that 'individuals with insecure attachment styles will perceive less support from leaders no matter how much they receive because their notions of caregiving might block the opportunity to embrace a secure base provided by leaders'.

This hypothesis is built upon studies such as Richards and Schat (2011) and Littmain-Ovadia *et al* (2013) that also propose that the individual attachment style of an individual can affect relationships at work with managers, colleagues and other leaders. This is an area of work that has received little attention to date and, as Wu and Parker (2017, p.1045) recommend, there is a need for an increase in the number or 'longitudinal studies to examine the potential dynamics among research variables in the longer term'.

Summary

There are some significant insights that can be taken forward from this theme into the coaching sector. If it is accepted that effective leaders need to be surrounded by secure base leaders within the workplace, then investment could be made into supporting current line managers and leaders to understand and develop their own secure base leadership style. Kohlrieser *et al* (2012) believed that regardless of your attachment style, you can learn to become a secure base leader. This suggests that even individuals who may have grown up without experiencing their own secure base attachments can still develop into 'great people' in order to support others. This aligns with previously considered authentic leadership literature that acknowledges the significance of managers, coaches and mentors in sustaining authentic leadership behaviours (section 2.6.7). These connections and links are another contribution of this study to new knowledge within the sport coaching sector.

It would also be interesting to further consider the argument that leaders can only become secure bases for others if they have multiple secure bases themselves (Kohlrieser *et al*, 2012). The individuals in this study evidently had significant support from a number of 'great people', which has in turn enabled them to support others in a similar way. Further investigation would be needed to fully understand this dynamic link, but there is enough evidence in this study, and the wider literature, to suggest it is an area worth considering in future. This is relevant for the complex structure of coaching systems, particularly in relation to the connections between managers, leaders, the people who 'train the coaches', the coaches and ultimately the athletes. Focussing on the people who are often behind the scenes yet have significant influence on the output from the systems may be a helpful way to effect positive change in coaching systems in the future. This very much connects with the arguments built in Chapter 3 around the need to focus efforts on developing the 'people' within the systems.

7.4 Nurturing environments

Major theme	Sub theme	Descriptor
Nurturing environments	Great people creating empowering places	Feeling happy and safe in places where I feel encouraged and empowered to learn and grow. Places where I am challenged, trusted and afforded the freedom to explore, knowing I have support if I need it.
	Thriving in a safe, supportive and successful team	Places I feel like I belong and am welcomed for 'being me'. Communities, family or teams where we all positively work for and support each other.

The theme of 'nurturing environments' was generated through frequent memories of 'safe spaces' where learning and growth were encouraged and supported. For example, Tom talked about the nourishing nature of his family, Grace recalled her developmental college environments, and Jo described the safety she felt when in a place or team where she could truly be herself. Whatever the example, the consistent strand was that learning and development were enabled by safe and trusting climates. It is important to note, though, that much consideration was given to whether there was any significant distinction between the themes of 'great people' and 'nurturing environments' as the two elements initially appeared highly connected. However, as the template analysis process developed, the decision was made not only to construct these as two separate, inherently linked themes, but to create two distinct sub-themes for 'nurturing environments'.

Primarily, this decision was determined through the template analysis process identifying that there were differing underlying characteristics of the 'environments' to which the research participants referred. Whilst some recalled environments that had been specifically created by the 'great people' around them, others related to the wider notion of being in a 'high-performing' team environment (specifically Grace, Jo, Karl and Tom). These references were not directly linked to one particular individual, rather were linked to overall culture and 'sense of belonging' created by the collective.

The second influencing factor was that the use of template analysis as a methodological tool allows for integrative themes to connect and overlap (King 2012; 2015). King acknowledged that whilst the outputs of template analysis are usually displayed in a linear fashion, this is not necessarily always the case. Template analysis also allows the researcher to actively develop connections between themes; a particularly useful point when using the outcomes of a research project to develop a model (King, 2015), which was the intention for this study (Chapter 8).

Great people creating empowering places

In the sport coaching literature, it has been consistently argued that the environment surrounding coach and learner is a fundamental part of the sports coaching process (Jones *et al*, 2004; Gomes *et al*, 2018; Jones *et al*, 2018). For example, several studies (Jowett, 2017; Jowett *et al*, 2017) identified that 'the learning environment created and supported by coach and learner [is] essential in order to nurture the coaching process' (Cooper and Allen, 2018, p.160). A number of studies (Duda and Appleton, 2016; Jowett *et al*, 2017; Cronin and Allen, 2018) adopt self-determination theory (SDT) as a basis for examining the environment for the coach-athlete relationship because it is believed to provide 'an appropriate framework for investigating this topic' (Matosic *et al*, 2017, p.254). Of particular interest to this study is the work that considers the environments in which athletes and coaches are able to perform effectively (Stebbings *et al*, 2012; Ng *et al*, 2012; Matosic *et al*, 2017).

SDT proposes that environments meeting the human needs of competence (feelings of effectiveness in meeting environmental demands), autonomy (feeling authentic and actively inputting to decisions and outcomes) and relatedness (feeling connected with and cared for by others in the environment), are more likely to lead to effective or healthy human functioning, (Deci and Ryan, 1985; 2000). Amongst proponents of the SDT approach in sport coaching, there appears to be collective agreement around the connection between 'autonomy-supportive' environments and positive athlete performance (Cronin and Allen, 2018; Jowett *et al*, 2017; Ruiz *et al*, 2019). There is, however, a counter-view that perceives 'athlete-centred philosophy grounded in elements of self-determination' to be rather simplistic (Jones *et al*, 2018).

SDT, however, does provides one way to consider the connection between the behaviours of the coach and the environment that they create with their athletes. For example, Stebbings *et al* (2012, p.485) concluded 'when coaches function within an adaptive environment, this will indirectly lead coaches to create a healthy interpersonal climate for their athletes'. Applied to this study, it can reasonably be argued that 'great people' created an 'autonomy supportive environment' (i.e. 'nurturing environments') in which participants were able to consistently experience competence, connectedness and relatedness. It thus seems plausible to argue that the environment in which coaching systems leaders learn throughout their career has a significant impact on their future coaching systems leadership effectiveness.

It could also be suggested that the 'nurturing environments' reported by the participants in this study were created by 'great people' who had experienced similar nurturing environments in their lives; with the coaching systems leaders in this study then recreating their experiences with others. This feels particularly significant when reflecting on the overall research question '*what can be learned*?' as it suggests the importance of the everyday working environment for the growth and development of effective coaching systems leaders. Where this working environment is supported by managers and colleagues who exhibit autonomy-supportive behaviours, leaders will be able to find competence, autonomy and relatedness; yet if the working environment is more heavily saturated by controlling behaviour, then learning is potentially limited. For example, Duda and Appleton (2016, p.375) identified that 'a coach who is more controlling in his/her interpersonal style will tend to be pressuring, coercive and intimidating when interacting with athletes'.

It is also important to acknowledge that managers and colleagues within a working environment are influenced by their own experiences. An understanding of the antecedents to behaviour in this instance helps to potentially 'break the cycle' and replace controlling environments with a higher proportion of 'nurturing' ones. This is an area of future research that would be interesting and beneficial to explore in the context of coaching systems leaders, perhaps beginning with exploring the life histories of the 'great people' identified by the participants in this study.

It is interesting here to reflect back to the previous chapter and the argument from Kohlrieser *et al* (2012, p.9) that 'you can only be a secure base for others when you have multiple secure bases yourself' (Chapter 7.3). In seeking to answer the research question from this study, it is reasonable to ponder whether you can only really be an effective coaching systems leader for others, and create suitably autonomy supporting environments, if you have experienced such environments yourself. Accepting the Kohlrieser *et al* argument, it is plausible to propose that great people create the nurturing environments necessary for growth and development; and all great people need to have experienced their own nurturing environments in order to be able to create them for others. As Grace summarised (Chapter 6.1, p.174):

"…but I also know that I was only able to do it because of the environment around me and the way in which we were being managed."

Thriving in a safe, supportive and successful team

Each research participant, at some point in their stories, recalled times when they felt a significant sense of belonging in an environment where they felt safe, supported and able to perform effectively. For example:

"You know I was back in a team environment. I was back feeling part of something bigger than me. Not just the department, but the school."
Jo (*Chapter 6.2, p.182*)

"…and I just remember we had a really great team atmosphere – socially, in the game, and I think that element of the social being quite important to how you perform, and the fact that people getting on actually did matter to performance…."
Tom (*Chapter 6.4, p.206*)

Built on the premise that 'human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.497), research on the concept of belonging has grown extensively over the past 20 years (Pillow *et al*, 2015, p.259). Whilst much work has considered the notion of belonging in areas such as higher education (Pillow *et al*, 2015; Masika and Jones, 2016; Ahn and Davis 2019) and marketing (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Wann *et al*, 2017; Harris and Dacin, 2019), very few studies have investigated belonging within the domains of sport and/or sports coaching. As Allen (2006, p.388) identified 'relatively little is known about belonging in sport', which is surprising, given Allen's recognition that 'individuals have a need for belongingness and seek out social contexts, such as sport, in which to satisfy this need' (Allen, *ibid*.).

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Reflecting on the experiences of the coaching systems leaders in this study, it appeared that having a strong sense of belonging to a particular community, group or team had significant impact upon their development as an effective leader. The stories that each shared about times when they felt empowered to learn and grow because of the environment in which they were living or working, provide a basis on which to argue that belonging plays a significant part in a leaders' development. For example, Grace shared positive memories of belonging to something special, with Karl (Chapter 6.3, p.201) concisely capturing his thoughts on being part of a successful group by highlighting:

"It's like if you can't build that, kind of, team spirit and that real positive culture, you're really not gonna achieve anything particularly big."

In his work on belonging, Antonsich (2010, p.649) argued that 'to feel at home in a place is not just a personal matter, but also a social one' and emphasised the link between individual feelings of belonging and the nature of the environment into which one is venturing (i.e. inclusive or exclusive). He suggested that not everyone will necessarily feel 'at home' in every environment as the 'politics of belonging' (*ibid.* p.649) will impact on whether an individual feels able to connect and fully feel part of a group. This idea echoed the sporting perspective of Allen (2006, p.388) that 'belonging [is] viewed as a sense of psychological connection with others in the sport setting and characterised by a sense of caring and security where individuals feel that they are included and respected for who they are'. It is interesting in this context to consider a quote from Jo, where she recalled (Chapter 6.2, p.183):

"I didn't like the environment actually. A couple of times when I'd gone along as a sort substitute or went along to get a bit of an experience, I found it quite a threatening place that I didn't really feel comfortable."

Jo's feelings of discomfort with the environment resulted in her disengaging, feeling unsafe, or that she did not belong, which together impacted upon her decision to discontinue her involvement with this group.

In this study it is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that nurturing environments with an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere played a significant role in the development of these coaching systems leaders. Taking this forward into the context of the overall research question, there is arguably much to be learned in terms of how workplaces actively support the ongoing personal development of their people within a safe, supportive and successful environment. Edmondson (1999; 2019) developed the concept of psychological safety, defined as 'a shared belief that the team is safe for risk taking' (1999, p.354), to describe this idea. Her work examining team effectiveness and learning, has been applied within numerous work environments (Agarwal and Farndale, 2017; Hans and Gupta, 2018; Harvey *et al*, 2019) and also in examining inclusiveness in leadership (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006; Lee *et al*, 2018). This would be an interesting lens through which to further explore the subject of belonging in relation to sport, coaching and the development of effective coaching systems teams and their leaders.

Summary

A consistent strand throughout this study relates to the contextualisation of professional learning in order for it to be meaningful and result in lasting behaviour changes. For example, in relation to leader development, Gurdjian *et al* (2014, p.123) argued that 'burgeoning leaders, no matter how talented, often struggle to transfer even their most powerful off-site experiences into changed behaviour on the front line'. Debate around the impact of continuing personal development (CPD) has featured heavily in recent years across a number or sectors including teacher education (Armour *et al*, 2017; de Paor and Murphy, 2018), sports coach education and development (Griffiths *et al*, 2018; Phelan and Griffiths, 2018), and leader development (Ardichvili *et al*, 2016; Edmonstone *et al*, 2019). There are also links to the literature around learning environments and authentic leadership development (section 2.6.7).

When contemplating the outcomes of this 'nurturing environments' theme in terms of future learning and development, it is essential to consider the development of the coaching system leader and the environment in which they work. Using existing work on the coach-athlete relationship through the perspective of SDT, it can be argued that in developing coaching systems leaders for the future, equal attention needs to be paid to the behaviour of current managers and senior individuals within the sporting systems if genuine change is to be created and sustained. Coaching systems leaders of the future need leadership development programmes to support their learning beyond the 'classroom' and, in instances where manager influence is potentially controlling and directive, will require ongoing support in managing and addressing their everyday working culture in order to seek the necessary 'nurturing environment'.

7.5 Courage

Major theme	Descriptor
Courage	Being brave enough to create and pursue opportunities where I am not certain of the outcome but believe that great things might happen because I have faith in my own values, confidence in myself and the people around me.

The notion of courage can be traced back to the works of Plato and Aristotle (Palanski *et al*, 2015, p.298), however, 'despite its perceived importance, a clear, concise operational definition is difficult to come by (Palanski *et al*, *ibid*)'. When examining the literature linked to courage, it is easy to understand the difficulties as authors consider courage in terms of both a behaviour and a trait, view the concept through differing perspectives, and also perceive courage to have 'many possible dimensions' (Howard and Cogswell, 2018, p.1).

