

Recognising, addressing, and supporting  
the challenging nature of community  
sport coaching work: A policy enactment  
perspective

T HOLDOM

2024

Recognising, addressing, and supporting  
the challenging nature of community  
sport coaching work: A policy enactment  
perspective

THALIA HOLDOM

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements of Manchester Metropolitan  
University for the degree of Master of  
Science (by Research)

Department of Sport and Exercise

Science

Manchester Metropolitan University

2024

## Abstract

Sport and physical activity are used across the globe to help achieve various sporting and non-sporting policy objectives. Yet, there remains a limited pool of empirical research that addresses the working lives of the community sports coaches (CSC) who are held responsible for enacting such initiatives. The aim of this thesis was to create practical recommendations to prepare, support, and develop CSCs in deploying the interactional skills needed to improve the lives of individuals and communities. Data for this study were generated with four CSCs and their two managers. This involved an iterative three-phase data collection design, using of semi-structured interviews, participant (video) observations, and stimulated-recall interviews which generated 61 hours of data. The dataset(s) were analysed via a phronetic iterative approach, which included the use of the critical incident technique. Several interrelated themes were identified across the whole dataset and were principally understood in relation the work of Ball and colleagues (e.g., Ball *et al.*, 2011; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012), Goffman (1959, 1970, 1990) and Hochschild (1983, 1979). The key findings included 1) how policy was interpreted and enacted differently by each CSC, 2) quantifiable measures were often prioritised over important non-measurable/harder to measure objectives, 3) the managers assumed the coaches already had the key interpersonal skills needed for the role, 4) the coaches then felt underprepared and ill-equipped for their job, and 5) the CSCs engaged in and deployed a repertoire of strategic practices to navigate their situated challenges and realities. The findings have implications for policy makers, coach educators, organisations, and practitioners by providing insights into the pressurised and political community sport landscape, and the specific skills and actions required to be an effective coach and enact policy. These findings can then be used as a set of reflective tools for various stakeholders (e.g., CSCs, policy makers) to consider.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b><i>i</i></b>
<b>Publications arising from this thesis</b> .....	<b><i>iv</i></b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b><i>v</i></b>
<b>List of acronyms</b> .....	<b><i>vi</i></b>
<b>Chapter one: Introduction and Literature Review</b> .....	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>1.2 Literature Review</b> .....	<b><i>3</i></b>
1.2.1 Moving towards policy enactment .....	<i>4</i>
1.2.2 Neoliberalism and precarity in community sport.....	<i>6</i>
1.2.3 Micropolitical actions .....	<i>9</i>
1.2.4 Training provision issues .....	<i>12</i>
1.2.5 Methodological and theoretical underpinnings .....	<i>14</i>
1.2.6 Summary .....	<i>16</i>
<b>1.3 Research aims and questions</b> .....	<b><i>16</i></b>
<b>1.4 Significance</b> .....	<b><i>17</i></b>
<b>Chapter Two: Methodology</b> .....	<b><i>21</i></b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>21</i></b>
<b>2.2 Recruitment and participants</b> .....	<b><i>21</i></b>
2.2.1 Phase one: Network sampling .....	<i>21</i>
2.2.2 Phase two: Criterion-based sampling .....	<i>22</i>
2.2.3 Phase three: Network sampling .....	<i>23</i>
<b>2.3 Research design</b> .....	<b><i>24</i></b>
<b>2.4 Data generation</b> .....	<b><i>26</i></b>
2.4.1 Phase one: Semi-structured interviews .....	<i>27</i>
2.4.2 Phase two: Participant (video) observations and field notes .....	<i>31</i>
2.4.3 Phase three: SRIs .....	<i>35</i>
<b>2.5 Data Analysis</b> .....	<b><i>37</i></b>
2.5.1 Phase one: Semi-structured interviews .....	<i>40</i>
2.5.2 Phase two: Participant (video) observations and field notes .....	<i>44</i>
2.5.3 Phase three: SRIs .....	<i>46</i>
2.5.4 Phase four: whole dataset analysis.....	<i>47</i>
<b>Chapter Three: Results and Discussion</b> .....	<b><i>50</i></b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>50</i></b>
<b>3.2 Realigning the misaligned: policy enactment</b> .....	<b><i>50</i></b>
<b>3.3 Staying afloat: appraisals and finances</b> .....	<b><i>55</i></b>
<b>3.4 CSC training and development: qualified or not?</b> .....	<b><i>61</i></b>
<b>3.5 Classroom chaos and impractical practicals: navigating the workplace</b> ...66	
3.5.1 Nice to meet you .....	<i>68</i>
3.5.2 Is this a joke? .....	<i>81</i>
3.5.3 Pick and choose your battles .....	<i>88</i>
3.5.4 All fun and games .....	<i>97</i>
<b>Chapter Four: Conclusion</b> .....	<b><i>103</i></b>
<b>4.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>103</i></b>
<b>4.2 Research findings</b> .....	<b><i>103</i></b>

4.3	Significance and value .....	105
4.4	Limitations and recommendations for future research .....	108
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>110</b>
	Appendix 1 – Semi-structured interview guide one.....	110
	Appendix 2 – Semi-structured interview guide two.....	111
	Appendix 3 – Horizon coaching standards.....	114
<b>6.0</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>115</b>

## **Publications arising from this thesis**

### *Journal articles:*

Holdom, T., Nichol, A. J. and Ives, B. (in press) 'Recognising, addressing, and supporting the challenging nature of community sport coaching work: Potential ways forward for research and practice' *Sports Coach Review*.

### *Other endeavours:*

Presented at CRiC 5<sup>th</sup> International Coaching Conference

Presented at the MSSM seminars at Manchester Metropolitan University

Taught on the Sports Coaching undergraduate course at Manchester Metropolitan University.

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation to the organisation and all of the participants involved in this study who generously dedicated their time to take part. Without you and your willingness to share your experiences, this thesis would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Ben Ives and Dr. Adam Nichol for the valuable feedback, guidance, and unwavering support throughout this process. I cannot thank you enough for the continued inspiration and encouragement that I have received from the beginning of this journey.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for the endless encouragement, love, and support. I am extremely grateful for everything you have all helped me to achieve.

## List of acronyms

**CCO:** Club Community Organisation

**CIT:** Critical Incident Technique

**CSC:** Community Sport Coach

**EFL:** English Football League

**FA:** Football Association

**NGB:** National Governing Body

**NGO:** Non-government Organisation

**NSO:** National Sporting Organisation

**PIS:** Participant Information Sheet

**SRIs:** Stimulated-Recall Interviews



## Chapter one: Introduction and Literature Review

### 1.1 Introduction

Governments across the globe use sport and physical activity to realise various health, education, and social policy objectives (e.g., tackling obesity, reducing crime, etc.) (Coalter, 2013; Mansfield *et al.*, 2018; Smith, Greenough and Lovett, 2022). The achievement of these outcomes is significant in terms of developing the quality of citizens' lives, enhancing economic productivity and growth, and garnering further support for governments and political parties (World Health Organisation, 2018). Consequently, organisations (locally, nationally, and internationally) seek to attain and prioritise these objectives (Smith, Greenough and Lovett, 2022). For example, '*Premier League Inspires*' and '*Doorstep Sport*' are sport-for-development programmes based in the United Kingdom (UK) that support disadvantaged youth to succeed in life by enhancing their wellbeing, developing personal and practical skills, and building their confidence (Premier League, 2023; StreetGames, no date).

Community sport coaches (CSCs) are often directly responsible and critical to the success of sport and physical activity policy initiatives like those stated above. Specifically, 3-million coaches in the UK dedicate 200-million hours each year in supporting the nation's physical and mental wellbeing, individual development, social/community development, and economic development (UK Coaching, 2022). Consequently, CSCs now find themselves in a highly pressurised, politicised, and precarious policy landscape that has significantly (re)shaped their roles, responsibilities, and practices (Holdom, Nichol and Ives, in press; Ives *et al.*, 2021). CSCs are now required to a) promote opportunities to

become physically active; b) work in partnership with a wider range and number of organisations and professionals to deliver high-quality coaching experiences; c) focus their activities towards the achievement of government's non-sporting outcomes; and d) evidence the impact of their work in terms of its contribution to policy priorities and in stimulating individual and population level behavioural change (Smith, Greenough and Lovett, 2022). Evidently, the role of CSCs is not to develop the sporting performance of participants, they are 'mentors, peer leaders, and community developers' (Smith, Greenough and Lovett, 2022, p.20).

This reality draws attention to the problematic reliance upon formal qualification schemes (e.g., NGB Level 2 Awards) as sporting organisations' primary form of prerequisite education. There is a dissonance between the expectations and responsibilities written in policies, CSC training and qualifications, and the realities CSCs face in-situ (Holdom, Nichol and Ives, in press; Super, Verkooijen and Koelen, 2018; Vinson *et al.*, 2016). Unsurprisingly, embryonic research indicates this situation often leaves CSCs feeling underprepared and ill-equipped to activate change in the health and wellbeing of participants and communities. For example, Crisp and Brackley (2022) highlighted how CSCs needed further support and guidance in terms of appropriate practice design and behaviour management to facilitate social policy outcomes. Thus, important questions surrounding the education, training, and professional development of CSCs are raised. Although the literature base has indicated the types of behaviours or practices that may facilitate success in community sport coaching (e.g., Crisp, 2020; Griffiths and Armour, 2014), there is a lacuna surrounding *how, when, why, and under which circumstances* these behaviours or practices may be impactful (and for whom) in specific contexts and programmes (Nichol *et al.*, 2019).

Literature pertaining to the complex community sport coaching context will now be discussed. The review of literature is broadly organised thematically, in relation to the enactment of policy, the neoliberal and precarious nature of community sport coaching, micropolitical actions, and training provision issues. Within this, critical appraisals are made of the usefulness and limitations of the research, with particular consideration to the methodological and theoretical approaches. It was felt that due to the complexity of the topics related to this thesis and clarity of arguments, the literature review was best placed alongside the introduction. Specifically, being mindful of the word count and space limitations, this structure limits the need for repetition and therefore, offers a more comprehensive understanding of the current issues within, and knowledge of, community sport coaching.

## ***1.2 Literature Review***

Despite the importance attached to CSCs by policy makers, industry, and society, significant issues continue to pervade the field and have yet to be the substantive focus of critical inquiry in academic literature. Many of these are attached to the often overly romanticised and heroic positionings of CSCs as ‘automatons’ who unproblematically implement programmes that achieve policy objectives (Holdom, Nichol and Ives, in press). Such discourse – feeding the notion that sport is a panacea to “solve all (societal) ills”, which Coakley (2015, p. 403) terms ‘the great sport myth’ – is unhelpful for recognising, addressing, and supporting the challenging nature of community sport coaching work (Smith, Greenough and Lovett, 2022). Specific issues remain with the a) overly functionalist views of policy setting and enactment, b) broader structural (working) conditions that shape and constrain the remit, practices, and job evaluations of CSCs, and c) training,

education, and development of CSCs. This review of literature examines our current understanding of these central issues in turn and ends with the outline of the research aim, questions, and significance of the current thesis.

### *1.2.1 Moving towards policy enactment*

Published research (as well as practice) in the domain of sport coaching has tended to position policy as a fixed entity, which is developed by policy makers in one space and then passed down to others who are responsible for its implementation in another (Penney *et al.*, 2022). This perspective creates the impression that policy is a linear and hierarchical process, between for example, governments → NGOs/NGBs → sport and physical activity organisations → CSCs. Community sport coaching has, therefore, often been viewed as something distinct from policy, with many not readily associating it with everyday coaching practice. Scholars, both inside (Dempsey *et al.*, 2021; Hammond, Penney and Jeanes, 2020) and outside of sport (Ball *et al.*, 2011; Penney, 2017) – contest the value of such functionalist representations of the policy process. Instead, policies are enacted rather than implemented and these enactments include acts of translation, interpretation, reconstruction, practice, and performance by a range of social actors and stakeholders, including CSCs (Penney *et al.*, 2022). Moving away from the implementation lens, sports coaching research has affirmed ‘the complex ways in which dimensions of context frame how coaches interpret and engage with policy’ (Hammond, Penney and Jeanes, 2020, p. 580). Such a viewpoint has significant implications for what we understand policy to be (i.e., its ontology) and how we can investigate it (i.e., epistemology). Challenging researchers and practitioners to reconsider and better investigate who is involved in policy, in what ways, at what stages, in which capacity, and the impact of this (e.g., for policy, organisations and society).

Similar to the current thesis, the recent work of Hammond (2022) applied Ball, Maguire and Braun's (2012) theoretical concepts to examine sports coaches' perceptions on working to enact policy. Specifically, Hammond (2022) utilised semi-structured interviews to explore how disability-inclusive policies were enacted in practice by eight Australian swimming coaches. Interestingly, the coaches 'ignored, adjusted, and re-worked official policies so they would fit with the contextual and cultural constraints of their organisations' (Hammond, 2022, p.471). Moreover, a disconnect between coach development and inclusion policy development at Australian Swimming was indicated, with the coaches not perceiving the promotion of inclusion as part of their coaching role. Thus, reflecting Dempsey *et al.*'s (2021) concluding thoughts of how policy is constructed and disseminated, Hammond's (2022) work indicated how in-situ practices are likely to be recontextualised from coaches selecting and legitimising certain knowledge from policy that fits their reality. Akin to Hammond (2022), emerging research has started to explore other areas of policy enactment. Hammond, Penney and Jeanes (2020) previously looked at how coaches embody hybrid policy actor positions to help navigate, cope with, and respond to their complex coaching contexts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight Australian swimming coaches and Ball *et al.*'s (2011) policy actor typology was used to examine their policy work. The coaches evidenced applying different and fluid actor roles to distinct policy issues concerning disability, inclusion, and their general practice. Some higher-level coaches were tactical in the positions they took to focus on the issues that were important to them. This echoed the work of Jeanes *et al.* (2019) who found the majority of CSCs took the role of policy critics, resisting the disability and inclusion policy imperatives they perceived to be unreasonable and prioritised other objectives. This was a larger and more diverse study in which 41 semi-

structured interviews were done with volunteer CSCs across 19 Australian community sports clubs. Advancing our knowledge of policy enactment, Jeanes *et al.* (2019) drew upon the importance of understanding context in which policy actors operate, as contexts shape responses to policy. Evidently, although heavily Australia based, policy enactment research in sport coaching has aided our understanding of coaches' work, the actor roles that they can and do play in advancing and/or inhibiting the realisation of policy hopes, and the discrepancies between the creation and dissemination of policy objectives and how they are understood and responded to in practice (Butson, Jeanes and O'Connor, 2023; Hammond, 2022; Jeanes *et al.*, 2019). Further inquiry is necessary on how and why CSCs adopt different policy actor positions, but researchers should extend the scope of their investigations beyond this consideration (Ives *et al.*, 2023b).

### *1.2.2 Neoliberalism and precarity in community sport*

Researchers have charted how the work of CSCs is interconnected to, and inherently affected by, the causal power of broader social structures (e.g., political, economic) (Coakley, 2021). Indeed, the permeation of neoliberal forces and technologies in community sport policy and practice has been recorded. Including, the introduction of performance management techniques (e.g., key performance indicators), rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes, and audits and inspections linked to the funding of schemes (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Smith, Greenough and Lovett, 2022). In addition to these corresponding shifts in the conditions of work, the industry has seen a general increase in precarious and insecure work for CSCs (Ives *et al.*, 2021). For example, nonstandard (e.g., casual) employment contracts, low paid roles, as well as limited social benefits and statutory protections (Ives *et al.*, 2021). Because of neoliberal restructuring, CSCs' outcome-led practice often takes place within pressurised policy contexts,

where they (and others responsible for enacting policy) are typically constrained to think and act in the short-term (Clark, 2010). Smith, Greenough and Lovett (2022) state that this is often in response to changing policy and funding cycles, and alongside shifting political fads and fashions, but always with tightly controlled targets set by government lurking in the background.

Consequently, these neoliberal policies, practices, and values have implications for how CSCs experience and enact government-inspired community sport policy. For example, Ives and colleagues (2021) reported how such working conditions motivated CSCs to adopt a variety of protective strategies (e.g., prioritising the attainment of attendance details over sporting activities) to safeguard their employment and defend themselves against organisational and policy directives. Ives *et al.* (2021) engaged in 45 hours of participant observations and 42 hours of in-depth interviews with two CSCs. The findings offer a micro-level understanding of the impact and consequences of neoliberal capitalism in sport, particularly surrounding the identity management of CSCs. Continuing this performativity and precarious discourse, highlighting that neoliberalism is not exclusive to the UK, Clark (2010, p. 41) found that South African NGO soccer coaches presented a 'facade of competence before learners, peers, superiors, and funders [...] to conform to neoliberal structures and accountability procedures [that] had increased pressure on individuals within these organisations to appear professionally proficient, despite the restricting situations within which they find themselves'. Here, Clark (2010) interviewed *and* observed primary actors (i.e., seven project coordinators, four coaches, director, project manager, and six teachers) within a community sport organisation, inquiring about the art of deception, power, and agency within a sport-for-development programme. The findings suggested that individuals within this organisation 'paraffin' information,

improvise, lie, or falsify actions and/or reports to cope with or avoid problems. However, Clark (2010) concluded that these deceitful acts can lead to incomplete or confusing learning experiences for the participants, impact the reputation of both the coaches and organisation, and tensions between co-workers and funders can be detrimental to job and programme security. Indeed, as contemporary research in the UK has started to indicate, a significant proportion of CSCs experience sector-related mental illness, and can pay a heavy work-related (e.g., stifled career progression) and non-work related (e.g., poor social relationships) cost when enacting community sport policy (Smith *et al.*, 2020).

The limited body of research to date suggests that current neoliberal working practices, though bringing about some benefits, often have an adverse impact on policy enactment (Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown, 2018; Ives *et al.*, 2021). For example, Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown (2018) used autoethnography to recount experiences of a UK-based sports charity. Taking a Foucauldian approach, this study identified that charities' monitoring and reporting practices had some value, but ultimately do more harm than good. This work offered an insider's view of how the current hypercompetitive socio-political landscape is shaped by policy makers and funders, and how this limits sports charities to enact effective holistic programmes. Ultimately, Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown (2018) identified how due to the neoliberal values and practices infiltrating community sport, the enactment of policy should be questioned as in-situ practices may not be producing the results governments and funders think they do. Additional research is needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how CSCs experience, respond to, and their health and wellbeing is impacted by, neoliberal policies, practices, and values.



### 1.2.3 Micropolitical actions

Recognising and attending to the political and neoliberal nature of community sport work, scholars have begun unpicking the micropolitical actions of CSCs. Grounded in the work of Goffman and/or Hochschild, embryonic research has examined the emotional and messy micropolitics of policy and practice in community sport, where CSCs have been found to engage in impression management, emotional labour, remedial work, and expression games. As Potrac *et al.* (2020, p. 23) posits, coaching is an 'interactive and emotionally laden' job requiring coaches to 'plan for and critically reflect upon how they present themselves and their ideas, choices, actions, and emotions to others'. For example, CSCs consciously adapt their physical, verbal, and emotional displays in the attempt to manipulate others' perceptions of them and circumstances to form an idealised coaching image (Potrac, Jones and Armour, 2002; Jones, Armour and Potrac, 2004).

Ives (2016) applied three theoretical backdrops to his ethnographic work, offering insights into the socio-political and emotional nature of sports coaching. Specifically, Kelchterman's work on micropolitics, Goffman's dramaturgical concepts, and Hochschild's writings on emotion management were deployed to make sense of the coaches' experiences. The findings suggested that the two CSCs operated in a defensive manner in order to survive, thrive, and influence others to ultimately achieve their desired ends (Ives, 2016). For example, one of the coaches identified that if he efficiently collected weekly registers and key forms, developed positive relationships with his peers, avoided tackling anti-social behaviours, and present a positive and commanding image when being observed by management, he could advance and protect his coaching position. The second coach also recognised the power of gathering completed registers and forms,

managing behaviour, and receiving positive feedback for his organisational interests. Ives (2016) concluded that the two coaches appeared to be *micropolitically literate*, as they could read situations through a political lens with the *knowledge aspect* to understand how to navigate their workplace realities in a way that helped attend to their *professional and organisation interests* (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002). Likewise, Hayton (2017) saw the benefit of utilising Hochschild's concept of emotional labour to explore student volunteers enacting a sport-based programme aimed at tackling social exclusion. Resembling the work of Jeanes *et al.* (2019), Hayton (2017) carried out 40 semi-structured interviews with 40 undergraduate students from across five universities. Corresponding with Ives (2016), the volunteers experienced challenges in-situ when trying to enact this programme which elicited emotions such as anxiety and frustration. To navigate their emotions and conceal their true feelings and anxieties, the coaches evidenced the use of emotional strategies. Hayton (2017) found this was in an attempt to successfully respond to the framing, feeling, and display rules tied to the socially diverse client groups and contexts they worked with/in. For example, one coach felt unsettled in his initial meeting with his group, but knew he had to convey a positive demeanour to reassure the participants that he was not a threat, and therefore, tried to construct a pleasant front. To do this, the coach stated he would consistently do expressive emotion work by always smiling and making an effort which allowed him to overcome any mistrust and uncertainty the participants may have held towards him. Hayton (2017) concluded then, the volunteers continuously engaged in emotional labour to alter their emotional displays to 'negotiate intense personal interactions, gain respect from and rapport with clients, and to simply persevere on the project' (p.25).

Seeing the benefit of applying micro-sociological perspectives to community sport research, scholars are increasingly using dramaturgy to underpin their work. Namely, Goffman's concept of impression management has been utilised to examine the expression and impression games CSCs engage in. For example, Gale *et al.* (2019) interviewed 12 CSCs from across the Northwest of England to examine the micro-dynamics of sports coaching. Specifically, how interpersonal (dis)trust is determined and (re)formed in the workplace. The findings suggested that CSCs were careful in their relationships with others, being acutely aware of the competitive conditions in which they operate. Similar to Ives (2016) and Hayton (2017), the CSCs in Gale *et al.*'s (2019) study engaged in 'expression games, namely, uncovering moves, secret monitoring, and exploitative fabrications to assess the intentions, motives and actions of others' which worked to protect or advance the CSCs' position or benefits within their organisation (p.27). More recent work from Gale and colleagues (2023) continued their use of dramaturgy to examine conflict and repair in CSCs' workplace relationships. This study consisted of 18 full-time male CSCs who were interviewed once about their remedial work and evidenced how relationship conflict was linked to identity and control violations from their participants. The CSCs 'offered remedial moves, namely accounts, apologies, and demonstrations of concern' to try and repair their relationships and navigate workplace conflict (Gale *et al.*, 2023, p. 427). As the work of Potrac *et al.* (2022) has discussed, the application of Goffman's concepts in community sport coaching can help researchers, policy makers and practitioners to better appreciate 'the hidden, and often underappreciated, social dynamics of community sport coaching work' (p. 220).

The embryonic work discussed, has acknowledged *how* and *why* CSCs engaged in emotional labour and/or impression management to navigate the

workplace and/or to enact community sport programmes. This developing literature has highlighted how CSCs navigate the personal, intra-, inter-, and extra-organisational mechanisms within which their coaching work takes place (Ives *et al.*, 2021). However, in line with the critical sentiments above, there is a focus on the perspectives of the coaches themselves, disregarding the important voices of others involved (i.e., participants). Consequently, we are left to only infer if their impression and/or emotion work was (un)successful. Despite such advancements in knowledge, future research could significantly benefit from more closely situating and aligning examinations of these socio-political skills and practices with policy enactment (Holdom, Nichol and Ives, in press; Ives *et al.*, 2023b). For example, research has yet to critically investigate what socio-political skills are needed by CSCs in the enactment of policy, how and why these are acquired and deployed in practice, and how such capabilities (i.e., skills, knowledge, and behaviours) specifically facilitate or constrain the achievement and evaluation of individual, organisational, and policy objectives. Not only is it important to critically examine these issues with coaches, but there is also considerable merit in investigating the perspectives of sport managers, participants themselves, and other policy actors involved in community sport coaching work. Until research and practice sufficiently foreground enactment in these ways (i.e., where policy remains in a constant state of (re)negotiation through the actions and interactions of those individuals invested, implicated, and impacted in and by policy), arguably, our understanding, evaluations of, and potential to improve, sport and physical activity policy interventions will be significantly restricted (Holdom, Nichol and Ives, in press).

#### *1.2.4 Training provision issues*

In the current community sport coaching field, CSCs are typically expected to have

'traditional' sports qualifications (e.g., FA level 1) that have a heavy focus on the technical and tactical aspects of coaching (Consterdine and Taylor, 2022). However, concerns over whether this type of knowledge and education is actually valuable for CSCs has led to scholars investigating training provision and development opportunities available to those working in community sport contexts. The work of Ives (2016) reported how CSCs were unable to effectively deploy the "soft skills" (e.g., trustworthiness) and "tough skills" (e.g., negotiation) needed to positively change the behaviours, outlooks, and feelings of participants from underserved communities. With the more recent work of Consterdine and Taylor (2022), indicating that current formalised coach education offerings typically fail to prepare CSCs for the realities of their work, including a) in the charitable sector where sport is used to develop a sense of community and individual betterment and b) in local authority provision which integrates sport and physical activity with other community-based support services. For example, Crisp and Brackley (2022) conducted a two-year longitudinal study, systematically observing, evaluating, and providing written feedback to 13 novice community/grassroot sports coaches. Additional semi-structured interviews with each coach were conducted to allow them to reflect and express their thoughts on their current coaching practice and coach learning experiences. Significantly, they indicated ongoing structural issues related to the ethos of coach qualification programmes, in which the CSCs despite being qualified at NGB Level 2, required additional support and expertise for the specific community contexts (i.e., outcomes, practice design). Crisp and Brackley (2022) concluded, poor practices are being delivered within community sport contexts and will continue to do so since knowledge of how to deliver effective sessions in these settings are not reaching CSCs through the normalised and over-relied upon formal coaching pathways.

In response to these positions, academics have suggested that mentoring and reflective practice may offer the best solutions for CSCs to engage in effective work-based learning (Crisp & Brackley, 2022; Griffiths and Armour, 2012). The work of Griffiths and Armour (2012) for example, examined the learning strategy of formalised mentoring for volunteer CSCs. Similar to Crisp and Brackley (2022), Griffiths and Armour (2012) undertook a 12-month longitudinal study of the formal mentor partnerships of six mentors and 18 volunteer CSCs, combining the use of interviews, questionnaires and focus groups in a three-phase design. Bourdieu's concepts were deployed to interpret what was said about their mentorships and cultural learning. The findings suggested that formalised mentoring was conditioned by 1) personal interplay, 2) context, and 3) learning culture. Therefore, learning is not a dualistic interaction but rather a dynamic learning culture that can, if done effectively, be a way of supporting professional practice. Whilst there is value in such arguments, a limited pool remains of critical research to inform the design and delivery of education/mentoring specific to the work of CSCs and that can be put into practice.

