UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER

Chichester Institute of Sport

A Qualitative Exploration of Inspirational Leadership in Sport

by

Sean Gareth Figgins

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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Sean Gareth Figgins

Inspiration has often been cited as the driving force behind extraordinary human achievement (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Despite this, until recently, inspiration as a psychological construct has been ignored, misunderstood, and underdeveloped (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, & Maruskin, 2014). Consequently, over the past 15 years, researchers (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004) have sought to understand inspiration, through providing a conceptualisation of inspiration (cf. Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004; Thrash, Maruskin, Cassidy, Fryer, & Ryan, 2010), and identifying a range of positive performance (e.g., work-absorption, mastery, and effort) and well-being related consequences for individuals when inspired. Such outcomes would appear beneficial to sport performers. However, while initial research in a sporting context has shown inspiration to be associated with motivation (Gonzalez, Metzler, & Newton, 2011) and mental toughness (Gucciardi, Jackson, Hanton, & Reid, 2015), limited research has explored the construct of inspiration in sport. This thesis explored the sources of inspiration for athletes and how leaders inspire athletes. Three studies were conducted to meet these aims. First, in Study 1, athletes were asked to write about an experience where they were inspired. Analysis of these accounts indicated that athletes were inspired by three sources: personal performances, thoughts, and accomplishments; interacting with and watching role models; and demonstrations of leadership. In addition, inspiration was proposed to lead to positive cognitive, affective, and behavioural consequences. Given that most athletes interact with coaches, the two studies that followed focus on leaders as a source of inspiration. In Study 2, athletes were interviewed regarding their experiences of inspirational leadership from coaches. Analysis indicated that prior to being inspired athletes could experience situations with negative consequences, positive performances, and experienced mainly negative

cognitions and emotions. In these situations, athletes reported being inspired when coaches demonstrated belief, had positive emotional reactions to performances, provided support, showed the way forward, and role modelled desirable behaviour. However, Study 2 did not identify factors that might explain the inspirational impact that coaches had on athletes. Taking this into account and considering the lack of a theoretically underpinned model explaining how leaders inspire athletes, the purpose of Study 3 was to develop a grounded theory that explains the process through which coaches inspire athletes. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with athletes and coaches at various performance levels. Data analysis led to a grounded theory built around the core category of 'Athlete(s) inspired through changed awareness of their capabilities.' The theory predicts that coaches can inspire athletes in situations where the athletes feel vulnerable (e.g., are unsure of how to overcome their current situation) or ignorant (e.g., are unaware of their future potential) by acting in a manner that could change their awareness of their capabilities, but only if they have established trust and respect with their athletes. In addition, the grounded theory highlights several factors (relating to the athlete, the coach, and the context) that impact on the process. Overall, this thesis provides the first sport-specific theory of inspirational leadership and, additionally, highlights several theoretical links which may enhance our understanding of leader influence.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Sean Gareth Figgins declare that the thesis entitled "A Qualitative Exploration of Inspirational Leadership in Sport" and the work presented in the thesis are both my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- parts of this work have been published as:

<u>Conference contributions, refereed:</u>

Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J., Knight, C.J., & Greenlees, I.A. (2016). Laying the foundations for inspirational leadership: Establishing mutual trust, respect, and loyalty. Paper presented at British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Conference, Cardiff, UK, December 2016.

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Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J., Greenlees, I.A., & Knight, C. (2015). Using grounded theory to explore the process of inspirational leadership in sport. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Conference, Leeds, UK, December 2015.

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Academic journal papers (published):

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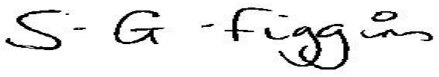
Signed: 

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

> "Bringing a first-class coach in will *inspire* the younger players" (Andrew Boyce Leicestershire County Cricket CEO discussing what the club needed to improve in 2014).
>
> "Chris Robshaw fails to *inspire* in England's hour of need" (Independent headline after England loss to Australia in the 2015 Rugby World Cup)
>
> "But I do remember as a little girl one of the sailing pictures that I cut out of a calendar was this amazing picture of Florence [Arthaud] looking really, really feminine on Pierre 1er which is her trimaran. I remember that it did *inspire* me as a young girl, that you could be a girl and sail these amazing boats. I didn't know who she was, or what she did – I didn't know that she'd won the Route de Rhum or anything, it was just the fact that it was this beautiful lady on a trimaran." (Sam Davies discussing what inspired her to pursue Sailing in 2015)

Inspiration is often cited anecdotally as the driving force behind sporting success (Arthur, Hardy, & Woodman, 2012). Indeed, as the headlines and quotes above demonstrate, players, coaches, and administrative staff recognise the potent impact that inspiration can have. Specifically, it appears that inspiration is perceived to be an important factor for performance and alter our perceptions of what we can do. However, perhaps surprisingly, inspiration has received little research attention in the sport psychology literature.

Over the past 15 years a concentrated study of inspiration has been conducted in the psychology literature. This research, primarily conducted by Thrash and Colleagues (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004; Thrash, Elliot, Maruskin, & Cassidy, 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, Cassidy, Fryer, & Ryan, 2010), has furthered our understanding of inspiration by outlining a definition and conceptualisation of inspiration, as well as identifying antecedents and consequences of inspiration. Inspiration is proposed to be a motivational state that occurs as a result of an individual coming into contact with an evocative stimulus object that directs their attention towards a target of greater importance than their normal concerns (Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004). In addition, inspiration is associated with enhanced productivity, motivation, positive affect,

creativity and wellbeing (Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010). Given that the experience of inspiration is proposed to lead to an individual shifting their attention towards higher-level goals and is suggested to have a positive impact on a range of performance- and well-being-related variables, the context of sport—where athletes and teams are often striving for improvement—would appear to be a fruitful setting in which to study inspiration.

Indeed, athletes' greatest achievements are often proposed to occur as a result of being inspired (Arthur et al., 2012). While this may be the case, little is known regarding the ways in which athletes are inspired. Studies within the sport literature utilise the term inspiration to describe consequences experienced by an athlete (e.g., athletes are inspired by their leaders). However, limited research attention has been paid to inspiration in the context of sport and, where inspiration has been mentioned, it is often used without consideration of the existing inspiration literature. To date, only two studies have examined inspiration in sport, finding that inspiration is associated with athletes' levels of mental toughness (Gucciardi, Jackson, Hanton, & Reid, 2015) and that coaches' pre game speeches have the potential to inspire athletes (Gonzalez, Metzler, & Newton, 2011). Thus, further research is needed to explore inspiration in sport in order to understand what inspires athletes and the impact being inspired can have on athletes.

Taken together, the findings both in and outside of the sport psychology literature suggest that inspiring athletes may have positive consequences. As such, identifying and understanding how, and by what, athletes can be inspired appears to be an interesting and important area for future study. To this end, the initial aim of this thesis was to explore and identify the sources of inspiration for athletes, as well as the consequences experienced by athletes when inspired. Following identification of the sources of inspiration in Study 1, the aim of the remaining studies was to explore how leaders inspire followers and the factors that may impact on the likelihood an athlete can be inspired by their leader.