For example, Bangari and Prasad (2012) considered courage in terms of 'physical courage' or 'moral courage' in relation to ethical leadership at times of national crisis; Hutchinson *et al* (2015) examined the complexity of moral courage in mental health nursing; and Clark *et al* (2018) investigated the relevance of leader courage in creating and sustaining organisational change. Yet despite the increasing focus on courage as an important underlying leadership behaviour or trait, there remains a gap in the literature in relation to courage and organisational research (Amos and Klimoski, 2014, p.114). There is recognition that this is beginning to change (Palanski *et al*, 2015, p.297); for example, a number of studies have begun to explore the characteristic of courage in great leaders (Sosik and Cameron, 2010; Gentry *et al*, 2013; Koerner, 2014).

Courage was identified as the final theme for this study after considerable reflection on how this trait or behaviour manifested itself within each of the six narratives. For five of the coaching systems leaders, courage, in one form or other, was developed as a specific theme through the individual thematic analysis work. Karl's story produced the theme of 'brave decisions', Rose had 'courage' for one of her core themes, and Rob's story developed the theme 'follow your heart'. For the sixth participant, Jo, whilst courage was not evident as a standalone theme, her story did elicit a sense of bravery in times of challenge and unexpected circumstance. Two examples of courage within the narratives are:

"I had no idea how I was going to earn money or anything like that, but I just knew it was right for me."

Grace (Chapter 6.1, p.172)

"…but I kind of had this epiphany moment when I knew it had to be my career. I didn't mind what it meant in terms of reward, I just knew I needed to pursue it."

Rob (*Chapter 6.5, p.217*)

Whilst a consistent definition of 'courage' remains elusive within the literature, the definition offered by Rate *et al* (2007, p.95) appears to be referenced as the most supported (Amos and Klimoski, 2014; Howard and Cogswell, 2018). Rate *et al* (*ibid.*) defined courage as '(a) a wilful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear'. It is easy to see why this definition is frequently cited, as it does offer a concise summary of the work in this area.

For example, Sosik and Cameron (2010, p.255) argued that 'courage entails emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of danger, uncertainty, risk, adversity, and includes the character strengths of bravery, persistence, integrity and vitality'. Whereas, Byrne-Jiménez and Yoon (2019, p.6) noted that 'courage is not the absence of fear, but rather overcoming it [and] leaders' courage to persevere comes from an unwavering commitment to a vision'. Tom acknowledged his emotions around fear when he reflected that:

"I understand it, rather than spending all this time feeling fearful."

Tom (Chapter 6.4, p.240)

The descriptor for the theme of courage in this study was built around a number of core strands from the narratives that strongly aligned with key elements from the various definitions of courage. Each of the stories from the coaching systems leaders included examples of courageous decisions being made, or actions that required great courage. Reflecting on the narratives as a collective, it was possible to view such choices or actions within the bounds of the Rate *et al* (2007, p.95) definition of courage. For example, the times Karl made choices about his sporting participation (Chapter 6.3), or the choices made by Grace in developing her career (Chapter 6.1) or the time when Rob left a secure, well-paid job with a guaranteed future to pursue a dream of working outdoors (Chapter 6.5). These all demonstrated the conscious, considered, risky and frightening choices made by courageous individuals. As described in their words:

"And I've been sensing for a wee while now that something new, a change is required. I'm going to prove that I can make something work on my own. And my gut instinct has been correct on many occasions, and maybe I should just trust it more often."

Karl *(Chapter 6.3, p.201)*

"In terms of the life I wanted to live, it wasn't going to tick those boxes."

Rob *(Chapter 6.5, p.217)*

An area of the literature of particular interest for this study is that which considers the antecedents to courage (Hutchinson *et al*, 2015; Howard and Cogswell, 2018), and in particular the link between character, integrity and courage (Palanski and Yammarion, 2007; Palanksi *et al*, 2015; Seijts and Gandz, 2018). Such studies provide a sound basis from which to construct an answer to the 'what can be learned from this research' question. Howard and Cogswell (2018, p.2) proposed that although little is known about the antecedents of courage and the manner in which such elements influence behavioural change, further investigation of such character traits and behaviour in leaders 'could benefit the success of the organisation as well as the employees themselves'. Seijts and Gandz (2018, p240) studied the link between certain character traits (including courage) and leadership effectiveness and argued that understanding such connections could help organisations consider how they 'might develop character among all leaders but especially those younger, less experienced leaders who will become tomorrow's leaders of change projects'. These two studies provide an aligned context for this particular research, especially given that there is a 'connection between success in leading deep and comprehensive change and the character of those who succeed in change leadership roles' (Seijts and Gandz, *ibid***.**).

This study suggests that these effective leaders were able to make conscious, considered and bold decisions even in difficult times, because they had a strong sense of 'who they were' and trusted their own decision making. Difficult choices were often made easier because of the 'great people' supporting them and the security of the 'nurturing environments' in which they were able to 'give things a go' even when the outcome was uncertain. The narratives also demonstrated that these leaders consistently behaved in line with their stated values and beliefs; that is, their actions consistently matched their words.

Much has been written in existing literature about the notion of integrity, although as Palanski and Yammarion (2007, p.171) acknowledged, 'everyone seems to want integrity in their leaders, but there appears to be great confusion about what it is or how to foster it'. Palanski and Yammarion defined integrity as 'consistency of an acting entity's words and actions' (p.178) and argued that integrity, or 'consistency in adversity' would be better considered as 'courage' (p.180). Palanski *et al* (2015) further explored the connections between courage and integrity in effective leadership and concluded that 'people infer courage when they see consistent behaviour under conditions of adversity'. Therefore, as 'values can have a direct and indirect (through self-identity) effect on behaviour' (Sosik and Cameron, 2010, p.252), it is plausible to surmise that the effective leaders in this study were able to behave courageously because they had a clear sense of self ('I know who I am', Chapter 7.1). They were also consciously self-aware (curiosity, sub theme 1, Chapter 7.2), and consistently brought their values to life through their actions, particularly in times of adversity or challenge.

For example, Tom and Grace talked about courage in terms such as:

"…I don't shy away from challenge, I think I'm quite…I can be quite swift at saying 'I don't think I'd work with that person, and 'I'd love to work with that person''."

Tom (*Chapter 6.4, p.214*)

"But it's having that courage and confidence to say 'OK, no, this isn't me."

Grace (*Chapter 6.1, p.177*)

Summary

There are two key strands from the literature that are therefore advanced by this study. The first accepts that courage is a character strength whereby effective leaders are able to maintain integrity under adversity (Sosik and Cameron, 2010; Sosik *et al*, 2018), and the second acknowledges that the development of courageous leadership behaviour is supported by a number of antecedents (Howard and Cogswell, 2018). Positioning the outcomes of this study against such literature supports the proposal that leaders who understand their own values and consistently behave in line with these values, particularly when faced with difficult decisions and challenging situations, can be considered to demonstrate courage. It is also plausible to propose that courage is a leadership behaviour which can be developed over time and with support.

It is interesting to consider the development of courage in the context of the authentic leadership construct reviewed in chapter 2.6. There is a consistency of language across the courage literature and that of authentic leadership; for example, identity, self-awareness, understanding of personal philosophies and appreciation of how values and beliefs manifest themselves in behaviours. This study, accepting the potential limitations of size, proposes that individuals who 'know who they are' and are supported by great people in nurturing environments to further explore their behaviours, are more likely to develop the level of courage required to be effective leaders in the ever-changing, and often turbulent, coaching systems landscape.

Linked to this context, Chen *et al* (2019, p.2) posited that individuals learn many leadership and pro-social behaviours by observing other individuals and leaders (reference to social learning theory; Bandura, 1977). This helps to build up a plausible explanation as to how the leaders in this study developed their own particular characteristics and strengths. There are also distinct connections with the literature on authentic leadership development discussed in chapters 2.6.3 to 2.6.7, particularly in relation to the influence of 'learning environment and support' (chapter 2.6.7) on leader development. Seijts and Gandz (2018, p.248) reflected that 'senior leaders can also coach and mentor individuals on the leader character dimensions and elements' and stressed the need for this support to be practically applied in order to connect any learning into the reality of the workplace. Again, it is a useful point of reference for contemplating the research question of 'what can be learned?', particularly when positioned in the context of authentic leadership.

7.6   The final template

The choice of template analysis as a tool for the cross-case analysis process was, as previously highlighted (Chapter 7.4, Nurturing Environments), a deliberate one, given the desire to develop a model that can be used within the coaching systems sector in future. As identified by King (2012; 2015), template analysis is a methodological tool that not only recognises that individual themes will overlap, and also enables the researcher to actively develop connections between themes; both of which are particularly useful when seeking to develop a model (King, 2015).

Before presenting the proposed model that has been constructed from this research, it is helpful to reflect on the final template that was created from the cross-case analysis phase of the data analysis. Figure 3 below provides a visual representation of the resultant template which has been created in a way that seeks to demonstrate:

1. The individual, separate themes (as discussed in sections 7.1 to 7.5 above)
2. Areas of overlap across themes
3. Connections between themes

Figure 5: **The template analysis output**
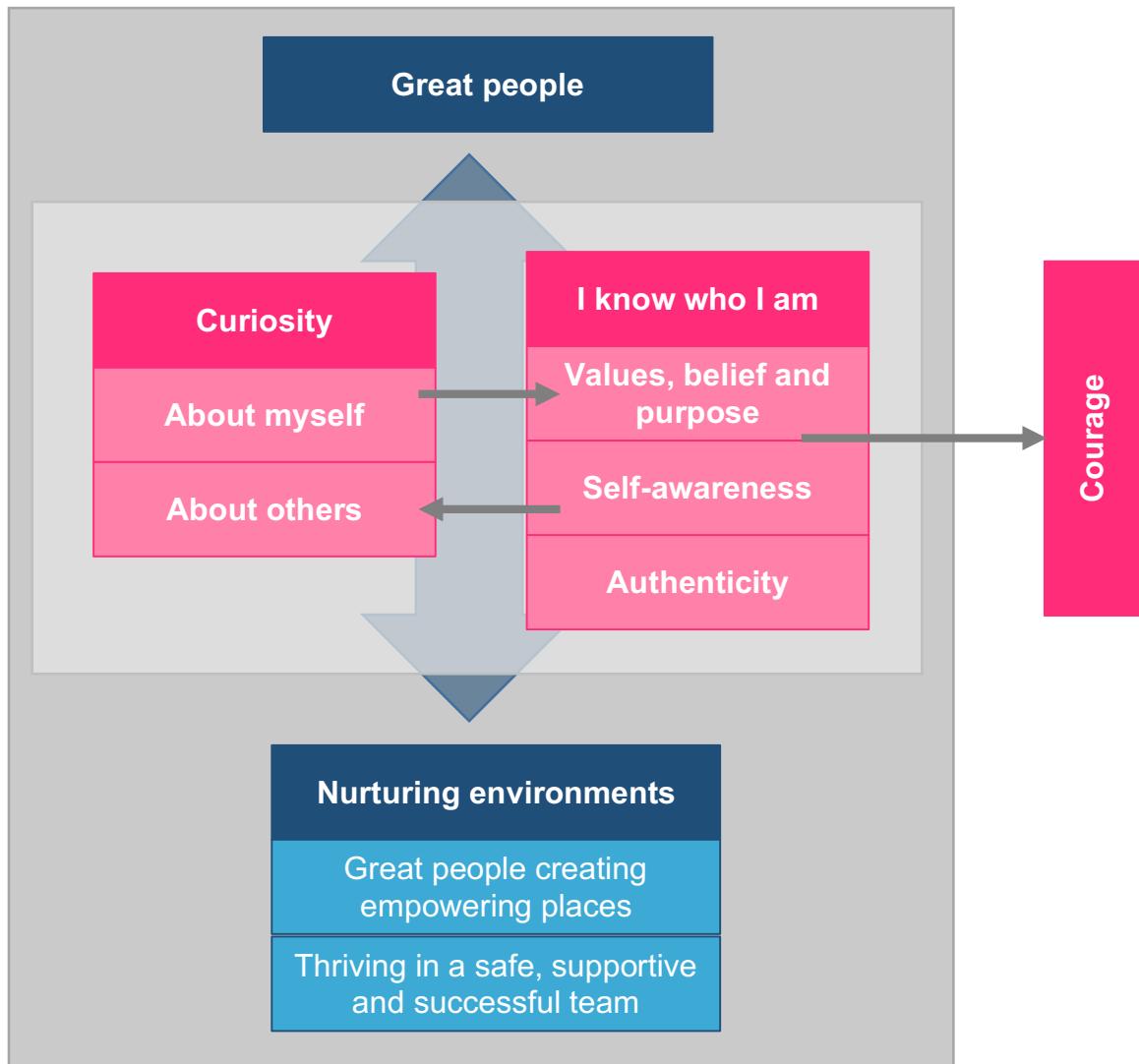
The associated narrative

Given the narrative basis for this study, the following paragraphs are offered as the story that explains the diagram. Taken together, the diagram and the narrative provide a concise summary of the constructed themes, their connections and meanings. It is this summary narrative that has then been translated into the model for coaching systems leader development presented in Chapter 8, with the detail from the themes discussed throughout this chapter providing the insight and critical analysis that has enabled the conclusions to be drawn.

Curiosity and 'I know who I am'

Effective coaching systems leaders develop a strong sense of personal identity over time and know who they are in terms of their values, beliefs and personal purpose. They develop this through their inherent sense of inner curiosity and the desire to better understand what drives and motivates them to continually grow and learn. Their acutely developed self-awareness enables them to consistently reflect on their own behaviour and appreciate how their actions impact upon others. They are genuinely interested in learning about and caring for the people around them, and have a strong desire to support others to be the best version of themselves.