#### *1.2.5 Methodological and theoretical underpinnings*

Although advancements have been made in our knowledge of community sport in the UK, part of our limited understanding lies with the utilisation of (popular) singular methods and prioritising one voice over another. Thus, along with the fact that majority of the studies reviewed in this section have only explored the perspective of one population (i.e., coach, director, educators etc.), semi-structured interviews tend to be the default methodology used to conduct research (e.g., Gale *et al.*, 2023; Hammond, 2022). Consequently, only gaining a snapshot of important phenomena through these methodologies restricts the scope and depth of knowledge and understanding into the realm of community sport. This is

not to imply that insightful data cannot be generated, however, an overreliance on one method or viewpoint may lead to missed opportunities (McGannon *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, reflecting parts of the current thesis and a more fruitful line of sophisticated inquiry, recent research into community sport coaching (e.g., Crisp and Brackley, 2022; Ives *et al.*, 2021) has started to move away from single use methodologies. Specific focus has been placed on utilising participant observations *and* interviews to examine the demands and dilemmas CSCs faced when enacting sporting initiatives. Hence, 'if we are to prepare, support, and develop knowledgeable, socially astute, and caring practitioners', who also have the capabilities to be effective policy enactors (Ives *et al.*, 2021, p.2), a multi-method approach would be advantageous to explore the issues discussed above.

Further, drawing on the principles of co-production when investigating community sport coaching may be advantageous for research, policy, and practice. Co-produced research is carried out "with" and "by" industry practitioners rather than "to", "about", or "for" them (Holdom, Nichol and Ives, in press). Smith *et al.* (2023) advocate that co-production can improve the overall quality, relevance, and impact for the target audience by ensuring the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of research is grounded in the specialist knowledge and lived experiences of practitioners. When considering different forms of co-produced research (Smith *et al.*, 2023), equitable and experientially-informed approaches may be the most beneficial for inquiry in this domain. Further, where deemed appropriate, researchers could seek to use participatory methods to generate rich and high-quality datasets. For example, longitudinal and multiple-method approaches (e.g., participant observation, semi-structured and stimulated recall interviews) from multiple perspectives (on the same incidents or events) (see Nichol *et al.*, 2023) may hold significant potential for producing original knowledge

that is truly responsive to the needs of CSCs and those within their relational networks.

### *1.2.6 Summary*

This literature review suggests a gap in research regarding how policy is enacted and experienced by the different policy actors involved in community sport coaching work (e.g., sport managers, participants, and CSCs themselves). There is great value in engaging with the more complex lens of *policy enactment* (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012; Penney *et al.*, 2022), accounting for the ways in which policy is (re)shaped, interpreted, and revised at multiple levels. In response to the neoliberal values and forces acting upon CSCs and their organisations, research could look to work more closely with industry partners to pilot and investigate more holistic appraisals of performance and productivity, rather than solely relying on quantitative metrics (e.g., key performance indicators). The current literature also highlights the problematic situation currently existing with training and education offered to CSCs. Research should look to close the gap between such activities and their ability to closely resonate with – and adequately prepare practitioners for – the realities of their day-to-day roles. Moving beyond the literature that identifies behaviours or practices that may be productive for CSCs more generally, greater attention could be paid to *how, when, why, and under which circumstances* these behaviours or practices may be impactful (and for whom) in specific contexts and programmes.

### **1.3 Research aims and questions**

In response to the literature reviewed above, the aim of this thesis is to tackle the gap in knowledge by creating practical recommendations to prepare, support, and develop CSCs in deploying the interactional skills needed to improve the lives of



individuals and communities (i.e., the *when, how, why, and under what circumstances*). An iterative three-phase data collection design and multiple theoretical concepts (i.e., Ball et al., 2011; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012; Goffman, 1959, 1970, 1990; Hochschild, 1983, 1979) were utilised to address the following questions:

- 1) What are the challenges and realities CSCs face when delivering community sport projects in-situ?
- 2) What are the intra- and inter-personal skills required to navigate these challenges, positively engage participants, and improve their health, wellbeing, and community relations?
- 3) How can these soft and tough skills be best deployed to achieve organisational and social policy?

#### **1.4 Significance**

The significance of this thesis attends to the empirical, methodological, and practical gaps in community sport coaching research. By working closely with an industry partner and in-situ with CSCs, the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of the research for this thesis is grounded on the specialist knowledge and lived experiences of practitioners (Smith *et al.*, 2023). To further our empirical understanding, this study engages with the more complex lens of policy enactment (Penney *et al.*, 2022). Whilst previous community sport coaching literature has started to examine the various policy actor types, this thesis moves beyond that and strives to examine who is involved in policy, in what ways, at what stages, in which capacity, and the impact of this (e.g., for policy, organisations and society). Not only does this project set out to gain insights into the policy enactment in, and realities of, community sport coaching, but it builds on our current knowledge of this area by examining the key skills and strategies required to (un)successfully enact policy in practice. As part of this approach, multiple participatory methods were utilised to generate rich and high-quality datasets.

Specifically, participant observation, semi-structured, and stimulated-recall interviews (SRIs) were deployed in the aim of producing original but relatable and relevant knowledge. Thus, the practical significance of this research lies in how the methodological and empirical approach can help to underpin evidence-based education, training, and mentoring, through acting as a set of tools for practitioners to think with and reflect on to inform their practice. Indeed, the nuanced methodological approach lends itself to have practical significance in the dissemination of findings, whereby the gap between academia and practice can be bridged.

Whilst there lies a focus on CSCs, this study also looks to speak to the wider sports coaching literature base. Taking a similar theoretical and analytical approach to this study, O’Gorman et al. (2021) examined how 12 part-time professional youth football academy coaches interpreted, experienced, and engaged with The FA Premier League’s Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP). The use of cyclical interviews, iterative phronetic analysis, and Ball’s theorising highlighted how the precarious nature of the coaches’ employment impacted the ways in which they interpreted and translated the EPPP policy. For example, to ensure the sessions aligned with the club philosophy and met the targets required to maintain funding, the sessions began being planned for the coaches which led to them expressing that the enactment of their coaching role was ‘constrained, narrowly defined and lacked creativity’ (O’Gorman et al., 2021, p.317). To further this, O’Gorman et al. (2021) found that the intensification of work and constant monitoring of performance led to the coaches feeling compelled to fabricate accounts of their work, themselves, and their academies to cope with their political workplace environment. As with the current thesis, O’Gorman et al. (2021) emphasised the challenging nature of coach engagement with, and enactment of,

policy, whilst also acknowledging the neoliberal and precarious influences. The influence of neoliberalism, precarity, and politics on sports coaches' professional agency was identified by Purdy et al. (2019) in their study with seven professional basketball coaches in Europe. Reflecting this thesis and the work of other sports coaching scholars (e.g., Hammond, 2022; O'Gorman et al., 2021), Purdy et al. (2019) used semi-structured interviews and an iterative analysis approach to offer insights into how, when political interference, power relations, and economic consequences were less pronounced, coaches were able to demonstrate greater autonomy and stronger professional agency. It was when organisational constraints were heightened that some coaches worked to protect their reputations by placing themselves in precarious employment conditions (e.g., leaving their job early, shorter contracts). Aligned with the work of O'Gorman et al. (2021), Purdy et al. (2019) concluded that coach decisions and actions were tied to professional ideals and understandings of what strategies are required to effectively undertake, navigate, and/or adjust their work to fit the needs of the stakeholders. Although not much work has been done on precarity and policy enactment in the broader sports coaching literature, the likes of Purdy et al. (2019) and O'Gorman et al. (2021) exemplify the workplace and professional boundaries, challenges, and realities inherent to sports coaching work. Consequently, there is great scope to examine these issues in other sporting contexts, with various stakeholders, and within different organisational structures (e.g., academies, pro-clubs etc.).

Indeed, as highlighted in section 1.2, this thesis looks to help address the gap in knowledge surrounding the precarious nature of coaching and how coaches manifest this within their respective settings. This research builds on the current limited knowledge of precarity and policy enactment in sports coaching by not only interviewing coaches, but observing their in-situ practice to understand how and

why they make certain decisions, linking to and reflecting upon the neoliberal and political working conditions they are implicated by. The thesis also looks to add a layer of insight by hearing the voices of those in management, to further understand the organisational workings and policy enactment process from various positions within the sporting organisation. Therefore, the findings and implications of this thesis are set to not be limited to the field of community sport coaching, but to contribute to the wider knowledge of sports coaching more broadly.

In the rest of this thesis, you will find an outline of the methodology and research design ([chapter two](#)), followed by the results and discussion ([chapter three](#)), and ending with a conclusion and future directions for research and practice ([chapter four](#)).

## Chapter Two: Methodology

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology used throughout the research. It discusses the participant recruitment, research design, and procedures used to generate and analyse data. Further, the advantages and issues associated with the research process will be considered, along with reflexive thoughts of the researcher.

### **2.2 Recruitment and participants**

For this study, a three-phase purposive sampling approach was used to recruit participants and sites. Purposive sampling involves choosing a sample as a way to 'gain as much knowledge as possible about the context, the person, or other sampling units' (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p. 70). As such, the researcher chooses the participant(s) based on who they feel are capable of meeting the research aims, resources, and timeline by providing 'information-rich' cases on the topic(s) of interest (Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Tracy, 2019). Under the umbrella of purposive sampling are 15 subtypes (Patton, 1990), including *network* and *criterion-based* sampling which were used for this investigation.

#### **2.2.1 Phase one: Network sampling**

First, *network* sampling was deployed. This involves using others to direct you towards places, sites or cases that meet the needs of the study. Indeed, the existing relationship between Manchester Metropolitan University and a leading football in the community organisation (Club Community Organisation (CCO)) was utilised to conduct research into the realities and challenges of being a CSC. A CCO is a charitable extension of a English Football League (EFL) club, that offers a range of community initiatives, projects, and programmes that aim to help

improve health and wellbeing, raise aspirations and realise potential, and build stronger, more cohesive communities. Using this network, careful consideration and deliberations were made with the CCO regarding which community sport programme would be best to examine. It was decided that this research would explore their educational intervention programme, Horizon [pseudonym]. Horizon is a personal development programme that is predominantly delivered in secondary schools and pupil referral units (PRUs), consisting of a two-to-three-hour classroom session and a one-hour practical (e.g., football) session. This initiative works to empower at-risk 11–18-year-olds to develop personal, social, employability and life-skills through regular group sessions, mentoring, workshops, and social-action projects. Once the programme was decided, phase 2 began and *criterion-based* sampling was deployed to recruit CSC participants.

### *2.2.2 Phase two: Criterion-based sampling*

*Criterion-based* sampling was deployed to identify the CSCs for this study. This process involved a predetermined criteria for selecting places, sites, or cases (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). These participants needed to be:

1. A current CSC at this CCO
2. Currently delivering the Horizon programme
3. Aged 18 or over
4. Understand and speak fluent English

This criterion was presented in the participant information sheet (PIS) provided to the Horizon team via email. Informed consent was granted after obtaining institutional ethical approval. After sending the PIS over email, I joined a Horizon team meeting to 1) introduce myself, 2) talk through the PIS, and 3) discuss the research and answer any questions. After this meeting, out of the six CSCs and

two managers that make up the Horizon team, the two managers and four CSCs volunteered to take part, providing written and verbal consent. Participant information can be found in table 1. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of all the participants, other individuals they mention, and organisations.

Table 1. Participant information

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Experience as a Horizon coach/manager</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Coaching Qualifications</b>
<i>Luke</i>	CSC	3 years	Male	UEFA B PE School Sports Level 3
<i>Sam</i>	CSC	2 years	Male	FA Level 2 Rugby League Level 2 Handball Level 1 Futsal Level 1 BSc Sports Coaching MA in Coach Development
<i>Will</i>	CSC	1 year	Male	FA Level 2 BSc Community Sport Coaching
<i>Jack</i>	CSC	6 months	Male	FA Level 2 FA Primary Stars Award BSc Community Sport Coaching
<i>Harry</i>	Team Manager	16 months	Male	None
<i>Dan</i>	Area Manager	5 years	Male	FA Level 2

### 2.2.3 Phase three: Network sampling

Once the CCO, programme, and CSCs were recruited, the attention turned to recruiting the schools that the CSCs work with/in via *network* sampling. Multiple

emails were sent to a total of eight partner schools, and the CSCs and managers communicated with the school leads (e.g., headteachers) of each school. After which, three schools (one school per coach) did respond and were happy for me to observe the CSCs (Sam, Luke, and Will) in practice. Following this initial acceptance, I organised a time to meet with each of the school leads and group of students who were enrolled on the Horizon programme so I could 1) introduce myself, 2) provide them with PIS, and 3) discuss the research and answer any questions. All of the students verbally stated to me, their CSC, and school lead that they were happy to take part. Only four pupils requested not to be video recorded. Since I was not taking any of their personal information and not interacting with them directly for the sake of the research (i.e., my focus for empirical inquiry was on the coach), the ethics committee approved consent for the pupils to be obtained with the school lead (e.g., head of year) acting as a gatekeeper, signing the consent form *in-loco parentis*. As such, part of this study included a total of 50 secondary participants (aged 14-16 years old) from across two high schools and one alternative educational setting in England who participated in Horizon.

### **2.3 Research design**

This thesis took a qualitative approach. Qualitative research uses ‘words as data...collected and analysed in all sorts of ways’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 2) to uncover ‘the meaning people constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world’ (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 19). Within qualitative research, people adopt different paradigmatic positions which reflect ways of thinking and doing research (Tracy, 2019). For this qualitative investigation, an interpretivist paradigm was adopted. Interpretivism is concerned with understanding ‘the fundamental nature of the social world at the



level of subjective experience' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 28). Put simply, this perspective views the social world as complex, where individuals define their own meanings within their situated realities (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). Indeed, it is those meanings that interpretive researchers set out to examine.

The paradigmatic position that a researcher adopts differs on their ontological (the nature of reality) and epistemological (the nature of knowledge) assumptions. In terms of interpretivism, researchers adopt a relativist ontology (i.e., no reality independent of perception) and a subjectivist epistemology (i.e., knowledge is subjective and socially constructed) (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). From an ontological perspective then, interpretivists argue that there are multiple realities, rejecting the view that there is merely one social world (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014; Sparkes, 1992). Rather, the social world is 'constructed within individuals' subjectivities, interests, emotions, and values' (Sparkes, 1992, p. 25). From this perspective then, social reality is a product of the ways individuals assign meaning to their experiences and interpret the social worlds they live in (Markula and Silk, 2011; Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). Indeed, our interpretation and understanding of reality is arguably influenced by various political, cultural, and social factors (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). Further, this perspective recognises that the meaning individuals attach to their experiences of the social world are not fixed but are open to change, revision, and re-interpretation (Sparkes, 1992).

Epistemologically, interpretivism is based upon the view that knowledge is socially constructed and subjective, rejecting objectivity (Sparkes, 1992). Instead, it is argued that knowledge is co-constructed, interactive, and subjective (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). When applying this belief to research, the goal is to

place the participants' experiences at the core of inquiry to make sense of their social realities from their point of view (i.e., values, emotions, interests, intentions, subjectivities) (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014; Tracy, 2019). In summary, an interpretivist position facilitated rich analyses of the meanings CSCs attribute to their experiences of the social complexities inherent with community sport coaching work, and to understand how and why CSCs deploy skills and tactics to respond to these contexts (Tracy, 2019).

#### **2.4 Data generation**

Interpretivist researchers typically adopt dialectical methodologies because they are looking to produce thick descriptions and interpretations, and prioritise depth and breadth of data (Potrac, Jones and Nelson, 2014). In line with this perspective, I combined semi-structured interviews, participant (video) observations, and SRIs. The subsequent subsections outline and explain each method in a purposeful order, however, the collection and analysis of all three phases were interwoven and iterative (see [2.7](#) for more on the iterative data analysis process) (Tracy, 2018). That is, each phase informed but also continually supported one another to open up more possibilities of knowing and understanding, particularly as to what variables, themes, and scenarios were of interest for further exploration (McGannon *et al.*, 2021). For example, the interviews and observations were conducted simultaneously which worked to help refine the exploration and examination of inquiry. By using a multi-method design I was able to investigate *what, why, how, when, and under what circumstances* events occurred in-situ, whilst striving to overcome the possible limitations that each singular method posed (McGannon *et al.*, 2021; Nichol *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, semi-structured interviews worked to investigate the *what* and *why*, the addition of participant observations offered insights into the *what, when, and*

*under what circumstances*, whilst stimulated recall interviews attended to all of the above, with a particular focus on the *how*.

#### *2.4.1 Phase one: Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are purposeful and detailed conversations that are stimulated and directed by the use of predetermined open-ended questions (e.g., tell me about...) (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). As opposed to being highly standardised or too open, this flexible interview structure allows for important and relevant information regarding the research topic to be gathered, whilst still permitting the opportunity for the participants to express their own thoughts and feelings (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). The four CSCs and two managers took part in two semi-structured interviews each (n= 12) which lasted around 68 minutes. Each interview took place in a mutually agreed and comfortable location, eight were conducted face-to-face at the office (e.g., in a meeting room) and four took place on Microsoft Teams. The decision to complete some interviews online was a pragmatic one due to time constraints and schedules, making an online forum more convenient for the coach. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim following completion. After the transcripts from the first round of interviews were produced, pseudonyms were ascribed to each participant to protect their anonymity as well as any other individual or organisation that were mentioned during the interview process (Tracy, 2019).

The interview guide (see [appendix 1](#) and [2](#)) for this study was informed by the research aim, my reading and understanding of pertinent community sport coaching literature (e.g., Hayton, 2017; Ives *et al.*, 2022), social theory (e.g., Ball *et al.*, 2011; Goffman, 1990; Hartley, 2016; Hochschild, 1979), and my own knowledge of the community sport landscape. This guide helped direct the

discussion toward the research questions, whilst having a degree of flexibility for additional exploration into areas of interest (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Specifically, the first set of interviews broadly focused on the participants' background information (e.g., qualifications), context of the programme (e.g., aims and objectives), insight into job roles, responsibilities, and everyday realities (e.g., what do they deliver?). For the second set of interviews, Hartley's (2016) ideas on political astuteness were used as a sensemaking framework to help form some of the interview questions. This allowed the exploration into what key skills the participants deemed to be essential (or not) for the role and why (e.g., "Why do you think it is important to be able to read people and situations?"). The interview guides were circulated to the participants via email seven days prior to their scheduled interview. This was to give the participants time to familiarise themselves with the guide and think about the questions posed (Ives *et al.*, 2023a). I also engaged in informal conversations with each participant leading up to their interview to discuss the way the process works, answer any questions, and attend to any uncertainties.

To further encourage participant talk and maximise the collection of rich and useful data, I engaged in additional strategies before, during and after the interviews. Before the interviews, I offered a controlled choice as to where the participants wished to carry out the interview. This strategy ensured the setting was appropriate for collecting in-depth information, but that the participants still felt happy, safe, and comfortable to encourage openness (Purdy, 2014; Tracy, 2019). Leading up to the interviews, in an attempt to build trust and break down any barriers, I tried to immerse myself into the organisation (e.g., having lunch with the coaches) and had conversations about my previous work history as a CSC outside of academia. Engaging in these strategies prior to and throughout the data

collection period allowed a mutual understanding and rapport between myself and the participants to form (Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Tracy, 2019). During the interviews, I attempted to maximise rich data by trying to regulate my verbal and non-verbal presence. For example, to try and make the participant feel more comfortable and relaxed I intentionally wore casual clothes as opposed to the Horizon kit I was provided, greeted them with a friendly 'hello' and smile, and gave them the option as to where they would like to sit (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Further, each interview started with an introductory statement informing the participant of the research aim and reassured them of confidentiality and their right to withdraw, whilst permitting them time to ask any questions (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). I also stated how I was interested in their own personal views and therefore, there were no right or wrong answers (Tracy, 2019). In addition, I attempted to be an active listener (i.e., being attentive and responsive) by ensuring my body language and attitude evidenced to the participant that I was listening to them (e.g., eye contact, smiling, not interrupting, asking follow-up questions).

Throughout the interview process, I also incorporated a variety of different 'probing questions' to encourage the participants to share more and enrich the data gathered (Seale, 2018, p. 180). For example, *clarification probes* looked to elucidate on any unclear points to avoid any misunderstanding (e.g., "Can you help by explaining it a little more?"), *elaboration probes* were deployed to encourage participants to expand on points raised in the interview (e.g., "Can you give me an example of when that happened?"), and *detailed-oriented probes* were used to enhance the narratives shared by the participants (e.g., "Who was with you?") (Gale *et al.*, 2019; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). In addition, curiosity-driven questions were used to gain deeper insights into any 'unexpected' topics that sparked an interest (Ives *et al.*, 2023a; Monforte and Ubeda-Colomer, 2021). At

the end of each interview, clean up questions were asked (e.g., “Would you like to add anything in relation to the topics we have discussed today?”). This gave the participants the chance to highlight any additional issues they deemed to be important and/or that could add to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I also ensured that I thanked the participants for taking the time and effort to do the interview as a way to maintain the rapport and trust that was developed prior to and during the interview. After the first interviews were completed, I contacted the participants via a courteous email to thank them again for taking part and to schedule their second interview.

Whilst semi-structured interviews are a popular method in sports coaching research and offer the opportunity to build rapport and gain good quality data, there are limitations (Purdy, 2014). For example, interviews are often a ‘one-off’ snapshot perspective which limits the possibilities of generating rich descriptions and insights (Purdy, 2014). Further, semi-structured interviews do not allow for the examination of in-situ events happening in ‘real time’, you cannot be party to conversations that may not be shared or disclosed in an interview, and contextual knowledge and understanding cannot be developed (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). As Hammersley (1990) states, ‘to rely on what people say about what they believe and do, without also observing what they do, is to neglect the complex relationship between attitudes and behaviour’ (p. 597). Therefore, to help overcome these limitations I also engaged in participant (video) observations because this method enables you to record the ‘mundane, taken-for-granted, and unremarkable (to participants) features of everyday life’ (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p. 100). Further benefits of participant observations include the ability to ask questions about specific interactions, scenes and events that have been observed, accounting for the naturally occurring ways in which people think, feel, and act in their situated

contexts (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Indeed, combining semi-structured interviews with observations generated data not only on what the CSCs said they do, but on what they actually do (Sparkes and Smith, 2014).

#### 2.4.2 Phase two: Participant (video) observations and field notes

Following the interviews, I observed three CSCs delivering their sessions over a half-term period. Sam was observed a total of three times (n= 12 hours of observation) in a school setting with two all-female groups (aged 14-16 years old). Luke was observed four times (n= 12 hours) in a school setting with one mixed gender group (aged 15-16 years old). Will was also observed four times (n= 12) with one all male group (aged 14-16 years old) and delivered his sessions at a football stadium (i.e., function room, astroturf). In summary, I observed a total of 11 sessions and conducted approximately 36 hours of (recorded) observation.

Considerations were made about the role I played in the observations. In order to generate rich data, my participation was not static but changed in response to different situations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). As such, I moved along the 'continuum of enmeshment' (i.e., mixture of overlapping roles), where my role fell somewhere between a *play participant* (i.e., participates in activities but not in everything) and *focused participant observer* (i.e., primarily observes from the sideline) (Tracy, 2019, p. 130). When I was a *play participant* for example, I engaged in activities such as the practical sessions and class games. As a *focused participant*, my participation in the group was secondary to my role as a researcher for example, during the main task, I only interacted with the group when I was spoken to or when the coach approached me or during the breaks (i.e., lunch time, between lessons). Equally, to strengthen my position within these contexts and build rapport, if a student got an answer right or scored a

goal I would clap along or celebrate with the rest of the class because I recognised that failing to do so, may have led to negative consequences and therefore, they may not have been as open to me coming back the following week. Likewise, not reacting in the normative way may have likely raised questions and led to distrust between me, the group, and the coach, which could have impacted their openness and the richness of data collected (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, I took up positions that, in the moment, enabled me to be alert, focused, and show interest, which helped build rapport and generate rich data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; O'Reilly, 2012). Indeed, decisions about whether to participate more or less were dependent upon various factors including the research questions and agenda, insights from the interviews, the nature of interactions and events (e.g., behaviour incidents), and my relationship with the group (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019).

The observations included the use of a static camera (Sony HDR CX625) and wireless microphone (SubZero SZW-C40 Lavalier Camera Microphone System) attached to the coach. I used this as an additional tool to aid the participant observations, field notes, and SRIs, providing 'a vivid and detailed' video and audio documentation of each observed session (Tracy, 2019, p.137). As videotaped observations are 'not selective at the time of recording' (Rosenstein, 2002, p.24), I was able to personally observe and direct my attention to critical events when they occurred, without any other background interactions or significant incidents being missed since they were recorded for later viewing (Babchuk, 1962). Further, I was party to conversations that may not have been shared via another qualitative method (Paterson, Bottorff and Hewat, 2003; MacPhail, 2004). By capturing the complex and missed moments and, adding depth and breadth to my in-person observations, rich data was generated



(Paterson, Bottorff and Hewat, 2003). It is important to recognise that using this equipment can have limitations, particularly in regard to affecting the scene. For example, those in the room (i.e., CSC, pupils, teachers) may change their behaviours, act differently, or hide certain attributes to present themselves more favourably (Tracy, 2019). To limit this effect, I chose to observe and record each CSC a minimum of three times, for the duration of their day with their groups (i.e., 3-4 hours), because it can be hard to try and conceal or present yourself in a certain (possibly fabricated) way for a prolonged period (Carnevale *et al.*, 2008). This provided everyone in the room the chance to become attuned to and comfortable with being recorded (Carnevale *et al.*, 2008). For example, two of the coaches said to me in their third observed session that they forgot for most of the day that they had a microphone on and that they were being recorded.

To complement the video camera data and aid my analysis, I took field notes during the observations. Specifically, I made field notes to help remember the time and content of significant events, which then helped search through the video footage. This is an interpretive process where just-witnessed events, people, and places are transcribed into written representations (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). As such, when a significant event (i.e., relating to the research questions, insights from the interview data) and/or interaction occurred, I made a mental note or if it was appropriate, a jotting that captured the event using 'keywords or phrases' (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011, p. 29). It was often the case that when a task was set, I would use that opportunity to discreetly make my notes after a significant event occurred. When this was not possible, I later wrote it down at an appropriate time (e.g., at lunch time). Similar to the roles I took in the observations, careful consideration was given to how I took my jottings. By this I mean when and where I decided to take my field notes should not have been 'culturally strange'

(Thorpe and Olive, 2016, p.132). Having a noticeable note taking technique could impact on my relationship with the coach and participants, and the authenticity of their behaviours and interactions (e.g., concealing/showing certain behaviours in the chance that I make notes on it) (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). Indeed, I changed from writing in a notebook to using my laptop, as this imitated the norm of these contexts more closely, helping to ensure my role as a researcher was more inconspicuous (Hein, O'Donohoe and Ryan, 2011) assisting the collection of rich data (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). After each completed observation, I transcribed my short notes into full typewritten field notes using a Microsoft Word document on my computer. Constructing these full field notes immediately after each observation aided my memory recall quality (Thorpe and Olive, 2016), and the addition of the video and audio recordings enabled me to affirm and clarify what I had written (Paterson, Bottorff and Hewat, 2003).