1.1 Overview of thesis

In order to address the aims outlined above, this thesis is arranged into seven chapters. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature which draws upon theory and research that has examined inspiration. Initially, this chapter presents an overview of inspiration theory and research which has aimed to extend our understanding of what inspiration is. The chapter then progresses to provide a review of the research (mainly outside of the sport psychology literature) which has examined the antecedents, consequences, and sources of inspiration. Subsequently, a rationale for the examination of the sources of inspiration in sport is provided.

Chapter 3 outlines the philosophical approach that shaped the studies in this thesis. Specifically, this chapter outlines the change in philosophical approach from critical realism to pragmatism and the reasons underpinning this change.

Chapter 4 presents a qualitative descriptive study aimed at identifying potential sources of inspiration for athletes in sport. The findings outlined sources of inspiration and, subsequently, provide a rationale for exploring the inspirational potential of leaders in sport.

Based upon the findings of Chapter 4 (that leaders are a source of inspiration for athletes), Chapter 5 delivers an overview of the existing leadership literature, with particular attention paid to what leadership theory and research suggests about how leaders inspire followers. The review of literature starts by outlining a definition and common characteristics of leadership, and provides a brief overview of the historical development of leadership theory both in and outside of sport. Following this, the review of literature focuses on the theory and research (namely transformational leadership) which has provided some suggestions regarding the ways in which leaders inspire followers. Finally, this review of literature provides a critique of the existing theory and research and provides a rationale for further study of inspirational leadership in sport.

Chapter 6 provides a qualitative exploration of athletes' experiences of inspirational leadership. The findings add to our existing knowledge of the ways in which leaders inspire athletes, the consequences of inspirational leader behaviour, and

highlights some potential factors that may influence the likelihood than an athlete is inspired. However, given the descriptive nature of the study and the aim to primarily explore the ways in which leaders inspire athletes (i.e., behaviours and actions which lead to inspiration) several questions remained regarding the process through which leaders inspire athletes (e.g., the factors that might influence athlete perceptions of inspirational leader behaviour).

Consequently, in Chapter 7 a grounded theory approach was utilised to explore the process of inspirational leadership. More specifically, this chapter used a Straussian grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to understand what leaders do to inspire athletes and what enables leaders to have an inspiring influence. A range of athletes and coaches, with different demographics (based upon the theoretical sampling procedures used within grounded theory research), were interviewed regarding their experiences of inspirational leadership. The chapter concludes by providing a substantive grounded theory of inspirational leadership which could provide practitioners working with coaches a framework through which to enhance the inspirational capability of coaches.

In Chapter 8, a general discussion of the thesis is presented. The purpose of this chapter is to restate the key aims of the thesis, summarise the key findings, and discuss the theoretical and practical implications for not only inspirational leadership but leadership research and theory more generally. Critical reflections of the contribution this thesis makes to leadership theory are provided, and limitations of this thesis are discussed alongside areas for future research. Finally, concluding remarks are made to summarise the overall contribution of this thesis to leadership literature.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature: Inspiration.[1]

[1] Part of this chapter was accepted for publication as;
Smith, M.J.*, Figgins, S.G., & Sellars, C.N.+ (2016). Antecedents and impacts of effective and inspirational coach communication. In R. Thelwell, C. Harwood & I. Greenlees (Eds.). The Psychology of Sports Coaching: Research and Practice. Oxon: Routledge.

*Supervisor – Advised on preparation and write up of the thesis and lead on the write up of the chapter.

+Collaborator – Advised on write up for the chapter.

2. Review of literature: Inspiration.

2.1 Inspiration

The term inspired is often used when citing the reasons for accomplishing something meaningful within our lives—for instance, artists will often say they were inspired by something (e.g., a beautiful landscape) to paint a masterpiece—and it appears that most people will be able to describe an experience of inspiration during their lifetime which they perceive to have had an impact (e.g., leading to new creations or directions) on them (Jennings, 2012; Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Despite this appreciation of inspiration as something that most people experience, it is only recently that research has begun to examine inspiration as a psychological construct. Originally, inspiration was used to explain supposedly enlightening religious experiences (Hart, 2000; Thrash & Elliot, 2003). In this context inspiration refers to the notion of divine inspiration, whereby an individual believes that they have been chosen to communicate the word of God (Canale, 1994; Hart, 1998). From a scientific perspective, despite some initial acknowledgement and research in the early- to mid-1900s (e.g., Howes, 1926; Kris, 1939), there has been a paucity of research examining inspiration. Over the last two decades the study of inspiration has provided an understanding of peoples' experiences of inspiration (e.g., Hart, 1998), and a conceptualisation of inspiration as a psychological construct (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, & Maruskin, 2014).

2.2 The construct of inspiration

As highlighted previously, inspiration for many years was typically considered to be related to supernatural or mythical processes (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014), whereby inspiration was referred to as "an influence by a supernatural being in which the individual is used as an instrument for the delivering of divine truths" (Thrash & Elliot, 2003, p. 871). Given that most scientists reject the notion of supernatural influence (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), and that inspiration is recognised as something that most people have or will experience in their lives, researchers have sought to understand inspiration in the context of everyday life (Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

2.2.1 Hart's (1998) study of inspiration

Hart (1998) provided the first empirical study of inspiration. Specifically, Hart utilised semi-structured interviews to examine individuals' (including artists, teachers, secretaries, carpenters, scientists and students) experiences of inspiration in order to explore the core characteristics of inspiration. Thematic analysis of the data revealed inspiration to comprise of four main characteristics: (a) connection, which involved moving from a sense of self separateness to a greater sense of connectedness with the self (e.g., a painter feeling union with their self and the canvas), another person, nature, an idea, or some aspect of the divine; (b) opened, which related to an individual being "available" and "receptive" to inspiration, a consequences of which was a feeling of being "filled" with energy or serving as a channel through which something flowed; (c) clarity, where individuals experience heightened sensory awareness and/or greater understanding (e.g., of a particular issues in one's life); and (d) energy, which involves a shift in mood (e.g., increased joy, excitement, elation) and physical energy (e.g., arousal). As well as identifying the core characteristics of inspiration, the findings from Hart's (1998) study suggested that the insight gained from an inspirational experience could be translated into immediate action or provide the drive to direct one's energy in a particular direction or towards a particular object (e.g., a new goal). In addition, two other findings are noteworthy. First, Hart suggested the findings indicated that inspiration could be cultivated, stating: "although it does not seem possible to will inspiration into existence it does seem likely that we can set up favourable conditions to woo or invite it" (p.26). This suggests that it may be possible to nurture an environment in which inspiration is likely to occur. Second, participants in Hart's study were asked to describe a life devoid of inspiration and used words such as depression, meaninglessness, hopelessness, boring, dead, and dull to describe such an experience. Thus, highlighting the importance of inspiration to psychological well-being. In summing up the research, Hart defined inspiration as:

> A specific epistemic process that provides psychological and spiritual sustenance and is characterized by a remembrance or recognition of some knowledge or perspective valuable in the social or psychological context given. The acquisition or awareness of knowledge takes the form of an expansion of understanding that involves an intimate relationship or a transcendence of

> conventional subject-object distinction with some idea, object, or person. As such, inspiration describes a non-rational, postreflective event of knowing that can be cultivated not willed (p. 32).