Great people and nurturing environments

Leaders are surrounded by great people throughout their lives; people who guide, nurture, support and trust them to develop and uncover their own solutions to complex problems. They benefit from nurturing environments created by the 'autonomy-supporting' behaviours of such great people as they confidently explore their surroundings, safe in the knowledge that they are trusted to simply 'give things a go'. Equally, these leaders have experienced the comfort of belonging in environments where they have been able to 'be themselves' and develop strong, meaningful connections with others. They are then able to recreate these nurturing environments for others because they have experienced and learned from them on many occasions.

Courage

As a culmination of the elements within these four themes, effective coaching systems leaders demonstrate great courage in their behaviour and decisions. They exhibit integrity, even under the greatest pressure, and their actions consistently match their words. They are able to lead authentically and courageously because they have confidence in who they are, understand how their actions impact upon others and care about the environment they create and the leadership they demonstrate. Courage is an outcome of the other themes being fully developed and explored.

CHAPTER 8:   TOWARDS A MODEL FOR COACHING SYSTEMS

8.1   Introduction

This penultimate chapter of this study presents the third output of the research in the form of a proposed model for coaching systems leadership development within UK. Specifically, this section seeks to articulate the core learnings that have been elicited from analysis of the narratives of the participants in this research and present these in a way that can inform the future development of effective change leadership in sport coaching systems. The model proposed below has therefore been primarily informed by the data from this study and is also carefully positioned within existing literature from the wider fields of sports coaching and leadership.

Whilst initially it was not the intention of this research to produce a specific model for leadership in coaching systems, it became evident during the data collection and analysis phases that the presentation of a model would be a beneficial and helpful way in which to present the output of this study. Given the prevalent use of models 'of' and 'for' the coaching process within sport (Lyle, 2002; Cushion *et al*, 2006; Coté and Gilbert, 2009), the proposal of a model 'for' coaching systems in order to answer the overall research question appeared to be a logical choice.

8.2   Pause for thought

Before presenting the model a few notes of caution are offered. Firstly, readers of this model will be positioned differently in terms of their perspective and position as related to coaching systems within the UK. This, in turn, will affect the ways in which the model will be read. For example, a reader who is a core 'part' of the system and who has a vested interest in creating success may read this differently to an 'outsider', looking in at this complex and dynamic world. As the 'third corner' of this research triangle (alongside the researcher and the research participants), the reader's positioning and perspective will influence how the proposed model and suggested approach are viewed.

Inevitably, individual epistemology will influence how this information is received as personal values, beliefs and views on coaching systems in the UK will affect the interpretation of what is presented. Readers should therefore acknowledge their view before reviewing this model in order that a constructive conversation may then take place on the meaning and relevance of the model going forward. Individuals are encouraged to begin from a position of curiosity about what is presented in order that researcher and reader may together learn and reflect on what might be possible for the future. As Riessman (1993, p.15) identified, 'obviously, the agency of the teller is central to composing narratives from personal experience, but so are the actions of others – listener, transcriber, analyst, and reader'.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that the output presented below has been influenced by the researcher perspective and research paradigm as detailed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4). This model is not presented as the only model for the future, nor as definitive or with the assumption that the evolved themes will always be present in any situation; rather the suggestion that there is some valuable learning to be taken from looking at how these six, successful individuals have navigated their way through their particular contexts. This model is knowingly presented as one version of the 'truth' that has been developed and evolved within this particular reflexive, case study framework, but with full cognisance of the multiple realities that could exist within the inter-relational world of coaching systems.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge both the value and limitations of using a model to summarise the outputs of this research study. With a lack of literature specifically related to leaders in coaching systems, it has, throughout this study, been necessary to turn to the sport coaching literature for reference and context; it is again useful to consider sport coaching work at this point. Lyle (2002, p.80) proposed that models within sport coaching are a useful tool as they provide a 'representation of the relational aspects of (usually) complex phenomena by using symbols or simplified descriptions that help conceptualise the phenomenon itself'. However, Lyle also acknowledged that 'there are many limitations in building and displaying models' (p.81). Cushion *et al* (2006, p.83) explored these limitations further as they concluded that 'the analysis suggests that the current set of models result in a representation of the coaching process that is often reduced in complexity and scale, and the essential social and cultural elements of the process are often underplayed'.

8.3   A model for coaching systems

In making a choice to propose a model for coaching systems leader development, reference has been made to the work of Coté and Gilbert (2009) regarding their integrative definition of coaching effectiveness and expertise. In their comprehensive examination of the various conceptual models of coaching since the 1980s, Coté and Gilbert concluded that despite the 'lack of precision in terminology and approach' and a singular failure to relate effectiveness and expertise literature to any conceptual understanding of the coaching process' (Lyle, 2002, p.251), it was possible to identify 'three common variables that affect coaches' work' (Coté and Gilbert, 2009, p.309).

Using these three variables, or components, Coté and Gilbert (*ibid.*, p.316) proposed the following 'integrative definition of coaching effectiveness':

'The consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection and character in specific coaching contexts.'

Cote and Gilbert chose to present their work through the offering of a number of definitions, and therefore whilst their work has been considered a 'model', this was perhaps not their original intent. Whilst the Coté and Gilbert work is oft quoted within the sport coaching research (according to Google Scholar, the paper has been cited in 734 publications, for example, Stoszkowski and Collins, 2016; Holt at al, 2017, Boardley, 2018), it does not appear to have been grasped in its entirety or translated into a model for effective coaching.

The Coté and Gilbert work provided a strong foundation on which a tentative and grounded model to understanding and informing leadership within UK coaching systems could begin to be constructed. The following paragraph, model and further descriptions have therefore been developed as a means to articulate the outputs of this study in a meaningful and practical manner. The original Coté and Gilbert paper did not include a diagrammatic representation of their work, therefore the model presented in Figure 4 below is offered as an original visual interpretation of their work in the context of the outcomes of this study.

To paraphrase Cote and Gilbert (2009, p.309), 'the definition of coaching system leader effectiveness and expertise proposed in the model below, integrates the three components by considering the interaction of **leader knowledge** and **leader/follower outcomes** in **specific leadership and working contexts**'. Equally, the model below is built on a proposed working definition of coaching systems leadership effectiveness as *'the consistent application of integrated intrapersonal, interpersonal and professional knowledge to enhance the competence, confidence, connection and character of self and others within a range of leadership and coaching systems contexts'* (adapted for coaching systems leadership as described above, from Coté and Gilbert, 2009, p.316).

Figure 6:   **Proposed model for coaching systems leader development**
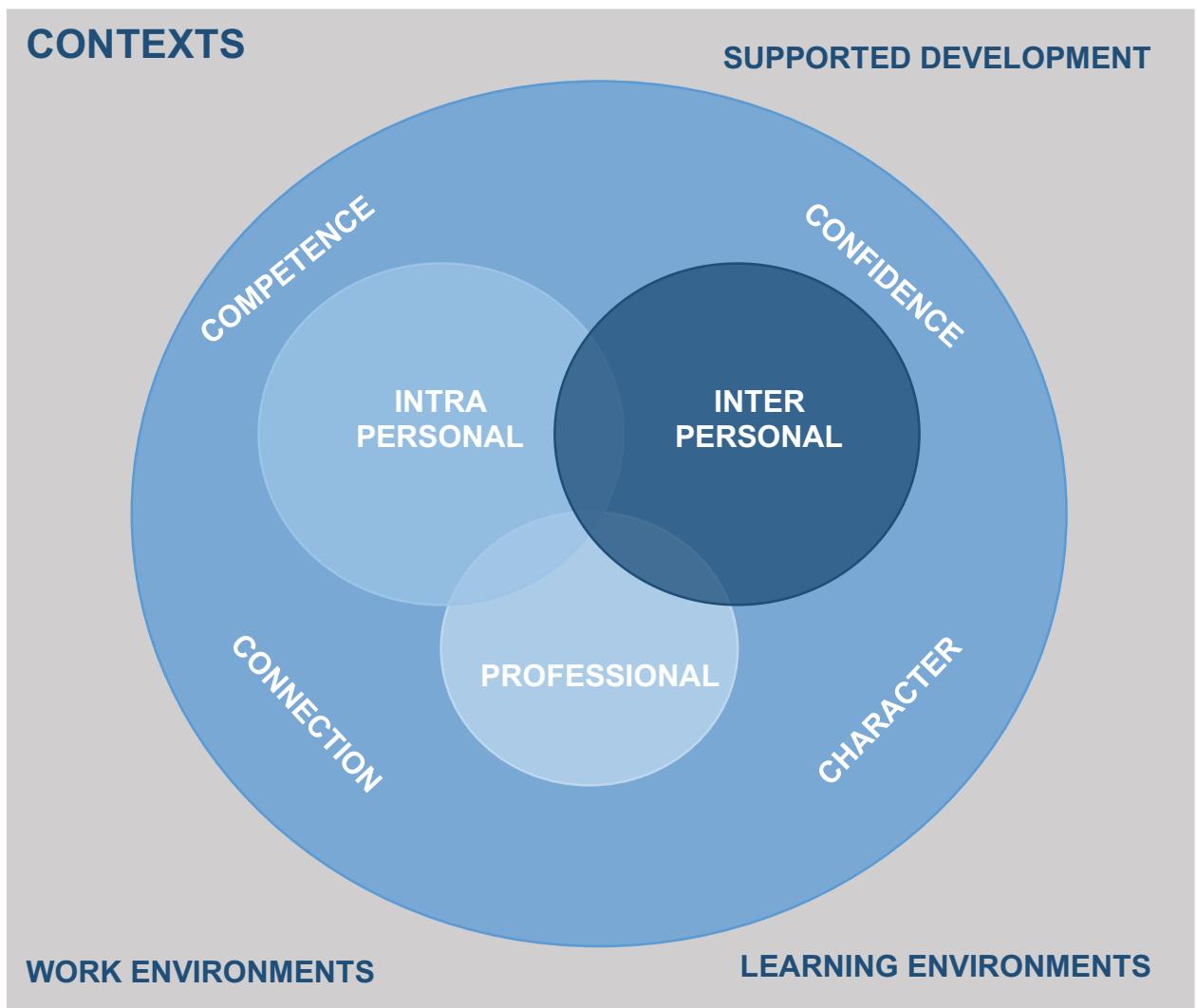
N.B. The diagram above and definitions described below have all been created using the outputs of this research study with the Coté and Gilbert (2009) definition of coaching effectiveness as a base. As such, each has been exclusively developed for this study and should be considered as original concepts, creations and connections.

Table 6: **Component definitions: Coaching systems leader development model**

Adapted from Coté and Gilbert (2009)

Model component	Sub-component	Meaning
Coaching knowledge	Intrapersonal	The understanding of oneself and the ability for introspection and reflection.
	Interpersonal	The ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with others in a variety of contexts.
	Professional	Expert knowledge relevant to role and context of coaching systems; also knowledge relating to leadership, behaviour change and effective people development.
Leader/follower outcomes	Competence	Highly developed skills within the contexts of coaching systems, leadership, behaviour change and people development.
	Confidence	Internal sense of overall positive self worth.
	Connection	Positive bonds and social relationships with people inside and outside of coaching systems.
	Character	Respect for self and others (morality), integrity, empathy and responsibility; also encompasses care and compassion.
Leadership contexts	Learning environments	The environments in which individuals learn to be effective leaders; includes formal development programmes, in-situ learning, coaching, mentoring etc.
	Work environments	The ability to adapt personal behaviour in line with the demands and needs of the shifting coaching systems environment. An appreciation of context is critical to understanding and delivering effective leadership.
	Supported development	The people who provide learning and development support for the individual; includes formal course tutors, line managers, peers, colleagues, coaches, mentors and other significant personnel.

Table 7:   Connecting the research themes and the model

Research theme	Leader knowledge	Outcomes	Contexts
I know who I am	Intrapersonal Interpersonal	Connection Character	Learning and work environments
Curiosity	Interpersonal Professional	Competence Connection	Learning and work environments
Great people	Interpersonal Professional	Connection	Supported development
Nurturing environments	Intrapersonal	Character Confidence	Learning environments
Courage	Intrapersonal Interpersonal Professional	Character Confidence	Learning and work environments

8.4   Coaching systems leader development narrative

8.4.1 Bringing it all together

This model, based on work by Coté and Gilbert (2009), brings together the five core themes identified through the template analysis process and presents them in a structure that could now be practically applied within the context of coaching systems leader development. The coaching process has been recognised as a 'negotiated and problematic social practice - an activity that is both situationally and consensually constructed, while comprising interactions between a myriad of actors in context' (Edwards and Jones, 2018, p.745).   Equally, the process of leadership is acknowledged as a 'dynamic process involving multiple individuals spanning various levels of analyses, the content aspects of this process include a variety of interpersonal factors', (Day *et al*, 2014, p.68). This study argues that the process of becoming an effective coaching systems leader is as negotiated and problematic as coaching itself, and yet has, to date, largely been ignored in the academic and applied fields. This study thus presents a starting point from which future work in this crucial area could be evolved.

Coté and Gilbert (2009, p.310) argued that whilst 'it has become apparent that professional knowledge alone is insufficient to become an effective coach' there remains an 'almost exclusive focus on professional knowledge by traditional coach education programmes'.   Coach education programmes have also been widely criticised in the academic literature for delivering content that does not 'match up to the reality of the activity' (Jones and Turner, 2006, p.184), and remain 'divorced from the knotty reality of practice' (Jones *et al*, 2011).