Whilst this method generated valuable insights into the CSCs' everyday practices and realities, it could be argued these were only superficial as 'field notes are always subjectively created' based upon my own in-situ impressions, experiences, and interpretations (Tracy, 2019, p.141). Using field notes and/or the video footage alone would have restricted my exploration of the research questions since I was unable to understand the meanings and reasons the CSCs attributed to their experiences, actions, and decisions. Therefore, to help overcome these limitations I used SRIs. This is because stimulated recall is an introspective research procedure where 'videotaped passages of behaviour are played to individuals to stimulate recall of their concurrent cognitive activity' (Lyle, 2003, p. 861). This stimulated participant talk by giving the CSCs the opportunity to explain, confirm, defend, and expand upon my and their own interpretations and what occurred during their sessions (Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Tracy, 2019).

Indeed, choosing SRIs over another standard semi-structured interview meant the participants were a step closer to the moments in which the events actually occurred (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). This design provided the chance to listen and view themselves in action and therefore, permitted the CSCs to reflect upon their experiences more deeply and meaningfully.

#### *2.4.3 Phase three: SRIs*

Phase-three involved each observed coach taking part in SRIs. The SRIs occurred in the context of a one-to-one semi-structured interview, but with the addition of video extracts from their observed sessions as stimuli. Will, Luke, and Sam did four SRIs each (n= 12) which lasted around 57 minutes. The stimuli used in each SRI correlated to the day of the CSCs' observation (i.e., the footage from Sam's first day of observations were clipped and grouped to be used in his first SRI). The duration of the individual video clips lasted between 20 seconds to three minutes long, depending on the CSC and depth of discussion (e.g., pausing the clips, rewatching a clip). Whilst it is recommended to carry out SRIs as soon after the event occurred as possible for the accuracy in recall (Lyle, 2003), this was not always an option for us due to time constraints and coach schedules.

Consequently, the CSCs took part in the SRIs between one to four weeks after the observation took place. To help overcome this drawback, I asked each coach straight after their sessions if they felt that anything significant happened throughout the day (positive or negative, big or small) and asked a few questions at that moment (e.g., "How did you feel when..."). I then marked it against my field notes to see during my analysis whether it was a critical incident in relation to the research aim and questions, and thus, if it warranted further exploration in the SRI. I also gave a short description of each session prior to starting the SRI to help jog the coach's memory and answer any questions they had.

The video extracts were chosen using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). I (re)watched the recorded footage back, and with the help of my field notes, clipped and marked up areas of interest in relation to the research aims, incidents that warranted further exploration, and/or if the coach themselves identified it as an important incident/area to discuss (e.g., a fight, a positive interaction) (see [2.7.2](#) for more on data analysis). The inclusion of the perspectives from the CSCs themselves reflected Nichol *et al.*'s (2023) work that also used the CIT, where it was important to ensure the selection of incidents were not just based on what I as the researcher felt was meaningful, but recognised incidents that were meaningful to the CSCs too since it was their reality that I was exploring. Using the video clips as stimuli helped the coaches relive the experiences they had, giving them the 'opportunity to review events in which they have participated from an outsider's perspective, but with an insider's insight into their motivations and intentions' (Rowe, 2009, p. 427). As a result, I was able to reveal *how, why and under what circumstances* the CSCs deployed certain skills and strategies to navigate their workplace, forming explanations not just assumptions about their in-situ practices.

A limitation of SRIs is that participants can experience anxiety when watching themselves, and potentially censor and/or distort the recall of thought processes and decision making to present themselves more favourably (Nguyen *et al.*, 2013). To ease their anxieties and attempt to limit this effect I engaged in some strategies. I introduced the participant to and talked through the process and technique of SRIs to enlighten them about the interview format. When it came to doing the interview, I implemented what Pirie (1995, p. 7) terms 'giggle time', where the participants watched part of the recordings informally before moving onto the questions. To help with distortion/censoring, I developed a bank of open-

ended questions that started off as broad inquiries (e.g., “What were your thoughts here...?”) and then moved to more theory-led wording (e.g., “How did this make you feel?”, “What impression were you trying to give off?”) (Nguyen *et al.*, 2013). Overall, an average total of 61 hours of data was collected via this in-depth and novel methodology, including 14 hours of semi-structured interview data, 36 hours of observations, and 11 hours of SRI data. This novel and rigorous dataset was used in the data analysis process detailed below, which helped form the final findings presented in this thesis.

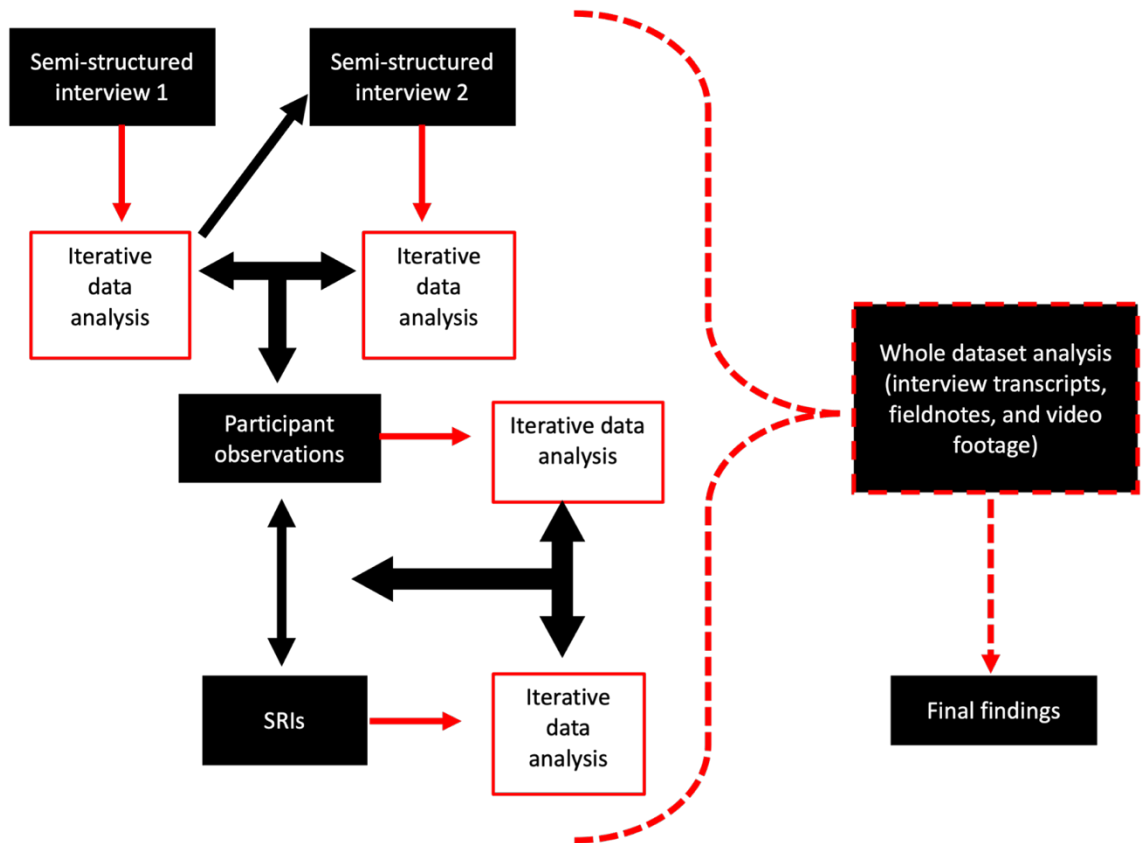
## **2.5 Data Analysis**

This study adopted a phronetic iterative approach to qualitative data analysis (see figure 1). The iterative component denotes the systematic, repetitive, and recursive practice (Tracy and Hinrichs, 2017). This involves the cyclical process of moving between 1) data generation, 2) etic analysis, 3) emic analysis, and 4) writing (Tracy, 2018). Emic refers to emergent findings from the field (inductive), whilst etic involves pre-existing theories and literatures used to determine meanings (Tracy and Hinrichs, 2017). The continual and intermittent rotation between etic and emic analysis means that researchers read and reread data, connect to the emerging insights, and progressively refine the focus until it addresses the research questions in rich and detailed ways (Tracy, 2018). In practice, theory entered after the first round of semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, it is important to note that theory did not master drive the whole process. Rather, throughout the analysis process I tried to afford the data an opportunity to provide explanatory power of its own accord before carefully selecting and utilising relevant theory to help make sense of the data (Bott and Tourish, 2016). In this sense, the iterative process of coding in both an etic and emic manner offered the possibility to interrogate the assumptions of conventional

theory and pave the way for renewed theoretical development (Tracy, 2018). Therefore, whilst the analysis process comprised etic and emic phases, it is acknowledged that research is inherently implicated by our respective paradigmatic and theoretical loyalties which shapes the whole research process (e.g., aims, purpose etc.) (Denzin, 2017). Indeed, this approach was appropriate for an interpretivist frame since it allowed for the analysis of the CSCs' experiences and the mechanisms that influenced and shaped their behaviours, views, and perspectives, facilitating the generation of rich interpretations (Ives *et al.*, 2023a; Tracy, 2018).

This study used the dynamic and simultaneous process of cycling between 1) data generation, 2) **emic** and **etic** readings of the data, and 3) **writings** within and across the three-phase methodology. The rotation between these steps continued until I believed the data sufficiently attended to the research aim in a way that key audiences would find valuable and interesting (Tracy, 2018). The discussion will now turn to the explanation of specific analysis techniques that were deployed for each methodological phase.

Figure 1. Iterative data analysis diagram



### 2.5.1 Phase one: Semi-structured interviews

After the first semi-structured interview with each participant, I transcribed the interviews verbatim using Microsoft Word. It was here (in-between interview one and two) where I engaged in what Tracy (2019) terms the *data immersion phase* of analysis. This **emic** analysis involved submerging myself in the generated transcriptions by (re)reading the data, questioning “What is happening here?” (Tracy, 2018). Part of this process involved engaging in *primary-cycle coding*, where descriptive words or phrases were used to capture the essence of the data (e.g., who, what, where) (Tracy, 2019). This was done by colour-coding participant quotes that were of interest and labelling them with a code. Following this, I engaged in a form of **writing** by creating an early analysis table on Microsoft Excel that used category headings aligning to the preliminary codes established before (e.g., session structure, daily tasks, experience) to create a start-list of codes and quotes. I then spoke with critical friends (i.e., supervisors) about my initial hunches and emerging interpretations whereby, they played devil’s advocate ‘to try to poke holes into or consider weaknesses in my emerging arguments’ (Tracy, 2018, p.73). This worked as a way to help focus my thoughts, maintain a reflexive approach, and note any questions we had for subsequent interviews with the participants (Tracy and Hinrichs, 2017). This analytic process identified any gaps, misunderstandings, or areas of interest that required further exploration in the second round of interview.

The second set of interviews addressed any questions raised from interview one, as well as asked a series of questions informed by Hartley’s (2016) ideas on political astuteness. Mirroring the process of the first round of interviews, I transcribed each interview verbatim using Microsoft Word. I then engaged in *data*

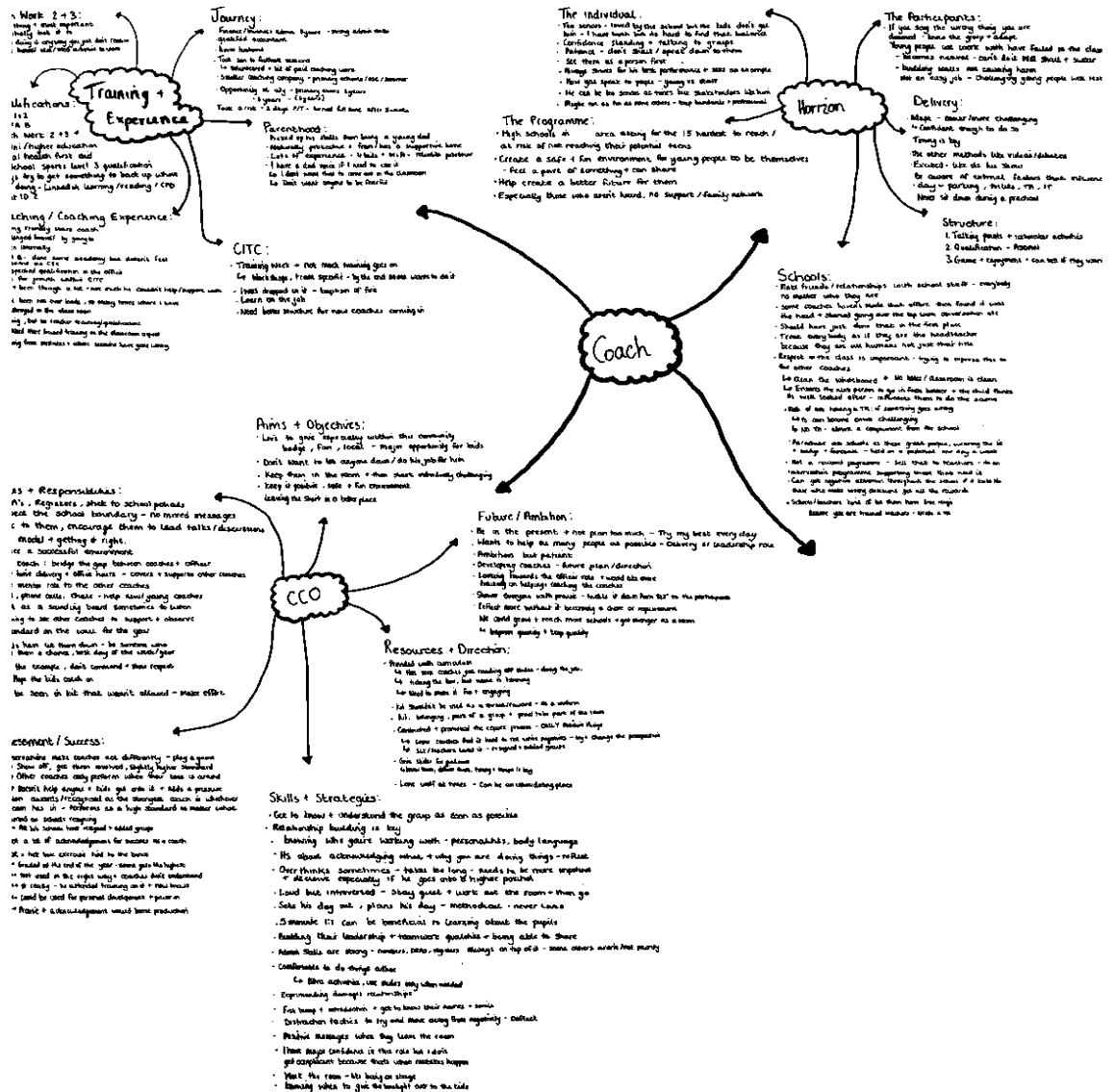


*immersion* and conversations with my supervisors. The initial **emic** analysis involved colour-coding participant quotes that were of interest and *primary-cycle coding*. Within this process, I engaged in the *constant comparative method* which is a circular, reflexive process that compares data applicable to each code allowing for code modifications (Tracy, 2018). Indeed, data from this set of interviews was compared to the first interviews, resulting in the codes captured in the early analysis table to be adapted, deleted, and/or added to, and participant quotes inserted under the corresponding heading. I then repeated this *data immersion* process but through an **etic** approach. Here, I formed an additional table with headings that corresponded to the specific components of Hartley's (2016) political astuteness framework (i.e., interpersonal skills, personal skills, etc.) which, after the transcripts were (re)read, the participant quotes that evidenced these categories were inserted under the appropriate heading.

This mode of **writing** (i.e., early analysis tables) enabled the creation of a *codebook* of key phenomena, that I was finding and continuing to look for in the data collection and analysis processes that attended to the research questions (Tracy, 2018). This writing helped shape my thinking and inform my focus for the participant observations, by building my knowledge and understanding of the horizon programme and being a CSC. I then engaged in an additional form of writing similar to Tracy's (2018) concept of *analytic outlines* to brainstorm and synthesise my early interpretations and focus my thoughts. To do this I made mind maps (see figure 2.) for each CSC based on their quotes presented in the codebook, highlighting and categorising areas of interest and key questions raised, particularly in regard to their practice. As such, I had a visual aid to help direct my observations in relation to the responses from this phase, the aims of the research, and theoretical lens. It was after the analysis and coding of the second

interview transcripts when I decided that I had generated enough data from this phase. This decision was formed on the fact that rich insights were generated and due to the time restrictions of this study, moving onto the observations at that point was ideal (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Smith and Sparkes, 2016).

Figure 2. Example mind map



### 2.5.2 Phase two: Participant (video) observations and field notes

As each observation ended, I analysed my full field notes and video footage together prior to each SRI. **Emic** analysis was used for field notes (before the next observation occurred) using the same *data immersion* technique as I did for the phase-one transcripts, as well as engaging in conversations with my supervisors about any emerging interpretations. For this emic process, the field note extracts that I deemed to be of interest were highlighted in yellow on Microsoft Word and given a broad descriptive code. For example, a behaviour incident was coded 'behaviour management'. Following this initial emic analysis, I then used the *data immersion* technique again but through an **etic** lens. This etic process analysed the field notes in relation to the codebook and mind maps formed from the interview data, relevant theoretical concepts (e.g., policy enactment, political skill, emotional labour, impression management), and literature on community sports coaching (e.g., Hayton, 2017; Ives *et al.*, 2021). This more structured analysis enabled notes to be made on and organise the field note data in relation to, whether it aligns with, contrasts to, or challenges the interview data, and/or independently relates to the guiding research aim (Tracy, 2018). After which, I recorded any key questions or areas of interest that emerged from this data to examine further and more closely in either another observation or SRI.

Alongside the emic and etic analysis of the field notes, after each observation, I uploaded the video footage from that day onto my password-protected laptop and used the iMovie software to help analyse, clip, and mark up the videos. This video analysis process deployed the CIT where 'an incident is critical if it makes a 'significant' contribution either positively or negatively to the general aim of the activity and capable of being analysed' (Flanagan, 1954,

p.338). This is not limited to singular, one-off incidences but includes recurring events that could be deemed significant. For example, the use of the CIT identified how one CSC greeted his participants the same way each week, every time they arrived and left the classroom or sports hall. Thus, the CIT was used as a systematic means for gathering data and analysing emerging patterns, as well as, posing provisional conclusions (Kain, 2004). To do this, I deployed a three-step process after every video upload, prior to the next observation and corresponding SRI.

For step one, prior to analysing the footage, I determined what was relevant to the aims of the study (i.e., interpersonal skills, delivery style, programme aims etc.) to help specify which critical incidents would be of interest. Step two reflected Tracy's (2019) *data immersion* technique, where I engaged in a mixture of **etic** and **emic** analysis. I watched the footage once without a predetermined framework to look for any incidents that caught my attention, and then again. However, the second round was completed with a frame of reference using the theoretical work of Goffman (1990) and Hochschild (1979) to help identify and classify the critical incidents and interactions more specifically. For step three, I used a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet for each CSC to group and track which clips I wished to use for their individual SRIs, with a description of the event, key questions in relation to the incident, and my corresponding field notes. For example, a clip of a behaviour incident caught my interest, I described it as 'coach telling off a student during the practical session and receiving resistance from that student', example questions were, "Why did you approach him like that?" and "How did his reaction make you feel?", along with the corresponding field note extract which was coded as 'behaviour management' beforehand. As part of this process, I grouped similar incidents together (i.e., behaviour, greetings, teacher interactions) on the spreadsheet and colour coded each clip in regard to what I

deemed necessary to explore (in red) and what would be advantageous to explore if time allowed (in yellow) (e.g., the incident described above was highlighted red). It was important to focus on quality over quantity (of incidents) to ensure the CSCs gave adequate explanations during the SRIs (Nichol *et al.*, 2023). Indeed, the three-step process described above was done for each recorded session (total of 36 hours of footage) which resulted in nine to 14 critical incidents discussed per SRI, per coach (n= 145 critical incidents).

Similar to the writings developed in phase-one, the spreadsheet was another form of **writing** that enabled me to focus my thoughts, understandings, and emerging interpretations of the current dataset to look out for any areas of interest in subsequent observations, and set up, inform, and guide the SRIs. This process was carried out until all of the field notes, and video-footage were analysed. This etic analysis enabled each SRI to be focused on incidents that pertained to the guiding research questions, extending theory, and what is of interest to key audiences. Specifically, this method and analysis permitted a deep and insightful exploration into *how* and *why* the CSCs did (or not do) certain things in practice.

### *2.5.3 Phase three: SRIs*

I transcribed each of the SRIs verbatim on a Microsoft Word document as soon after the interview as possible, and always before the next observation and SRI. As each transcript was generated, like the previous two phases I engaged in **emic** analysis and utilised Tracy's (2019) *data immersion* technique to submerge myself deep into (re)reading the data and conversed with my supervisors. This emic analysis helped to develop an ongoing understanding as to *how* and *why* CSCs deployed various practices and strategies (e.g., counting down as a behaviour

management strategy) which also helped to direct my subsequent observations to see if these incidents reoccurred in practice. Basic descriptive codes were produced via highlighting and making *analytic memos* (i.e., written notes as a way to 'dump your brain' (Saldaña, 2021, p. 58)) next to quotes that sparked an interest (Tracy, 2018). Building on this initial analysis, I then immersed myself into the transcriptions again, (re)reading them but this time taking an **etic** approach. This was used as a way to guide my examination in relation to the theoretical lenses (e.g., Ball *et al.*, 2011; Goffman, 1970, 1990; Hochschild, 1979, 1983) underpinning this study. For example, I developed a deeper understanding into *how, why, and under what circumstances* CSCs engaged in emotional labour and/or deployed impression management tactics to navigate their workplace.

**Writings** were generated from both the etic and emic analysis in the form of highlighted quotes and annotations (e.g., this is an example of deep acting) on a Microsoft Word document, which were then inputted into another analysis table that categorised and coded the SRI excerpts in relation to theoretical concepts. Engaging in both emic and etic analysis stages for each transcription helped to guide and inform my subsequent observations and therefore, future SRIs. This iterative process continued until all of the critical incidents were discussed or I felt no further SRIs needed to take place (i.e., rich insights were generated, no unanswered questions, time restrictions) (Nichol *et al.*, 2023; Smith and Sparkes, 2016).

#### *2.5.4 Phase four: whole dataset analysis*

Once the data generation process was completed and the final SRI transcript was generated and appropriately analysed, I engaged in a more intensive analysis of the entire data set (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This involved organising the

datasets from each phase into folders pertaining to the participant (e.g., Sam's observation footage, field notes, and transcripts were in one folder), so that if I needed to rewatch any videos and/or read any transcripts or field notes again, I knew where to find them (Tracy, 2018). I then pulled together all of the analysis tables, codebooks, and any other **writings** from each analytic phase, to systematically engage in the intensive analysis of the whole dataset. As such, I was able to identify patterns both within and across the whole dataset for each individual participant, as well as between each participant. This was completed by engaging in *secondary-cycle coding* (Tracy, 2018). Here, I examined the *primary-cycle codes* to then organise, synthesise, and categorise them by highlighting, making notes, and cross-referencing each table which informed the creation of a *loose analysis outline* (Tracy, 2018). This **etic** process involved my 'interpretive creativity and theoretical knowledge to create second-level codes, which explain, theorise, and connect the data' (Tracy and Hinrichs, 2017, p. 6). Specifically, using preceding research, sociological concepts, and my interpretations to appreciate the data, I looked at how the emerging codes were (or not) attending to the primary research questions to identify which codes were most appropriate to form the final cycle of coding.

I then engaged in *hierarchical coding* to group these codes into larger, umbrella categories or themes that make conceptual sense (i.e., navigating the workplace) (Tracy, 2018). These larger themes then incorporated and linked other smaller codes or sub-themes together (i.e., navigating the workplace: relationships, behaviour management). This process, along with **writing**, were crucial steps in the transformation of headings and quotes to research findings and analysis (Ives *et al.*, 2023a; Tracy and Hinrichs, 2017). The active process of examining, discussing, and (re)writing the results and discussion for this thesis



helped refine the focus of the narrative I wished to convey (Ives *et al.*, 2023a). In doing so, I identified four core themes that reflected the challenges and realities faced by the CSCs. The findings are examined and discussed in chapter three.

In line with my interpretive approach, it is important to recognise that the participants' actions and responses influence, are influenced by, and intertwined with the researcher (Markula and Silk, 2011). As such, I acknowledge that it is not possible 'to see the world outside of our place in it' (Sparkes, 1992, p.27). What follows is my interpretation of the data, which is informed by my paradigmatic, practical, and theoretical dispositions (Denzin, 2017). That is, this thesis contains one reading of the data, one interpretation, but one that I hope the reader and others will find interesting, stimulating, and valuable (Tracy, 2019). So, in terms of generalisations, I believe the findings in this study provide detailed, layered, descriptions of the participants' experiences, along with comprehensive supporting evidence in the form of interview transcripts and critical incidents to permit transferable and *naturalistic generalisations* (Stake, 1995; Tracy, 2010). These generalisations are 'required to provide readers with rich, thick, descriptions of the case under study so that the readers themselves can reflect upon it and make connections (that is, naturalistic generalisations) to their own situations' (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p. 184). In doing so, I hope the research findings resonate with many readers' (i.e., researchers, coaching practitioners, NGBs, partner organisations) 'own situation and/or they (you) can instinctively transfer the findings to their (your) own action' (Smith, 2018, p. 141).

## Chapter Three: Results and Discussion

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to critically discuss the key themes ascertained from the data. The iterative analysis resulted in the production of four central themes, 1) [Realigning the misaligned: policy enactment](#), 2) [Staying afloat: appraisals and finances](#), 3) [CSC training and development: qualified or not?](#), and 4) [Classroom chaos and impractical practicals: navigating the workplace](#). Theme one examines the way policy was interpreted by the Horizon team. Theme two discusses how inter- intra- and extra-organisational forces and social conditions influenced the working lives of the CSCs. Theme three addresses the issues surrounding CSC training and development. And theme four explores how the CSCs navigated their workplace realities and challenges. Collectively, then, this chapter addresses the central aims of this thesis by elucidating the contextual elements of the research in terms of *who*, *what*, *how*, *why* and *under what circumstances* policy was enacted in community sport coaching contexts.

### **3.2 *Realigning the misaligned: policy enactment***

Through the semi-structured interviews, it became clear that the coaches' interpretation of the Horizon scheme varied from person to person. This is in keeping with previous research (Hammond, 2022; Penney *et al.*, 2022), highlighting how the Horizon policy was not simply implemented but rather, subjected to different interpretations by the different individuals. Building on current literature (Hammond, Penney and Jeanes, 2020), the participants in this study arguably adopted and applied different and fluid policy actor positions that aligned with their individual interpretations of policy.