One limitation of Hart's (1998) study relates to the use of interviewers. Specifically, 14 different interviewers ranging from undergraduate students to PhD students were used to conduct the interviews. The interviews were described as open-ended and, thus, given the lack of qualitative training, differences in experience of the researchers, and lack of structure to the interview guides, the interviews (e.g., content of the questions) may have been heavily influenced by the different interviewers. As such the consistency and trustworthiness of the qualitative data gained could be questioned. Further, while Hart's study provided the first exploration of inspiration and provided some promising findings regarding the characteristics of inspiration, comparing inspiration to mystical experience precludes the examination of inspiration in everyday life (Jennings, 2012; Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

2.2.2 Conceptualisation of inspiration

Building upon Hart's (1998) research, over the past 15 years, research (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, Moldovan, Oleynick, & Belzak, 2017) has accrued which has furthered our understanding of inspiration as a psychological construct by drawing upon common threads among the varied literatures (e.g., creative, spiritual, organisational) in which inspiration has been discussed (Oleynick, Thrash, LeFew, Moldovan, & Kieffaber, 2014). The primary aim of the research conducted, principally by Thrash, Elliot and their colleagues, has been to provide clarity and consistency with regards to the meaning and function of inspiration.

In their seminal work on inspiration Thrash and Elliot (2003, 2004) reviewed and integrated existing literature, where inspiration has been discussed, from disciplines spanning psychology, anthropology, education, art, management, and engineering, in order to conceptualise inspiration, validate the construct of inspiration, and establish its importance within the empirical psychology literature. Based upon their review of literature, Thrash and Elliot (2003) conceptualised inspiration as an episode that unfolds

over time and energises and directs an individual's behaviour towards a target. Alongside outlining the trait and state nature of inspiration, Thrash and colleagues' programme of research has proposed three conceptual frameworks that centre on different facets of inspiration. Specifically, these frameworks conceptualise inspiration in relation to: (1) its defining characteristics (i.e., the tripartite conceptualisation; Thrash & Elliot, 2003); (2) the component processes (Thrash & Elliot, 2004); and (3) its function (i.e., the transmission model; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010), respectively.

2.2.2.1 Tripartite conceptualisation of inspiration

Initially, Thrash and Elliot (2003) proposed a conceptualisation of inspiration that could be utilised across different contexts. After reviewing the existing literature and noting several commonalities within the writings on inspiration, Thrash and Elliot proposed a tripartite conceptualisation, which proposes inspiration to be a motivational state defined by three core characteristics. These are (a) *evocation*, which suggests that the experience of inspiration is not directed implicitly by wilful act but rather is evoked by something (e.g., an object, a person, a view) outside of the self; (b) *transcendence*, whereby the experience of inspiration makes an individual aware of and directs one's focus towards possibilities, a target or a vision which is grander than their usual concerns; and (c) *approach motivation*, which involves the energization or direction of one's behaviour in order to realise or achieve these new, greater possibilities.

2.2.2.2 Component processes of inspiration

Building upon their earlier work, Thrash and Elliot (2004) argued that inspiration can be conceptualised in terms of two temporally and functionally distinct processes: being inspired *by* and being inspired *to*. Being inspired *by* is proposed to be a passive process which involves appreciation of the intrinsic value of an inspiring stimulus (e.g., a role model or a creative idea). Being inspired *to* is an active process in which the inspired individual is compelled and motivated to do something to actualise or extend the valued qualities to a new object (i.e., in a context relevant to themselves). These two processes are proposed to be distinct as an individual can be inspired *by* something, without necessarily being inspired *to* do anything. For example, an individual might be inspired by the beauty of a natural environment, but this is unlikely to lead to any difference in their behaviour. However, if an individual is inspired by knowledge gained

or a new idea presented by an inspiring stimulus within an environment which holds intrinsic value this is likely to result in action (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). For instance, an individual who watches sport and is inspired by the display of skill may try to replicate that skill in their own play. The component processes are also proposed to correspond with the characteristics of the tripartite conceptualisation. That is, being inspired *by* involves the characteristics of evocation and transcendence, whereas being inspired *to* involves the characteristic of approach motivation.

In order to test the proposition that the component processes are present across the diverse contexts where inspiration might occur, Thrash and Elliot (2004) asked participants to produce a narrative account of either a time where they were inspired or a baseline experience representative of their daily lives (which acted as a control condition). Participants' accounts of inspiration covered diverse topics including becoming animated by an artistic or scientific insight, the discovery of one's calling, the influence of role models on one's ability to succeed, and unexpected success leading to the realisation that greatness is possible. While there were minor differences in the content of the experiences outlined, the narratives shared some consistent underlying themes relating to having one's eyes opened to a new target during an encounter with an object, idea, event, or person (i.e., being inspired by), and wishing to express, communicate, transmit, or actualise one's new target (i.e., being inspired to).

2.2.2.3 Transmission model

As well as documenting the characteristics and processes of inspiration, Thrash and colleagues have aimed to advance theoretical understanding of inspiration by extending their conceptualisation to explain the function of inspiration. Specifically, inspiration is proposed to facilitate the transmission of the newly apprehended qualities of the evoking stimulus object (Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010). Thus, inspiration is posited to serve the role of mediator in a statistical sense (Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, & Dombrowski, 2014). There are three forms of transmission (replication, actualisation, expression) that explain the way intrinsic qualities presented

by a stimulus inspire an individual to extend these qualities to a self-relevant object[2] (cf. Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, et al., 2014). *Replication* refers to how one is inspired by the qualities of a pre-existing object (e.g., a young athlete seeing exceptional skill demonstrated by an elite athlete) in the environment and seeks to reproduce these qualities in a new object (e.g., the young athlete attempts to reproduce this skill in their own performances). *Actualisation* explains the appreciation of a compelling seminal idea that enters awareness during a moment of insight (e.g., a leader might outline an ambitious and exciting long-term goal) and as such an individual is energised by the possibility of bringing the idea into fruition (e.g., the athlete is motivated to invest effort to work towards this goal). Finally, there is *expression*, whereby transmission is facilitated by a compelling idea that is already well formed when it enters awareness (e.g., an athlete is provided with specific, clear tactical instructions to counter a challenging opponent's strengths) and is acted upon immediately (e.g., the athlete has a clear understanding of how to overcome the opponent and carries out the instructions).

2.2.2.4 Inspiration as a trait

Thrash and Elliot (2003, 2004) proposed that the experience of inspiration may differ for individuals in terms of frequency and intensity. Specifically, inspiration can be operationalised at the trait and state level. Consequently, Thrash and Elliot's initial work (cf. Thrash & Elliot, 2003) also aimed to validate and conceptualise inspiration as a trait.