The over-emphasis on professional knowledge in development programmes is also acknowledged as a challenge within business leader development. For example, Byrne *et al* (2018, p.284) argued that 'to continue to develop business students who have competence in finance, strategy and marketing, yet lack the strength of character to fully exercise the competence to achieve sustained excellence, means that we are training future business leaders who are unable to effectively respond to situational pressures in a character-based manner'. Kiersch and Peters (2017, p.149) supported this perspective and proposed that 'if student leadership could be better linked with ethics and more strongly reflect the cumulative evidence of effective leadership in organisations, we can expect to see a positive ripple effect within communities'.

Each of the components of the model is now discussed in greater detail.

8.4.2 Component 1 – Intrapersonal knowledge

The model and approach proposed suggests that leader development in coaching systems should begin with a focus on building effective intrapersonal knowledge; i.e. the understanding of oneself and the ability for introspection and reflection. As discussed in the theme 'I know who I am' (section 7.1), developing a strong sense of self through an understanding of personal values, beliefs and purpose was a consistent strand across each of the participant narratives. Therefore, building a coaching systems leader development programme that begins with this intrapersonal focus would visibly demonstrate the importance and significance of leadership capabilities such as self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

Utilising the sport coaching related literature around coaching philosophy (Lyle, 2002; Cassidy *et al*, 2009; Jenkins, 2010; Carless and Douglas, 2011), this proposed model recognises the need to help coaching systems leaders develop an appreciation that what they 'do' in practice is directly shaped by their personal values and beliefs (Carless and Douglas, 2011, p.1). Equally, reflecting the work of Cassidy *et al* (2009), the presented model postulates that effectiveness as a coaching systems leader depends largely on the ability of an individual to articulate their own personal philosophy and to appreciate how their own paradigm and philosophy affects their leader behaviours. This draws on the coaching psychology and therapy literature referenced in the 'I know who I am' theme (Chapter 7.1) and proposes that self-aware individuals are better able to make decisions and take more ownership of their actions.

This is also reflective of the construct of authentic leadership described in section 2.6, with particular recognition that connection to the proposal that authentic leaders are built upon an awareness of their 'self-concept; his or her self-knowledge, self-clarity, self-concordance, and person-role merger, and on the extent to which the leader's self-concept is expressed in his or her behaviour' (Shamir and Eilam, 2005, p.395).

Whilst it may not be possible to 'teach' authentic leadership *per se* (Chapter 7.1, 'I know who I am'), this study adopts the view that it is possible to support individuals to better understand their personal philosophy. This model also acknowledges that developing enhanced self-awareness and becoming conscious of how values are translated into consistent behaviour, could help to develop a greater potential for authentic leadership within coaching systems in the UK. It is therefore suggested that the intrapersonal component of this leader development model would include focussing on elements such as personal philosophy (understanding values, beliefs and purpose), enhancing self-awareness through reflexive practice, understanding the authentic self, and translating values into consistent, everyday behaviours (integrity).

8.4.3 Component 2 – Interpersonal knowledge

The second domain of knowledge referenced by Coté and Gilbert (2009) is the notion of interpersonal knowledge, which has been translated for this study as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with others in a variety of contexts. Taking insight from the two central themes of 'I know who I am' and 'curiosity', the focus of this component is the building of emotional intelligence and encouraging curiosity about the motivations and drivers of others in order to enhance the ability to effectively communicate with others throughout the coaching systems environments.

Critical insights can be evolved from the authentic leadership literature reviewed in sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.7 and linked to this component. Given that 'leadership is always a relationship between leader and followers' (Shamir and Eilam, 2005, p.400), and 'is co-created through a series of interactions among actors in which communication becomes the means through which leadership is socially constructed within a particular context' (Day and Dragoni, 2015, p.146), it seems self-evident that strong interpersonal skills are a necessity for the effective leader. Despite the lack of attention on such elements of leadership (Kiersch and Peters, 2017; Byrne *et al*, 2018), there is evidence to support the inclusion of interpersonal content on leadership development programmes. For example, Miscenko *et al* (2017, p.608) argued, 'participants' engagement with the development of interpersonal leadership skills in a leader development programme will strengthen their self-perception as leaders'. There is also recognition that enabling 'participants to work at both the intra and inter personal levels of experience, exploring and developing their self concept in the social context' (Fusco *et al*, 2015, p.146), contributes to development as an authentic leader.

Gardner *et al* (2005, p.352) acknowledged that 'knowing oneself is more than simple awareness of one's thoughts, values and motives…self-knowledge also encompasses awareness of one's emotions'. As discussed in chapter 7.1 (I know who I am), acute self-awareness is essential in coaching psychology and therapy because counsellors need to acknowledge their own beliefs, experiences, issues and position in order to be able to help others develop their self-understanding (for example Oden *et al*, 2009). Curious leaders who are interested in learning more about themselves and those with whom they work are more likely to have the drive to develop this acute personal awareness and want to understand more about their own abilities and effectiveness, (Day and Sin, 2011, p.547). Therefore, in terms of translating research insights from this study into practical applications, this model proposes the need to dedicate time early in a development programme on enhancing individual ability to reflect, become emotionally intelligent and to recognise how actions impact on others.

Leaders need to be curious enough to want to learn, which may be something inherent in their character, otherwise individuals will need to be supported to develop and build their motivation to learn. Again, there are connections to be made with the authentic leadership development literature in terms of recognising the 'important role that identity processes play in motivating and supporting leaders' personal growth' (Miscenko at al, 2017, p.617) and that 'if one does not think of oneself as a leader, or aspire to lead, then there is little motivation to develop or serve as a leader' (Day and Sin, 2011, p.547). Arguably for those not yet motivated to learn, supporting them to understand their own identity could spark the necessary curiosity and drive.

However, it is not simply enough to consider the theory of self-reflection or communication. An effective leader development programme must provide individuals with meaningful opportunities to practice and develop their interpersonal skills 'in – situ'. For example, Sturm *et al* (2017, p.364) concluded that such skills can be developed in everyday life and argued that 'character and competence can be consciously cultivated in daily life [and] in this sense, life experiences, interpersonal relationships and communities of practice, provide opportunities to develop and bind the habits of character and competence in practice'. This need to apply knowledge and learning into 'real-life' work situations is also present in the sport coaching literature, with Cote and Gilbert (2009, p.310) 'it is important for coaches to continually develop their interpersonal knowledge base so that they can communicate appropriately and effectively with their particular athletes and other people'.

8.4.4   Component 3 – Professional knowledge

This third domain of coaching knowledge is often the focus of education and development programmes within both sport coaching and leader development. With regards to sport coaching, Cote and Gilbert (2009, p.310) identified that even though many programmes at the time focussed on developing professional knowledge, this alone is insufficient to become an effective coach. They particularly emphasised that 'exposure to professional knowledge out of context loses its relevance and minimises the importance of the reflective and complex interactional nature of effective coaching'.

From a broader change leader perspective, Fullan (2011, p.9) noted the dominance of 'theory and strategy' over 'practice and implementation' within management and leader development, whereas Ardichvilli *et al* (2016, p.278) proposed the 'over-reliance on competency models' as one of the main problems for the lack of impact of many leader development programmes. There is arguably greater focus on processes, power and the functions of management rather than the need for an effective leader to be 'a clear-headed, persistent learner in the setting in which you work, with an eye to the bigger picture' (*ibid*. p.21). With any learning programme there is a need for an element of knowledge development around subjects directly related to a particular context, but as Coté and Gilbert (2009, p.311) argued, 'the vast array of coaching and teaching literature suggests that coaching effectiveness and expertise should include professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge'.

Using existing literature from the fields of sport coaching and authentic leadership development, alongside the thematic outputs of this research study, it has been possible to clearly and concisely summarise the intrapersonal and interpersonal components of this model. It is less easy to provide such specific detail on potential elements of the professional knowledge component, as this was not something that became obvious or was constructed through the analysis process. So what is the professional knowledge required by coaching systems leaders now and in the future?

It is interesting to note that Sport England has recently increased their focus on developing the professional workforce through their 'Working in an Active Nation' report (Sport England, 2018). One of the strands of the plan is 'enhanced leadership culture' (p.15), with one success measure articulated as 'by 2020, 50% of leaders and managers at all levels across the sector will have engaged in industry-recognised leadership development endorsed by CIMSPA', (p.16). Whilst there is an accompanying goal to 'establish partnerships with organisations that are able to provide cutting edge leadership, mentoring and organisational development solutions' (by 2019), there remains the distinct impression that, by referring to leaders and managers in the same sentence, the focus will continue to be on the more traditional 'top-down' approach to leadership. Equally, the report does not clearly articulate an ambition to fully understand the required knowledge, skills and abilities of the professional workforce beyond the overall desire for a 'skilled, motivated and valued workforce to inspire an active nation' (p.7). Without a comprehensive and current understanding of the skills and expertise required by 'leaders' in sport, can impact truly be measured?

For the purpose of this study and the proposed model, it is helpful to reflect on leadership literature that considers leadership in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) world (Bolman and Deal, 2015; Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015; Bushe and Marshak, 2016). It is also interesting to connect this to the sport coaching literature that considers the act of coaching to be 'multi-dimensional, ever-changing, plural and never finished' (Jones and Ronglan, 2018, p.907). It does appear appropriate to argue that both leadership and sport coaching are dynamic, non-linear relational and highly social acts that require leading, or 'orchestrating' (Jones and Wallace, 2005, 2006; Jones and Ronglan, 2018) and therefore need development and education programmes that are cognisant of this shifting nature.

There is a new narrative that suggests leadership needs to be a 'contextual and temporal process of learning and practice' (Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015, p.858). Equally, Bolman and Deal (2015, p.36) proposed that for leaders of today, 'the ultimate goal is fluid expertise, the sort of know-how that lets you think on the fly and navigate organisations as easily as you drive home on a familiar route'. As Bushe and Marshak argued, leaders of today 'need to be able to hold the space of complexity and uncertainty in ways that encourage and enable generative and transformational change' (2016, p.37). It is this new approach to leadership that Sport England (and the other home nations and governing bodies of sport) would arguably benefit from exploring further, particularly as it does appear to align with a significant strand to the sport coaching literature.

For the professional knowledge component of this model the proposal is that coaching systems leaders of today and for the future need to be equipped with this ability to navigate and embrace the ever-changing environments in which they work. There should, therefore, be an element of any leadership development programme that supports leaders to understand the concept of change and how they can effectively lead and navigate their teams through such continual evolution. It is not necessarily about managing change, rather having the skills and ability to lead through the constant change that is found within coaching.

Leaders of coaching systems today arguably require high degree of curiosity that enables them to continually learn, grow and lead, and the courage to venture into new areas of work that do not have a certain outcome. As Bushe and Marshak (2016, p.9) argued, 'the more successful leaders encouraged numerous small experiments, learning as they went, in a more emergent process of change'. They also acknowledged that 'the leader does not need to know in advance what the content of the change will be, but does provide a process for change that engages those people who will help the organisation learn and adapt through collective enquiry'. Given the need for curiosity, the ability to connect with others, and the courage to follow a new path in uncertain times, the proposal from this study is that the professional knowledge required by coaching systems leaders of today is linked to thriving through change.

The critical insights from the participant narratives suggest that individuals with strongly developed intrapersonal and interpersonal skills are well-equipped to work in these constantly shifting environments because, as Fullan (2011, p.21) identified, they are the 'clear-headed, persistent learner(s)' that are needed to be an effective change leader. This study and model acknowledged the suggestion by Sturm *et al* (2017, p.364) that 'any leader can build their character and utilise naturally occurring learning opportunities in order to be successful'. The professional knowledge component of this model is therefore deliberately visually smaller than the intra and interpersonal components to reflect this connection and priority order of these more relational areas of knowledge and development.

8.4.5 Component 4 – contexts

In their model of coaching effectiveness, Cote and Gilbert (2009, p.314) described coaching contexts as the 'unique settings in which coaches endeavour to improve athlete outcomes'. They also argued that 'an appreciation of these settings is critical to understanding effective coaching'. Whilst clearly there is an overall link to be made between coaching contexts and the environments within which coaching systems leaders work, for the purposes of this study, contexts are considered to be the places in which coaching systems leader development may take place.

This part of the model reflects the areas of research and theme descriptors discussed in the 'nurturing environments' and 'great people' sections (Chapters 7.3 and 7.4 respectively). It is also highly reflective of the authentic leadership literature reviewed in section 2.6.7 of this thesis in relation to the 'learning environments and support' necessary for authentic leadership development programmes. The following three contexts are critical to the development of effective coaching systems leaders:

1. Learning environments
2. Work environments
3. Supported development

Learning environments

A brief glance at the world of 'learning and development' reveals a field bursting with training programmes and qualifications designed to enhance knowledge, understanding and practice in any given area. The fields of sport coaching and leadership are no different, yet there remains a lack of development support for individuals operating as leaders within coaching systems. Traditionally, leadership programmes and qualifications are delivered 'off-site', where individuals connected by their chosen subject, gather to be 'taught' and learn about how to become more effective in their particular role or domain. However, as has been highlighted in this study, there are significant challenges in translating learning from a training environment into the world of work.