As policy actors (see section [1.2.1](#) for more), the participants in this study played a key role in the ‘discursive articulation of policy’ (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p.51). Policies produced by organisations are not simply implemented and are never the ‘end product’ in the policy process, but instead ‘are subjected to (re)interpretation as they are re-worked, adjusted (or discarded), and worked into practice’ (Hammond, Penney and Jeanes, 2020, p. 574). As per policy documentation published online, the current scheme under study seeks to support young people to excel socially, physically, mentally, and improve engagement in prosocial behaviours. In reference to this information, each participant was asked what they considered the aims and objectives of the programme to be. Dan (manager) stated:

We are aiming to create better young people...it relates to the outcomes of the programme itself so the guidance will be sent from the Arch Group [pseudonym] and I cherry pick the outcomes that are relatable to us. So, all the coaches are aware whether it’s from a staff meeting or a bit of internal training that we are looking to increase prosocial behaviours, increase confidence, increase levels of engagement, self-esteem, how to behave yourself in a classroom, all of that sort of stuff, so each Horizon coach should be able to tell you that (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

Dan’s interpretation included a clear articulation of the specific outcomes that underpin the role of the CSCs working for this CCO. His response showed some alignment with the broader aims of the national initiative (e.g., prosocial behaviours), which was not surprising as Dan arguably embodied the role of what Ball *et al.* (2011) term a *policy narrator*. This means, Dan had the autonomy and power, with some guidance from the national organisers to ‘cherry pick’, filter, and explain what policy is relevant to their institutional endeavours, giving meaning to policy for the contexts in which the CSCs work. His actor type also appeared to extend into and showed signs of a *policy entrepreneur*, where he worked to represent and advocate the policy directives he perceived to be relevant for the CCO and Horizon (Ball *et al.*, 2011). This newly crafted policy is then expected to

be 'translated into and through structures, roles and tactics' for its enactment (Ball *et al.*, 2011, p.628). Through these actor positions, Dan tried to incite the successful enactment of (relevant) policy by creating an 'institutional narrative' that fostered team coherence and alignment (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p.51). However, despite Dan's latter comment and his efforts, this coherence was not demonstrated in the interpretations from the CSCs:

The programme as a whole we are asking for the 15 hardest to reach or at risk of not reaching their potential teenagers. Responsibilities are creating a safe and fun environment for young people to be themselves. Make sure our dynamic risk assessments, registers are done, stick to school policies as best we can, we have got to respect as well that boundary that there are school rules... keep them in the room, if you start off with 10 and you end up with 10 students its successful...then can we start individually challenging...keep them in the classroom, keep them positive, like I say a safe, fun environment where this is as little failure as possible (Luke, coach, semi-structured interview)

Luke acknowledged the implications of not only working for his CCO, but also the partnership with the schools. In keeping with research by Hammond, Penney and Jeanes (2020), he demonstrated aspects of becoming a *hybrid* policy (en)actor, having to balance and 'respect' multiple different policies (e.g., safeguarding, school rules), and acting various roles within, beyond and parallel to his own organisation (Penney *et al.*, 2021). Interestingly, despite being implicated by external policies and structures, the other CSCs nor the managers accredited them to their explicit understanding and enactment of the role or programme. Other elements of Luke's interpretation were concerned with safety (e.g., risk assessments), fun, and positivity. Jack's interpretation almost aligned with Luke's, where he identified happiness, safety, and engagement as the three central tenets of his role:

Well first thing is probably making sure the kids are happy, making sure they're safe and then probably making sure they're engaged, so if you can deliver those three and you delivering a session that's fun as well it's always a bonus...that's all that they want really...So, it's just ensuring those three spoken about there (Jack, coach, semi-structured interview)

Yet, in contrast to the other CSCs, Jack perceived enjoyment as an ancillary benefit and not an overt aim of the programme itself. Consistent throughout the coaches' interpretations was 'engagement' as a principal objective. Will echoed Luke in his aim of keeping the children in the room:

So kids who are already kicked out of mainstream school, I work with them and the ASDAN [Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network] is basically what we deliver but for me I don't see that as my end goal, if they don't get the ASDAN qualification personally it doesn't bother me, I just try and basically be a good role model in their life and make them enjoy school...so one of my main aims is like keep them in the room and enjoy it so the ASDAN works against me sometimes so I just don't do it... engagement is like a big thing, is a kid going to enjoy what I am doing?... the whole point of us is to try and basically get them [participants] to be better humans and get them to be happier in school, which learning objectives and ASDANs don't work...it is nothing about getting to know the kids, it's like two different disconnections (Will, coach, semi-structured interview)

For the CSCs, keeping participants engaged and in the room allowed for registers to be completed, filled, and target numbers met. Will's response also insinuates that he had a conscious awareness of wider educational policy objectives but perceived the qualification to be almost counterproductive to the aim(s) he prioritised (i.e., enjoyment). In this case, Will appeared to take the position of a *policy critic*, where if it did not help him navigate the workplace, he stated '... I just don't do it' (Ball *et al.*, 2011). This draws a connection to the way in which the challenges Will faced in practice (i.e., encouraging engagement and enjoyment), influenced the way he enacted (or not) certain types of policy. As a *policy critic*, Will created and maintained a counter-narrative that reflected his beliefs on the qualification not benefiting him or his participants, and resisted action to advance the educational policy by ignoring imperatives from the Arch Group and his CCO to focus on facilitating enjoyment (Ball *et al.*, 2011; Jeanes *et al.*, 2018).

Indeed, previous research has shown how CSCs decode policy (e.g., disability and inclusion) in relation to what goals they believe are worthy of achieving, placing other policies to the periphery (Hammond, 2022; Hammond,

Penney and Jeanes, 2020; Ives *et al.*, 2021; Jeanes *et al.*, 2018). Mirroring these findings, the current study indicated that while Will interpreted the qualification as optional and a hindrance to facilitating fun, Sam saw it as a significant part of Horizon that helped to support the achievement of the wider programme aims. Embodying the role of a *policy enthusiast* Sam 'speak[s] policy directly to practice', interpreting the educational policy as 'meaningful and doable' (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p.60). Interestingly, none of the other coaches acknowledged the qualification as a central area to their role, despite it being one of the more explicit programme objectives. Where Sam illustrated, to a degree, the value of the work and structure to the session (e.g., talking points), his complete interpretation of the programme aims (i.e., fostering personal development and a relaxing environment) continued to be generic:

I would say the overall arching aim of the day is to support and encourage a variety of young people. I use variety in terms of background, risk factors, all those kinds of things to engage them in personal development throughout the day. The aim of the qualification is then to support that overarching aim. So, the qualification is relatively straight forward but it does challenge their learning...talking points for me that is a way of relaxing our young participants, some come in quite stressed out, some come in maybe nervous or anxious about coming to the session, it's a way of relaxing and opening up some dialogue for the day (Sam, coach, semi-structured interview)

The responses from the CSCs questioned the level of knowledge and understanding of the policy objectives within the whole team. Given the guidance provided by the Arch Group is non-specific and non-mandated, little alignment was shown in and between the coaches' interpretations of what the programme is trying to achieve and what to prioritise to effectively navigate their working environments.

Indeed, this misalignment in and between the policy interpretations is not suggesting that the coaches were unwilling to understand policy, but rather that they rely on 'interpretations of interpretations', looking for guidance and direction as to what to do (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p.63). Therefore, this evidences

how policy is engaged with and interpreted in different ways, with practitioners adopting hybrid actor positions to attend to distinct policy issues. As such, the various interpretations of policy demonstrate that ‘policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set’ (Ball, 1994, p.19). This resonates with the work of Christiaens and Brittain (2023), whereby there is a disconnection between the national strategy, the way policy is interpreted by the organisation’s representatives, and how it is understood by the CSCs. Indeed, adding to current literature (e.g., Hammond, 2022; Penny *et al.*, 2022) which challenges policy implementation theory, this thesis evidences how community sport policy is not merely implemented but rather, (re)worked and (re)interpreted by various policy actors in different positions (i.e., manager, CSCs). This raises important questions about the ways in which policy is traditionally viewed and done in these contexts. Specifically, about why different interpretations exist and how these interpretations impact upon the practices of CSCs and other stakeholders who play a role in the enactment of policy.

### ***3.3 Staying afloat: appraisals and finances***

In addition to having a limited understanding of the aims of the scheme, the phase one semi-structured interviews strongly indicated how social conditions and forces within the organisation and beyond (e.g., KPIs, audits, appraisals etc.) were a key factor in underpinning the CSCs’ interpretations of their role(s) and responsibilities. With elusive and diverging interpretations of policy, the coaches conveyed a sense of uncertainty surrounding the policy that grounded their work, the importance of it, and therefore what they as CSCs are supposed to enact at the micro-level. For Ball *et al.* (2011), this could be due to the unsuccessful integration of policy, where rather than fostering coherence, policy has become a ‘collection code’ of disparate

fragments of information (Braun *et al.*, 2011, p. 627). In place of a formal induction period, Harry (manager) explained how the CSCs are socialised into the organisational standards, job role, and their responsibilities via team meetings throughout the year:

We have a meeting where we look at the objectives first of all in September...a meeting to finalise them and then we have mid-year PDRs where it's checking the progress, then we will have a final one somewhere around July time where we will look at the objectives and then that's at the point we will be give them a ranking, so you ask them to rank themselves, and then we give them a grading and that's on, partial contributor, fully effective contributor, good, and then an outstanding (Harry, manager, semi-structured interview)

Harry drew a connection between the team meetings, setting and achievement of objectives, and the organisational appraisal process (i.e., PDR). After further exploration, Luke (coach) directed me to the objectives for 2022/23 that were taped to the wall in the office, titled 'coaching standards' (see [appendix 3](#)). Consistent with Ball *et al.*'s (2011) discussion of imperative policies, the four 'coaching standards' (i.e., relationships, planning, delivery, and tracking) were developed, 'texts' were made, and 'artefacts' devised to then be 'translated' into practice (p. 621). However, in spite of the policy objectives, the neoliberal language used in the framework suggests that community sport coaching is conceived as a technocratic activity within this context. This results in a larger focus towards coach performance (the enactment of these 'coaching standards'), how it is monitored, and subsequently 'graded' (PDRs), with the idea that the CSCs' successes or alternatively, failures, feed into the overall judgement of the programme and its impact (Jeanes *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, 'success' was interpreted by the CSCs in relation to the achievement of KPIs, funding targets and the continuation of the programme since they accumulate wealth and prioritise the entrepreneurial self (e.g., bonuses, admiration, promotions etc.), over the impact they may have on their participants (Conley, 2009; Ives *et al.*, 2021; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018). Dan expressed the importance of the CSCs' having



visible reports of their impact for the funders and schools to see (Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown, 2017):

We take their funding and still charge schools 7000 pounds for a coach for the year... so as long as we hit the KPI's, as long as we've got success stories, the case studies and the reports and what we are reporting on is as successful as we think we are, the funding should come in (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

Evidencing what Houlihan and Green (2009, p.689) term the 'spine of accountability', the expectations from the Arch Group are passed down to the CCO, who subsequently spreads the responsibility to managers like Dan, and ends with the CSCs being accountable for achieving such targets and change. As Harry (manager) described above, the CSCs were socialised into this accountability through informal conversations, performance review processes, previous failures, and team meetings. Consequently, the CSCs' practice is determined by the 'interaction of rationalities and technologies on the one hand, and the agency of both practitioners and clients on the other' (Williams, 2012, p.175). Sam went on to evidence the tension between his work practices, values, and attitude, and the technocratic orientations of the workplace:

I don't take any notice of it, and I don't mean that in a cocky way, I mean I don't take notice of it because it puts you in a box and I don't think necessarily you can be put in a box for some of this kind of stuff and some of the things you have to provide evidence for to have in that last meeting for them to grade you on...we know on a day to day and a weekly basis if you are performing or not by the type of discussions, the feeling that we get from the schools anyway, looks after itself doesn't it, those things are I suppose, they have just become the norm because one company once did it as HR and someone's come and said I am going to do it in mine, but I am not sure it means that much really (Sam, coach, semi-structured interview)

Conveying a sense of disapproval towards these neoliberal values and procedures, Sam perceived it to be an unproductive means of assessment. Whilst there was slight 'murmurings' and 'subtle discontents' expressed by the staff members around these procedures (Ball *et al.*, 2011; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012), in line with previous research (Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown, 2017; Houlihan and Green, 2009; O'Gorman *et al.*, 2021), the coaches still moulded their coaching agendas to meet the needs of the funding- and PDR-related targets in

light of their situated realities.-This is similar to the work of Ball (2000) and O’Gorman *et al.* (2021), where practitioners showed compliance even if, on occasions, they were privately unwilling to follow these standards demonstrating the notion of ‘resistance within accommodation’ (Braun, 2017, p.172). This suggests the economic rationales governed the CSCs’ choices, actions, and priorities, furthering explanations of how and why policies may not be enacted as initially intended. Luke alluded to the link between quantifiable successes and the precarious working conditions that pervade the community sport sector:

I make sure I’m absolutely on it because if we don’t hit these targets, we don’t get the funding...the lads are going to lose their job, the girls are going to lose their jobs, so I think it’s vital... and I think safeguarding for one you’ve got to do a register come on get real, but even if you don’t agree with that if we don’t send that register to the national organisers to say what we’ve been doing with our funding they won’t fund us and you won’t have a job...as a coach you are only signed on for a year until you get to four years and you then get a permanent contract...but maybe even that as a culture and as a way of you thinking am I going to get signed in September, maybe I just think I’ll just get through my job (Luke, coach, semi-structured interview).

In line with previous research, Luke indicated an awareness of the symbiotic relationship between funding related targets and job security (Ives, 2016; Ives *et al.*, 2021). This illustrates the macro-level forces (e.g., funding requirements) that shape the way in which community sport coaching is thought about and performed by practitioners. Thus, the CSCs working in these contexts are not merely delivering a coaching session, but having to continuously navigate the macro-level, meso-level, and micro-level forces that have significant implications for their professional and personal selves (Costas Battle, Carr and Brown, 2017; Ives *et al.*, 2021; Roderick, 2006).

Ironically, in keeping with Ball *et al.*’s (2011, p.612) notion of unsuccessful policy integration and ‘technical professionals’, what all the coaches were overtly aware of and understood were these metrics and tangible elements of their work that determined individual, team, and organisational success and thus, financial

security and/or gain. Will expressed how he had to learn this the hard way after losing his delivery schools and therefore, received a poor performance review and lost his bonus:

I got partial last year which I disagreed with but it is what it is and that is like your bonus at the end of the year but your PDR is on loads of things it's not like how to build the relationship with kids... then for me I know I'm doing well when kids enjoy it when I've got that good relationship with kids I feel that I'm doing well so yeah there's different parameters, I see that as personal and professional if that makes sense, I've developed the relationship with that kid, that is personal to me but I also need to look at the professional parameter of is that school going to resign...like they pay, so if I've not re-signed that school the organisation isn't getting that money (Will, coach, semi-structured interview)

The discontent towards the PDR process was shared amongst the team, describing it as a 'tick box exercise' that has 'no real relevance' to their job (Sam and Luke). The disconnect between organisational goal setting, monitoring and appraisal procedures, and the wider programme objectives was acknowledged by Harry:

...a lot of that going on just to sort of hit those numbers rather than let's look at how the coaches are dealing with the kids we've got to work with, and actually the quality of what we are delivering, that doesn't really get measured, so that doesn't really become important...really my remit is to make sure we hit those targets that come for our funding... But I've got to balance that at the same time with the rest of the funding comes from the schools paying for the group, and they're bothered about the quality, it's that kind of balancing act (Harry, manager, semi-structured interview)

Harry depicts this paradox embedded in 'the law of contradiction' (Lyotard, 1979) where so much time, focus and effort is being placed on KPIs which shifts attention away from the activities the KPIs are supposed to represent (Ball, 1997; Verhaeghe, 2012). Consequently, the work of the CSCs is redefined (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018), it becomes 'a balancing act' between working in ways that meet the needs of the funders as well as the schools, with their participants' needs getting caught in the crossfire. Indeed, impacting the CCO's efforts to deliver the Horizon programme across the county, was the significance and formality of the relationships between schools in the area, the CSCs, and the Horizon participants (Epstein and Sheldon, 2016; Morgan and Bush, 2016). Therefore, the Horizon

team recognised that the school acts as a resource for the organisation (e.g., monetary) and as a beneficiary of the service (e.g., improving lives) (Carlisle, Jackson and George, 2006; Morgan and Bush, 2016). The CSCs then had to find a way to respond to the macro-political targets of their organisation (i.e., PDRs, re-sign KPI), meet the needs of their schools and participants, and protect their professional selves. Dan (manager) described this 'delicate' process:

It's really delicate, like schools pay for the provision so as soon as someone's not managing from the delivery stance, that school are not comfortable paying for the provision and we lose that relationship, and as a result we lose that contact time with the young people... So, relationship building comes first (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

This situation then demands careful stage-management to foster the right impression for those judging them and ensure the programme's continuation (Ball, 1997; Hogan and Stylianou, 2018). As such, the CSCs experienced the 'Big Brother' feeling' (Verhaeghe, 2012, p. 134), where they are constantly being measured against and appraised via 'neo-liberal evaluation systems' (p. 126) (i.e., KPIs, PDRs). Indeed, both the CSCs and their managers felt 'compelled to dance to the music of an invisible administration' (Verhaeghe, 2012, p.126), whereby they conformed to and engaged in 'tactics of accountability' which left little space for anything else (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012).

These systems reflected the CCO's concern with the more inherently quantifiable goals (e.g., re-signing the school, achieving a qualification) over those that are arguably less measurable, but relate more closely to the policy objectives (e.g., participant confidence, empathy). As such, performance reviews produced an intensification of the coaches' work (often tasks unrelated to their direct aims), submitted them more directly to the 'gaze' of metric-led policy work, and encouraged the organisation and coaches to shape their actions for the purposes of evaluation (Ball, 1997, p.317). All of these factors could potentially impact how

the programme is delivered. For example, Kelleberg and Vallas (2018, p.2) stated that being subjected to precarious work motivates 'workers to adopt protective strategies to defend themselves', as precarity and audit-driven landscapes incite feelings of fear, anxiety, and frustration (Ives *et al.*, 2021; Verhaegue, 2012). So, as much as the CSCs and managers may have cared about helping and developing the Horizon participants, superseding this goal was the need to stay afloat, both as individuals and as an organisation. Essentially, a performativity discourse is set over and against a humanist discourse (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012).

Building upon community sport coaching work that discusses the influence of precarity and neoliberal forces on the work of CSCs (e.g., Costas Battle, Carr and Brown, 2017; Ives, 2016; Ives *et al.*, 2021), this discussion indicates the CCO's reliance on easy and readily available quantifiable measures to represent individual coaches', the scheme's, and the organisation's success. This raises questions about whether the more holistic forms of development are being overlooked and what impact this may have on the achievement of policy objectives. Interestingly, compared to the confusion the CSCs had surrounding what the scheme's aims and objectives were, there was a collective and coherent understanding amongst the whole Horizon team about the need to hit targets, what those targets are, and how they are appraised. Therefore, questions are raised regarding the way policy and organisational procedures are disseminated to practitioners, the ways in which CSCs are prepared for their role, and the impact this has on policy enactment in practice.

### **3.4 CSC training and development: qualified or not?**

In addition to the variations in policy interpretations and the neoliberal forces

influencing the work of the CSCs outlined above, another key finding identified in the dataset was the issues surrounding CSC training and education provisions. The CCO in this thesis normalised that ‘...most learning for [the] coaches happens on the job’ (Harry, manager), where the CSCs ‘...basically just got given the schools and was like good luck’ (Will, coach). This is in contrast to previous policy enactment research that showed how staff members (new and old) in education settings were provided with development opportunities, and continual ‘briefings’ on policy materials that then translated into practical ideas (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p.48). For Braun *et al.* (2011, p. 586), the interpretation and enactment of policy is ‘mediated by institutionally determined factors’, in which context shapes, constrains, or enables the design, planning, and implementation of policy in various ways (Jeanes *et al.*, 2019). Unsurprisingly then, language that suggested a sense of under-preparedness for the job such as ‘sink or swim’ (Jack, coach) and ‘baptism of fire’ (Luke, coach) was used to describe the CSCs’ first week delivering the Horizon programme.

Indeed, despite having the prerequisite qualification required to be a Horizon coach (i.e., FA Level 2), echoing the voices of other CSCs (Crisp, 2021; Crisp and Brackley, 2022), the coaches under study stated how their ‘traditional’ coaching qualifications lacked relevance and therefore, did not equip them with the knowledge and/or skills necessary for success.

I’ve got my level one and two in football which is all fine, but because of how technical those qualifications are it doesn’t relate to community coaching. I’d say it’s like 5% relatable because there’s nothing on sort of behaviour management, life skills, how to sort of inspire young people or to motivate them, it’s all like tactical and technical skills of how to deliver a football session which is not what we are there to do... there is kind of an assumption if you’re working for a CCO...that you’ve got a lot of these skills anyway (Sam, coach, semi-structured interview)

...rather than going down the football qualification route I think go down the youth work one, it’s much more prominent to what we do...we’re not football coaches, well we are, but we are football coaches in a classroom...we are probably youth workers in a

classroom, I keep changing the strapline don't I (Luke, coach, semi-structured interview)

This difficult start and feeling under-prepared, were also influenced by the (lack of) training the CSCs have had access to from their CCO. For example, within this organisation, the managers relied upon a 'robust process for recruiting' because '...how difficult the job is takes a unique individual to do it' (Dan, manager). This recruiting process involved the managers having faith in prerequisite qualifications needed to be a Horizon coach so that they could then:

...cherry pick good people who have got the life skills from other experiences to deal with them, engage and motivate these young people and be relatable alongside using the badge and football as the tool... can they make relationships with students, are they strong enough to have a group of 15 challenging kids and are they interesting and engaging enough (Harry, manager, semi-structured interview)

Importantly then, all of the CSCs stated (to varying degrees) that they felt ill-equipped and underprepared for the challenges and realities of the job, indicating misalignment between the prerequisite qualifications and the skills required to be an effective Horizon CSC. Specifically, with the industry's large focus on traditional football qualifications (e.g., FA Level 2), these CSCs are required to enact programmes that are aimed at achieving non-sporting policy objectives without any clear direction as to how to do so (Consterdine and Taylor, 2022).

Alarmingly, Dan was aware of the insufficiently skilled CSCs and highlighted the divergence between the realities of the 'highly pressurised' job and skill development and training offered:

...someone who has had six years of bespoke training can't do this job that we are asking community coaches to do who haven't got any really relevant training...so, our expectations of community coaches are significantly higher than the qualifications they've got (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

This is in line with the enactment of '*sporting schools*', where National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and researchers have concerns over 'unqualified' sports

coaches delivering educational programmes without the necessary pedagogical skills and classroom experience (Hogan and Stylianou, 2018). Since the issues surrounding the CSC training provision were not a furtive subject within this team, the CSCs and managers openly expressed what they perceived CSC training should consist of and what key skills are needed:

Our training should be you are going to get abused for 20 minutes. Can you withstand...like 99% of our job is they are going to insult you and you've got to learn how to take it. I think training should be about you and your personal self, learn how to be thick skinned and develop that and not to show any emotion (Will, coach, semi-structured interview)

Will's response encapsulated the emotional realities (Hochschild, 1983) of his job as a CSC working with vulnerable, disengaged teenagers, where personal skills and emotion management are key (Potrac *et al.*, 2020). Building upon the embryonic body of research (e.g., Hayton, 2017), Dan's response encompasses the demanding nature of this sector, signifying the importance of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills in both a practical and classroom setting:

You need like a low-level teaching qualification really...classroom management, behaviour management...FA level 2 all about technical, tactical football skills we don't need any of that. We need a qualification that focuses on how to engage, motivate and inspire young people throughout education within education...you're looking for how to teach people the skills to build relationships, have emotional awareness in the classroom and on the pitch, be able to have a confrontational conversation with young people in the right way, how to positively reinforce to enhance relationships all those skills into a qualification or training course that has sort of a practical side where they get opportunities to go and deliver the skills that they've learnt (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview).

Clearly there is a surface level awareness of the inter- and intra-personal and extra-organisational skills needed to be a CSC. Yet, the (somewhat 'irrelevant' (Luke and Sam)) prerequisite qualifications continue to be normalised, 'respected' (Luke, coach) by sport coaching employers and other coaches, and consequently, marketed as essential for the job within this organisation. This is because, 'there is no qualification that meets the specific needs of this role' (Dan, manager), but a similar situation seems to infiltrate the internal training (albeit limited) that the organisation has offered. Training tended to be 'ad-hoc' (Dan, manager) and on



'generic' or 'outdated' topics (Sam, coach) (e.g., first-aid) for the whole staff, not programme specific (e.g., de-escalation). This training backdrop reflects the broad realities of community sport, where CCOs do not have the time and resources to offer valuable and relevant opportunities for development (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012), as Dan expressed:

There's just not enough exposure to upskill staff...again finances dictate...you'll see with the coaches there's a lot of internal movement, not even progression, just movement across because we have to identify coaches within this business who are capable of doing this job... it can be that stressful of a job that if it is not managed well, you just don't enjoy your job' (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

Relative to the awareness of the CSCs' skill deficiency, the extracts suggest that the managers must trust their judgement to find 'unique individual[s]' who can be successful in the role. Depicted in the responses, there was the 'assumption' (Sam, coach) or a hope that these coaches already have the interpersonal skills from other experiences. As a result, their coaching dispositions were shaped by their 'previous experience and unfortunately it is mistakes, where sessions have gone wrong' (Luke, coach). Will was very vocal of his frustrations on organisational policy and training, stating the dichotomy between the situations they are persistently in, and the occasional training received:

I think it's a load of rubbish that we get first-aid trained but I don't get any first-aid kit and we can't do it...where they would need me to do first-aid I would do it anyway because I see myself having a duty of care to that kid...fighting ones, I will always step into a fight. Always. There will never be a point in my life where I'm going to let that kid get battered. That's idiotic to me, not to train us on how to de-escalate fight situations but we're in them anyways (Will, coach, semi-structured interview)

Adding to the contradiction between internal training and the challenges faced in-situ, because of the scheduling and content (e.g., two weeks of non-programme specific training in August) of the workshops that attempt to upskill the coaches, it '...ends up us just having a good time on those weeks... and we won't want to train on that day we will just want to put our feet up' (Luke, coach). Consequently, in place of an institutional narrative and coherence around policy objectives (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012), is the normalisation and institutional narrative of

inadequate coach education. Resulting in a habitual dismissive attitude towards training opportunities when they do occur.

Building on our understanding of the training available to CSCs (e.g., Consterdine and Taylor, 2022; Crisp, 2021; Crisp and Brackley, 2022), it is evident that there is a lack of adequate and relevant opportunities internally and externally to develop, support and prepare CSCs for their role(s). Interestingly, the managers are not unaware of this situation but were governed by the constraints (i.e., money, time etc.) inherent to the community sport landscape which resulted in a reliance on traditional coaching qualifications, specific hiring processes, and leaving the CSCs to learn from mistakes in practice to fill the void. Indeed, this raises important questions about the value and quality of the training that these practitioners are receiving and therefore, the impact this has on their enactment and delivery of these schemes.