In their initial study on inspiration Thrash and Elliot (2003) conducted a series of studies in an attempt to validate a trait measure[3] of inspiration (Inspiration Scale; IS)[4] and establish the *tripartite* conceptualisation (discussed earlier). The IS was completed

[2] To explain the three forms of transmission examples are provided in relation to sport. However, as little research (two studies to my knowledge) is yet to explicitly examine inspiration in the context of sport, these are hypothetical rather than concrete examples.
[3] The term trait, in this instance, refers to the tendency to become inspired rather than a personality trait per se (Thrash & Elliot, 2003).
[4] As the aim of this section is to outline the antecedents, correlates and consequences of inspiration, and the remit of this thesis is to use qualitative research to examine inspiration in sport, little attention will be given to the validity of the IS. However, research studies have demonstrated the IS to have strong psychometric properties. The interested reader is pointed towards Thrash and Elliot (2003) and the other studies outlined in this literature review which have subsequently utilised the IS regarding measurement and validity related information.

by two independent undergraduate student samples. Confirmatory factor analyses revealed the measure to consist of two internally consistent four-item factors, labelled as intensity and frequency subscales. To test for convergent validity, participant responses to the IS were compared to participant responses using a definition from the Oxford English Dictionary. The results demonstrated strong positive correlations between the two measures for both the frequency and intensity subscales. Construct validity was established by demonstrating that US patent holders (typically considered to be readily inspired by novel ideas and then motivated to transform these ideas into reality) were more frequently and intensely inspired than a comparison group (a sample of undergraduate alumni).

2.2.2.5 State inspiration

Following the establishment of the trait nature of inspiration, Thrash and Elliot (2004) aimed to extend their conceptualisation to the *state* (i.e., specific experiences) of inspiration. First, participants wrote about a personal experience of inspiration, which was compared with a representative (baseline) experience of their lives (e.g., an ordinary experience), and filled out self-report measures relating to motivation (e.g., activated positive affect) and transcendence (e.g., spirituality), regarding the experiences. The findings supported Thrash and Elliot's (2004) conceptualisation, demonstrating the state of inspiration to differ from a baseline experience. Individuals reporting higher in inspiration experienced higher levels of activated positive affect and the content of their narratives involved greater insight and more abstract concerns (e.g., discovering one's calling, realising greatness is possible in response to unexpected success). Thus, the state of inspiration is associated with more positive emotions and is grounded in cognitions of greater importance than those experienced in everyday experiences; thus demonstrating support for the transcendent nature of inspiration. In Study 2 the baseline condition was replaced by an activated positive affect condition, and several measures (relating to motivation, attribution and self/other responsibility, and transcendence) were added. The findings revealed the *inspired by* component to be positively related to measures of transcendence but negatively related to responsibility (thus supporting the proposition that inspiration is initiated by external sources), whereas being *inspired to* related positively to responsibility and approach motivation and negatively to transcendence.

In Study 3, Thrash and Elliot (2004) demonstrated that inspiration is different to reportedly similar psychological constructs. Participants completed trait questionnaires and subsequently recorded daily experiences of (state) inspiration, activated positive affect or a general experience over a period of 14 days. Subsequent analyses showed inspiration and activated positive affect to comprise diverse antecedents, with daily inspiration found to be triggered by illumination among individuals high in receptive engagement, whereas activated positive affect was shown to be triggered by reward salience among individuals high in approach temperament.

Thrash (2007) provided additional support for the state nature of inspiration by demonstrating that the experience of inspiration can fluctuate dependent upon the situation. Thrash examined the distributions of these states across the different days of the week. The findings indicated that inspiration is more prevalent during the week and declines at the weekend, whereas activated positive affect is higher at the weekends for undergraduate students. However, this does not necessarily mean that inspiration is unlikely to be experienced at weekends. Rather, the context in which we find ourselves at a given time is likely to dictate the extent to which we experience inspiration. Indeed, Thrash suggests that inspiration is facilitated by a cognitively engaging stimulus environment and effortful involvement; hence why undergraduate students may be inspired during the week while learning about potentially stimulating subject matter.

2.2.3 Summary of inspiration: definition and conceptualisation

To briefly summarise, based upon Thrash and colleagues work, inspiration is considered to be a motivational state evoked by external stimuli (e.g., people, ideas). Specifically, inspiration raises an inspired individual's intentions regarding something of high intrinsic value (e.g., a vision of an ideal-self in a context that holds importance to the individual) and motivates the individual to engage in efforts to achieve these intentions. While this research has yet to specify how inspiration differs from existing theories of motivation, research (e.g., Hart, 1998; Thrash & Elliot, 2003) has found that participant experiences and descriptions of inspiration are consistent and, thus, Thrash and Elliot (2003) suggest there is "much value in embracing lay conceptions [of inspiration] as gold standard for empirical research" (p. 886).

2.3 Research examining inspiration

Research, primarily driven by Thrash and colleagues, has also begun to examine the conceptualisation and measurement of inspiration, the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of inspiration, as well as potential agents of inspiration. As such, the following sections will provide an overview of the empirical research which has explored inspiration (e.g., correlates, agents, and moderators), and outline the potential links to sport.

2.3.1 Correlates and consequences of inspiration

The majority of research exploring inspiration has been conducted in relation to creativity, as creative insights are posited to facilitate inspiration because they satisfy the criteria of transcendence, evocation, and approach motivation;that is, they are often novel, arise spontaneously, and provide an actionable goal (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014). In their seminal paper on inspiration, Thrash and Elliot (2003) conducted a series of studies which included the examination of the link between trait and state inspiration and creativity. The findings revealed that trait inspiration predicted levels of self-reported creativity in daily life and that inspiration frequency predicts creative accomplishments (in this case the number of patents received by inventors). In terms of state inspiration, Thrash and Elliot (2003) found that undergraduate students perceived themselves to be more creative on days when they reported experiencing higher levels of inspiration. In the final study, Thrash and Elliot (2003) aimed to establish the antecedents and consequences of inspiration. To do so, initially, 171 participants completed the IS and ten other trait measures related to intrinsic motivation, openness to experience, absorption, work mastery, creativity, positive affect, perceived competence, self-esteem, optimism, and self-determination. Three weeks after completing the baseline measures, 150 participants undertook a two-week daily diary procedure, whereby participants were required to rate – rated from 0 “I did not experience this”, to 5 “I did experience this, very intensely” – the extent to which they experienced the trait measures on a daily basis. Hierarchical logistical modelling revealed openness to experience, positive affect, optimism, intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and creativity to be antecedents of inspiration, with work mastery, absorption and perceived competence to be among the consequences. This suggests that certain

personality characteristics (related to receptivity, positivity and engagement) may influence the extent to which we are inspired, and that the inspirational experience has an impact on motivation and self-concept. In addition, receptive engagement (measured by openness to aesthetics, absorption, and self-forgetfulness) was shown to predict transcendence (amount of time and resources dedicated to a target object) while inspired.

More recently, Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010) explored the role of inspiration in the actualisation of creative ideas in the writing process. Utilising cross-sectional methods (i.e., questionnaires measuring inspiration and creative ideation), Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010) conducted four studies to explore the link between inspiration and creativity in the writing process. The findings indicated that creative ideas evoked by an external stimuli preceded an individual's experience of inspiration. In addition, the findings demonstrated that inspiration predicts creativity and writing performance and is related to efficiency and productivity. Also, Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010) found support for their transmission model, whereby inspiration was shown to mediate the transmission of a creative idea to the actualization of a creative product.