This is a recurring challenge that has been been revisited throughout this study. For example, Kippenberger (1998, p.13) highlighted the challenge of transferring knowledge from management programmes. In terms of coach education, Nelson *et al* (2011, p.204) argued that 'coach education has had a limited impact on the learning and development of coaching practitioners' and, as has been previously referenced in this study, authors such as Morgan *et al* (2013, p.486) have criticised coach education for being divorced from the 'complex reality of practice' From a leader development perspective, Gurdjian *et al* (2014, p.123) concluded that 'burgeoning leaders, no matter how talented, often struggle to transfer even their most powerful off-site experiences into changed behaviour on the front line'. However, despite the acknowledged difficulties in translating 'off-site' learning into workplace culture, this model still recognises the value of bringing groups of leaders together in a specific learning intervention as there are still perceived to be significant benefits to group learning for the development of authentic leadership.

As was evidenced in the second sub-theme of 'nurturing environments', (section 7.4), the leaders in this study expressed a sense of great value in being in environments where they felt connected and that they belonged. The support, challenge and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999, 2019) provided by the group was an important part of the learning process, and particularly the ability to be comfortable 'being me'. Baron and Parent (2015, p.39) proposed that, 'the empathy, support, and encouragement of others all play key roles in the participants' enjoyment of experimentation and their eventual integration of new behaviours'.

This model proposes that being a connected learner in a supportive community adds value to the learning experience, that arguably lasts beyond the life of the programme. The notion of 'sociocultural conversations with peers' (Priest and Clegorne, 2015, p.72) provides further evidence of the value in creating connections within a learning cohort, with authors such as Segar *et al* (2008) and Dugan *et al* (2013) agreeing that such conversations are a powerful mechanism to help students explore diverse cultures, life experiences and varying world views, with such conversations strongly linked to the development of socially responsible leadership. As discussed in section 2.6.7, given that effective leadership inherently encompasses relationships between leaders and followers, it logically follows that group learning would be beneficial in authentic leadership programmes as it enables and facilitates relational interactions.

There is also a strong desire through this model to promote the need for learning environments to facilitate 'autonomy-supporting' environments as described in the 'nurturing environments' theme (section 7.4). If, as has been suggested, the aim is for leaders to be curious, responsible and a 'clear-headed, persistent learner in the setting in which [they] work' (Fullan, 2011, p.21), creating a learning environment that reflects the literature on self-determination theory appears a logical proposal. It is understood from the sport coaching literature that there is a link between the athlete performance and the type of environment created by their coach (for example Stebbings *et al*, 2012; Ng *et al*, 2012; Matosic *et al*, 2017), and it is also perceived that environments which meet the basic human needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness are more likely to lead to effective functioning (Deci and Ryan, 1985; 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2002, 2008).

It is thus proposed that learning environments creating competence, connectedness and relatedness will be more effective in supporting individuals to develop leader capabilities. The role of the facilitators of such learning programmes is therefore critical and perhaps an area for future research. As Cushion *et al* (2017, p.1) identified, 'professional coach educators are key to the success of coach education and play a crucial role in developing coaching practice', however, they also noted that little was known about this role. There is a sense from this research, though, that any leadership development programme would benefit from facilitators akin to the 'stimulating, reflective facilitators helping coaches to make sense of their own and others' actions within their particular culture', proposed by Bowes and Jones (2006, p.243).

Work environments

The insights gained from this study suggest that the workplace needs to be actively included as a core element of any leader development programme, particularly as the value of *in situ* experiences within learning has been acknowledged within the sport coaching literature (Cushion *et al,* 2003; Phelan and Griffiths, 2019). Whilst there appears to be much support for such adaptions in coach learning interventions, there remains doubt as to the true impact of such approaches (Gomes *et al*, 2018). However, as Hanson (2013, p.106) proposed, there is certainly a 'need to move away from isolated methods and toward an interconnected process of personal and organisational discovery and learning'. It is also important to note that there is not a 'one-size fits all' approach to learning and development (Ardichvilli *et al*, 2016), as the unique life experiences, relative life age/stage and personal work context will impact upon leader development of (Day *et al*, 2009; Ardichvilli *et al*, 2016; Byrne *et al*, 2018).

This model proposed that work-based projects form a core part of any learning curriculum as these allow individuals to apply their growing knowledge and skills to a 'real-life' situation. Support from a coach or mentor, in addition to the supportive community of the programme cohort, will accompany such projects to enable individuals to maximise the impact of 'off-site' learning. Thus, as Ardichvilli *et al* (2016, p.278) suggested, 'leadership skills [will] be developed at different rates depending on the leaders' level in the organisation'. Equally, it will also allow for individuals to take into account their unique life experiences and specific challenges faced in their particular workplace setting.

There is another core insight that must be considered within this element of the model; and that is the role of others, particularly line managers and senior colleagues, in supporting or inhibiting learning within the workplace. As discussed in the 'nurturing environments theme' (section 7.4), when a working environment is supported by managers and colleagues who exhibit autonomy-supportive behaviours, leaders are able to find competence, autonomy and relatedness; yet if the working environment is dominated by a culture of controlling behaviour, then learning is potentially limited (Gomes *et al,* 2018; Phelan and Griffiths, 2019). The role of supportive others will be further explored in the 'supported development' section below, but from a 'working environments' perspective, this model acknowledges that in order for a leader development programme to be fully effective, it has to consider, and potentially address, the culture created by other individuals back within their working environment.

This model recognises that individual leadership behaviour is strongly influenced by the actions of leaders and other significant people throughout their life and career (Bowlby, 1958, 1969; Kohlreiser *et al,* 2012; Stebbings *et al*, 2012), and that, arguably, there is a 'knock-on' effect for leadership where individuals recreate their own leadership experiences with others in the course of their career. By acknowledging this phenomenon, this study proposes that for a future leader development programme to be considered fully effective, it must seek to fully understand the context within which the developing leader is operating. If they are working within an 'autonomy-supportive' culture, then it is likely that they will be able to implement and apply their new and evolved learning and skills. However, if their everyday environment is limited by 'controlling' leadership, then there must be appreciation that, unless proactive intervention within the workplace environment is made, the potential for that leader to develop is limited.

In applying this model, systems builders and developers should be cognisant of the need to also focus on supporting wider organisational culture if the desire to create cultural shift is to be realised. The recommendation from this model is that, as a minimum, line managers should be engaged in the leader development process from an early stage, and if necessary, should also be supported with some learning and development. However, if this is not possible, then programme developers need to consider the additional support they might provide for individual leaders on the programme in order that the learning is not 'lost' back in the workplace.

Supported development

As detailed in the 'great people' theme (section 7.3), each of the leaders engaged in this study reported being surrounded by a variety of 'great people' throughout their life, including close family members in childhood, teachers, coaches, team mates and work managers and leaders. These 'great people' were inspiring, supportive, caring, compassionate and demonstrated faith in the research participants and it is this that provides the basis for this element of the proposed model. If it is accepted that relationships built on secure bases are important for the development of effective leaders in coaching systems, then it is relevant to consider these relationships as a core aspect of a programme that supports the development of such individuals.

As has been acknowledged in the previous section (work environments), the influence of line managers and close colleagues can have a notable influence on the process of leader development. However, this model recognises that these influences are not only limited to the workplace; other significant relationships can enhance progression as a leader, regardless of the context. Therefore, using the insights gained from this study, this model proposes that any future learning programme for coaching systems leaders should encourage individuals to identify their 'great people' early on in the process in order to recognise their system of support beyond the workplace. These people may be family, friends, former colleagues, mentors or perhaps sports team-mates, but crucially they must be individuals who provide inspiration, motivation, support, care and compassion for the coaching systems leader, and also offer them an environment in which they feel safe and trusted.

A key point to note here is that this model also argues for coaching and/or mentoring support to be an integral element of any coaching systems leadership development programme. This would operate alongside the ongoing peer support that would evolve through the learning environment, and would be in addition to any personal mentors/support. However, for some, this work-based mentoring may actually be their only source of secure base support. Research from the authentic leadership domain recognises the significant impact of post-learning intervention support through coaching, mentoring or structured reflection for developing leaders (DeRue *et al*, 2012; Gatling *et al*, 2013; Day and Dragoni, 2015), therefore this is considered critical to the success of any future leadership programme.

In line with such literature, it is also pertinent to highlight that any coaches/mentors should be carefully selected to ensure that they, too, advocate the authentic leadership approach. As discussed in section 2.6.7, role models are crucial in the development of authentic leaders, and the coaching/mentoring relationship offers a prime opportunity for such behaviours to be modelled and shared (Gatling *et al*, 2013, p.338). It could be considered that these people would be the 'more capable others' identified by Jones *et al* (2018) as playing an important part in the learning process.

8.4.6 Component 5 – Leader/follower outcomes

Coté and Gilbert (2009, p.312) proposed a framework referencing positive psychology literature to view the impact of coaching on athlete outcomes. Building on previous work by Horn (2008), Coté and Gilbert hypothesised that athlete outcomes from effective coaching could be considered in terms of the '4 C's' of competence, confidence, connection and character (caring). This broader definition enabled coaching effectiveness to be seen as extending beyond the more traditional view that effective coaching could be considered solely in terms of successful performance measures or positive psychological responses from athletes (Horn, 2008, p. 240).

It is from this expanded definition that the final component of this model has been evolved, which essentially provides the measurement framework for assessing the impact of any future leader development interventions. The use of outcomes such as leader character, confidence and credibility to assess leader performance can be seen in some of the contemporary literature exploring leadership from ethical, moral or social constructs (Amos and Klimoski, 2014; Seijts *et al*, 2015; Sosik *et al*, 2018). Arguably the critical difference between the model proposed and the original work by Coté and Gilbert is that coaching system leader effectiveness should be considered in terms of leader (coach) outcomes as well as follower (athlete) outcomes rather than just by athlete outcomes. Initially, any leader development programme will seek to influence the behaviour of the engaged leaders, so it is necessary to assess programme effectiveness in terms of impact on personal behaviour. However, given the relational nature of leadership, coaching systems leader effectiveness arguably also needs to be considered in terms of follower outcomes.

The relationship between leaders and followers is one which has increasingly been studied in the literature from a range of perspectives. Research examining areas such as leaders effect on follower work engagement, performance and wellbeing (for example Clarke and Mahadi, 2017; Gutermann *et al*, 2017; Pfrombeck and Verdorfer, 2018) and links between ethical leadership and follower confidence, growth and morality (Tu and Lu, 2016; Kiersch and Peters, 2017) has enhanced understanding of the complex and influential relationship between leaders and their followers. It is insight from studies such as these, alongside the sport coaching effectiveness work, that provides the rationale for this final evaluation component of this proposed model.

Whist this model is not offering a definitive method or format from which to evaluate coaching systems leader development effectiveness, it is proposing a simple framework from which future measures may be developed. Table 6 below provides a reminder of the component definitions offered earlier in this chapter and it is these descriptors that provide the base from which measures of programme effectiveness can be evolved. These broad definitions provide room for flexibility when creating specific measures, which is crucial when reflecting that coaching effectiveness (according to the Coté and Gilbert work, 2009) is directly linked to the context within which a coach is operating.

Table 8: Leader/follower outcomes definitions

Leader/follower outcomes	Competence	Highly developed skills within the contexts of coaching systems, leadership, behaviour change and people development
	Confidence	Internal sense of overall positive self worth
	Connection	Positive bonds and social relationships with people inside and outside of coaching systems
	Character	Respect for self and others (morality), integrity, empathy and responsibility; also encompasses care and compassion

8.5 Summary

Building on the work of Cote and Gilbert (2009) and reflecting a variety of connected literature from sport coaching and authentic leadership, this model is intended to present an answer to the overall research question of 'what can be learned about effective change leadership in sport coaching systems from critical analysis of the narratives of selected change leaders'. It provides a summary of the complex insights gathered throughout this long-term research process, and, whilst it is acknowledged as providing simply 'one version of the truth' from an epistemological standpoint, it is presented in the knowledge that there is something to be learned from every case, and that every individual case has a value (Chapter 4.4).

It is concluded that for sport in the UK to develop effective coaching systems leaders in the future, it should consider a leader development approach built on supporting individuals to grow their intra and interpersonal knowledge and skills, within the professional context of the need to be able to effectively create and navigate the continuity of change. Any development programme needs to also consider the environment in which learning takes place, the influence of workplace culture in an individuals working environment and the need to ensure learning leaders are supported by a range of 'secure base' individuals who give them the space, time and belief to achieve. Finally, the coaching systems sector should be encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of any leader development intervention in terms of the leader/follower outcomes, with the integration of the three factors of leader knowledge, leader contexts and leader/follower outcomes providing coaching systems with a useful model from which they can build for the future.

CHAPTER 9:   CONCLUSIONS

9.1   A reminder

The overall purpose of this research was to understand the experiences of effective leaders within sport coaching systems in the UK. By developing an analytical perspective on how such individuals learned to lead, the intention was to develop valuable insights to inform future leadership development.   It is important to acknowledge that this research was undertaken as an 'insider' within the world of sport coaching. Driven by a personal sense of frustration and a genuine belief that there were some 'bright spots' (Heath and Heath, 2010) in the sector from which others could learn, this research sought to explore individual stories of effective leadership in order to appreciate, celebrate and understand the 'ingredients' of those successes.

The following chapter provides a summary of the core conclusions from this study. It is structured by first providing concise summaries from Chapter 2 and 3 that examined relevant literature relating to change, leadership and the evolution sport coaching in the UK in order to provide a frame within which this research could be positioned. The following chapter will then answer the research sub-questions posed in Chapter 1 (section 1.5) before addressing the main research question of 'what can be learned about effective change leadership in sport coaching systems from critical analysis of the narratives of selected change leaders?'. This chapter includes a number of future recommendations for practitioners and academic researchers, before acknowledging the limitations of this study and identifying the contribution to knowledge made by this research. Finally, there is a reflective section (written in the first person) that considers 'that this research adds' from the perspective of a practitioner.