### ***3.5 Classroom chaos and impractical practicals: navigating the workplace***

The issues discussed above in relation to the lack of understanding of the programme aims and objectives, the CSCs' socialisation into the CCO's neoliberal ethos, and the CSCs' lack of preparedness for their role, raised important questions about how the CSCs enacted the Horizon programme in practice. In the analysis of phase two and three, the dataset elucidated as to how the CSCs then tried to navigate these working conditions and situated realities. Most notably, the Horizon team stressed the importance of building, maintaining, advancing, and utilising successful relationships with various stakeholders:

If you are unable to form positive relationships with staff, students, and colleagues you are going to get absolutely nowhere, and again we represent a brand, representing the community, representing the charity and you are that face of the charity that these people see and in order for us to do a good job we need to be

able to build those relationships. If you can't then the likelihood of you being able to positively impact schools and kids' lives and young people's lives or whoever you are working with is going to be small (Jack, coach, semi-structured interview)

The number one skill is being able to form positive relationships...they [CSCs] should be in a position where they are talking to school leads on a regular basis, they have got that conversation, they know the feedback they are getting from the school and that it is not just a big messy relationship... it just helps us to integrate and be part of the school...with the kids we want to build positive relationships where we're actually changing their outlook on the world a little bit, not seeing things as negative, we've got to be present and reinforce that regularly as long as possible...it's got to be about do they trust you; they'll follow you... the main reason that's important is so we know those kids inside and out and that's what makes a really good coach...the planning, the support they need, everything is then what's best suited to that kid (Harry, manager, semi-structured interview)

The following subsections explore the strategies deployed in the CSCs' attempt to build, 'balance', maintain, and/or use key relationships to enact their coaching agendas, navigate their working environments, and their implications. Here I take a predominantly dramaturgical and emotion management perspective. Dramaturgy is concerned with the individual and collective performances people put on, in which they seek to control their *appearances* (i.e., features that identify their role, status and condition e.g., dress) and *manner* (i.e., the way the role is performed - energetic, meek, angry), skilfully use *props* (i.e., objects to support performances), and manage the *staging* (i.e., layout, structure) of an activity to achieve their desired ends (Harris, 2024). At the core of this perspective are the notions of *performances*, *fronts*, *regions*, *impression management*, and *teams* (Goffman, 1959) that are used to strategically manipulate social encounters and situations (Jacobsen and Kristiansen, 2015). Complementing this, is the use of an emotion management lens, that draws on an interactive account of emotion (Hochschild, 1979). Whereby, I draw upon the concepts and ideas of *emotion norms*, *emotional deviance*, *emotion management* and *interpersonal emotion management* to examine how CSCs understand and navigate the emotional demands of their job (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019; Harris, 2024; Hochschild, 1979, 1983; Thoits, 1990).

### 3.5.1 Nice to meet you

From the initial meeting with their audience(s), the CSCs under study engaged in various strategies to persuade their participants and schools to buy into and trust the programme, and conform to their coaching agendas (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2004, 2016; Cushion and Jones, 2006; Hayton, 2017). Along with educational and coaching research (Morgan and Bush, 2016; Morgan and Parker, 2017; Potrac, Jones and Armour, 2002; Potrac and Marshall, 2011; Shields, 2004), evidence in this thesis was plentiful of how the relationships between the CSCs and their participants had to be grounded upon effort, positivity, and trust, and retaining this. Consequently, reflecting the work of Jacobsen and Kristiansen (2015, p.72), the CSCs' work involved a 'series of staged negotiations to exchanges' where the CSCs' influence and/or success is largely dependent upon being able to offer others (i.e., participants) 'something that they will appreciate or reward' – in this case, it is respect and trust:

Ultimately the most important thing is keeping that relationship between me and kids a positive one... Having those kids trust you is a great feeling so you have to act in ways that does that and being trusted can help in the sessions too...Like I say, long term goals, relationships are a massive thing... more important than the work we do to get them to do written work and the qualification (Will, coach, semi-structured interview)

You've really got to be able to establish trust in your relationships with these young people...we do a lot in Horizon of one-to-one work with our young people on various issues that can be you know things that they are going through at home, they need someone to trust and offload that to, helps to work on like strengths and skills that that young person needs to improve on in order to succeed (Sam, coach, SRI)

Indeed, Sam and Will explained that they try to (inter)act and perform in a way that gives the impression of trust, which helped inform future interactions and enact their coaching agendas (Jones *et al.*, 2011; Partington and Cushion, 2012). Specifically, Sam recognised that to influence the thoughts and feelings of the participants who have previously disregarded education and teachers, he had to ensure he was viewed as trustworthy and welcoming to encourage a desired

response (i.e., buy-in). Sam described how he attempted to develop trust with his participants in his opening interactions:

In the first year when we meet them, we have a bit of an introductory session, like this is what you can expect from us and then I always say look, this is what I'm gonna do for you this year you can come back and question me on anything If I'm not doing this so they know they can trust me...then I ensure that I am coming in with a positive attitude, knowing the names are really important, and knowing little fun facts about them. They are then interested that you are actually interested in something they're interested in... which normal teachers don't do....and it does work because they've openly said to me that they didn't like me at the very beginning and I'm like, that's cool but you like me now? and they were like yeah, we didn't know how kind you were going to be to us and supportive you were going to be. And I said, yeah, when I told you I was going to be like that, that wasn't a show, it was like this is what I am going to be doing to help you (Sam, coach, SRI)

Here, Sam's sentiments align with Goffman's (1959) notions addressing the importance of first impressions for positive relationships. For example, the latter part of the quote suggests that during his initial social encounters with his group, Sam attempted to strategically manipulate his opening performance in an effort to present an *idealised calculated front* (i.e., purposefully creating the best possible image in the eyes of others) that demonstrated these desired attributes (e.g., dependable, trustworthy) (Goffman, 1959). He hoped that doing so would build social capital with his participants that would then help form a 'positive' *secondary impression* in the mind of the students, getting them to like him (Leary, 1996). Further, Sam recognised the importance of avoiding performance disruptions such as *unmeant gestures* (i.e., inadvertent acts that convey inappropriate impressions), *faux pas* (i.e., unthinkingly making an intentional contribution that destroys the ideal image), and *inopportune intrusions* (i.e., activity that is incompatible with the impression that they are meant to maintain) that can be harmful to the trusting image he is trying to present and maintain (Goffman, 2003). For example, Sam was shown a clip of a one-to-one conversation with a student during his well-being checks:

...because once they confide in you, they feel you've got that trust and it could take a long time to build but it can take one second or one conversation to completely break, and you'll never have a conversation again, and sometimes they're like the most important ones...if I handle this wrongly or react wrongly or show negative body language or even if I'm not listening fully and their reaction is like oh, what's the point? I've become like their teacher, then I've become that adult that they deal with and do not like...I kind of tried to relax my voice a little bit and give them my full attention, I turn my body and make eye contact so she knows I'm listening... where I've used those examples of her sister she knows that I know she's told me things and I've remembered it, just personal touches and you are not using that against them, but it's just showing that you have listened and that what she tells you does matter to you (Sam, coach, SRI)

Sam's (inter)actions resonate with the concept of *face-work* (Goffman, 2003). For Goffman (2003, p. 7), the term *face* 'is an image of self-delineation in terms of approved social attributes'. So, face-work are 'the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face' which 'serves to counteract "incidents"—that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face' (Goffman, 2003, p. 8). As a self-presentational tactic, Sam attempted to control his outward expression, particularly his nonverbal behaviours (i.e., bodily gestures) to avoid being 'like their teacher', as he felt it would be deemed a negative and undesirable impression for the context. Therefore, he carefully and purposefully made eye contact, turned his body, and used facts to elucidate a desirable attentive and caring expression. Conveying his interest in the pupils, was in the aim of encouraging the feeling that his participants can 'confide' in him which served to help facilitate the conversations in his wellbeing checks. Interestingly, Sam realised once the students had bought into the programme and him as a coach, he could use this trusting relationship as an *impression management* technique (i.e., tactics to influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others) with the participants to meet wellbeing check quotas but also to meet the target number of qualifications in the group – a significant KPI. This was not unsurprising since Sam's interpretation of policy (see section [3.2](#)) centred around the support he provides, and the importance of the work being completed. Therefore, the

trusting relationships that Sam looked to build with the young people helped him to 'tick those boxes that need to be ticked', for him, the schools, and the participants:

You've got a set goal, especially with this course, there are certain boxes that need to be ticked for us, them and the school, so it can be a little bit like come on girls you've got to do this, I know it's not the most fun, but it's got to be done... so find like a common ground to gain any kind of respect with them and then when you ask them to do a task and getting them to accept doing a task for you they will because they trust you (Sam, coach, SRI)

Luke showed a similar use of impression management tactics within his performance to achieve his goals. He actively *staged* every morning setting with the first task as a *prop*, in the attempt to regenerate his relationships from their last encounter and get the students to 'buy in' to the day. In line with the programme objectives, Luke's actions attempt to create an inclusive environment through props, which can work to positively affect the emotional climate of the setting and encourage positive interactions over the normalised disengagement. Luke described this interaction below:

There is always an icebreaker so it's meant to get them talking with me and others, but it gets them that initial buy-in and then we can maybe take them onto the more serious work of the task... so just building relationships with them, and then when I do need them to do a little bit of work, I think I've built that relationship enough that I can go over there and say, can you just finish this off? With this student, she'll generally do it (Luke, coach, SRI)

This carefully staged start to the day, then looked to get Luke's participants also involved in and completing the 'serious work'. However, like Sam did above, Luke acknowledged the delicateness of trust within these relationships, where it can become particularly vulnerable when the CSCs are put in challenging situations. Indeed, *interpersonal emotion management* is useful to understand Luke's thoughts, feelings, and actions during challenging contexts. This is because interpersonal emotion management involves using techniques that influence, control, and manipulate the emotions of others (Harris, 2024). For example, Luke described a difficult scenario that required him to influence the feelings of his participants, as gang issues were taking place in his group and a possible ambush

was threatened during his practical. According to Harris (2024), interpersonal emotion management is often performed through *surface acting* (i.e., managing your outward expression of emotion to control how others perceive about your emotions) and/or *deep acting* (i.e., managing the emotions you actually experience for your own or others' benefit). Luke explained he was still the trusted adult, so where you may feel a bit flustered or nervous you still have to display 'calmness' for the sake of the participants:

I was nervous, trying to think of all the possibilities and how I would react but without letting on to the lads. So, I was breathing and forced a smile to calm myself down but also when those young people look back on that, if they can see their want for of a better word, their leader was calm, that's got to have a big effect...just to pass on a calmness, everyone feels better, everyone feels like achieving. It's just with the young person, if they shut down like you've lost them for the lesson, the term, the year, that relationships gone. And they find it hard to trust again. Whereas if I'm calm and cool, obviously inside I'm feeling different things, that will transmit on to them and it will flow nicely (Luke, coach, SRI)

When considered in light of Luke's story, it could be argued he performed interpersonal emotion management via *bodily deep acting* and *expressive deep acting* to manage his emotions that he was actually experiencing (i.e., nervousness) for others but also for himself (Hochschild, 1983; Harris, 2024). Indeed, Luke used bodily deep acting via his 'breathing' to manipulate the level of bodily arousal, and expressive deep acting by trying to 'smile' to modify his emotional experience in the hope that his inner feelings will follow his external appearance (Hochschild, 1979). Engaging in these emotion management techniques, Luke was able to calm himself down and avoid showing the wrong emotion (i.e., scared, worried) to the students, which in turn ignited a calmness over them too (interpersonal emotion management). Without engaging in these tactics, Luke risked losing the trust and relationship with the students which would pose some difficulties for his future enactment of the programme.



Goffman's (2003) concepts of *dramaturgical loyalty* (i.e., moral obligation to not betray shared secrets) and *circumspection* (i.e., putting measures in place to minimise and prepare for anticipated incidents or contingencies) help to make sense of Will's experiences. Specifically, Will demonstrated a sense of dramaturgical loyalty (Goffman, 2003; Harris, 2024) when it came to trying to retain the trust between him and his participants:

But you gotta be a bit careful, because if they see you as snitching, and I know it sounds strange coming from an adult and like obviously you can't be snitching because they are kids, but kids do see it as snitching. If they see me snitching to the teacher, they wouldn't trust me or listen to me anymore which can be quite detrimental for me going forward...So, I try to use [teacher] as the bad cop to get him to bollocking them to try and sort of set the tone because that is what he does normally anyway and we talk all the time as well, so it isn't suspicious to the kids (Will, coach, SRI)

Will recognised that if he were to betray the students by displaying an obvious alliance with their teachers, he would lose their trust and cooperation in future sessions. Therefore, he engaged in dramaturgical circumspection by choosing to 'snitch to' the teacher that was the normal authoritative figure in the students' life, so being disciplined by him would not seem out of the norm and protect Will's image of loyalty he has with the students. Deploying these defensive tactics was in the attempt to limit the risk of acting improperly or disloyally, helping to sustain any relationships, trust, and/or buy-in the CSCs had built with the Horizon participants (Harris, 2024).

Amongst the formation of a trustworthy relationship with the participants, was the importance of promoting positivity. In particular, in line with the programme objectives, Luke and Sam viewed positivity as a principal component of their practice to try to incite positive behaviour change and negate any negative thinking the participants may experience. Similar to their use of face-work to display an image of trustworthiness and credibility, Luke and Sam saw the benefit

of what Goffman (2003, p.11) terms 'the little ceremonies of greeting and farewell'. For example, Luke and Sam always gave a warm, friendly welcome and goodbye to their participants by engaging in emotion work, *using the gesture* of a fist bump to elicit positive feelings during these social exchanges (Hochschild, 1979). This strategy involved saying good morning, afternoon, or goodbye in a soft and calm tone, and ended the interaction by asking how they were or with a send-off message (e.g., "Well done today", "Enjoy your weekend") whenever the participants walked in or out. Luke explained how he used this gesture as a way to make his participants feel 'a bit better':

fist bump on the greeting or a handshake and I'll do that whether they go out for break and when they come back from break whenever there's a gap from the group I'll always try and bring them in with that...So straight away I'm trying to gauge the mood cause we don't know what they've been through and how they want me to respond so give them a bit of space or if they are up for it engage in that conversation... shows a little bit of respect, you don't know when the last time they had a conversation was with someone... and then just praise, praise, praise and then it gets better every week...just always end on a positive and always try and reflect on what we've done (Luke, coach, SRI)

Not only did this tactic work to leave the students with a positive interaction at the start and end of the day, but Luke recognised he could simultaneously use it as a way to 'gauge the mood'. This was a strategy to then inform his next (inter)action with each student to get the best out of them and show 'respect'. Again, like Luke, Sam's deployment of gestures were to celebrate the small wins to incite feelings of respect and gratification:

These young people like that praise and compliments they want to feel or to be made to feel good about themselves. So yeah, the fist bumps, high fives are all like really good ways of doing that and sort of increasing the feeling a bit. It shows a kind of respect between from me to them and shows that I am pleased with them and hopefully that like physical contact like just allows them to like feel that they are doing something right like as I said before, a lot of the time at home or in school there's a negative connotation and often don't get that positive physical contact, you're just trying to support that individual as much as you can and give them as much of a positive feeling so that they're having a good day and feel like they're taking something from the day (Sam, coach, SRI)

In regard to the welcome and farewell, the passion that goes into it compensates for the weakening and harm done to the relationship when it had previously or is about to be hit by separation (Goffman, 2003). These extracts suggest that Luke and Sam share the same goal - to always be positive and make that person's day a little bit better - and by utilising the simple strategy of a clear greeting and departure they hoped to achieve it. Importantly, as part of their greeting strategy, Sam and Luke explained how they would purposefully exaggerate their positive emotional image:

It was a little bit over the top sometimes, first thing in the morning you do need to be a little bit enthusiastic. Get them kind of engaging and sometimes like in a classroom, if you try and get people to kind of respond and engage with you, you've got to kind of win over their hearts and minds rather than just like, oh, we've got a task for you to do and just making them do it or feel they've got to do it. You want to kind of create such a positive feeling that they want to do it for you and for them...Not just 'Oh, well answered', it's also a 'yeah, you're engaged, thank you for listening, well done (Sam, coach, SRI)

It is about them belonging and just about them being part of it and feeling it. So, it's not my show, it's like our show or their show just to let them know that there will have been bumps, there will have been times where it didn't go right in the session, but to say at the end it is important, and they can hear me. I'm saying it in such a happy positive way that they're going to want to come back which is great. Another one I say is 'make the right choices', 'see you next week make the right choices', just because it's not a Horizon Day everyday like you still gotta make good choices, so you can come back and that is a pretty good one (Luke, coach, SRI)

This is another example of interpersonal emotion management performed via Luke and Sam's surface acting, whereby they amplify their 'natural' or 'real' emotions (i.e., happy, proud) to convince their participants that they are experiencing that emotion (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019). This amplification strategy was not limited to greetings. As Sam's statement described, in line with the programme aims, he also utilised it in other positive interactions to 'celebrate the small wins' (Sam) such as when a participant got an answer right or showed pro-social behaviours. Indeed, even if the participants' interactions and experiences outside of the programme are negative, Luke and Sam deploy a strategy that develops an encouraging and consistent interaction the students know they are coming back

to. Ultimately, this self-presentational tactic worked to reinforce their positive and trusting relationships developed from the very start, which in turn informed their future interactions and ability to enact their coaching agendas.

Luke and Sam were also aware that their impression and emotion management had to extend beyond the students to the school staff to help form positive and advantageous impressions. Aligned with previous research (Cassidy, Potrac and Rynne, 2023; Hayton, 2017; Shulman, 2017), they recognised tactics to influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the school staff had to be deployed. Hence, where Will would sometimes avoid simple yet effective strategies to build these professional relationships, Luke and Sam actively sought them out to further their relationships. Luke described his engagement in impression management tactics to build his relationship with the teachers. For example, he told a 'white self-presentational lie that has no obvious consequences for others' but benefits his *social-professional* (i.e., quality of interpersonal relationships within the workplace) interests (Leary, 1996, p.170):

I think the interpersonal skills are pivotal, what's massively worked for me is that extra time, that care, getting there early, and I will sit and have dinner with them...spending a bit of time with all the staff in the staff room like you saw...and at the end I will stay behind 10/15 minutes, and the teachers are so laid back then as soon as the bell goes, they want to talk to you as a person as well, that relationship building is huge...now I'm being cheeky there cause I'm waiting for traffic to die down, that's one of the reasons I'm doing it, but at the same time I probably have my most golden conversations in that 10-15 minutes and all the young people can see that I'm not in a rush, the adults think he wants to be here he is not in a rush anywhere...some coaches will just arrive dead on quarter past 10, go out for lunch, come back and leave, again you can ghost in and out but definitely wouldn't recommend that (Luke, coach, SRI)

This indicated that Luke had a level of emotional intelligence (i.e., the capacity to recognise our own emotions and those of others) to identify how the teachers are 'more laid back' at the end of the day (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Taking this into account, Luke actively concealed he is actually letting the traffic die down and

tactically used this 'free' time to engage in 'golden conversations' with the teachers, rather than sitting in his car. For Goffman (1959), Luke used his time to assert, maintain and control how he presented himself, forming a calculated impression towards the idealised and desirable qualities and attributes (e.g., committed, hard-working, caring) of the workplace (Shulman, 2017). Specifically, this strategy worked to try and omit the impression of being in a 'rush' and instead, replace it with the presentation of a socially desirable, committed coach that is interested in the school staff outside of the programme. Sam used the same tactic, recognising the benefit for himself and the CCO, he explained in his own words:

I believe massively that like if you're like an external like business coming into a school or anywhere and working with them, if you can remain on site as much as you can and be in the right places, you're going to end up building relationships with people...like oh so and so in your classroom I've built that relationship and got that quick conversation sort of relationship with that teacher. And we've had coaches before but who's like, left schools or whatever at dinner times and then arrived back after like that could have been spent like building up your relationship with your school lead or the other teachers or even pupils and like OK, it might take up some of your like free time whilst you try and have dinner but you might get a big gain from that within a week or two because the relationships been built... it's an extra four, five, six, seven minutes at the end of the day. One you know the road, the traffic's terrible on the road anyway, so I've got to wait anyway, really, so, from that, from my perspective, it doesn't bother me (Sam, coach, SRI)

There were differences between the intent shown by Luke and Sam to establish a professional *front* (e.g., turning up early, proactively engaging in conversations with staff), and Will's intentions of managing his professional *appearance*. Over the four-week observation period, Will turned up early once and, in this case, it was an unmeant gesture (Goffman, 2004, p.36), as the field note depicts:

Will: Good morning (said with a smile)  
Teacher: Blimey Will are you feeling alright, you are early (sarcastically checking his watch)  
Will: I know when I looked over, I thought you had all arrived (smiling and laughing)  
Teacher: Ah well, you will just have to wait with us then whilst the others arrive (laughing)  
Will didn't respond he just hesitantly joined in the laughing with a slight smile but seemed somewhat uncomfortable by being called out and quickly started a conversation with one of the participants about their hot chocolate they were drinking (Field note, Will, 3/03/23)

As a negatively valued characteristic in workplaces, this interaction highlights how everyone was aware of but never usually referred to the 'fact' that Will does not turn up early (Goffman, 2004, p.36). So, Will's accidental display brought this fact to attention, leading to a moment of awkwardness in which Will was unable to defend or save his performance (Goffman, 2004). This reflects Goffman's (1964) notion of a *spoiled performance* (i.e., occasions where those judging our performances consider us to have failed to fulfil the situationally acceptable expectation). Since it was a recurring theme that Will never turned up early, this event could indicate how the teacher decided he no longer wanted to play the game of polite interaction and instead confronted Will with this fact (Goffman, 2004). Rather than having the political efficacy and interpersonal skills to defend himself or save his performance, Will found himself out of countenance trying to counteract the danger by laughing it off and changing audiences, moving away from the teachers to interact with a student, a relationship he feels more confident engaging in (Goffman, 2004). Spoiled performances often lead to negative evaluations, being viewed as a 'discredited' individual by the audience you are trying to impress (Goffman, 1964, p.3). Subsequently, this may not only seriously negate or restrict Will's efforts to positively influence the teachers but, as indicated in section [3.2](#), can also problematically impact employment conditions (Ives *et al.*, 2021). When asked about this incident in an SRI, Will stated:

The teachers are secondary and I don't really care about their relationships with me, and I don't really pay attention to it as much as I should...I just don't talk to them, like I'd rather invest my time in a kid than try and bullshit away to a teacher because talking about being fake and all that stuff, even if I did it really well it would still be mentally draining for me...I just can't get my head around it just really annoys me (Will, coach, SRI)

Will's in-situ emotional displays and SRI responses suggest that he did not have the desire or emotional stamina required for the job. This can be explained through Hochschild's (1983) theorising that sustained emotion management and long-term

acting requires a high degree of emotional stamina. For example, Will implied that when he was expected to project a professional and caring front for adults, he was 'bullshit[ting]' his way through those interactions to align with the display rules (i.e., the socially acceptable outward expression of emotion) of the situation (Hochschild, 1979). The consequence of trying to display inauthentic behaviours and emotional displays, is that it can prove emotionally fatiguing (Hayton, 2017; Hochschild, 1983). As Will declared, even if he tried to engage in emotional labour to give off the 'right' impression, 'it would still be mentally draining for me'. The concern with this ideology is how a reduction in emotional stamina or lack of motivation to engage in emotion work, can lead to situations where Will's credibility is questioned by the schools he worked with (i.e., lost partnerships) (Potrac *et al.*, 2017). There were other examples of where Will appeared to have failed to meet the expectations of the school staff:

(Five minutes before the session starts) We walked over and Will greeted his group with a "good morning, is this everyone?" (There were only 6 students out of the usual 15) and one staff member said, "yeah". Will responded almost instantly with a "YES!". Celebrating with his arms up in the air and a big smile on his face. The teachers quietly laughed but it sounded quite disapproving as they looked at one another. Will stopped smiling and asked, "where are they?", the teacher responded with "some are on a trip, two are excluded, and two have moved to mainstream". Will said "that's good" after a slight pause and no response, he added "ok let's go then, follow me", walking ahead of the group with no conversation initiated with staff or pupils until they all got the room (Field note, Will, 17/03/03)

This incident suggests Will lacked emotional intelligence and created a mismatch between the *feeling rules* (i.e., social norms that tell us when, where, what, how long and strongly to feel) and *display rules* (i.e., how to appropriately express and display emotions) (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). To express what are considered to be socially acceptable emotions, often involves suppressing genuine emotions in-line with the display rules of that setting (Harris, 2024), which Will did not adhere to. For example, Will expressed his response was 'a sigh of relief', but instead of suppressing this 'relief', he boldly opposed the formal rules of etiquette and

professional interaction by displaying what could be deemed a *backstage* (i.e., place(s) where you can step out of character) *expression* in the *front stage* (i.e., a place where you are performing in front of a scrutinising audience) region (Goffman, 1959, 1964; Harris, 2024; Hochschild, 1979).

Will's nonchalance toward engaging in emotion management and positive interactions with the school staff resulted in him behaving outside of the socially appropriate limits (Leary, 1996). As Leary (1996, p. 2) states, '...people who are unconcerned with others' impressions would often behave inappropriately, resulting in negative reactions ranging from disparagement to ostracism'. In this social exchange, the reaction from the teachers (negative looks and quiet, hesitant laughing) served as a 'rule reminder', a cue for Will to adjust his 'mis-feelings' (expressing joy in front of them) to align with the rules of the group (Hochschild, 1979, p. 564). It was when Will stopped smiling that inferred he engaged in a low level of self-monitoring, trying to respond to this cue with the 'right' impression by decreasing the *duration* and *extent* of his joyful and celebratory response (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019; Hochschild, 1979). Thus, Will was somewhat guided by the disapproval from the teachers to deploy a sense of damage control, trying to cover up his mistake and managing his impression in terms of what he now perceived the teachers would prefer (i.e., asking a follow up question that makes him seem like he cared where the absentees were). Will's subsequent actions, successful or not, suggest he tried to engage in protective impression management due to his initial affective response resulting in a potentially negative evaluation of him. Indeed, his credibility, trustworthiness and therefore, social capital with this group of teachers could have been affected and have negative repercussions for future interactions and achievements (e.g., lower chance of re-signing).