Building upon the work of Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010), Thrash et al. (2017) aimed to examine whether inspiration could be contagious in the creative context. More specifically, Thrash et al. (2017) explored the hypothesis that more inspired writers produce more write more insightful works that, in turn, induce higher levels of inspiration in readers; whereby insightful works are the output of the transmission process for the writer and the input (i.e., the evocative stimulus object) for the transmission process in the reader. In addition, Thrash et al. (2017) aimed to explore whether writer inspiration predicted reader emotions as indicated by enthrallment (i.e., awe and chills). 220 undergraduate students were asked to read poems at various stages throughout a semester and complete measures relating to the poem's impact upon them (e.g., inspiration, awe, chills, and positive affect); the poems and measures of writer inspiration were taken from 195 undergraduate participants from Thrash, Maruskin et al.'s (2010) study. To explore the potential mediators of the writer-inspiration-reader-inspiration relationship, the poems were rated in terms of insightfulness, sublimity, originality, and pleasantness by nine qualified (English majors or graduate students) coders. Regression analyses revealed reader-inspiration to be predicted by writer-

inspiration via the mediating mechanism of insightfulness and pleasantness, whereby more insightful and pleasant poems (as rated by the coders) related to higher levels of inspiration in the reader. In addition, writer-inspiration predicted readers' level of awe and chills. Interestingly, sublimity was not found to mediate the contagious effect of inspiration; potentially because sublime stimuli may elude comprehension. This suggests that the content of inspiring stimuli need to be relevant and perceived as achievable by the inspiree. Taken together the findings from this study have wider implications for individuals in all contexts. That is, individuals should look to the most insightful sources within their own fields in order to inspire their work or efforts.

Research has also begun to extend the construct of inspiration to other contexts. In four studies by Böttger, Rudolph, Evanschitzky, and Pfrang (2017), inspiration (as evoked by marketing practices) experienced by customers was found to be related to impulse buying, emotions (positive affect, delight, and transcendent customer experiences) and attitudes (customer satisfaction and customer loyalty). Specifically, the research identified that emotions and buying behaviours were related differently to the component processes of inspiration, with emotional consequences (i.e., delight and transcendent customer experiences) found to be related to the inspired-by process, and impulse buying being more strongly related to being inspired-to. As well as identifying that inspiration is related to these constructs, Böttger and colleagues found that inspiration predicted shopping behaviour (e.g., number of clicks, shopping duration, and purchase intentions) on an online shopping website, attitudes towards the inspirational source (e.g., satisfaction with and loyalty to a brand), and the likelihood a customer is likely to purchase a product. Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that inspiration can impact upon the decisions an individual makes and, as a result of being inspired, may lead to positive attitudes towards the inspiring stimulus, increased motivation, and loyalty towards the inspiring stimulus.

While research has consistently examined the link between inspiration and a range of, what could be considered, performance-related and decision-making based measures (e.g., productivity and creativity in relation to writing), Thrash, Elliot, et al. (2010) aimed to extend the construct of inspiration to wellbeing. Specifically, Thrash, Elliot, et al. proposed that inspiration has the potential to facilitate two forms of well-being: (a) hedonic well-being, which is pleasure-orientated (e.g., activated positive affect); and (b)

eudaimonic well-being, which is growth-orientated (e.g., self-actualisation). In Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to a Jordan or control condition, in which they were required to watch video clips of either Michael Jordan expertly performing a series of basketball skills or a computer screen saver of abstract shapes. Following this, participants filled out measures of inspiration and positive affect. The results revealed that participants in the Jordan condition experienced higher levels of activated positive affect, which was mediated by inspiration, when compared with participants in the control condition. Study 2 examined the impact of inspiration on a wider range of well-being variables. The findings indicated that trait inspiration predicted positive affect, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, self-actualisation, and vitality. Study 3 extended the findings of Study 2 by demonstrating trait inspiration to be an antecedent of positive affect, life satisfaction, self-actualization, and vitality. In Study 4, Thrash, Elliot, et al. aimed to build on the findings of studies 1-3 by examining the relationship between inspiration and well-being at the within-person level. Participants' levels of inspiration in the morning indirectly predicted, via the mediating processes of purpose in life and gratitude, a range of positive well-being levels in the evening over a two-week period. Therefore, when inspired—as well as being more motivated, engaged, and productive—individuals are likely to experience increased psychological wellbeing.

2.3.2 Moderators of inspiration

As well as examining potential consequences and agents of inspiration, research has also indicated a range of factors that may moderate the experience and impact of inspiration. Several studies discussed previously have identified factors that impact upon trait inspiration (i.e., the frequency at which an individual experiences inspiration). Indeed, research (Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010; Thrash et al., 2017) has consistently found that personality variables related to openness (e.g., openness to experience, openness to aesthetics) appear to impact on an individual's receptiveness to inspiring stimuli. Specifically, the higher an individual rates in openness the more frequently they reported experiencing inspiration. In addition, variables associated with general positivity are posited to impact on the frequency of inspiration. For instance, Thrash and Elliot (2003) found that individuals higher in positive affect, optimism, and self-esteem reported experiencing inspiration more

frequently. As well as openness and general positivity, personality traits related to receptive engagement—whereby an individual is sensitive to intrinsic value, has the capacity for engrossed attention, and has the ability to be captivated by and focussed on one thing—have also been shown to impact on trait inspiration. Findings from Thrash and Elliot's (2003, 2004) initial studies demonstrated that individuals higher in work mastery, creativity, absorption, and self-forgetfulness experience inspiration more regularly. Put simply, these findings suggest that traits associated with openness, positivity, and engagement appear to impact on the frequency at which an individual is inspired.

Research has also identified factors that impact on the intensity with which people experience inspiration. Several studies (Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010) have indicated that factors related to approach temperament (e.g., behavioural activation system (BAS), extraversion, and positive emotionality)—which indicates an individual's sensitivity to desirable stimuli and motivation (Elliot & Thrash, 2002)—moderate the impact of an inspiring stimulus. Specifically, Thrash and Elliot (2004) found that approach temperament predicted the strength of inspiration intensity, with individuals higher in extraversion and BAS drive experiencing more intense episodes of inspiration. In addition, Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010) observed that approach temperament moderated the impact of idea creativity on inspiration whereby individuals higher in BAS drive experienced higher levels of inspiration. Thus, individuals with a more positive outlook and higher in approach orientation are likely to experience more intense episodes of inspiration. Another factor that appears to impact on inspiration is nostalgia proneness (Stephan et al., 2015). Stephan et al. (2015) found that the extent to which an individual experiences nostalgia impacts on the frequency and intensity of inspiration when pursuing goals. In addition, research has found that group membership may impact on the experience of inspiration. Indeed, across several studies, Chadborn and Reysen (2016) found that in-group identification correlated with inspiration and impacted upon in-group perceptions of inspiration relative to other outgroups.

As well as impacting on the frequency and intensity of inspiration, certain factors may have a moderating impact upon the source of inspiration. For instance, when exploring the relationship between inspiration and goal-progress, Milyavskaya, Ianakieva, Foxen-Craft, Colantuoni, and Koestner (2012) found that trait inspiration

moderated the relationship between goal inspiration and goal progress, with individuals higher in trait inspiration experiencing higher levels of goal-inspiration and, subsequently, greater goal-progress. This suggests that the frequency at which one experiences inspiration is likely to impact upon the intensity with which one experiences inspiration when inspired by an evocative stimulus and, consequently, the progress that we make towards that inspiring goal. In addition, Van Kleef, Oveis, Homan, van der Löwe, and Keltner (2015) found that sense of power is likely to impact upon the extent to which we are inspired by internal or external stimuli. That is those who have a higher sense of power are more likely to be inspired by themselves than others.