9.2   Review of the research findings

9.2.1 *It's not about 'managing' change*
What is change, what drives it and how can it be managed?

Chapter 2 reviewed a range of literature relating to change and change management. By considering five recognised, yet diverse change models, this chapter established a context for change within which this study was grounded. Throughout this exploration into change and the ways in which the literature has attempted to categorise how change can, or should, be managed, it became clear that there is no singular agreed way to approach this phenomenon. From Lewin's work of the 1940s, through to the methods of Waterman *et al* in 1980, and Kotter in the 1990s, the academic landscape for change appears to be as 'ubiquitous and relentless' (Fullan, 1993, p.vii) as the nature of change itself.

It is this 'changing nature of change' that is the most notable point for this study. 'Change is not an exception but an ongoing process' (Nordin and Deros, 2017, p.310), and there is increasing evidence that in the 21st century, change has become the norm', (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015, p.234). There is overwhelming recognition in the literature that modern change is dynamic and non-linear, but many change management models promote a linear approach to managing change. Given the literature reviewed, and the interesting comparisons to the relationally dynamic nature of sport coaching, a simple answer to this first research sub-question could be that it is no longer relevant to think in terms of 'managing change', rather it is about finding ways to 'orchestrate' practice (Jones and Ronglan, 2015) within the volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous landscape of the 21st century (Saleh and Watson, 2017, p.705).

9.2.2 Leading authentically

Who leads change and how do they learn to lead?

Whilst there were many differences in the change models reviewed in Chapter 2, an emergent consistency was the significance of the change leader; the second part of Chapter 2 explored this strand. Views on leadership varied substantially across the literature; from the traditional 'top-down' approaches of Lewin (1940s), Lippitt *et al* (1958) and Waterman *et al* (1980), to the 'tempered radical' perspective offered by Meyerson (2001). Leadership theories have evolved over the decades and the field now contains a diverse range of 'traditional' and more 'emergent' forms to leadership (Dinh *et al*, 2014). With the range of theories on offer to the leadership researcher, it was necessary to focus on a specific approach in order to more effectively position this study.

Authentic leadership is an emergent theory, popularised in the last two decades in response to the demand 'for more positive, genuine and value-based forms of leadership' (Chaudhary and Panda, 2018, p.2071). In proposing a model for authentic leader development, Gardner *et al* (2005, p.347) suggested that 'by learning who they really are and what they value, authentic leaders build an understanding and a sense of self that provides a firm anchor for their decisions and actions'. It is this construct of leadership that offered a positive answer to the question of 'who leads change?' in the 21st century. Chapter 2 also explored how such leaders 'learn to lead', with the four components of leader identity, life stories for development, awareness of self and others, and learning environment and support, providing insight into how authentic leaders learn, and, importantly for this study, can be developed in the future.

9.2.3 The professionalisation of coaching?
How has the nature and structure of the sport/sport coaching landscape changed in the UK since the early 1960s and what are the implications for the coaching sector or profession?

Chapter 3 reflected on the evolution of sport/sport coaching since the 1960 Wolfenden Report. This review revealed a somewhat paradoxical perspective in terms of change and development. On one hand, there was evidence of continual change as sport experienced a number of significant 'turning points' (Hargreaves, 1986, p.7); for example, 12 sport related strategies or plans published in England alone since the year 2000. However, on the other hand, there were many constants, with several points first raised in the Wolfenden Report still being areas of focus within sport and sport coaching today. Of particular relevance for this study was the need for more formalised coach education, and the call for sports governance structures to be reviewed, refined and modernised.

Debates on the concept of coaching continue in the academic and practical arenas (Cushion *et al*, 2006; Coté and Gilbert, 2009; Jones and Thomas, 2015; Jones et al, 2018), with interest in sport coaching as a research topic increasing considerably since 2000 (Griffo *et al*, 2019). Yet progress towards coaching as a 'professionally regulated vocation' (sports coach UK, 2008) is questionable given that neither of the two most recent coaching related documents reviewed (Sport England, 2016b; UK Coaching 2017) referred to a coaching 'profession' or used the term 'professionally regulated vocation' (sports coach UK, 2008). Whilst it is clear that the landscape for coaching has changed since the 1960s, the impact on wider coaching systems is arguably less certain; especially if there is now a concerted move away from the previously desired professionalisation of coaching.

9.2.4 Shifting the leadership narrative for coaching

What has been the approach to managing change in sport coaching systems within the UK?

Reflecting on the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, it is questionable whether there has ever been an acknowledged approach to managing change in sport coaching systems in the UK. There have been frequent calls since 1960 for the sporting infrastructure to modernise and evolve to meet changing priorities (DCMS, 2000; HM Government, 2015), and also increasing pressure on sports governing bodies to meet new standards of effective governance. However, little emphasis has been placed on developing or nurturing the skills of the workforce within such sporting bodies to enable them to effectively adapt their approaches and practices going forward.

The call from this research, therefore, is the need for a new way of viewing systemic change within sport in the UK and specifically for sport coaching systems. Ultimately it is not systems and structures that create change, but people within those organisations who lead change. Whilst there is limited recognition within recent publications (HM Government, 2015; Sport England 2016b, 2018b) of the need to invest in leadership within sport to drive the change required, this is reflective only of the traditional 'top-down' view of leadership (Sport England, 2018b, p15). This study proposes the need for sport/sport coaching in the UK to adopt a 'different conceptualisation of leadership' (Byrne *et al*, 2018, p.2710), with the 'top down' narrative replaced by a more 'tempered radicals' (Meyerson, 2001) belief that everyone has the potential to lead change. Embracing this approach will potentially uncover untapped leadership potential of coaching systems personnel who play a significant, yet currently under-acknowledged role, in leading coaching systems change in the UK.

9.2.5 Research question 1 - The power of story
What are the stories of the individuals who are leading change effectively within sport coaching systems in the UK?

Chapter 6 presented the six co-constructed narratives from this study, alongside the outputs of the individual thematic analysis processes. Each narrative provided valuable insights into the life experiences of the effective coaching systems leader, and it was a privilege to share in the telling, and re-telling, of these life (hi)stories. Whilst each case gave a personal leadership perspective, collectively these individual stories provided the answer to sub-research question 3 and the detailed data necessary to address the overall research question.

As was established in Chapter 2 (section 2.7.5, p.56), life histories and narratives have a valuable role to play in the process of authentic leader development (Rae and Carswell, 2000; Gardner *et al*, 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Day and Dragoni, 2015). Equally, in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.2, p.104), the value of stories and narratives for the wider field of sport, sport management and sport coaching was clearly established (referencing work by authors such as Jones *et al,* 2004; Jones, 2006, 2009; Smith and Sparkes, 2009; Smith, 2010; Toner *et al*, 2012; Carless and Douglas, 2008, 2013; Gilbourne *et al*, 2014; Hall and Gray, 2016; Hemmestad and Jones, 2019). Using this literature as a base, this study advances the field of sport coaching by applying narrative techniques that have, to date, been widely used in relation to the practice of sport coaching, to the overall role of the coaching systems manager, or leader.

9.2.6   Research question 2 – The core themes
What common and/or contrasting themes can be identified and developed from within and across these stories?

Chapter 7 described the outputs of the template analysis process used to compare and contrast each of the cases, with table 7 below presenting a summary of the five core themes identified from this cross-case analysis:

Table 9:   Core research themes summary

Major theme	Sub-theme	Descriptor
I know who I am *(Chapter 7.1; p.243)*	Values, beliefs and purpose	I know what is important to me; my actions reflect my values
	Self awareness	I know who I am and how my behaviour impacts on others
	Authenticity	I am comfortable with who I am and trust my sense of identity, even when times are tough
Curiosity *(Chapter 7.2; p.251)*	About myself	Always learning about my drivers and motivations; continual self-development
	About others	I care about others and want to know what makes them 'tick' so I can help them grow
Great people *(Chapter 7.3; p.259)*	**Descriptor**	
	Caring and compassionate people who make me feel safe and believe in, inspire, trust and support me to learn, grow and become the person they know I can be. Supporting me…so I can support others.	
Nurturing environments *(Chapter 7.4; p.266)*	**Sub theme**	**Descriptor**
	Great people creating empowering places	Feeling happy and safe in places where I feel encouraged and empowered to learn and grow. Places where I am challenged, trusted and afforded the freedom to explore, knowing I have support if I need it.
	Thriving in a safe, supportive and successful team	Places I feel like I belong and am welcomed for 'being me'. Communities, family or teams where we all positively work for and support each other.
Courage *(Chapter 7.5; p.275)*	**Descriptor**	
	Being brave enough to create and pursue opportunities where I am not certain of the outcome but believe that great things might happen because I have faith in my own values, confidence in myself and the people around me.	

The identified themes from the narratives presented a strong connection to the authentic leadership literature. It is therefore concluded that the six effective coaching systems leaders participating in this study were all authentic leaders who had, over time, established a sound understanding of their personal identity, developed an acute sense of self-awareness and sustained an inherent sense of curiosity. Whilst their learning journeys were unique and varied, their leadership development was consistently supported by 'great people' in their work and personal lives. They also each reported the value of experiencing community, team or family environments where they felt nurtured and 'safe' to be themselves. Subsequently, they were able to take brave decisions and trust themselves to follow their 'instinct' when making potentially difficult choices.

There is also a further point of unexpected learning from this research, and that is the significance of the narrative methods employed in this study. Each participant in this study reported value in the process of being interviewed and co-constructing their own narrative in that it enabled them to reflect on their own development and personal philosophy. They welcomed the space and time to talk openly about the experiences that had shaped them, and found the structure of working with an interviewed during the reflective process of particular benefit.   In hindsight, this feedback largely resembled the 'many valuable benefits that come with sharing a life story' (Atkinson, 2007, p.235-236).

Nonetheless, whilst the methodological choices had been consciously made to match the research perspective and aims; the significant personal value reported by the participants in the process was surprising, even though it had been reported in similar studies from different contexts. For example, in sport and coaching (Carless and Douglas, 2011; Toner *et al*, 2012; Gilbourne *et al,* 2014), leadership development (Schedlitzki *et* al, 2015; Aidman and Long, 2017; Kelly and Bhangal, 2018), management learning (Gray, 2007), education (Amott, 2018), therapy (Gu, 2018) and authentic leadership (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Day and Dragoni, 2015). Therefore, an additional learning point from this study is that using a life (hi)story based methodology within an authentic leadership development programme would arguably add significantly to the framework of any such intervention.

9.2.7   Research question 3 - Future leadership development
How can the insights gained from this research inform future leadership development for sport coaching systems and other relevant contexts in the UK?

In order to answer the final research sub-question of this study, a tentative model for future coaching systems leadership development was proposed (Chapter 8).   This model combined the thematic/template outputs from this research with the definition of coaching effectiveness proposed by Coté and Gilbert (2009) in order to distil the findings of this research into a practical tool that could inform future leadership development for sport coaching systems in the UK.   Whilst not intended as definitive, or the 'only' way to develop coaching systems leaders, the model provides a robust and evidence based reference point.   Described in detail in Chapter 8, the model integrates the three domains of **leader knowledge**, **leader/follower outcomes** and **specific leadership/working contexts** to build a proposed definition of coaching systems leadership effectiveness (adapted from Coté and Gilbert, 2009, p.316):

'…the consistent application of integrated intrapersonal, interpersonal and professional knowledge to enhance the competence, confidence, connection and character of self and others within a range of leadership and coaching systems contexts'

The core conclusion in synthesising the findings from this study into the development of this model is that for sport in the UK to develop, effective coaching systems leaders in the future would benefit from a new leadership narrative that views authentic leaders as an integral component of coaching system development at every level.   Such leaders could be supported by developing their intra and interpersonal skills within the constantly shifting, increasingly complex landscape for sport coaching in the UK.

9.2.8 So what can be learned?

Reflecting on the conclusions above (within the frame of the research sub-questions), it is now possible to address the overall research question and identify what can be learned about effective change leadership in sport coaching systems from critical analysis of the narratives of selected change leaders. The stories of the six effective change leaders participating in this study revealed that:

- The individuals in this study were leading coaching system change by being authentic leaders who have a deep appreciation of their own philosophy, and consistently translate their values into action through their behaviour.

- These individuals are curious about themselves and others, with an inherent desire to learn and support others to grow.

- They 'learned to lead' over a period of time and have been supported along the way by 'great people' who cared about their development, believed in their abilities and enabled them to discover their personal potential.

- The 'great people' in their lives created empowering places where they felt happy, safe, challenged, trusted and able to learn and grow.

- Each leader experienced a strong sense of belonging in their family, a community or a team where were able to thrive because they felt safe, supported and 'able to be me'.

- These effective leaders displayed courage in creating and pursuing opportunities where the outcome was uncertain, yet they were willing to explore because of their strong sense of self, faith in their own values and confidence in the people around them.

9.3   Recommendations

9.3.1 For practical application

Reflecting on the conclusions above, there are five core recommendations for how the outputs from this research could be translated into practical application in the future:

1. The sport coaching sector should move away from using the term 'managing change' and towards the notion of 'leading or navigating change'.

2. Ensure there is recognition that it is people, not systems or structures, who create and sustain change; a shift in focus is needed to provide development support to the people within the systems and organisations who are tasked with delivering the various plans for sport across the UK.

3. The 'top-down' approach to leadership in sport and sport coaching should be (at least partially) replaced by a narrative that views leadership as necessary and possible at every level; thus developing a belief that everyone has the potential to create, or contribute to change, whatever their perceived position.