### 3.5.2 *Is this a joke?*

As highlighted above, to adhere to the demands of their community sport coaching contexts, the CSCs had to think about their emotional performance. The CSCs were expected to demonstrate emotions such as interest, friendship, and positivity to help obtain and/or maintain participant buy-in and relationships and avoid the Horizon participants questioning their authenticity and appropriateness. Another key finding from the data was how the CSCs regularly used humour as part of their emotion management strategies. Building upon the work of Edwards and Jones (2018, 2022) who suggest humour is an underexplored, underappreciated form of emotion management in sports coaching literature, the data suggests that humour was a core strategy of the CSCs' emotion work to maintain, advance and negotiate their relationships with the Horizon participants. For example, Will expressed how humour worked as a mental defence mechanism, manipulating his own and others' emotions to better cope with unpleasant situations. He stated how when participants 'banter' with him or make personal comments, he engaged in micropolitical actions to release stress and manage his impression displayed to the participants by trying to 'laugh' or 'make a jab back at them':

when someone comes at you it is alright just chill, make a joke, laugh or whatever, like be comfortable in chaos like if you're comfortable in that chaos, nothing will affect you and they will see nothing will affect you, go cry in your car afterwards but in that room you need to be comfortable in that chaos because there will be teachers who have has that chaos and the kids strive off it like oh he's flustered we can win here (Will, coach, SRI)

This excerpt echoes Hochschild's (1983) work 'managing emotions', as Will engaged in humour as a way to shape and suppress his own feelings of being 'flustered' to feel 'comfortable'. Reflecting Edward and Jones' (2018) notion of 'disciplinary humour' (i.e., (re)affirms social boundaries and (re)gain control), humour in this situation worked to maintain a certain image of control and social standing to try and stop the students from getting the upper hand and 'win'. Will

then recognised the backstage region as a safe space for CSCs to drop the comfortable, calm, and unbothered front and 'step out of character' (Goffman, 1959, p.114) by going to 'cry in your car'. Thus, in the front stage region (i.e., in the classroom) he adjusts his role, using humour as his default strategy to ensure his performance fits the purpose of the situation and his participants. For example, at times humour was used to release tension after he has had to discipline his participants in some way:

I was always trying to put a joke in just try to kill the tension, so they know I wasn't that annoyed and that angry with them... for me personally, making jokes and making sure they like us as you've gotta be a very likeable person in this job. If kids don't like you, then you're in not in a good place (Will, coach, SRI)

Will recognised how participant buy-in is essential for him to maintain his relationships and enact the programme in the very unforgiving context of community sport coaching. For Romero (2006), humour can help to keep groups intact and generate synergy, as well as create an attractive working environment. Indeed, Will predominantly used what Edwards and Jones (2018) term 'inclusionary putdown humour' which involves deploying humour such as teasing and sarcasm as part of a caring and friendly strategy. As such, Will used humour to try and keep the participants on his side by lightening the mood, offering jest over an authoritative approach to induce a 'likeable' personality and signal a friendship amongst the group (Edward and Jones, 2018, 2022). Moreover, in the attempt to construct an identity that defined the context to be as if he was 'joking with his mates', Will relied on 'banter' to 'stay relatable'. However, much of this humour reflected the disparaging aspects of 'disciplinary humour' (Edwards and Jones, 2018), specifically, using degrees of ridicule directed towards others as a means to (re)confirm Will's status and power, and uphold the social norms of conduct embedded in these contexts:

So humour is like a big defence. I will just make a little jab or comment towards him like I did today like mate we all know you're angry for what the barber did to you, like stuff like that. A funny joke is the biggest weapon you can have if you make someone laugh, you are not angry when you are laughing, so like it kills that quite dead to diffuse the situation... but I think humour is a big thing for Horizon coaches like likeability is a big thing we're not a teacher and I feel like we've got some coaches who are like they feel like they have got to get the work done like sometimes it is just not going to get done, and approachable is a big thing for me like the kids got to feel comfortable telling you certain things (Will, coach, SRI)

For Will, disciplinary humour was his 'weapon' to 'defuse the situation' and release the tension in difficult situations. Indeed, as the limited research into humour in sports coaching has indicated (Edward and Jones, 2018, 2022; Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2013, 2014), whilst Will may not deliberately be trying to hurt or degrade the students, others would possibly deem his humorous communication as ill-advised or insulting. As such, Will's use of 'banter' became his 'big defence' to help control or manage behaviour by increasing his likability with the others in the room. For example, a group of boys were messing around with each other at the front and saying derogatory things to each other when one said something about Will. Will responded by making an insulting comment or 'bantered' back to the participant about his height, the other two boys laughed but the recipient of the joke did not seem impressed:

Yeah, [student] being lippy... and he's insulting me to get a laugh out of the kids, but I do a better insult and get that audience on my side. Then he didn't have that audience to perform to anymore, so it's about flipping it... So, stuff like that where you just take away that confidence. It's a fine line. I don't like using the word belittle but sort of like he tried to be a big guy and then one or two comments I've just shot him down straight away and there was absolutely nothing. I made a joke about him, the other two laughed. So, get that audience on your side by making a joke towards them then it just kills them straight away because they are like ah shit. Then when I said move over there now, he would only do that because they're not interested in him anymore because I've made that joke...And like I say, it just takes away that power because the only power that you got is to make them laugh... so, it did work in the end (Will, coach, SRI)

Leary (1996, p.42) states, 'people can often influence others to respond to them in desired ways – that is, they exercise power over others – by presenting certain impressions of themselves.' Indeed, Will's humorous performance worked to benefit him two-fold. Firstly, he deployed both inclusionary putdown and

disciplinary humour as an *interpersonal emotion management* technique to try and get the other two boys 'on his side' by making them laugh, which then took away the misbehaving student's 'confidence' and sense of 'power' (Edwards and Jones, 2018; Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2013). Secondly, as a result of diverting the power back to himself, Will was able to discipline the student by asking him to move to a different table without being met with resistance. The consequence of this interaction reflects the notion of humour as a double-edged sword, where it influences social inclusion and exclusion (Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2013). In Will's case, whilst he might have sustained a positive relationship with two of the students by making them laugh, the one that received the negatively worded 'banter' could have been adversely affected (Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2014). This is contradictory to the positive emotions and behaviour change that the Horizon coaches are supposed to incite and encourage.

What Will's approach suggests is that he is exposed to ambiguous and dubious emotion norms. Harris (2015, p.25) explains, 'emotion norms might be said to "govern" the way we feel, [but] the rules are not necessarily ironclad; there can be wiggle room or controversy surrounding their application.' Meaning, insults and banter may be the best emotional performance given to demonstrate friendship and relatability with this demographic since that is what they are used to and engage in themselves, creating a sense of authenticity. However, in regard to the aims of the programme and wider policy, engaging in this type of humour could be detrimental to the enactment of pro-social behaviours, positive outlook on life, and education since it could be viewed as offensive by the recipient or onlookers. Ultimately, using banter tactics in community settings may in some cases prove beneficial, but also poses a risk to the coach-participant relationship and the CSC's attempts to construct a friendly social identity (Ronglan and Aggerholm,

2014). In this regard, there was an air of dispute surrounding the notion of humour with the other two coaches, Luke and Sam. As 'what is funny to one person is not necessarily funny to another...or even be perceived offensive' (Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2012, p.223). Indeed, Luke showed some disdain towards using banter as a tool to build and maintain relationships and enact your coaching agenda:

it's a controversial one this but I don't think humour works either, it might work for some people but I don't think name calling or banter, it's not something I do at any point but some other coaches swear by it, maybe their personality suits it I don't know but I just think if you say the wrong thing to the wrong person you could ruin their day, month, year, that will stick with them for a long time, you don't know who is strong and who isn't... so for us, to make this the best day of their week, make them look forward to their week is fantastic so again just to remain positive. I just steer away from banter as much as possible because I don't think self-esteem or confidence is high in many of these or with their risk factors, they probably wouldn't have been in this position without them (Luke, coach, semi-structured interview)

Here, Luke shows a strong sense of emotional intelligence. Recognising that his choice in *wording* and *expression* can impact the well-being of others and the enactment of the programme objectives. Much of the discussions with Luke involved his goal of making sessions a safe space for his participants. To do this, he attempted to avoid both putdown and disciplinary humour (Edwards and Jones, 2018) by distinguishing between productive (inclusive, enjoyment) and destructive (exclusion, ridicule) humour production (Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2014). For example, he does not use 'personal humour' as a tool:

I'll try and be funny maybe, but I won't personally say something about somebody...you say the wrong thing to the wrong person and it's either going to escalate something in the classroom or they'll go away and escalate it to somebody else. Saw it happen and it's not very nice. I never get personal. Never name call. Some coaches will be like, oh, look at your haircut or look at your trainers, just having a joke and they are being funny, it's humour, but you just don't know how people are going to take things do you? Maybe joke about different situations I have been in or stuff like that, but nothing personal (Luke, coach, SRI)

Luke's sentiments show his awareness of how the *type*, *timing* and *recipient* of humour is crucial for the appropriate use of this interactional strategy (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019). Therefore, in his efforts, he tried to continue to convey a

positive and pleasant demeanour to reassure his participants he is not against them or a risk, but instead is there to support and help them. In Luke's words:

The riddle works quite well and gets a few laughs. I will sometimes do dad jokes or like a pun and usually get a pity laugh but it still makes them smile even if it is a rubbish joke...but always being positive in my language, always trying to praise the effort and achievement. So, if they missed a shot on goal, then it's not to say even in a jokey way, you missed, I'll focus on the positive to say 'see you got yourself in front of the goal and you took the shot, next time it'll come' (Luke, coach, SRI)

Similar to Will, Luke used humour as a strategy to break tension and reassure the participants of solidarity and team cohesion (Aggerholm and Ronglan, 2012). For example, Luke discussed a behaviour incident where a boy was swinging on the basketball hoops during a practical. He used humour to share a laugh with his participants as a way to signal a sense of common ground after a moment of challenging behaviour. Therefore, in this interaction, humour was used in a positive and productive manner, not as a way of negatively targeting anyone to get a laugh. Luke explained:

Saying if they break then I won't be able to do this, tried to have a shot and missed and made him and a couple of others laugh which is nice... so I put a laugh in as well, turned it into a joke there, just to let him know the conversations in a nice place, it is not me vs you so like, how can we work together so that you don't hurt yourself or break the equipment (Luke, coach, SRI)

Whilst it was not always a common feature of his practice, on the odd occasion Sam used humour to be engaging and foster a fun environment (Edwards and Jones, 2018; Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2014). For example, during a talking points activity:

I think they quite enjoy that, I can come and laugh about my own team getting beat, make a joke like especially if Liverpool get beat, I always make a good little comment or try to do a funny comment, use a little bit of humour and that again just kind of engages people and sometimes I kind of say the same jokes and, you know, they say oh sir you've said that 100 times. So, they kind of just laugh along...Again, it's like quick look up who's laughed, right, so and so's not laughed and yeah, just kind of sensing the mood and see if I need to adjust my approach at all (Sam, coach, SRI)

Sam evidenced that he is aware of how humour can be a great interpersonal skill to engage his participants and offer a cheerful appearance. Addressing the latter statement in his response, Sam evidences the concept of 'noticing the world of

small realities' (Jones, Bailey and Thompson, 2013, p.277) by being alert to the reactions of his participants and using it to consider how his appearance and manner are perceived to adjust his approach accordingly. Corresponding to the affiliative humour used by the coaches in Edwards and Jones' (2018) study, Sam used his sense of humour to 'light-heartedly' challenge behaviour. For example, three girls at the front were chatting away loudly rather than getting on with the work, instead of telling them off Sam said with a smile and a giggle 'girls you're like a box of frogs today' the girls laughed and then he added 'you can talk but let's be a bit quieter and get on with the task please':

Just having a laugh with them a little bit and it's quite positive really. And then I've still used my voice to get their attention and obviously picked out those three because when they get talking, they are loud. I am trying to do it in a humorous way because I hate going right you need to be quiet now, you become too much of a teacher. Do it in a humorous way and they will respond to that as well, rather than just shutting off. So yeah, that's why I've used a little bit of humour. But I have obviously reiterated that in a positive way because I don't mean it as in you know badly, but just how noisy they are (Sam, coach, SRI)

Again, like Luke's example, the way Sam worded his joke allowed him to share a laugh with his participants to gain a sense of solidarity, where he was then able to give some directions without it sounding too authoritative and 'too much of a teacher', which could result in them 'shutting off' (Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2014). Indeed, positive use of humour can be a productive skill and tool to use during interactions in community sport contexts. Sam not only made jokes as a micropolitical action to 'read the room' and manage behaviour, but he saw how humour is a productive skill to stimulate his participants' work ethic and quality (Mathies, Chiew and Kleinaltenkamp, 2016). For example, Sam used humorous communication to be more relatable and 'human like' to a participant who was struggling with her work:

Obviously, I've made a bit of a joke there like, I don't know everything, even with my big head. I think sometimes, although she kinda demonstrates this really confident young person who's almost like authority doesn't matter to her, I think actually that's just a big defensive mechanism and she's nervy with not low self-esteem but maybe like in certain situations low self-confidence or self-efficacy...I'm joking around, not

being too serious just helps her relax a little bit and we've got a good relationship anyway and a lot of it is based on like having a little bit of a joke at times and I think when I have to be serious with her I am but she's got a good sense of humour and that kind of helped her engage (Sam, coach, SRI)

Here, humour was used as an interpersonal emotion management approach that worked to 'relax' and 'engage' his participant. Rather than scrutinising her work or using a sarcastic tone, Sam strategically worded his joke so that it is self-deprecating (allows his audience to laugh at him, making fun of his own weakness (i.e., big head)) to help reduce the participant's anxiety and perceived uncertainty. This was to support the student to be successful in the session and achieve his coaching objectives. Indeed, how humour is worded and delivered to others needs to be carefully considered by those using it as a tactic in community sport coaching contexts (Edwards and Jones, 2018; Ronglan and Aggerholm, 2014).

### 3.5.3 *Pick and choose your battles*

In line with previous research (Duffell, 2019), another key finding was how the coaches under study prioritised managing the participants' behaviour, as it helped them to enact the Horizon scheme and present a positive impression of themselves and the programme to the schools. To do this, the CSCs deployed various strategies. For example, Sam would strategically pre-plan his sessions and how he is going to deliver them in an attempt to avoid undesirable behaviours:

you've got completely different people, probably different interests if you're not changing those slides, you are gonna have behaviour issues, kids disengage. You can blame the child all you want but look at your planning first (Sam, coach, semi-structured interview)

Specifically, Sam planned his starter activity to be a staging device and prop (Harris, 2024) to manage behaviour by having something interesting for his participants to engage with upon their arrival:

When people are arriving into the class, there's something for them to focus on straight away and get them engaged rather than sat there bored messing around, being on the phones, doing things that we don't want them to do and that kind of thing can spiral very quickly and you find such a small thing can lead to them being off task which if a teacher walks by or comes in and see they are on their phones or messing



around I wouldn't get in trouble but it is not going to look good for the students, me or programme. So that's just kind of key behaviour management (Sam, coach, SRI)

Thus, Sam had the micropolitical understanding that misbehaving students in his sessions could result in the school staff perceiving his performance to be unsatisfactory or evaluating him as incompetent. Therefore, he prioritised actions (i.e., remembering the 'little facts' (Sam) about his participants to personalise the sessions) that ensured his participants were engaged to limit the chances of misbehaviour, to portray an idealised image to his delivery school. This reflected what Harry (manager) calls 'the game they have got play to survive':

We are not teachers, we are coaches; we are very different. We are not in a position where we can take those fights on so we don't, you know we ask them nicely, really our main weapon is to make sure that whatever we are covering in the sessions is so much fun and they want to do it so much that behaviour doesn't happen...that's our real behaviour management strategy is knowing the kids so well we can plan really well (Harry, manager, semi-structured interview)

To play this game then, Will and Luke's in-situ practice extended beyond their individual performances, evidencing Goffman's (1959) notion of a *performance team*. A performance team is 'any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine' that tries to produce a desired and integrated team impression (Goffman, 1959, p.79; Scott, 2015). As such, Luke and Will utilised their relationships with the school staff to deploy the tactic of 'good cop, bad cop', to manage behaviour whilst sustaining their credibility and trust with their Horizon participants:

I am terrible for using the staff as the bad cop sort of thing, so I'm always good cop and I'll say that to them, to the staff at the school saying I'm not being funny but I've got to try and get buy-in from them and you're with them all week so if it does come to any sort of they're getting too far away from themselves or being challenging then if you could step in and lay down the rules then it saves me doing it for that longer term relationship (Luke, coach, SRI)

...he [school lead] is your sort of bad cop... it's not my nature to bollock people. I don't like doing it. I like to be that sort of person where we're always positive and we try to find solutions...But we should be the good guy that is always trying to support but that only works if you've got someone else who is able to stop that sort of thing (Will, coach, SRI)

The teacher in this scenario is a team-mate to the CSCs who engaged in *dramaturgical discipline* (i.e., management of your personal front to appear casual whilst hiding the work you are doing to create that impression) to maintain the given definition (i.e., good cop, bad cop) of the situation (Goffman, 1959; Harris, 2024). Thus, Luke and Will looked to manage the impressions the students have of their teacher 'as a way of indirectly conveying an image of themselves' (Leary, 1996, p.37). Essentially, the teacher in the room is used as a behaviour management prop by playing the part of the 'bad cop' in their performance. Deploying this tactic worked to safeguard the CSCs' positive and friendly 'good guy' front they attempted to show to the Horizon participants, favouring them over the teacher. As a result, the behaviour is managed but not at the expense of the CSCs' relationship with the Horizon participants, and for any future incidents, the CSC and teacher know their pre-established roles. Further, Luke's response suggested that he engaged in dramaturgical circumspection by stating to the school staff what their role is prior to their first performance, putting measures in place to avoid or minimise any unanticipated incidents that may impinge on giving a successful performance (Goffman, 1959). Since this tactic involved manipulating their important relationship with the teachers, the CSCs carefully controlled the various facets that make up this performance. An example of this in practice is discussed below:

The starter activity was 'how would you spend £1million'. The school lead went over to one of the students and looked at their work, reacting to it by shouting out in front of the class, '400 quid for your house! what is it, a dolls house?' in a patronising tone, which led to another student laughing at him. He followed on with 'research it properly, you can't get a front door for 400 quid'. Luke about 5 minutes later, walked round to the same student where he bent down to engage in a conversation, reading through his work saying 'nice, I like it, that leaves you with around half a million left over, keep going' (in a quiet and soft tone) (Field note, Luke, 02/03/23).

I don't think it's ever got to a point where I need to challenge him, I would just try and steer it into a more positive direction...put a positive spin on it. So, he [school lead] can give constructive criticism and then I can give the effort, praise sort of thing. So hopefully it kind of works well in the Ying and Yang, as long as he doesn't go too

strong with the criticism and I don't go too strong with the overpraising, then we'll be alright... it tends to be sir again being bad cop, I'm more like, softly, softly, just come and do what you can (Luke, Coach, SRI)

This suggests that Luke engaged in dramaturgical discipline to avoid any unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions, or faux pas which could result in a spoiled performance (Harris, 2024). For example, remembering to confidently execute his 'good cop' role whilst keeping a watchful eye on the teacher as the 'bad cop' (Goffman, 1959). Further, by manipulating his relationship with the teacher to be the anti-hero, Luke's carefully selected actions (i.e., praising, soft tone) during the team performance aimed to stimulate the emotions of the Horizon participants to go in his favour. Like the work of Ives *et al.* (2016), Luke aimed to do this by managing his own emotional displays to present as calm, positive, and friendly, to build the students back up after receiving criticism or disappointed emotions from the teacher. In some cases, Luke attempted to almost 'fix' the actions of the school lead in a face-saving manner by having to 'put a positive spin on it'. Typically, face-saving behaviours are often used in the context of self-presentational predicaments (Leary, 1996). However, in the case of working as a performance team, Luke utilised his position as the 'good cop' to act on the teachers' undesirable behaviours in a way that boosts his position and image. As Luke explains, he continuously thinks about how he interacts with the students and monitors the direction and content of his and the school lead's collective performance. So rather than 'ruin the show', it could be argued that Luke engaged in dramaturgical loyalty, by not challenging the teacher's negative comments or behaviour management tactics. Instead, he used his role to counteract the negativity and positively influence the students via encouragement and a friendly front. Essentially, Luke saw this as a way of preserving his relationship with both audiences (i.e., teacher and student) and achieving his personal and professional goals (i.e., participant and school buy-in).

When the CSCs were unable to utilise the 'good cop, bad cop' strategy, it was then about 'picking and choosing your battles' due to the risk of escalation. As Luke explains:

Like I just know to distract or just be kind, maybe take a loss, maybe let them win. But knowing you're gonna win the next two or three and you have to be able to swallow. Keep saying it to a few of the other coaches and they're not grasping it. They wanna win every fight and every battle and you're going to tire yourself out. You can lose a few small ones (Luke, coach, SRI)

Luke recognised the mentally draining and challenging nature of trying to 'win every fight'. Dan explained that much of the unchallenged behaviour was often due to the fear that those types of confrontational incidents would escalate to something worse or result in lost relationships and buy-in:

Horizon coaches will ignore a lot of the low-level behaviour just in case and it's just not worth the battle, but we have to get through to them that it's essential you sort of stick to your expectations and stick to agreement and challenge behaviour regardless of how it looks. Ultimately, if you are doing all that relationship building that we talked about, those challenges will become easier because they are not taking it personally, they trust you as an adult and your judgement and that you genuinely care for them so they're not gonna take it personally. Whereas if you've not done all that and you start trying to correct behaviour and they say I don't respect you why would I listen to you, it creates a very difficult situation (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

Will's practice reflected the concerns Dan expressed regarding the CSCs' (in)ability to challenge behaviour. He often missed opportunities to enact the programme and wider policy objectives by ignoring or ineffectually attending to unsocial and negative behaviours, and in some cases reenforced unwanted behaviours. Will explained:

We're never going to get these kids to be saints and we are not going to try...so do I want to destroy our relationship by always having a go? I might have won that little battle there, but like the whole objective might collapse cause my relationship with him is done now. For me it's much more about assessing the situation and then moving on, but ultimately the most important thing is keeping that relationship between me and kids a positive one. So, I always say like come one guys not here, but if I was angry in saying how dare you say that the kids go, what's this guy doing? And then that relationship is gone. And I think like saying, come on guys 20 times over will have more effect because they like me and like them sessions more than me having had a little go at them (Will, coach, SRI)

The consequence of Will prioritising his likability and relationship with his participants, is that the same undesirable incidents such as swearing and inappropriate comments at him and each other kept transpiring. For example, on one occasion a student swore during a one-to-one interaction with Will, and rather than taking the time and effort to positively attend to the swearing, he ignored it:

You can see in that clip that he's actually engaged and he's getting there, talking about his character and all that stuff, and he is actually looking like he's gonna do the work, so do I wanna derail that for a comment of 'don't swear, mate'?...but at the moment he is trying to do work and if he swears which every single kid does, then I'm not really that bothered. Cause like say it's not my main task. If I was really working on him not to swear, then I would be like ok, but has he made a major problem with the swearing? No. Is he gonna get on with the task? Yes. So, which one would I rather. He does the work happy days (Will, coach, SRI)

What became apparent in Will's practice was, due to relying on his 'good cop, bad cop' tactic, he had set emotion norms (i.e., culturally agreed upon expectations regarding the emotions people should feel and express in certain scenarios) regarding how he (inter)acted with the participants (Hochschild, 1983). He created the emotion norm of being 'unbothered' and more like a 'mate' from the start to try and gain participant buy-in, but to ensure he adhered to the emotion norms he had set, Will used bodily deep acting. For example, he stated that 'it's important to keep on task and keep the ball rolling, calm your frustration by counting down and act unbothered'. Indeed, Will's attempt to conform to the norms he had previously established (i.e., ignoring behaviour and leaving the discipline to the school lead) was done by continually counting down to get participant attention and suppress his frustration, to present a calm surface display.

There were times when Will did not have the emotional stamina to engage in deep acting and adhere to the rules of this context (Hochschild, 1983). For example, in one situation he challenged and reacted to a student's behaviour too strongly and in front of everyone. As a result, another student called him out on his

actions saying, 'sir why are you telling him off, you never do that I bet it is because of the camera'. Will explained:

So yeah, [student] killed me with the camera comment. And I was like, yeah, I don't really tell people off but then again it is just one of those things where he sort of got to me and I let it show (Will, coach, SRI)

This situation and response from Will can be explained by Thoits' (1990) concept of emotional deviance. This is when a person fails to conform to the emotion norms and as a result, can experience sanctions (Thoits, 1990). For Will, when he displayed the wrong type of emotion and the actions to follow with his participants, he experienced a minor sanction when the student made a comment. However, being emotionally deviant can pose larger risks such as loss of trust, relationship, and participant buy-in, which CSCs should be aware of as it can be detrimental for their practice (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019). Irrespective of whether his approach worked to achieve the programme and wider policy objectives, Will was trying to focus on not escalating the situation to maintain his desirable working conditions and his relationship with the participants. A consequence of this approach was that, during his observations, Will often faced the same type of comments, swearing, and disruptive behaviour from his participants on and off the pitch.