2.3.3 Agents of inspiration

A major premise of Thrash and colleagues' (Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010) conceptualisation of inspiration is that individuals are inspired by the intrinsic value illuminated by an eliciting object. However, considering that, and given that inspiration is related to a range of positive consequences, only small body of research has examined the potential sources of inspiration[5]. Milyavskaya et al. (2012) sought to test the perception that inspiration has the potential to drive behaviour by examining the impact of personal goal progress on perceptions of inspiration. Specifically, Milyavskaya et al. theorised that goal inspiration (i.e., the extent to which we are inspired by a goal in our everyday lives) can drive behaviour to achieve desired outcomes by making an individual more open to novel experiences and more aware of the processes that would aid progression towards the goal. In addition, it was hypothesised that goal progress would increase levels of inspiration such that individuals would be more inspired to continue striving for these goals. The results showed that trait inspiration predicted goal progress and that this process was mediated by goal inspiration. In addition, goal progress also predicted future goal inspiration (i.e., those who make greater progress towards goals are likely to set more inspiring future

[5] Other studies have claimed to investigate inspiration (Grant & Hofmann, 2011; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997, 1999) but did not explicitly measure inspiration (i.e., they did not use the IS or explore inspiration qualitatively), rather using the term to describe positive consequences within their studies. Therefore, these studies were not included in this review of literature.

goals). These findings suggest that the goals an individual sets, and the progress that they make towards these goals, can provide inspiration. However, this research did not identify where such goals come from, thus, research is needed to identify the sources of inspiration.

As well as highlighting the moderating impact of power, Van Kleef et al. (2015) examined the contention that inspiration could be drawn from inner sources (e.g., an individual's own ideas, achievements, or past experiences; Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Based upon theories of power and self-prioritisation (i.e., individuals with more power prioritise themselves over others and are more likely to use themselves as a reference point), Van Kleef et al. theorised that perceptions of power may impact on an individual's potential to draw inspiration from the self versus others. Findings from a series of studies revealed that participants who perceived themselves as having a higher sense of power were more inspired by their own experiences than individuals of lower power; were more likely to describe an inspiring event that featured the self than those with less self-reported power; and were more inspired after writing about an inspiring experience that involved themselves compared to writing about those of others. However, caution should be taken when interpreting these results as contextual factors were not taken into account. That individuals were more inspired by a personal experience was not surprising. To explain, inspiration (especially in relation to being inspired *to*) often occurs when what we are inspired *by* (e.g., an idea or information presented by the inspiring stimulus) is personally relevant (i.e., it can be related to an individual's current context) and leads to the appreciation of a new target (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014). Thus, given that the contexts discussed were varied (e.g., people wrote or discussed inspiring experiences relating to sport, injury rehabilitation, and academic achievements), other participants may not have been able to relate to these experiences on a personal level. Replication of this study in a specific context may provide more compelling evidence regarding the impact of personal power on the experience of inspiration. However, these findings broadly suggest that individuals can draw inspiration from their own experiences.

In another study examining personal experiences as a source of inspiration, Stephan et al. (2015) explored how nostalgia (the act of remembering a meaningful memory from the past) could impact on an individuals' experiences of inspiration.

Specifically, over a series of cross-sectional studies, the results revealed: (a) that nostalgia proneness was positively associated with inspiration frequency and intensity; (b) that nostalgic memories positively impacted on participants levels of state inspiration to engage in exploratory behaviours (e.g., meet new people, explore new places); (c) that nostalgia impacts on (boosts) inspiration indirectly via social connectedness (to the environment) and self-esteem; and (d) that nostalgia impacts on goal-formation, goal-pursuit, and goal completion via inspiration. Thus, thinking about past inspirational experiences may prove inspiring in the present.

Interestingly, as outlined above, research examining how inspiration is evoked has, in the main, focussed on the self as a source of inspiration (e.g., personal goals, perceptions of power; Milyavskaya et al., 2012; Van Kleef et al., 2015). Thrash and Elliot's (2003) conceptualisation suggests that inspiration is evoked by something outside of the self. However, this does not mean that inspiration cannot come from the self per se, rather that inspiration does not occur as a result of agency on our behalf. Put simply, an individual may be inspired by something they have done, but the inspiring act was performed without the explicit intention to inspire themselves. In one of the only studies to look at an external source of inspiration, Thrash et al. (2017) demonstrated that creative writing can inspire readers when the writing is insightful (e.g., provides ideas that they were unaware of).

These findings highlight that it is possible to be inspired by both internal and external sources, but relatively little research has explored the sources of inspiration. This may be down to the quantitative methods used to study inspiration, as Thrash and colleagues (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010; Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014) have suggested that it is impossible to manipulate inspiration (because inspiration is an outcome and not a stimulus) and difficult to manipulate experimentally because inspiration "tends to happen to people spontaneously in the natural context of everyday life" (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014, p. 506). Therefore, research using qualitative methods—which is more suited than quantitative research to understanding and interpreting people's experiences in their daily lives (Sparkes & Smith, 2014)—is warranted to explore experiences of inspiration in order to identify what inspires individuals.

2.3.4 Inspiration findings and their application to sport

Given that athletic performance is often driven by the process of striving towards personal or team goals it is clear to see how inspiration may be important in the sporting context. Indeed, the theory and research related to the agents and consequences of inspiration could be related to sport. For instance, that inspiration is evoked—especially in contexts where one perceives high intrinsic value (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014)—suggests that it would be possible for an athlete to be inspired by an internal or external source. Indeed, the agents outlined above provide some suggestions as to the potential sources of inspiration for athletes. For instance, Stephan et al.'s (2015) finding that nostalgia can impact on inspiration suggests that remembering successful past performances (perhaps as part of an imagery intervention) may have the potential to inspire athletes. Further, the goals we are striving towards, and the progress we subsequently make towards these goals, can impact upon the extent to which we are inspired (Milyavskaya et al., 2012). Thus, in sport, setting inspiring goals, regularly monitoring progress towards them and, if required, adjusting these goals could inspire athletes.

Inspiration is related to a host of beneficial performance-related outcomes such as absorption, work-mastery, intrinsic motivation, and perceived competence (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010; Thrash et al., 2017). Thus, applying the study of inspiration to the context of sport, where motivation and perceptions of competence (i.e., self-efficacy and confidence) are crucial factors to development and success (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Moritz, Feltz, Fahrbach, & Mack, 2000), would appear beneficial. Indeed, based upon the outcomes discussed, it could be suggested that inspired athletes are likely to produce higher levels of performance, be more motivated, be more confident in their ability, and experience more positive emotions.

In addition to the performance-related consequences, inspiration has been seen to be positively associated with well-being (Belzak, Thrash, Sim, & Wadsworth, 2017; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010). These findings provide further support for the potential importance of studying inspiration in the context of sport—particularly given that athletes are vulnerable to a range of mental health problems (for a detailed review see

Rice et al., 2016). First, inspiration is linked to higher levels of wellbeing (Thrash, Elliott, et al., 2010) and, considering the above point, could be a positive by-product of being inspired in sport. Therefore, understanding how we can inspire athletes, and people in general, could have important mental health consequences. Second, the finding that inspiration is linked to purpose in life (the extent to which an individual identifies and connects with something), as well as forms of growth- and pleasure-orientated well-being, suggests that athletes may be inclined to experience inspiration because athletes may have several reasons for participating in sport (e.g., to improve and or have fun) and sport can provide athletes with purpose (e.g., personal and developmental goals to pursue).