4. The construct of authentic leadership could be more widely used within the context of sport coaching, particularly given the apparent commitment in the Sport England 'Working in an Active Nation' plan (2018b, p.16) to 'provide cutting-edge leadership, mentoring and organisational development solutions' with '50% of leaders and managers at all levels across the sector engaged in industry-recognised leadership development endorsed by CIMSPA by 2020'.

5. The proposed 'New Model for Coaching Systems Leadership Development' could be critically reviewed and, where appropriate, tested by the sport coaching sector and evaluated through a series of 'action research' style projects that seek to further explore and expand the findings of this research.

9.3.2 For future research

A number of questions arose during the course of this research, that have resulted in the following recommendations for future research:

- With a current lack of research into the notion of authenticity within sport coaching, particularly for leadership, there is a need for further research to establish a robust evidence base on which future developments/research can build (section 7.1).

- Curiosity, a critical characteristic of authentic leaders, was a core theme from this research (section 7.2), however, little is yet known about this concept within the sport coaching literature. It would be beneficial to consider how underlying curiosity can be motivated and sustained in order to help individuals build the self-awareness that is critical for ongoing personal growth.

- The six individuals in this study all reported positive attachments in their childhood (section 7.3), providing only one perspective on the complex features of attachment theory. It would therefore be interesting to consider how disrupted or insecure developmental experiences might affect an individual's ability to become a leader.

- Section 7.3 identified the need for future research to examine the life histories of the 'great people' referenced in this study, and to explore the relationships between the research participants and individuals for whom *they* would be considered a leader. This triangulation of evidence would enable greater understanding of 'secure base leadership' within coaching systems leadership.

- This study argued that leaders/managers who themselves experience 'autonomy-supportive environments' are more likely to create similar positive environments for those with whom they work. Conversely, individuals experiencing 'controlling' environments are more likely to recreate these when in positions of authority (section 7.4). This is an interesting area of future research to explore in the context of coaching systems leaders, perhaps beginning with the life histories of the 'great people' identified in this study.

- Finally, given the significance of the role of programme leaders in an effective leadership development programme, and given the lack of current research into this area (even within the realms of the professional coach educator; Cushion, 2017), this is an area that would benefit from further exploration. For example, is there a need for 'authentic learning facilitators' in authentic leadership development programmes? If so, what/how are they developed and supported?

9.4   Limitations

There are, of course, limitations to this research. From a methodological perspective, whilst there is value to be gained from even a single case, a sample size of six could be regarded as small. However, the value of this study is in the depth of each case and the richness that each individual story sought to uncover, therefore the sample size of six was considered large enough to provide the necessary insights. Equally, the reality of a narrative PhD study was that any more than six cases would have been difficult to manage to the level of integrity that this research has sought to maintain.

In order to address this limitation and maintain the integrity of the research, steps were taken throughout 'to develop an informed and reflexive' approach to rigour (Smith and McGannon, 2018, p.103).   Establishing a clear paradigm for the study that acknowledged a constructionist epistemology and relativist ontology then informed appropriate case selection, choices of method and data analysis (Armour and Griffiths, 2012, p.206).   Equally, utilisation of enhanced 'member reflection' techniques throughout the research provided ongoing opportunities 'to acknowledge and/or explore with participants the existence of contraindications and differences in knowing' (Smith and McGannon, 2018, p.108).   For example, the full interview transcripts and audio files were given to the participants at each stage of the research process, and they were invited to reflect on their story to date. This step was not included in the original research plan, but was added to the process in order to provide greater opportunity for participants to engage in their own narrative construction, and to partially mitigate a limitation.

The position of the researcher as an 'insider' is also a potential limitation for this study. As explored in section 4.5.3, there are advantages and disadvantages to conducting research from this 'assumed position of knowing' (Leigh, 2014, p.429), with a particular challenge being the risk of preventing 'the researcher from being able to look at the context with fresh eyes, as it were, in order to gain new insights concerning what might still be hidden from understanding, yet needs to be uncovered' (Kacen and Chaitin, 2006, p.212). Nonetheless, through active recognition of epistemological stance and research paradigm, it is proposed that sufficient action was taken throughout the research process to mitigate against the potential implications of harmful researcher bias at critical points.

For example, in co-constructing the narratives, the ongoing dialogue between researcher and participant was positively reinforced to ensure reliability and validity of findings, as discussed by Smith and McGannon (2018). Equally, the output from this research is presented as one possible version of the 'truth' within a relativist ontology that recognises the existence of multiple realities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.13). Thus whilst it is possible for a qualitative researcher to be tempted to generalise findings in the pursuit of common theory (Flyvberg, 2011), the steps taken in this study to properly understand case study methodology and the value of a 'case' provide an enhanced level of research rigour.

9.5   Contribution to knowledge

As acknowledged throughout this thesis, there is an absence of existing research relating to sport coaching systems leadership. This study has, therefore, frequently drawn on literature from other sectors; in particular, the related field of sport coaching. With the increasing interest in sport coaching as an academic discipline and applied professional practice, it is surprising that, to date, there has been minimal research considering the 'people' responsible for creating and developing the systems in which the practice of sport coaching is situated. This study is unique in examining effective leaders and leadership within such systems and this gap arguably needs considerably more investigation in the coming years. Coach education programmes are developed, delivered and managed within such systems, and without the efforts and work of such leaders, the existing debate on efficacy and effectiveness of sport coaching practice would be largely redundant.

Using definitions provided through the UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008) and the ESCF (Lara-Bercial, 2017, p.12) that focus on 'coaching systems' as the 'people, organisations, structures and processes that play a part in the recruitment, development, employment and recognition of coaches in a particular context', this study challenges the sector to embrace the need for a different kind of coaching systems leadership development for the 21st century. As established within Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, the call for change has been consistent within the sport coaching sector since the 1960s and yet arguably very little has changed in terms of identified priorities and vision.

This study focusses attention on the 'people' behind the coach education and development interventions as a crucial constituent part of the coaching system. Having seen a recent shift in research emphasis from the practice of coaching (and coach/athlete relationships) to the role of the coach developer (see section 1.4, p.10), this study advances the field another step by highlighting the need for effective coaching systems leaders and leadership development in order to really create and sustain the changes articulate within the various sport coaching related policy and strategy documents in the UK.

With this in mind, it is interesting to look back at the visual representations of coaching systems presented in the UK Coaching Framework (sports coach UK, 2008 - Chapter 1, Figure 1, p.7) and the European Sports Coaching Framework (Lara-Bercial *et al*, 2017, Figure 2, p.9). The only 'people' identified in these diagrams are the coach and athlete, with a broader focus on the environments and organisations involved in a 'coaching system'. Using the outputs from this study, a simple and yet significant development for this diagram would be to present such a 'coaching systems' scoping diagram from a 'people', rather than organisational, perspective. The coach/athlete relationship would remain at the centre of such a diagram, with the concentric layers then highlighting the role of the coach developer then coaching systems leaders within their particular contexts, rather than purely focussing on the systemic environments within which coaching, and the development of coaches and coaching, occurs.

As established throughout this thesis, sport coaching is inherently a relational act (Bowes and Jones, 2006; Jowett, 2017; Edwards and Jones, 2018; Jones and Ronglan, 2018) whereby athletes are supported by coaches (and others) through the development of effective, arguably authentic, relationships. Thus whilst this research contributes knowledge in terms of the role of coaching systems leaders in the UK, it can arguably also add to the ongoing debates around sport coaching. For example, with evident synergy between the dynamic nature of sport coaching and change, and the need for coaches to 'orchestrate' rather than 'remould' practices (Jones and Ronglan, 2018, p.907), it could be considered that the 'New Model for Coaching Systems Leadership Development' has a role to play in the future development of effective coaches, coach educators and developers as authentic leaders.

9.6   Adding to the sector

In drawing this thesis to a close it felt appropriate to add a final, reflective perspective that connects the study, outcomes and recommendations back to the original 'why' as laid out in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 1 (section 1.1 p.2). My original motivation for this PhD research was largely driven by my sense of injustice at the seemingly endless academic criticisms that governing bodies of sport were simply 'getting coaching wrong'. As I identified through my initial words, I regularly struggled for a perspective of what 'good' looked like in my particular 'Head of Coaching Systems' role, and I was therefore absolutely convinced of the need to better understand the skills, abilities and experiences that underpinned 'success' in roles such as mine.

Embarking on this PhD felt like a way to take positive action towards raising this area of focus within the coaching sector. I had first hand experience of the responsibilities of a 'coaching systems leader' and also completely understood how difficult it was to stimulate and lead change within very traditional environments where 'doing things differently' was feared rather than embraced. From the beginning I wanted this research to connect theory with practice in a helpful way and in particular and I wanted to understand stories of success to better comprehend what good looked like in 'my world'. Then I wanted to share this insight throughout the wider profession and, most importantly, within coaching systems leadership. So what have I found? How can my findings really help to advance the field, contribute to the existing body of knowledge and, perhaps most crucially, support future development of coaching systems leadership across the UK?

A number of formal recommendations, from a practical and research perspective are included in sections 9.3.1 and 9.3.2 above and these are areas which can be built on by myself and other academics/practitioners in the coming years. These recommendations, however, do not fully articulate the value of this study to the complex context of coaching systems leadership. With frequent reference throughout this thesis to the absence of research relating to coaching systems or coaching systems leadership, this study provides a starting point from which future studies can be developed. The desire and intention is to focus attention on, and raise questions around where academic research arguably really needs to focus going forward. This study also provides a challenge to researchers, policy makers and strategists to consider a new way of viewing coaching systems leadership.

Equally, it provides a unique and accessible model that can be applied and tested by practitioners within the sport coaching field; a model that is informed by theory and yet deliberately designed to be flexible and adaptive to circumstance and the needs of specific participants.

As a final reflective note…I found it intriguing that whilst I had begun my PhD journey trawling through more 'functional' literature in change and leadership; I ended my adventure surrounded by research from the counselling, psychology and therapeutic worlds. Having debated this with myself for I while, I realised that this was arguably reflective of the wider coaching sector within which I worked – in that there was much talk of 'managing change' and strategy, and yet genuine behavioural change was not necessarily obvious. I eventually concluded that it was not, in fact, at all surprising that my journey had led me in this direction because, after all, coaching is all about people. Whether those people be athletes, coaches, coach developers or effective coaching systems leaders whom this study sought to study and better understand.

Figure 7:   A final, epistemological, ontological reflection

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – THE RESEARCH PLAN

A1 – Detailed phase-by-phase plan

Research phase	Details
Research participant identification and recruitment	Individuals known for innovation and creating change within the coaching sector identified and invited to participate. 8 individuals identified; 6 participants recruited.
Research preparation	Finalise life-history grid choice and initial meeting structure (to include some structured questions to provide a framework) Contact research participants to arrange initial meeting and send information on structure of the session, including the outline of the life-history grid. Participants to be invited to begin to think about, or start to complete, grid if they wish – not essential
Interview preparation	Finalise interview framework/structure, based on reflections and outcomes of life-history grids. N.B. each interview will have a similar framework, detail may differ. Simple format for interview I was to invite the participant to tell their story. They could start wherever they wished; talk about whatever came to mind; and take as long as they wanted. Preparation was to think about their story (background provided in participant information sheet and introductory recruitment conversation), and some of the key experiences they wished to share about their professional development and key learning experiences. Arrange venue/date for interview with participant
Interview I	Recorded interview at venue/time to be agreed. Using the life history grid as field notes to support the interview 1.
Post-meeting actions	Simply to transcribe the interview and note any key questions or thoughts that arose from reviewing the audio.
Interview I reflections	Transcribed interview was sent to the participant, along with copies of the life history grid notes and copy of audio recording. Participant invited to reflect on their interview transcription with the following key question prompts in mind: • What in particular strikes you about your life story as you reflect on interview I? • Is there anything obvious that you feel you missed in interview I? If so, what? • As you reflect on your story shared in interview I, what connections can you make between your life story and experiences and how you operate in your current role/context?

	• What else came to mind as you reviewed your transcript?
	Arrange venue/date for interview II with participant
Interview II	Recorded interview at venue/time to be agreed.
	Structure based upon the reflective questions sent out with the transcription of interview I
Post-meeting actions	Transcribe interview and collate field notes – send to participant with audio copy of interview.
	Initial thematic analysis exercise to identify core themes within interview 1 and 2. These themes shape the production of the initial narrative draft.
	Produce initial interim research narrative based on themes/key perspectives arising from interviews I and II.
Interview II reflections	Send initial (draft) narrative research text to participant and ask them to read and reflect on what they read. Text will not be anonymised at this stage to aid reading (anonymising will be final step). Explain that the intention of the narrative is to capture the essence of interview conversations in a way that doesn't just recount and tell the story, rather focuses in on some of the key themes identified reflected in the second interview.
	Invite participant to identify any amends or edits, or anything with which they are note comfortable. This exchange could be in conversation form or via email. Develop revised drafts as required.
Interview III preparation	Invite participant to consider the following questions ahead of interview III:
	• How did you find the process overall? • How did it feel to read your story back? • What, if anything, has this process and the story helped you realise/learn about yourself and how you are able to apply your skills to do the job you do?
	Arrange venue/date for interview with participant
Interview III	Recorded interview at venue/time to be agreed.
	Structure based upon the reflective questions sent to participant prior to interview.
Post-meeting actions	Transcribe interview and collate field notes – send to participant.
	Produce final, anonymised participant narrative and send to research participant for their records. Offer the opportunity for any final edits – time limited.
Final narrative (if any amends required)	Produce final participant narrative based on written feedback/amends from participant.
	Send final text to participant.