Sam also acknowledged the risk of adverse responses to challenging behaviour in the wrong way, particularly if he got his wording, tone, or timing wrong then he could have started a 'war' with a student (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019). For example, a student turned up late to his session wearing a coat and had earphones in, Sam welcomed her into the session and asked her to take her coat off and earphones out, she did not follow those instructions. Sam explained:

If I immediately challenge her for wearing her coat and because she doesn't want to take it off, it would start conflict. She's just walked in, I don't know what happened in this appointment. So, you don't want to start a war when you could have been better. Consider consciously the reason, I mean, I probably should looking back now, hold my standards that I have got to take your jacket off. But at the same time, if I've got a feeling that something isn't right, if I say one thing wrong or in the wrong tone she could flip, or any small thing could upset her, and I'll lose her for the rest of the day. Is it really worth it? She's arrived, whether it's late or not. She's arrived. She sat down straight away. She said good morning and so that is three wins already. So, it's a like right, let's manage it (Sam, coach, SRI)

As a result, he avoided challenging unwanted behaviour and engaged in *cognitive deep acting* which is attempting to modify your feelings by changing your perspective on the situation (Charmaz, Harris and Irvine, 2019; Harris, 2024). For Sam, in an effort to reduce the disappointment he felt from the student turning up late and not listening to his instructions, he tried to minimise the importance of punctuality and high standards and focused on the 'three wins' he did manage to achieve in that interaction (Harris, 2024). Despite using similar emotion and impression management tactics, Luke's approach reflected the desire to enact the programme's true aims the most. This is because he continued, as per his other practices, to promote positivity and in some circumstances, turn behaviour incidents into a constructive lesson that encourage prosocial behaviours. For example:

A participant was not joining in with the rest of the group and kept going in and out of the fire doors despite being told not to by both Luke and his schoolteacher. Luke then went over to him and had a one-to-one conversation discussing what is going on. The student wanted to be on a team with his friend and was not happy with the team he was on. Luke decided to give him the responsibility of being a leader for the year 10 group who was joining in with them for the practical (field note, Luke, 23/03/23)

After watching that interaction, Luke explained why he did not ignore this behaviour and instead of shouting at him took a different approach:

...my voice then was awesome like that could have escalated massively... If I had shouted or been aggressive, I would have just lost him, the relationship between us would have been damaged and, you know, you can get short-term results if I shouted...Just saying you are a sports leader for the year 10s and they don't behave like that. It's trying to give him a role, just trying to give him responsibilities to make him feel included again. Again, asking do you want to, I'm not going over there demanding like you will because he would just not do it, so giving them a choice almost that they still trust me and respond to my offer. I say please and thank you as

well so they can feed off of that too... the overall thing is for them to be successful, so that's what we want and they're generally with because they've not succeeded in mainstream because of normal teaching methods. So, we've got to come up with our own ways of dealing with it (Luke, coach, SRI)

Luke arguably used surface acting to manage his own emotional display to shape how the student acts and feels (Harris, 2024). In this interaction, Luke demonstrated his tactical use of wording and tone to not come across demanding otherwise he could lose complete engagement from the student. Rather, Luke tried to stimulate the feeling of trust by giving an illusion of choice in the aim of influencing the student to make the right decision and behave accordingly. Luke continued this calm and positive display with all of the students whether it was in the practical or in his classroom sessions. For example, even with a student's incessant lateness, Luke did not blatantly or negatively challenge her, explaining:

Because I am super kind. She's got a lot of things going on, so I celebrate it, same with [student name] this morning, for her to be in the room is incredible. There are many lessons that they don't attend. So, I just need to make it as welcoming as possible. She doesn't like being in the spotlight either. I don't accept lateness but would challenge it later like I do there, I'm just happy to see them and in that moment that is all that matters. I'll allow her to sit down and settle and then as we see, I'll go over and say how are you? Where have you been? What's going on? How's your week been? That sort of thing. Rather than going you're late, why?! Where have you been?! They just turn around and walk out the door, I've lost them then for an hour. I can't have any positive effect on them then (Luke, coach, SRI)

Luke's approach inferred he was aware of the importance of not being emotionally deviant. Specifically, trying to avoid any unwelcome anger or other norm violations as that can result in the loss of participant buy-in. As such, he carefully managed the intensity, placing, and timing of his interaction with the student. He identified that taking an overly abrasive approach (intensity), challenging her in front of the other students (placing), and/or challenging her too prematurely (timing), could result in loss of attendance, a breakdown in relationship, and thus, the inability to enact positive change. These incidents and responses highlight the awareness Luke had of the way he challenged behaviour, particularly via his strategic usage



of tone and wording (Harris, 2024) in these interactions, as opposed to Sam and Will's avoidant tactics.

#### 3.5.4 *All fun and games*

Another key finding was that the CSCs looked to foster fun and enjoyment in their practice to help manage behaviour and the overall flow of the session. In line with previous research (Lugueti *et al.*, 2017; Reid, 2017), the managers stated how if the CSCs successfully build strong and trusting relationships with their participants, everything else (i.e., behaviour, achievement of aims) will follow. Highlighted in the extracts, to do this, the CSCs are expected to 'sell' the benefits of the programme and 'cater' the sessions to the needs of their participants to stimulate enjoyment:

It's sell not tell, it's make them want to do something...sell them benefits of doing something like behaviour, make your sessions fun so they want to come in, because I think if they've got that trust and then use their knowledge of that student to plan what happens in that session for all those students, behaviour and things aren't actually really going to be the issue, that looks after itself...I wouldn't want to give them a load of strategies and be excellent at holding empty threats and making a kid feel like they should do something... it's got to be about do they trust you; they'll follow you (Harry, manager, semi-structured interview)

It has got to be fun and engaging and catered to your group otherwise there will be behaviour problems and disengaged young people all over the place which then makes the job for our coaches even harder. But if you have built that relationship and they trust you and you use it to make your sessions so much fun they have no choice but to enjoy it then you should be fine. But it is easier said than done (Dan, manager, semi-structured interview)

However, as Dan points out, in practice this is not so easy. There were discrepancies in how the CSCs interpreted and translated the notion of 'fun', and the way they worked to prevent or deal with behavioural issues. This was mainly due to the varying in-situ challenges the CSCs faced and what they prioritised (i.e., fun, meeting targets) as their coaching aims and objectives (see section [3.1](#) for more). For example, despite being aware of their organisational policy stating that they cannot join in the practical sessions, all of the CSCs did so in some capacity.

Sam and Luke would often take up positions such as goalkeeper or referee, with the occasional full game involvement. Will however, joined in the whole session as a full participant. Will and Luke also had the staff members take part. When asked why they did not follow this organisational directive, the CSCs explained:

I'm not allowed so don't tell our safeguarding lead. It's just more fun for them. And if I was just standing around, how can I ask them to come and join in and play around. It's just like playing with your mates. It's fun for me if I'm having fun, they're more likely to be having fun, you're encouraging them you know. You can also do stuff like if you can pretend sometimes to have bad games to even out the game and you can see and control it better (Will, coach, SRI)

Again, just relationship building isn't it, it's just fun. I enjoy it; they can see me having a good time and then they might think why can't I have a good time? And again, maybe goes back to if I'm willing to do it then they should be willing to do it. I wouldn't ask them to do anything really that I'm not going to do myself, that's part of it and suddenly you're not someone who's sat in the corner watching, you're actually taking part in it. It can really work well (Luke, coach, SRI)

Yeah, I mean, sometimes if I don't join in the game, it might breakdown. So just jump in goal just to kind of facilitate the game. We shouldn't really be joining in but obviously it can really help to make it fun and engage the girls like oooo Sam is joining in now. And if I'm going in goal I'm not going to come out like, punch the ball or dive on the floor, I'm just basically stood in the goal... There's definitely been times I would have said right you got me on your team for 10 seconds or whatever just because like it's gone really. So, people are getting distracted and not doing what they should be doing and it kind of gets everyone's attention, it becomes competitive then, and then they like to tackle me and like to stop me, which I love as well. So just little quick things that I just let refocus people get them motivation levels back up does help (Sam, coach, SRI)

What was clear is the CSCs are aware of how this front stage interaction and strategy they deploy to facilitate a fun practical session would not be well received by the organisation's safeguarding lead if translated into the front stage of the office. Nevertheless, the benefits outweighed the cost for the CSCs, as their involvement worked to motivate and encourage the students to take part, resulting in more chance of firstly, as Will alludes to 'control it better' and secondly, get the attendance they need to meet the required numbers and enact positive change. However, the enactment of the programme aims and objectives came into question when the in-situ delivery of the sessions from Sam and Will contradicted the expectations of the managers who stated, 'they shouldn't just have a game, we do coach properly' (Harry). Apart from Luke who structured his practical sessions

as a mix of small games or activities, free play, and a match to 'offer variety and keep everyone interested and happy' (Luke, coach), Sam and Will just facilitated a football match each week. Sam explained:

Every year I say to them, what do you want out of your practical sessions? Do you want multi-sports? Do you want just the match or be coached? and if they're like we just wanna play a game I am like that is fine, It's basically your practical time. I'll manage the session. Obviously, sometimes you throw in a few little things just to shake up the session a little bit, make it fresher. Sometimes we've made it handball and it works quite well. But yeah, you just manage it as best you can... just seems to be a nice way for everyone to relax and just be themselves before we go back in after lunch...And for me the practical is an award for the hard work, if that's what they wanna do and that's what's gonna get them best engaged, then do it. But yeah, I think all the school want there from me is as many of the participants participating as best they can, enjoying themselves and in a safe environment, and however you deliver that is different (Sam, coach, SRI)

Sam offered his groups a choice to how they wanted to experience their practical sessions, and whatever they chose he would facilitate. This could tie into the latter parts of his response, where he suggests that the practical is part of his front stage impression for both the participants and the school staff evaluating him. Therefore, getting as many participants as he can taking part and looking like they are enjoying themselves, would increase the likelihood of being perceived as successful. However, there seemed to be some conflict for Sam regarding what part of his practice would give off the better impression to the school regarding his success, engagement in the practical sessions or in the classroom. For Sam it was the latter, due to it being a 'more visible and measurable success in the long term', that benefits him, the schools, and the participants. As a result, Sam translated this into his practice by prioritising the work and meeting the qualification targets, over other important areas of policy enactment in his sessions (i.e., practical). In particular, the excerpts below show how Sam (in the eyes of management, wrongly) presented the practical as a 'reward for the hard work'. The field note describes one out of two observed examples where this was translated into his practice:

We had been outside for around half of the practical time when Sam shouted, “next goal wins and then we will go back inside to carry on with the work”. The girls moaned and groaned a little when they heard this. As the goal was scored:

Participant: “can we not just keep on playing?”

Sam replied: “No, we will stop there, no we have got work to do, not everyone has done it to the standard we expect, you’ve had ample time just needs to be the right standard, the gets works done then football”

Participant: “please just 5 more minutes”

Sam: “No, listen if next week you do the work, we will stay out longer. You need to get the work to the right standard and then you can” (field note, Sam, 22/02/23)

In response to this incident, Sam explained how:

I can remember that day, a lot of them have been really disengaged in the morning... I'll always pick like going back in and doing a bit of work over staying out for a little longer period of time as well. I mentioned before, as much as practical is part of the day, it's a reward as well for their hard work and the hard work in the classroom comes before this. So in regard to one-to-ones, obviously, that's really important at this stage because once everyone was up to date with the work, do well-being checks before kind of the half term as well, just make sure that we are kind of in a good place and things like that... and we need to make sure that like they understand that and that they know that like if they do the right thing in the classroom, that we're going to, like, make a note of that they're going to get praise and, that they're going to get the reward for it. There's a reason as to why we're pushing it in there. If they could just do the bare minimum and get away with it then those lazy traits will manifest and become like a bad habit that sticks with through life and through all of this. And that's not what we want at all and if that happens, then there's the basically, the agreement we have with the schools that we wouldn't allow that happening. So, if it was happening, I would be questioning, well, it's still happening so why are we paying you this money? Why? So, we've got to kind of give the school a body of evidence to show that we're doing all we can to eliminate those habits. And it does come down to the responsibility and ownership and then making the right choice (Sam, coach, SRI)

Rather than using the practical to teach ‘...how to lose, how to help your teammate, learning how to respect others that aren’t as good as you, learning how to win gracefully, be a sportsman, communication skills’ (Dan, manager), Sam always picked ‘doing a bit of work over staying out’. Inferred from the latter parts of his response, this perspective centres not necessarily around the best interests of the programme aims or his participants’ holistic development, but as a way to impression manage his and the organisation’s image for the school. This could be because Sam does not have a staff member in his sessions to consistently perform for, and therefore, consciously tries to *stage* his performances in this way. Namely, he uses the work that his Horizon group does and other ‘tick box’

situations (i.e., well-being checks) as props to evidence his success to the schools and his organisation, which will inform his re-sign rate and PDR outcomes.

Will had a similar ideology, where he also presented the practical as a reward to manage behaviour. He implemented this belief as an 'empty threat to make them think they won't be allowed back or join in, because all they want to do is play football so saying that will get them to stop pissing about in the class' (Will). Luke did not follow the same pattern but rather enforced his strong belief that 'it is an intervention programme not a reward'. However, he did see that facilitating a fun practical session can benefit the work ethic of his group in the classroom:

If we can make this as fun and enjoyable as possible, the classroom lessons will eventually start to get easier. And then in the classroom, you can start to say things like we're going to go and do football to motivate them. But again, if football becomes another structure lesson where they are not seeing success or they feel like they're being moaned at or shouted at, then the classroom lesson gets even harder, so they can't marry them off against each other in that way (Luke, coach, SRI)

To make his practical sessions enjoyable and make a distinction from the classroom sessions, Luke utilised props, specifically, music. He explained:

Just helps massively, the mood you can lose yourself a little bit, a little bit of a distraction. The difference when the speaker's not there, it's so bad. Like their mood drops. I'll try to put dance tunes on. It's another responsibility, if you don't wanna take part in the sport, you know, maybe you could be the DJ. It breaks up the session. What I've started using it for is when the music's off, I'm talking. So, you've got to be listening. We know it's time to rest. Get some water, relax, have a chat then when the music comes back on bosh we're playing. So, I'm using it to that effect. You put a Disney one on or something daft like that and then the coolest kid in the class starts singing and like smiling and laughing about it. I don't know if you pick this up, but when the behaviour is getting a little bit scatty when they are starting to make the wrong choices, I will lower the music or when [school lead] is starting to correct a few people I lower the music. When everyone's playing, everyone's taking part. I might even sneak it up a little bit (Luke, coach, SRI)

As Luke's account suggests, the use of music worked as an interpersonal emotion management tool to influence the level of motivation and increase the positive mood of his participants (Harris, 2024). For example, Luke recognised that strategically lowering or increasing the volume can shape behaviour and intensity of the session by signalling down time (quiet) or play time (louder). This strategy

has helped Luke to even get the 'coolest kid in the class' to engage and have fun. The benefit of this strategy and positioning the practical as a positive and fun end to the day that everyone can look forward to, was that Luke was able to engage most of his participants without having to threaten the risk of losing out on the practical or use it as a reward, which is arguably counterproductive to the aims of the Horizon programme.

## **Chapter Four: Conclusion**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

This chapter aims to outline the key research findings, discuss the significance and value of the findings, as well as reflect on the limitations of the study and provide recommendations for future research.

### ***4.2 Research findings***

The aim of this thesis was to examine how we can better prepare, support, and develop CSCs in deploying the interactional skills needed to improve the lives of individuals and communities. To do this, three research questions were set out:

- 1) What are the challenges and realities CSCs face when delivering community sport projects in-situ?
- 2) What are the intra- and inter-personal skills required to navigate these challenges, positively engage participants, and improve their health, wellbeing, and community relations?
- 3) How can these soft and tough skills be best deployed to achieve organisational and social policy?

Through conducting this study, it was clear that working in community sport is not an unproblematic feat. Upon completion, seven central findings were ascertained in this thesis. Whilst the discussion of the seven findings are separated for clarity and to help the reader, they are all interconnected:

- 1) The Horizon managers hired CSCs with the presumption that they were already equipped with the relevant 'soft' and 'tough' skills and qualities needed for the job. As a result, the CSCs did not receive an appropriate induction or training period prior to starting their role that ensured they were effectively prepared to be a Horizon coach.

2) Rather than prioritise relevant training and upskilling opportunities for the CSCs, the managers' efforts were centred around communicating and promoting to the CSCs the importance of hitting KPIs. Importantly, this neoliberal discourse (i.e., hitting the required numbers) disseminated to the CSCs was constructed in a way that held them accountable for their own employment contracts, personal bonuses, and the continuation of the Horizon programme (Verhaeghe, 2012). Therefore, the way 'success' was perceived by the CSCs related to what they and the organisation are measured against (e.g., attendance, number of qualifications), over the positive holistic development of their participants.

3) In addition to promoting the KPIs and benefits tied to hitting them, there seemed to be a lack of alignment in the interpretation of what the programme aims and policy objectives actually were. Indeed, no CSC under study could confidently articulate the true definition of the programme and/or their job description. Rather, there were quite vast variations between coaches in terms of what they are trying to achieve in practice.

4) The CSCs further explained that the training provisions they have experienced (e.g., FA Level 1) are inadequate in terms of equipping them with the skills needed to be 'successful' in their role. Stating how because of this situation, they felt underprepared and ill-equipped for the realities of being a Horizon coach.

5) As a result, learning on the job, namely through trial and error, became the normalised practice and 'training' for the CSCs. However, the findings of this thesis suggest this approach has had undesirable consequences for both the coach (e.g., bad behaviour) and their participants (e.g., boring sessions). For example, the CSCs spoke about how partnerships were lost due to their inability to engage in effective



interpersonal skills. Therefore, there was less opportunity for the Horizon team to work with young people that require their support.

6) Through engaging in this informal learning process, the CSCs did learn the importance of intra- and interpersonal relationships, skills and qualities needed for workplace 'success'. For example, being confident, resilient, and organised were identified as central intra-personal skills. Whilst, good communication, emotional intelligence, active listening, conflict resolution and management, adaptability, trustworthiness, empathy, and relatability were all key interpersonal skills perceived to be essential for a CSC. Value was also accredited to skills such as reading and people and situations, building alignment and alliances, and strategic direction and scanning skills, resonating with Hartley's (2016) political astuteness framework.

7) In response to these learnings, the CSCs engaged in and deployed a repertoire of strategic practices. These practices worked to meet all of the targets their 'success' was measured against, and navigate their situated realities. For example, impression management (Goffman, 1959) and emotion work (Hochschild, 1983) operated as a way to safeguard and further advance key relationships, since they helped to enact the CSCs' coaching agendas and achieve their personal and professional goals (e.g., behaviour management, re-sign rate) (Hayton, 2017; Potrac *et al.*, 2020).

### **4.3 Significance and value**

These findings make an original contribution to knowledge on the community sport landscape and being a CSC. Specifically, building upon existing literature (Costas Batlle, Carr and Brown, 2017; O'Gorman *et al.*, 2021), this thesis contributes novel insights into the way in which neoliberal values penetrate community sport

practitioners' (i.e., managers, CSCs) behaviours, actions, and enactment of policy (e.g., target setting, appraisal processes) (findings 2 and 3). Reflecting on these findings and attending to research question [one](#), this thesis contends that the CSCs conformed to 'the juggernaut of measurability', whereby they stopped doing things that 'don't count' (Verhaeghe, 2012, p. 135) which arguably did very little for the CSCs' conscious enactment of the true programme aims and policy objectives set (i.e., promoting pro-social behaviours) (finding 3). This also supports the work of O'Gorman et al. (2021), adding to our knowledge of how the political environment can influence the working lives of sports coaches generally, as well as other members working in sport organisations. The findings further highlight the limitations of existing coach education provisions, organisational training, and how we need to do more to ensure CSCs are sufficiently prepared and supported for this line of work (findings 1 and 4). So, whilst existing studies have provided valuable insights into the ineffectiveness of CSC training (Consterdine and Taylor, 2022; Crisp and Brackley, 2022), the field lacks a comprehensive understanding of what specific skills and knowledge are needed for CSCs that can then be used to improve these education provisions. This thesis helps to address this gap and research question [two](#) by indicating the centrality of relational skills and micropolitical actions that CSCs are expected and need to have to successfully navigate their situated realities (findings 5 and 6). Indeed, helping to answer research question [three](#), the findings offer novel insights into *how, when, why, and under which circumstances* CSCs may (un)successfully deploy impression management and emotional labour strategies (finding 7). For example, emotional labour (i.e., surface and deep acting) was used in the attempt to manage and manipulate their own, or others' (i.e., teachers, participants) emotional experiences in order to conform to emotion norms, impress others, and avoid sanctions (e.g., emotional deviance) (Hayton, 2017; Hochschild, 1983). With the use of specific

impression management techniques (e.g., dramaturgical loyalty, discipline, and circumspection) representing the CSCs' understandings of the need to perform certain strategies to meet, and even exceed, professional expectations (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002; Potrac *et al.*, 2020).

In addition to significantly advancing our empirical understandings of community sport coaching, this thesis simultaneously makes practical and methodological contributions to knowledge. Regarding practical contributions, the findings from this thesis have implications for policy makers, coach educators, organisations, and practitioners. Namely, the empirical knowledge about the specific skills and actions required to be an effective CSC can be used to underpin evidence-based education, training, and mentoring that has more relevance to community sport practitioners, acting as a set of tools for practitioners to think with to inform their practice. Indeed, the benefits of having these skills and strategies should not be limited to the realm of CSC but can, and should, be used to inform the training and development of sports coaches and sports workers more generally. It could also be used as a reflective tool for policy makers, managers, NGB's etc. to consider the impact of organisational structures and neoliberal forces.

Finally, in terms of methodology, this study took a novel approach by deploying a rigorous qualitative three-phase methodological design. Engaging in 14 hours of semi-structured interviews, 34 hours of observations and 11 hours of SRIs, generated new knowledge that provided critical insights into the unique social phenomenon that is community sport coaching. The combination of these methods contribute in different (and potentially better) ways than have been achieved to date, to the understanding of the pressurised, politicised and

emotionally laden nature of community sport coaching work (McGannon *et al.*, 2021). Within this, specific attention was given to the messy, ambiguous, and often unintended enactment of policy in community sport. Indeed, researchers may learn from this thesis's use of a unique and under-utilised methodological design, that demonstrated the generation of rich and rigorous knowledge into the everyday realities, challenges, and in-situ coaching practices of CSCs. The significance also lies in the fact that sport coaching researchers in the broader sense, should also use this thesis to recognise the political and neoliberal nature of sport and the influence it plays in the everyday practice of practitioners, not just those in community sport. Therefore, scholars should embrace a range of qualitative approaches and consider the utility of Ball (e.g., Ball *et al.*, 2012) and other theoretical frameworks to examine policy enactment and precarity in sports coaching.

#### ***4.4 Limitations and recommendations for future research***

The conclusions of this thesis have only touched the surface of the multifaceted nature of community sport coaching, policy, and practice. Whilst realising the potential value of the findings in this thesis, I recognise some of the limitations of this study. Firstly, this study was conducted with a relatively small sample of six White British male community sport practitioners, representing one community sport programme within one CCO. Therefore, future research may wish to take a more intersectional approach to examine how CSCs of different demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, social class, disability) experience and navigate community sport contexts. Further, researchers may find benefit in examining the enactment of multiple community sport programmes across various sporting organisations, as the challenges and skills may differ based on the varied situated realities.

Secondly, this thesis only examined the CSCs' perspectives with limited excerpts from those in management. While CSCs are at the centre of policy delivery, it is important to recognise that they are just one of many stakeholders who contribute to the enactment of policy. Indeed, further examination into the role of middle leaders (e.g., managers) that are also involved in policy work within community sport would be advantageous (Skerritt *et al.*, 2023). Further, the perspectives of the participants who actually engage in community sport programmes should not be overlooked. Therefore, incorporating the voices of programme participants into future research will provide original understanding of how, when, why, and under which circumstances specific coaching practices are impactful (or not). This knowledge could then be directly applied to improve the design, delivery, evaluation, and societal impact of sport-for-change programmes for diverse communities.

Thirdly, although novelty in this thesis can be found within the use of a rich three-phase methodology, this study was restricted to a three-month data collection period. Therefore, I encourage future scholars to take a similar line of inquiry (i.e., multiple methods) but with a longitudinal approach. This would allow a greater depth of knowledge over time into the in-situ practices of CSCs, the implications on policy enactment, and provide the opportunity to hear from additional important voices (i.e., participants, managers, policy makers etc.). Aligned with this suggestion, I urge researchers interested in community sport coaching to continue the move away from the ideology that policy is merely implemented and look further into these contexts through a policy enactment lens.

## 5.0 Appendices

### *Appendix 1 – Semi-structured interview guide one*

#### **Interview Guide 1**

##### *Background Information*

1. Could you talk through your journey into coaching, what first got you interested?
2. Can you tell me about why you became a community sports coach?
3. How long have you been a coach at x?
4. Can you tell me about your current roles and responsibilities?
5. Can you tell me about the qualifications you have?
6. Can you describe the training you have been involved in to get to your current position?
7. Could you talk me through your goals and aspirations within x and beyond?

##### *Horizon*

8. Can you tell me what an average day as a Horizon coach involves?
9. When you plan and deliver a Horizon session, what are your main aims and objectives?
  - a) What influences this process?
  - b) How have you come to understand these aims and objectives?
10. How would you describe what makes a great coach working on the programme?
  - a) What skills are needed to achieve this and why?
  - b) How have you come to understand this?
  - c) Has your training/qualifications or lack of, influenced your development of these skills?
  - d) Are there any areas where you would like more training/development?
11. How do you know if you are fulfilling your role, how is your success assessed?
  - a) How does this impact your planning and delivery?
  - b) Why?
12. If you had the chance to be in charge of Horizon for the day, what changes and/or recommendations would you make?
  - a) Why?
13. Would you like to add anything in relation to the topics we have discussed today or that you think would be important for this research?

##### Follow up question bank:

- Can you explain...?
- Can you tell me more about...?
- Can you tell me what you mean by...?
- Can you give me an example of...?
- Can you tell me why you think this is...?

## Interview Guide 2: Framework

### PERSONAL SKILLS

14. Do you feel like personal skills are an important characteristic for a community sport coach?
  - a) Yes/no – why?
  - b) Can you provide an example of when you may use or have previously used this skill?
15. How have you come to understand that this is an important element of community sport coaching?
16. Do you find it easy to acknowledge your own motives and behaviours, and exercise self-control?
  - a) No – why?
  - b) Yes- why and how?
17. How well has traditional coach education prepared and/or helped you to develop these skills?
  - a) Could you provide an example?
18. Do you feel you currently have the personal skills needed to successfully navigate horizon – why why not, examples.
19. How can we/CPD/Education help you to develop these skills?

### INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

20. Do you feel like interpersonal skills are an important characteristic for a community sports coach?
  - a) Yes/no – why?
  - b) Can you provide an example of when you may use or have previously used this skill?
21. How have you come to understand that this is an important element of community sport coaching?
22. How do you use this skill to build and effect your relationships with others?
23. Do you find it easy to negotiate, adapt, and manage conflict to achieve the desired response and influence?
  - a) No- Why?
  - b) Yes- Why and how?
24. How well has traditional coach education prepared and/or helped you to develop these skills?
  - a) Could you provide an example?
25. Do you feel you currently have the interpersonal skills needed to successfully navigate horizon – why why not, examples.
26. How can we/CPD/Education help you to develop these skills?

### READING PEOPLE & SITUATIONS

27. Do you feel like being able to read people and situations is an important element of community sport coaching?
  - a) Yes/no- why?
  - b) Can you provide an example of when you may use or have previously used this skill?
28. How have you come to understand that this is an important element of community sport coaching?
29. Do you find it easy to identify and understand the motives, interests, and feelings of those around you?
  - a) No- Why?

- b) Yes- Why and how?
  - c) How does this impact your decision making and actions
30. How well has traditional coach education prepared and/or helped you to develop these skills?
- a) Could you provide an example?
31. Do you feel you currently have the reading people and situations skills needed to successfully navigate Horizon – why why not, examples.
32. How can we/CPD/Education help you to develop these skills?

### **ALIGNMENT AND ALLIANCES**

33. Do you feel like building alignment and alliances is an important aspect of community sport coaching?
- a) Yes/no – why?
  - b) Can you provide an example of when you may use or have previously used this skill?
34. How have you come to understand that this is an important element of community sport coaching?
35. Do you feel it is possible to generate complete consensus between interests and agendas of different people?
- a) Yes- why?
  - b) No- why? - do you feel that the sufficient alignment of interests rather than complete is more achievable and/or more effective?
36. Do you find it easy to align different interests, goals and, motives to build consensus and tangible benefits?
- a) No- Why?
  - b) Yes- Why and how?
37. How well has traditional coach education prepared and/or helped you to develop these skills?
- a) Could you provide an example?
38. Do you feel you currently have the alignment and alliances needed to successfully navigate horizon – why why not, examples.
39. How can we/CPD/Education help you to develop these skills?