2.4 Inspiration in sport

As the quote presented in the introduction demonstrate, athletes and coaches recognise the importance of inspiration. However, while inspiration is often cited as a reason for sporting achievements (Arthur et al., 2012), much of this is anecdotal and little research has explored inspiration in sport. To date, only two studies have examined inspiration exclusively in a sporting context.

Gonzalez et al. (2011) sought to examine the influence of a coach's pep talk on athletes' levels of inspiration. 151 male collegiate football players were randomly assigned to either an experimental or control group and asked to complete a series of measures relating to inspiration, situational motivation, and emotional responses. Following this, participants viewed a video clip (edited from the film *Any Given Sunday*) relating to the condition (inspiration condition, where the coach delivers a team-talk prior to the most important game of the season; and control condition, where athletes viewed a montage of clips of the coach delivering technical information in training) they were assigned to. The results revealed that the athletes who viewed the inspirational video clip reported higher levels of inspiration, increase in the emotion of dominance, and decrease in amotivation. In contrast, participants who viewed the control stimulus reported less inspiration, an increase in amotivation, and a decrease in feelings of dominance. However, the inspirational video clip did not differentially influence athletes' levels of pleasure, arousal, intrinsic motivation, externally regulated motivation, or overall autonomous motivation relative to the control condition. The

findings suggest that it is possible to influence athletes' feelings of inspiration using a video clip, but these elevated levels of inspiration do not necessarily relate to athletes' levels of motivation. However, there are limitations within the research. For instance, Gonzalez et al. (2011) proposed that the difference found in levels of inspiration between the groups was due to the words used by the coach in the different video clips, suggesting that the speech during the inspirational video clip appeared to elicit a sense of purpose in the players. However, the research design did not allow Gonzalez et al. to ascertain what it was that inspired athletes. Consequently, research exploring athlete perceptions of what it is that coaches say to inspire athletes is needed.

In the only other study of inspiration in sport, Gucciardi et al. (2015) examined the motivational correlates of mental toughness. Specifically, Gucciardi et al. (2015) hypothesised that inspiration (among other constructs) would be associated with mental toughness because inspiration has been proposed to be a source which aids the development of mental toughness (Connaughton, Hanton, & Jones, 2010). 347 tennis players completed measures related to inspiration, fear of failure, and passion, with parents filling out a measure to indicate their perception of their child's mental toughness. With regards to inspiration, structural equation modelling demonstrated that tennis players who experienced inspiration on a regular basis were more likely to behave in a mentally tough manner. Thus, given that inspiration has been found to be an antecedent of advantageous constructs, such as mental toughness, research is warranted to understand how and by what athletes are inspired.

2.5 Summary and aims of thesis

This review of literature has demonstrated that inspiration is a psychological experience that has the potential to impact on a range of important consequences (e.g., self-esteem, self-determined motivation, well-being, efficiency, productivity). Therefore, it would appear that being inspired in the context of sport could lead to numerous psychosocial and performance-related benefits for athletes. Initial research (Gonzalez et al., 2011; Gucciardi et al., 2015) has demonstrated that inspiration may be evoked in sport and is associated with advantageous psychological concepts such as mental toughness. Taken

together these findings suggest that further exploration of inspiration in sport may provide a fruitful avenue of research that could guide applied practitioners and sport psychologists. However, before we can study the effects of inspiration in the context of sport, it is first necessary to establish and understand whether and by what athletes are inspired in sport (i.e., what are the sources of inspiration in sport). Therefore, the first aim of this thesis was to explore athletes' experiences of inspiration in sport. Initially the specific aims of this thesis (i.e., the aims of Study 1) were to: identify the sources of inspiration for athletes; and identify potential consequences of being inspired. The initial aim was kept broad as it was hoped that identification of sources of inspiration would provide a basis from which to tailor further studies in the thesis. Thus, the following specific aims for Study 1 were generated:

1) To identify the sources of inspiration for athletes.

2) To identify potential consequences of being inspired in sport.

Chapter 3

Philosophical approach to research in this thesis

3. Philosophical approach to research in this thesis

Scholars (e.g., Holt & Tamminen, 2010; Sparkes & Smith, 2014) have outlined the importance for researchers to clarify and outline the philosophical assumptions that underpin their research. Accordingly, this chapter will outline and justify the philosophical approach that underpinned the research design, research process, and data analysis throughout the thesis. In doing so, I reflect on my philosophical 'journey' that has resulted in a change of philosophical approach from critical realism to pragmatism. Specifically, this section will discuss the educational, research and personal experiences that have shaped my outlook on research and refer to key arguments in the underpinning lecture (in brief detail to save repetition from other chapters) that informed this change in approach.

3.1 Critical Realism

The first two studies were underpinned by a critical realist philosophy. The key propositions of a critical realist perspective are that through research it is possible to identify patterns that underpin social phenomena, and that these patterns are relatively stable, but that the phenomenon in question cannot be fully understood only approximated (Wiltshire, 2018). Further, critical realism acknowledges that scientific practices and findings are fallible due to the employment of imperfect observational methods (e.g., interviews; Wiltshire, 2018). Indeed, rather than supporting the idea of multiple realities, critical realism supports the notion that there are different valid perspectives on reality (Maxwell, 2012). Consequently, it is acknowledged that the findings from Study 1 and Study 2 are a consequence of the interaction between the knowledge and experiences of the participant and myself as the researcher (which will be discussed later in this section).

3.2 Pragmatism

Following completion of the first two studies and in deciding to conduct a grounded theory study, my philosophy changed to one of pragmatism. Pragmatism proposes that one's experiences, and the meanings we attach to them are developed and meaningful through the interaction of our beliefs and actions (Dewey, 1922). That is,

one's experiences are shaped by the social environment and that knowledge is developed in conjunction with other people in the environment (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatists acknowledge the role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge. Consequently, the findings and knowledge developed in Study 3 are a product of participants' (i.e., coaches and athletes) and my beliefs and experiences (outlined later in this section). Further, another central premise of pragmatism is that knowledge should be of practical utility and inform every day action (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), but that the knowledge gained is fallible, constantly evolving and open to revision (Bryant, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Thus, the knowledge gained from Study 3 is intended to enhance understanding of inspirational leadership and guide applied practice, rather than directly mirroring the world (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

3.3 From Critical Realism to Pragmatism: Reasons behind the change in philosophy

At the initiation of this thesis I adopted a critical realist philosophy, which was shaped primarily by three factors: (1) the structure of my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees; (2) the topic and supervision of my undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations; and (3) the advertised proposal for this PhD thesis. Considering these in turn, first, the undergraduate (BSc Sports Coaching Science) and postgraduate (MSc Psychology of Sport and Exercise) degrees that I undertook undoubtedly influenced my thoughts on what constituted knowledge and research. The structure and content of those degrees was primarily underpinned by what could be described as a positivist/realist philosophy. During this time, I studied modules on physiology, biomechanics, psychology, coaching and research methods, which were taught primarily by quantitative researchers with a heavy focus on quantitative methods and analysis. Consequently, less attention was paid to qualitative methods and, subsequently, I had less exposure to more constructivist/relativist research philosophies. Second, the dissertation projects I conducted during undergraduate (exploring person perception) and postgraduate (subconscious priming; see Greenlees, Figgins, & Kearney, 2014) study further shaped my beliefs surrounding research. The reading on these topics (which was experimental in nature) combined and the guidance I received from my MSc dissertation supervisor (who has a primarily positivist approach to

research) influenced my beliefs surrounding how research should be approached and conducted. Consequently, prior to starting the PhD I had primarily been exposed to positivistic research questions, methods, and analyses.