A2 – Participant information and consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Sport coaching systems in the UK: narratives of leading/managing change

Jane Booth   **Email:**   **Phone:**

What is the purpose of the research?

The overall purpose of the research is to understand the processes of effective change management in the development of sport coaching systems. The research will focus on the personal experiences and perspectives of selected change agents in the field of coaching systems development, and will seek to understand how they initiate change, why and how they draw upon their personal prior experiences. Exploring and analysing these personal 'stories', using a narrative approach, will provide detailed critical insights into the lived processes of effective change management in coaching systems development. These critical insights, detailed minutely and analysed robustly, will be of value to individuals and organisations seeking to initiate and lead future systems development.

The key research question being explored is:

- What can be learnt about the processes of effective change management in sport coaching systems from critical analysis of the narratives of selected change managers?

Why am I being asked to participate?

You are being asked to participate because you are recognised as someone who is employed (or deployed) by a sports organisation to take a **leading role** in the **successful** development of coaching in the **UK** by contributing to major system **change** within a **sports context.** You are also acknowledged within the coaching industry as having **significant professional knowledge** and **experience** of working within the sector – for the purposes of this research this is assumed as having **10+ years** of being employed within the sports coaching context.

Moreover, you have been identified as an interesting example of an individual who is being successful in initiating and sustaining long-term systemic change within your particular context. We are therefore interested in exploring your story and experiences relating to your own journey of development and how this has impacted on your ability to be successful in your daily practice.

What will I be asked to do?

As a participant in this research, you will be asked to participate in the following series of recorded interviews (to take place at a place/time convenient to you) designed to develop a deep understanding of your own 'life history' in the context of your professional role. In addition, you will be asked to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the researcher to inform the ongoing development of your story.

Initial meeting – will introduce the rationale for the research and gaining an overview of your life history, with particular focus on education, informal learning and career development. A life history grid will be used to guide all initial conversations and provide a structure for you and the researcher to work through together.

Research interview I – will seek to understand your current experiences in your work role in terms of what you do, why and how you believe this creates and sustains change. This interview will have a semi-structured approach with a set of opening questions guiding the focus of the interview, but the exact final structure will be shaped from your initial life history grid and your emerging story.

Research interview II – will encourage you to reflect back on your life history (from initial meeting) to understand how your experiences have shaped your current approach in your work role. As per interview I, this interview will have a semi-structured approach but the exact final structure and length will be determined by your story and thoughts.

Research interview III – will be a final opportunity to reflect together on the 'story' that has been co-constructed. It will also be a chance to share with you the themes that have emerged from the study as a whole in order to 'test' these themes with you to see if they resonate with your views and experiences.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Sport coaching systems in the UK: narratives of leading/managing change

Who is doing this research and why?
The research is being conducted by Jane Booth (Walters) under the guidance of Professor Kathy Armour and Dr Mark Griffiths at The University of Birmingham. The research is being conducted because it has the potential to offer learning insights for others seeking to become agents of change in the sport coaching field, and may also point to forms of practical support (both formal and informal) that might be of value (for example in developing training programmes).

Once I take part, can I change my mind?
Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form. However, if at any time before, during or up to one month after the data collection period has ended you wish to withdraw from the study, please just contact the main researcher. If, after the data collection period, you change your mind about participating contact either Jane Booth or Kathy Armour up to one month after the data collection has ended, and your data will be withdrawn. Please note that you can withdraw for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. All data will be destroyed at this point.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes. All procedures have been approved by the University of Birmingham's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Ethical Review Committee. All the information you provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others. Following the completion of the research, recordings will be kept on password-protected computers and any hard copies of data will be kept securely in a locked office. According to university regulations, all data will be preserved and accessible for ten years to the researchers. Research data related to future publications might be available for discussion with other researchers, but your name will not be disclosed at any given point.

Can I tell anyone that I am participating in this study?
In order to maintain your anonymity and protect the confidentiality of your participation in this research, it is recommended that you do not share your participation in this study with your professional networks and employers.

What will happen to the results of the study?
It is anticipated that findings will be published in relevant academic/professional journals and texts, presented at national/international conferences, and distributed through a range of other media (e.g. newspapers/social media). It is also envisaged that recommendations from this research could also be used to inform the future work in the realm of professional development and support for individuals working within, or aspiring to work within, the coaching sector in the UK.

What do I get for participating?
This is a comprehensive piece of research that, we believe, can provide a unique opportunity for professional learning and reflection in the coaching sector in the UK. If you decide to participate in the research, you will have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to a piece of work that has the potential to inform future developments of workforce support within the coaching sector. You will have full access to all your own case study data and narrative reports. You will also have access to a final copy of the 'cross-case' analysis at the conclusion of the research project.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Sport coaching systems in the UK: narratives of leading/managing change

Should you have any further questions:

Please contact me via email ████████████ or by phone ████████████ Alternatively, you may also contact Professor Kathy Armour via email ████████████ or phone ████████████

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Statement of consent

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the University of Birmingham Ethical Review Committee.

- I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation in the study.

- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that we will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

- I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name _____

Signature _____

Signature of researcher _____

Date _____

A3 – Participant information questionnaire

BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Sport coaching systems in the UK: narratives of leading/managing change

The purpose of the following questionnaire is to gather background information that can be used to assist with the research and development of the case study.

Please note that all answers will be treated confidentially along with all data collected for this study.

NAME:	DATE:
JOB TITLE:	
ORGANISATION:	
GEOGRAPHIC NATURE OF ROLE: (E.g. National, Regional, County – please specify location)	

1	Gender	MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐
2	Age range	<30 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ >60 ☐
3	Number of years industry experience	<10 ☐ 10-14 ☐ 15-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ >25 ☐
4	Are you a member of any professional/industry body or association?	YES ☐ NO ☐
	If yes, please specify:	
5	Highest level of academic qualification?	Doctorate ☐ Masters ☐ Other PG Dip/Cert ☐ First Degree ☐ Foundation Degree ☐ HND/HNC ☐ A-Level (or equivalent) ☐ BTEC/SCOTVEC ☐ GCSE (or equivalent) ☐ NVQ/SVQ ☐ None ☐ Other ☐
	Please name your highest qualification: (e.g. MSc Sports Coaching; BSc (Hons) History)	
6	Do you hold any industry specific professional or vocational qualifications?	YES ☐ NO ☐
	If yes, please specify:	
7	Do you hold any sports coaching awards	YES ☐ NO ☐
	If yes, what is your highest coaching award?	
	Is this a UKCC endorsed qualifications?	YES ☐ NO ☐

BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Sport coaching systems in the UK: narratives of leading/managing change

Additional monitoring information:

Which of the following ethnic groups best describes you?

White - British	☐	Asian/ Asian British - Pakistani	☐
White - Irish	☐	Asian/ Asian British - Bangladeshi	☐
White - Other	☐	Asian - Other	☐
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	☐	Black/ Black British - Caribbean	☐
Mixed - White & Black African	☐	Black/ Black British - African	☐
Mixed - Other	☐	Black - Other	☐
Asian/ Asian British - Indian	☐	Chinese	☐
I would prefer not to answer this question	☐	Other	☐

Would you describe yourself as having a disability/impairment?

Yes, I have a physical impairment	☐	Yes, I have a hearing impairment	☐
Yes, I have a learning disability	☐	Yes, I have a visual impairment	☐
Yes, I have a mental illness or mental health issue	☐	No /	☐
Yes, health or other impairment (please specify below)	☐	I would prefer not to answer this question	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire ahead of your participation in this research study

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APPENDIX B – ORIGINAL THEMATIC ANALYSIS MAPS

B1 – GRACE

GRACE

LOVE OF LEARNING
- PASSION
- "JUST HAVE A GO"
- CURIOSITY
- LOVE HELPING PEOPLE TO IMPROVE

HIGHER PURPOSE
- VALUES + PHILOSOPHY
- CREATING OPPORTUNITY
- SEEKING NEW CHALLENGE

"I KNOW WHO I AM"
- GROWING CONFIDENCE
- COURAGE
- SELF AWARENESS
- AUTHENTICITY

FAMILY + FRIENDS

GREAT PEOPLE
- TEACHERS + COACHES
- 'BRILLIANT MENTORS'

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS
- BELONGING

ENVIRONMENTS
- FREEDOM TO EXPLORE
- COMMUNITY + TEAM
- FUN

JO

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

SAME STORY: DIFFERENT MEANING

OTHERS

- EMOTIONAL AWARENESS
- EMPATHY
- DEEP UNDERSTANDING
- CARING

SELF

PERSONAL IDENTITY

VALUES, BELIEF + PURPOSE

SENSE OF SELF → STRONG / LOST

INDIVIDUALITY

PASSION

"PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER"

SHARED EXPERIENCES

BELONGING

FAMILY
SPORT
COMMUNITY
TEAM

SUPPORTING OTHERS

SHARED PURPOSE

COACHING

LISTENING

INSPIRING / INSPIRE

SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE

ENABLERS

CONFIDENCE GIVERS

ROLE MODELS

FRIENDS, FAMILY, COLLEAGUES

"I'M GOING TO PROVE YOU WRONG"

- WILL TO WIN
- MOTIVATED + DETERMINED TO SUCCEED
- COMMIT IT + APPLY MYSELF

DESIRE FOR BETTER

LEADERSHIP

- "NATURAL LEADER"
- CARING ABOUT THE TEAM
- FINDING A COMMON PURPOSE

DESIRE TO LEARN

- PERSONAL CHALLENGE
- NEED TO UNDERSTAND
- CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
- THE 'RIGHT' ENVIRONMENT

PEOPLE POWER

- COLLABORATION
- GREAT PEOPLE
- TEAM
- NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS → FRIENDS / MANAGERS
- INSPIRATION
- SIGNIFICANCE OF TEAM
- LEADING BY EXAMPLE

SENSE OF SELF

- "I KNOW WHAT MATTERS"
- EMERGING SENSE OF PURPOSE
- MATURITY
- GROWING CONFIDENCE
- SELF AWARENESS + REFLECTION

BRAVE DECISIONS

- THIS 'FEELS' RIGHT! – TRUST MY GUT
- MOVING TOWARDS THE POSITIVE (AN EXCITING NEW OPPORTUNITY)
- CONSCIOUS VS UNCONSCIOUS
- GUIDED BY PASSION

B4 - TOM

TOM

NURTURING ENVIRONMENTS
- FREEDOM TO TRY
- TRUSTED
- CHALLENGING

REFLEXIVITY
- MEMORY IS SUBJECTIVE
- MAKING SENSE OF LEARNING
- KNOWING MYSELF; MY VALUES
- TIME

AMAZING PEOPLE
- CONNECTION
- HAVE FAITH IN ME
- SURROUNDED BY AMAZING PEOPLE
- WILLING TO SHARE
- TAKE TIME TO BE INTERESTED IN ME

LEARNING
- FOR SELF
- ENRICHING
- THROUGH WITH OTHERS
- THROUGH EXPERIENCES

BRAVERY
- WILLING TO TRY
- COURAGE OF CONVICTIONS
- CONFIDENCE THROUGH TRUST OF OTHERS
- DRIVEN BY PURPOSE

CARE + COMPASSION
- EMPATHY
- UNDERSTAND THEIR WORLD
- INTERESTED
- DESIRE TO SUPPORT OTHERS TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF THEMSELVES

B5 – ROB

ROB

AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

- EMPATHY + LISTENING
- HUMOUR
- "YOU'RE OK; I'M OK"

CURIOSITY

- SEEK NEW EXPERIENCES THROUGH ADVENTURE + CHALLENGE
- ABOUT MYSELF
- DESIRE TO LEARN; UNDERSTAND WHY + HOW

CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

SUPPORTING OTHERS

- CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT
- COACHING
- CARE
- TO REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL

BEING ME

- CONSISTENCY
- LEADERSHIP
- CONFIDENCE TO GROW
- CLARITY OF PURPOSE + VALUES

GREAT PEOPLE

- ROLE MODELS
- LEARNING THROUGH THEM
- MAKE ME FEEL SUPPORTED
- TRUST + HAVE FAITH IN ME

"FOLLOW YOUR HEART"

- COURAGE TO MAKE BIG DECISIONS; TRUST MYSELF
- PASSION
- CREATE OPPORTUNITY
- KNOWING WHAT IS IMPORTANT

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B6 – ROSE

ROSE

Mind Map

GREAT PEOPLE
- FAITH + TRUST IN ME
- GUIDES
- SUPPORT ME + OTHERS → TO BE 'BETTER'

SHAPED BY THE PAST
- DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES
- GOOD + BAD
- DYSLEXIA: A GIFT NOT A LABEL
- MET YOU

GROWTH
- ANALYTICAL THINKING
- RIGHT QUESTION: WRONG TIME
- APPRENTICESHIP "LEARNING ON THE JOB"

KNOW MORE: BE BETTER
- INHERENT CURIOSITY + THE NEED TO UNDER-STAND
- TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS
- "THE MORE I LEARN, THE MORE I REALISE THERE IS TO KNOW"
- TO EVERYONE, LISTEN + LEARN

COURAGE
- TO ACKNOWLEDGE + EMBRACE FAILURE
- TO EXPLORE + FIND NEW ADVANTAGES
- "TO BE ME"

BE ME
- THROUGH MATURITY + EXPERIENCE
- BECOMING MORE FINANCIALLY AWARE OF SELF / BE OTHERS
- TRUE TO MY VALUES
- DETERMINED TO MAKE AN IMPACT

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