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND SCANNING**

40. Do you feel like strategic direction and scanning is an important aspect of community sport coaching?
- a) Yes/no- why?
  - b) Can you provide an example of when you may or have previously used this skill?
41. How have you come to understand that this is an important element of community sport coaching?
42. Do you find it easy to think long-term and plan accordingly for potential future scenarios and uncertainty?
- a) No- why?
  - b) Yes- why and how?
43. Could you tell me about your aspirations and goals for the future?
44. How well has traditional coach education prepared and/or helped you to develop these skills
- a) Could you provide an example?
45. Do you feel you currently have the strategic direction and scanning skills needed to successfully navigate horizon – why why not, examples.
46. How can we/CPD/Education help you to develop these skills?



47. Are there any skills we haven't covered that you feel are important?
- a) Why?
  - b) Can you give me an example?
48. Would you like to add anything in relation to the topics we have discussed today or that you think would be important for this research?

Follow up question bank:

- Can you explain...?
- Can you tell me more about...?
- Can you tell me what you mean by...?
- Can you give me an example of...?
- Can you tell me why you think this is...?

## Appendix 3 – Horizon coaching standards

Relationships				
Coaching Standard	R1	R2	R3	R4
	High expectations of students are set and maintained.	Unwanted behaviour is challenged and praise is given when due	Great understanding of the student as a person and a learner	Good working relationships are created and maintained with school staff
Evidence	Observations, Student Voice, Staff Feedback	Observations, Student Voice, Staff Feedback, Tracker	Observations, Student Voice, Staff Feedback Sheet	Observations, Staff Feedback
What outstanding looks like	Excellent behaviour within sessions, students are clear of what is expected of them. Try to get a balance between respecting the standards of the school but at the same time showing that how we deliver is different.	Praise is given constantly for students making the right choices with uses of prizes and rewards used accordingly. Challenging unwanted behaviour for short term success, remembering that we will be with them all year and relationships can be made or broken with our first few meetings with them.	Speak to staff in regards to student background, deliver activities in the classroom that helps get to know students, seating plan and remember names. Challenge yourself to remember a pet's name or favourite programme/artist and then bring it up in conversation the next week.	Talk to staff around the school. Caretaker, receptionist, behaviour team, SLT. Saying hello and asking how they are, what their role is at the school, do they know the students.

Planning				
	P1	P2	P3	P4
	Lessons and activities are tailored to students needs and ability	Activities are engaging, challenging and enjoyable	Lessons and activities fit in with medium and long term plans for students	Opportunities to educate with club and premier league initiatives are taken
	Observations, Student Voice, Staff Feedback	Observations, Student Voice	Observations, Student Voice, Staff Feedback, Tracker	Observations, Tracker
	Make sure to take the time to plan and adjust slides to needs of the group, plenty of engaging activities for more challenging groups. Try to sense mood on the day, gauge what else is happening around the school.	Practice delivering the lesson plan in different orders to increase confidence in your presenting skills and see if the group engages better. Show and explain if needs be the time you have put into creating the session, students sometimes need to see that you care.	Know what is coming across the year, have an idea on the timeframe you have to deliver the ASDAN, when is Social Action coming, when are the celebration events, keep an out for Case Study potential.	Talking Points should involve stories from across [redacted] group, so when it comes to trips to [redacted] Tour.

Delivery				
	D1	D2	D3	D4
	Instructions are clear and activities are run at a suitable pace	Work is modelled with use of examples and thinking out loud	Directed questioning is used to check, stretch and support students	Knowledge and understanding is checked frequently
	Observations, Student Voice,	Observation	Observation	Observation, tracker, student voice
	Speak to staff at school to see what a normal school day or lessons look like for the students. Try to get to the school at a time where you can observe students in their normal lessons.	Write out what you want to achieve on the whiteboard, try to get round each student individually to check they have an understanding, select a student who you think is striving and ask them to deliver back to the group, get the staff to complete the task to, increases competition and gets staff involved.	Have an idea of who enjoys speaking in front of groups and use this strength of theirs to direct questions at them, try to work with those that are less reluctant to develop their confidence over the weeks we are with them.	Follow up conversations along with indirect questions as sessions are progressing, Kahoots or other quizzes around the topics we have been learning about.

Tracking				
	T1	T2	T3	T4
	Registers are kept and Views information is up to date	Questionnaires are conducted and inputted and case studies conducted	ASDAN work is tracked and students are informed	Progress is shared between coaches and school staff.
	Views	Views	Tracker	Tracker, Staff Feedback
	Get WiFi password from school or hotspot from phone to ensure that DRA and register can be done on the day, set aside time when you get home from your school to double check Views register is correct.	Plan before lesson to spend time with each individual gathering thoughts for questionnaire answers, some students will appreciate being sat down with and you can input directly to Views, others will want less attention and will do well filling it in on paper as a group exercise.	Some groups who have a competitive edge may like to see the tracker on the board so that they can see where they are up to and who has completed the most work, staff who are supporting us should also have a good idea about where everyone is up to. Spend time at the end of the day making sure tracker is up to date.	Talking in every session you attend to staff should quite naturally leave all concerned as to how students are progressing, add quality to that by writing short, positive reports on each individual and email to staff and SLT at school, we have saw some very positive results come from this.

## 6.0 References

- Aggerholm, K. and Ronglan, L. T. (2012) 'Having the last laugh: The value of humour in invasion games', *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 6(3), pp. 336-352. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2012.689321>
- Ball, S. J. (1994) *Education reform*. Buckingham: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Ball, S. J. (1997) 'Good school/bad school: Paradox and fabrication', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18(3), pp. 317-336. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1393334>
- Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., and Braun, A. (2012) *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., Braun, A. and Hoskins, K. (2011) 'Policy actors: Doing policy work in schools', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(4), pp. 625-639. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601565>
- Bott, G. and Tourish, D. (2016) 'The critical incident technique reappraised: Using critical incidents to illuminate organizational practices and build theory', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 11(4), pp.276-300. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-01-2016-1351>
- Braun, A. (2017) 'Education policy and the intensification of teachers' work: The changing professional culture of teaching in England and implications for social justice', in S. Parker, K. Gulson and T. Gale (eds) *Policy and Inequality in Education*. Singapore, Springer, pp. 169-185.
- Braun, A., Ball, S. J., Maguire, M. and Hoskins, K. (2011) 'Taking context seriously: Towards explaining policy enactments in the secondary school', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(4), pp. 585-596. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601555>

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013) *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Burrell, G. and Morgan, G. (1979) *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London, Heinemann.
- Butson, M., Jeanes, R. and O'Connor, J. (2023) 'The enactment of leisure-time physical activity policy for older adults in community leisure settings', *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, pp. 1-15. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2023.2263853>
- Carlisle, L. R., Jackson, B. W. and George, A. (2006), Principles of social justice education: The social justice education in schools project', *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39(1), pp. 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680500478809>
- Carnevale, F. A., Macdonald, M. E., Bluebond-Langner, M. and Mckeever, P. (2008) 'Using participant observation in pediatric health care settings: ethical challenges and solutions', *Journal of Child Health Care*, 12(1), pp. 18-32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367493507085616>
- Charmaz, K., Harris, S. R. and Irvine, L. (2019) *The social self and everyday life: understanding the world through symbolic interactionism*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Christiaens, M. and Brittain, I. (2023) 'The complexities of implementing inclusion policies for disabled people in uk non-disabled voluntary community sports clubs', *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(4), pp. 1046-1066. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2021.1955942>
- Clark, C. (2010) 'Don't "paraffin" me!': Deception, power and agency in a South African sport for development organisation', *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 33(1-2), pp. 33-43. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2010.11499991>
- Coakley, J. (2015) 'Assessing the sociology of sport: on cultural sensibilities and the great sport myth', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(4-5), pp. 402-406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690214538864>

- Coalter, F. (2013) *Sport for development: what game are we playing?* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Consterdine, A. and Taylor, W. G. (2022) 'The training, education, and professional development of community sport coaches', in B. Ives, P. Potrac, L. Gale and L. Nelson (eds) *Community Sport Coaching: Policies and Practice*. New York, Taylor & Francis, pp. 61-73.
- Costas Batlle, I., Carr, S. and Brown, C. (2018) 'I just can't bear these procedures, i just want to be out there working with children': An autoethnography on neoliberalism and youth sports charities in the UK', *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(9), pp. 853-865. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1288093>
- Crisp, P. (2020) 'Leadership, empowerment and coaching: How community sport coaches in the UK can effect behavioural change in disadvantaged youth through incrementally given roles of responsibility', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 12(2), pp. 221-236. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1725095>
- Crisp, P. (2021) 'Autonomy, pro-social behaviour, and working to the future: How coaches in the community can model "next" practice for their participants', *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 26(5), pp. 362-376. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1829988>
- Crisp, P. and Brackley, P. (2022) 'A Premier League football in the community program's "new" coaches and support systems: practitioner reflections', *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 10(1), pp. 1-11. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2021-0067>
- Cushion, C. and Jones, R. L. (2006) 'Power, discourse, and symbolic violence in professional youth soccer: The case of Albion football club', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 23(2), pp. 142-161. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.23.2.142>
- Dempsey, N. M., Richardson, D. J., Cope, E. and Cronin, C. J. (2021) creating and disseminating coach education policy: A case of formal coach education in grassroots football', *Sport, Education and Society*, 26(8), pp. 917-930. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2020.1802711>

- Denzin, N. K. (2017) 'Critical qualitative inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(1), pp. 8-16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416681864>
- Duffell, T. (2019) *Enacting community sport policy for health: a case study of Active Blues*. PhD thesis. Edge Hill University. Available at: [https://research.edgehill.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/21483199/Duffell\\_Thomas\\_PhD\\_FINAL\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://research.edgehill.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/21483199/Duffell_Thomas_PhD_FINAL_July_2019.pdf) (Accessed: 22 December 2023)
- Edwards, C. N., and Jones, R. L. (2018) 'Humour in sports coaching: 'It's a funny old game'', *Sociological Research Online*, 23(4), pp. 744-762. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780418780047>
- Edwards, C. N., and Jones, R. L. (2022) 'Humour, agency and the [re]negotiation of social order within workplace settings', *Sports Coaching Review*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21640629.2022.2074246>
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I. and Shaw, L. L. (2011) *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.
- Epstein, J. L. and Sheldon, S. B. (2016) 'Necessary but not sufficient: The role of policy for advancing programs of school, family, and community partnerships', *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2(5), pp. 202-219. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.5.10>
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954) 'The critical incident technique', *Psychological Bulletin*, 51(4), pp. 327-358. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0061470>
- Gale, L. A., Ives, B. A., Potrac, P. A. and Nelson, L. J. (2019) 'Trust and distrust in community sports work: tales from the "shop floor"', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 36(3), pp. 244-253. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2018-0156>
- Gale, L. A., Ives, B. A., Potrac, P. A. and Nelson, L. J. (2023) 'Repairing relationship conflict in community sport work: "offender" perspectives', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 15(3), pp. 417-430. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2022.2127861>



- Goffman, E. (1959) 'The Moral Career of the Mental Patient', *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes*, 22(2), pp. 123-142.
- Goffman, E. (1970) *Strategic Interaction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Goffman, E. (1990) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. (2003) 'On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction', *Reflections: The Sol Journal*, 4(3), pp. 7-13. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1162/15241730360580159>.
- Goffman, E. (2004) 'The art of impression management' in M. J. Hatch and M. Schultz (eds) *Organisational identity: A reader*. New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 35-55.
- Griffiths, M. and Armour, K. (2012) 'Mentoring as a formalized learning strategy with community sports volunteers', *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 20(1), pp. 151-173. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2012.645605>
- Griffiths, M. and Armour, K. (2014) 'Volunteer sports coaches as community assets? A realist review of the research evidence', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 6(3), pp. 307-326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2013.824496>
- Hammersley, M. (1990) 'What's wrong with ethnography? The myth of theoretical description', *Sociology*, 24(4), pp. 597-615. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038590024004003>
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2019) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Routledge.
- Hammond, A. M. (2022) 'The relationship between disability and inclusion policy and sport coaches' perceptions of practice', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14(3), pp. 471-487. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2022.2074515>
- Hammond, A. M., Penney, D. and Jeanes, R. (2020) 'Sport coaches as policy actors: An investigation of the interpretation and enactment of disability and inclusion

policy in swimming in Victoria Australia', *Sport, Education and Society*, 25(5), pp. 570-585. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1628013>

Harris, S. (2024) *An invitation to the sociology of emotions* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: Routledge.

Hartley, J. (2016) 'Politics and political astuteness in leadership', In J. Hartley (ed) *The Routledge companion to leadership*. New York: Routledge.

Hayton, J. W. (2017) "'They need to learn to take it on the chin": Exploring the emotional labour of student volunteers in a sports-based outreach project in the North East of England', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 34(2), pp. 136-147. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2016-0098>

Hein, W., O'Donoghue, S. and Ryan, A. (2011) 'Mobile phones as an extension of the participant observer's self: reflections on the emergent role of an emergent technology. *Qualitative Market Research*, 14(3), pp. 258-273. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/13522751111137497>

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979) 'Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure', *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), pp. 551-575. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583>

Hogan, A. and Stylianou, M. (2018) 'School-based sports development and the role of NSOS as 'boundary spanners': Benefits, disbenefits and unintended consequences of the sporting schools policy initiative', *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(4), pp. 367-380. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1184638>

Holdom, T., Nichol, A., and Ives, B. (in press) 'Recognising, addressing and supporting the challenging nature of community sport coaching work: Potential ways forward for research and practice', *Sports Coaching Review*.



- Houlihan, B. and Green, M. (2009) 'Modernization and sport: The reform of Sport England and UK Sport', *Public Administration*, 87(3), pp, 678-698. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.01733.x>
- Ives, B. (2016) *Enacting sport policy: Towards a micropolitical and emotional understanding of community sports coaching work*. PhD thesis. University of Hull. Available at: <https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/4219465> (Accessed: 22 December 2023).
- Ives, B. A., Gale, L. A., Potrac, P. A. and Nelson, L. J. (2021) 'Uncertainty, shame and consumption: negotiating occupational and non-work identities in community sports coaching', *Sport, Education And Society*, 26(1), pp. 87-103. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1699522>
- Ives, B., Clayton, B., Gale, L., Taylor, W., Leeder, T. M. and Nichol, A. J. (2023a) 'I'm not the police': Practical strategies for sport coach mentors to develop trust and trustworthiness', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 1-16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2023.2271015>
- Ives, B., Penney, D., O'Gorman, J., Nichol, A. J., Potrac, P. and Nelson, L. (2023b) 'Investigating policy enactment in community sport coaching: directions for future research', *Sports Coaching Review*, 1-20. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21640629.2023.2291253>
- Ives, B., Potrac, P., Gale, L. and Nelson, L. (2022) *Community sport coaching: Policies and practice*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Jacobsen, M. H. and Kristiansen, S. (2015) *The social thought of Erving Goffman*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Jeanes, R., Rossi, T., Magee, J. and Lucas, R. (2019) 'Coaches as boundary spanners? Conceptualising the role of the coach in sport and social policy programmes', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(3), pp. 433-446. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2018.1555181>
- Jones, R. L., Armour, K. M. and Potrac, P. (2004) *Sports coaching cultures: from practice to theory*. London: Routledge.

- Jones, R. L., Bailey, J., and Thompson, A. (2013) 'Ambiguity, noticing and orchestration: Further thoughts on managing the complex coaching context', in P. Potrac, W. Gilbert and J. Denison (eds) *Routledge handbook of sports coaching*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 271-283.
- Kain, D. L. (2004) 'Owning significance: The critical incident technique in research' In K. B. deMarrais and S. D. Lapan (eds) *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 69-85.
- Kalleberg, A. L. and Vallas, S. P. (2018) 'Probing precarious work: Theory, research, and politics', *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 31, pp. 1-30. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0277-283320170000031017>
- Kelchtermans, G. and Ballet, K. (2002) 'The micropolitics of teacher induction. A narrative-biographical study on teacher socialisation', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18(1), pp. 105-120. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00053-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00053-1)
- Leary, M. R. (1996) *Self-presentation: Impression management and interpersonal behavior*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Lugueti, C., Oliver, K. L., Dantas, L. E. P. B. T. and Kirk, D. (2017) 'An activist approach to sport meets youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds: Possible learning aspirations.' *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 88(1) pp. 60-71. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2016.1263719>
- Lyle, J. (2003) 'Stimulated recall: A report on its use in naturalistic research', *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(6), pp. 861-878. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192032000137349>
- Lyotard, J-F. (1979) *The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge* (Manchester, Manchester University Press). Available at: <https://ocd.lcwu.edu.pk/cfiles/English/MS-ENG-701/ThePostmodernConditionbyJean-FrancoisLyotard.pdf>

- MacPhail, A. (2004) 'Athlete and researcher: Undertaking and pursuing an ethnographic study in a sports club', *Qualitative Research*, 4(2), pp. 227-245. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104044433>
- Mansfield, L., Kay, T., Anokye, N. and Fox-Rushby, J. (2018) 'A qualitative investigation of the role of sport coaches in designing and delivering a complex community sport intervention for increasing physical activity and improving health', *BMC Public Health*, 18, article number 1196, pp. 1-11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6089-y>
- Markula, P. and Silk, M. L. (2011) *Qualitative research for physical culture*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mathies, C., Chiew, T. M. and Kleinaltenkamp, M. (2016) 'The antecedents and consequences of humour for service', *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 26(2), pp. 137-162. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-09-2014-0187>
- McGannon, K. R., Smith, B., Kendellen, K. and Gonsalves, C. A. (2021) 'Qualitative research in six sport and exercise psychology journals between 2010 and 2017: An updated and expanded review of trends and interpretations', *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19(3), pp. 359-379. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2019.1655779>
- Merriam, S. B. and Tisdell, E. J. (2015) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Monforte, J. and Úbeda-Colomer, J. (2021) 'Tinkering with the two-to-one interview: Reflections on the use of two interviewers in qualitative constructionist inquiry', *Methods in Psychology*, 5, article number 100082. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.metip.2021.100082>
- Morgan, H. J. and Bush, A. J. (2016) 'Sports coach as transformative leader: Arresting school disengagement through community sport-based initiatives', *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(5), pp. 759-777. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.935319>

- Nguyen, N. T. & Tangen, D. (2017) 'Video-stimulated recall in cross-cultural research in education: A case study in Vietnam', *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 40(5), pp. 445-455. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2016.1160279>
- Nichol, A. J., Hall, E. T., Vickery, W. and Hayes, P. R. (2019) 'Examining the relationships between coaching practice and athlete "outcomes": A systematic review and critical realist critique', *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 6(1), pp. 13-29. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2017-0105>
- Nichol, A. J., Potrac, P., Hayes, P. R., Boocock, E., Vickery, W., Morgan, C. T. and Hall, E. T. (2023) 'Coaching in the shadows: critically examining the unintended (non) influence of pedagogical practice', *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 28(4), pp. 362-379. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2021.1990244>
- O'Gorman, J., Partington, M., Potrac, P. & Nelson, L. (2021) 'Translation, intensification and fabrication: professional football academy coaches' enactment of the Elite Player Performance Plan', *Sport, Education and Society*, 26(3), pp. 309-325. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2020.1726313>
- O'Reilly, K. (2012) *Ethnographic methods*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Partington, M. and Cushion, C. J. (2012) 'Performance during performance: using Goffman to understand the behaviours of elite youth football coaches during games', *Sports Coaching Review*, 1(2), pp. 93-105. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21640629.2013.790167>
- Paterson, B. L., Bottorff, J. L. and Hewat, R. (2003) 'Blending observational methods: Possibilities, strategies, and challenges', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(1), pp. 29-38. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200103>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. California: Sage Publications.

- Penney, D. (2017) 'Big policies and a small world: An analysis of policy problems and solutions in physical education' *Sport, Education and Society*, 22(5), pp. 569-585. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1242066>
- Penney, D., Jeanes, R., O'Hara, E. and Magee, J. (2022) 'Community sport coaches as policy actors' in B. Ives, P. Potrac, L. Gale and L. Nelson (eds) *Community Sport Coaching: Policies and Practice*. New York, Taylor & Francis, pp. 45-60.
- Pirie, S. E. (1996) 'Classroom video-recording: When, why and how does it offer a valuable data source for qualitative research?' Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED401128.pdf> (Accessed 3 November 2023).
- Potrac, P. A., Gearity, B. T., Nichol, A. J. and Hall, E. T. (2022) 'Sport, emotion, and engagement', in L. A. Wenner (ed) *The Oxford handbook of sport and society*. New York, Oxford University Press. pp. 507-528.
- Potrac, P. and Marshall, P. (2011) 'Arlie Russell Hochschild: The managed heart, feeling rules, and emotional labour: coaching as an emotional endeavour', in R. L. Jones, P. Potrac, C. Cushion., and L. T. Ronglan (eds) *The sociology of sports coaching*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 54-66.
- Potrac, P., Gearity, B., Nichol, A., Morgan, C. and Hall, E. (2020) 'Coaching profession: Acting as a coach' in R. Light and S. Harvey (eds) *Coaching for Human Development and Performance in Sports*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, pp. 125-142.
- Potrac, P., Jones, R. and Armour, K. (2002) 'It's All About Getting Respect': The Coaching Behaviors of an Expert English Soccer Coach', *Sport, Education and Society*, 7(2), pp. 183-202. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/135733202200001886>
- Potrac, P., Jones, R. L., and Nelson, L. (2014) 'Interpretivism', in L. Nelson, R. Groom and P. Potrac (eds) *Research methods in sports coaching*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 31-41.
- Potrac, P., Mallett, C., Greenough, K., and Nelson, L. (2017) 'Passion and paranoia: an embodied tale of emotion, identity, and pathos in sports coaching', *Sports*

- Coaching Review, 6(2), pp.142-161. Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21640629.2017.1367067>
- Premier League (2023) *Premier League Inspires*. Available at:  
<https://www.premierleague.com/news/3123692> (Accessed: 19 September 2023)
- Purdy, L. (2014) 'Interviews', in L. Nelson, R. Groom and P. Potrac (eds) *Research methods in sports coaching*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 161-170.
- Reid, G. (2017) 'A fairytale narrative for community sport? Exploring the politics of sport social enterprise', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(4) pp. 597-611. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1349827>
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2007) 'Humour in business: A double-edged sword: A study of humour and style shifting in intercultural business meetings', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, pp. 4-28. Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.09.005>
- Romero, E. J. (2006) 'The effect of humour on mental state and work effort', *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 1(2), pp. 137-149. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWOE.2005.008818>
- Ronglan, L. T., and Aggerholm, K. (2013) 'Humour and sports coaching: A laughing matter?', in P. Potrac, W. Gilbert, and J. Denison (eds) *Routledge handbook of sports coaching*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 222-235.
- Ronglan, L. T., and Aggerholm, K. (2014) "Humour helps": Elite sports coaching as a balancing act', *Sports Coaching Review*, 3(1), pp. 33-45. Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21640629.2014.885776>
- Rosenstein, B. (2002) 'Video use in social science research and program evaluation', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(3), pp. 22-43. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100302>
- Rowe, V. C. (2009) 'Using video-stimulated recall as a basis for interviews: Some experiences from the field', *Music Education Research*, 11(4), pp. 425-437. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800903390766>

- Saldaña, J. (2021) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Seale, C. (2018) *Researching society and culture*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Shulman, D. (2017) *The presentation of self in contemporary social life*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Skerritt, C., McNamara, G., Quinn, I., O'Hara, J. and Brown, M. (2023) 'Middle leaders as policy translators: prime actors in the enactment of policy', *Journal of Education Policy*, 38(4), pp. 567-585.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2021.2006315>
- Smith, A., Greenough, K. and Lovett, E. (2022) 'The politics and policy of community sport coaching' in B. Ives, P. Potrac, L. Gale and L. Nelson (eds) *Community Sport Coaching: Policies and Practice*. New York, Taylor & Francis, pp. 7-24.
- Smith, A., Haycock, D., Jones, J., Greenough, K., Wilcock, R. and Braid, I. (2020) 'Exploring mental health and illness in the UK sports coaching workforce', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(24), p. 9332. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249332>
- Smith, B. (2018) 'Generalizability in qualitative research: Misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(1), pp. 137-149. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2017.1393221>
- Smith, B. and Sparkes, A. C. (2016) *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Smith, B., Williams, O., Bone, L. and Collective, T. M. S. W. C.-P. (2023) 'Co-production: A resource to guide co-producing research in the sport, exercise, and health sciences', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 15(2), pp. 159-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2022.2052946>
- Sparkes, A. (1992) *Research in physical education and sport: Exploring alternative visions*. London: Falmer Press.



- Sparkes, A. C. and Smith, B. (2014) *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise and health: From process to product*. London: Routledge.
- Stake, R. E. (1995) *The art of case study research*. California: SAGE.
- StreetGames (no date) *About doorstep Sport*. Available at:  
<https://www.streetgames.org/what-we-do/about-doorstep-sport/> (Accessed: 9 October 2023).
- Super, S., Verkooijen, K. and Koelen, M. (2018) 'The role of community sports coaches in creating optimal social conditions for life skill development and transferability– a salutogenic perspective', *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(2), pp. 173-185. Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1145109>
- Thoits, P. A. (1990) 'Emotional deviance: research agendas', in T. D. Kemper (ed) *Research agendas in the sociology of emotions*. New York, State University of New York Press, pp. 180-203.
- Thorpe, H. and Olive, R. (2016) 'Conducting observations in sport and exercise settings' in B. Smith and A. C. Sparkes (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, London, Routledge, pp. 124-138.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010) 'Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), pp. 837-851. Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Tracy, S. J. (2018) 'A phronetic iterative approach to data analysis in qualitative research', *Journal of Qualitative Research*, 19(2), pp. 61-76. Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.22284/qr.2018.19.2.61>
- Tracy, S. J. (2019) *Qualitative research methods: collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tracy, S. J. and Hinrichs, M. M. (2017) 'Phronetic iterative data analysis', *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, pp. 1-8. Available at: <https://www.sarahjtracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Tracy-Hinrichs-Iterative-approach-encyc-17.pdf>



- UK Coaching (2022) *Coaching workforce survey: Coaching in the UK 2022*. Available at: <https://www.ukcoaching.org/UKCoaching/media/coaching-images/Entity%20base/Downloadables/UK-Coaching-Coaches-written-report.pdf> (Accessed: 9 October 2023)
- Verhaeghe, P. (2012) *What about me? The struggle for identity in a market-based society*. Victoria: Scribe Publications.
- Vinson, D., Christian, P., Jones, V., Williams, C. and Peters, D. M. (2016) 'Exploring how well UK coach education meets the needs of women sports coaches', *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 3(3), pp. 287-302. Available in: <https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2016-0004>
- Williams, A. (2012) 'Moralising the poor? Faith-based organisations, the big society and contemporary workfare policy' in J. Beaumont and P. J. Cloke (eds) *Faith-based organisations and exclusion in European cities*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp. 173-197.
- World Health Organisation (2018) *Global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030: More active people for a healthier world*. Available at: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf> (Accessed: 9 October 2023)