The third reason I adopted a critical realist approach to initial research was the initial advertised outline of the PhD (see the following passage):

> Much research in the past decade has demonstrated the positive impacts of transformational leadership on follower outcomes in the sporting domain. Of the four transformational behaviours identified by Bass (1985), inspirational motivation, which involves the arousal and heightening of motivation among followers through communicating a compelling vision (Behling & McFillen, 1996), appears to be a key behaviour (Barbuto, 1997). Gardner (1989) highlights how through inspirational processes, leaders conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, thus uniting them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts. However, little research has examined specific leadership behaviours such as the way a leader in sport (e.g., coach, captain, manager) communicates in an inspirational way. This research programme will investigate the key features of a sporting leader's inspirational communication, and how this impacts on follower outcomes. In addition, the programme will explore whether leaders in sport can be trained to communicate in a more inspirational way to thus have a greater positive impact on their followers.

Given this proposed focus of the PhD, the initial proposal for the process of research was primarily quantitative in nature. Specifically, the initial plan was to (1) identify how leaders inspire athletes using qualitative methods; (2) conduct several correlational studies to identify the correlates of inspirational motivation; and (3) test a prospective intervention to see whether leaders could be trained to be more inspirational. However, based upon van Knippenberg and Sitkin's (2013) critique of transformational leadership (see Chapter 5 for an overview), the focus of the research shifted from examining inspirational motivation to exploring inspiration more broadly within the leadership process, at this stage, my views on research and knowledge had been shaped by these experiences and, thus, I perceived, aligned with the central ideas of critical realism.

Philosophy of research

After reflecting upon the first two studies conducted in the thesis and reading about grounded theory methodology, I chose to change my philosophical approach from critical realism to pragmatism. The reasons for this change in philosophical approach were primarily informed by emerging critiques of existing leadership theory (e.g., transformational leadership; cf. van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), the gaps in my thesis at the time (i.e., that the first two studies did not provide information relating to contextual factors that impact upon why leaders are perceived as inspiring), and my reading around grounded theory methodology. In relation to critiques of existing leadership theory and gaps in the thesis, following completion of the first two studies, I noted an important gap in the findings of Study 2. The study identified situations in which athletes were open to being inspired, behaviours leaders could exhibit to try and inspire athletes in these situations, and consequences of being inspired. To some extent, these findings, like several existing theories of leadership, appeared to present a very linear view of leader (inspirational) influence and lacked the nuance to explain this influence. To put it simply, the study provided limited information that explained *why* leaders were able to inspire athletes. This limitation overlapped with emerging critiques (see Arthur, et al., 2017; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) of existing leadership theory. These critiques identified that current theories of leadership utilised in sport provide a lack of clarity relating to the factors (i.e., mediators and moderators) that impact on transformational leadership and its influence on outcomes and, thus, had a limited ability to inform day-to-day practice. As such, I recognized that leadership theory and research had somewhat presented an uncomplicated, inaccurate representation of leadership processes and, rather than add to this, I wanted to provide greater clarity as to the overall process of inspirational leadership—I wanted my research to go beyond identifying antecedents, behaviours and consequences of leadership that represented leadership as a seemingly linear process—as well as produce research that had an applied impact.

Bearing this in mind, I decided to embark upon a grounded theory approach to address the gaps from the first two studies whilst considering the critiques of existing leadership theory. Subsequently, I researched the different variants of grounded theory and after considering the merits and philosophical underpinnings of each, I believed that my own views aligned with the pragmatic philosophy that underpins the Straussian

variant (cf. Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This is where I was first introduced to the paradigm of pragmatism and recognized its potential to explore the complex process of leadership. Given that I had started to perceive that leadership theory presented an uncomplicated view of leadership that did not represent the messy, complexity of real-world leadership, the central tenets of pragmatism resonated with my evolving views that leadership is a contextually-bound process, research findings should impact on those individuals that we study, and that such findings are fallible and open to refinement (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Morgan, 2014). This perspective may, in some way, highlight the limitations of transformational leadership theory—for instance, that transformational leadership was transferred from politics to business, then from business to sport, without really considering the cultural differences inherent within these contexts (e.g., followers reasons for following). Consequently, my view is that leadership is an inherently complex process that is impacted upon by the interaction between the leaders, followers, and context within which leadership occurs. Thus, while we can study leadership and identify effective (or inspirational) behaviours that leaders engage in, from my perspective leadership is primarily in the eye of the beholder (i.e., the followers who experience leadership) and the knowledge gained from leadership study should constantly evolve.

3.4 My lived experiences and prior knowledge

As both critical realism and pragmatism recognise that researchers do not enter research environments knowledge free (Bryant, 2009) and that their involvement will in some way shape the research process and findings, it is worth outlining my own prior and current experiences and interests that shaped this thesis. From a research perspective, I have several years' experience of studying and researching leadership in sport (primarily centred on transformational leadership theory). However, while this knowledge will have in some way shaped my interpretations of participants' experiences, rather than being considered as having a negative impact on research, these insights are considered to enhance my ability as a researcher to think theoretically and facilitate novel insights (Bryant, 2009; Holt, 2016). Regarding prior experiences, I am an avid sportsperson (as amateur now, but having been involved in junior cricket academy set ups) and have leadership, captaincy and coaching experience (I am

qualified to UKCC Level 2+). Further, I have provided consultancy work within a high-level football club aimed at developing leadership and group cohesion which has also enhanced my understanding of the complex and important role of leadership and inter-group relationships. In addition, having to identify solutions to leadership 'problems' within this environment is aligned with the principles of pragmatism. Consequently, I have varied experiences that gave me insight into the research topic in question. In addition, these experiences have also enhanced the research process in different ways. For example, this prior experience enabled me to build rapport with participants. Furthermore, my understanding of the literature has enhanced my theoretical sensitivity.

Chapter 4

Study 1: An examination of the sources of inspiration for athletes in sport[6,7]

[6] This chapter was accepted as part of a two-study paper for publication as;
Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Sellars, C.N.+, Greenlees, I.A.*, & Knight, C.J.+ (2016). "You really could be something quite special": A qualitative exploration of athletes' experiences of being inspired in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *24*, 82-91.

[7] This chapter was accepted for a poster presentation as;
Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Greenlees, I.A.*, Sellars, C.+, & Knight, C.+ (2015). Inspiration in sport: Where does it come from and how can it be influenced. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Conference, Leeds, UK, December 2015.

*Supervisor – Advised on preparation and write up of the thesis, paper, and presentation.

+Collaborator – Advised on write up and analysis of results for the paper and presentation.

4. Study 1: An examination of the sources of inspiration for athletes in sport.

4.1 Introduction

Inspiration is proposed to be a powerful motivational state that can lead people to produce extraordinary outcomes (Oleynick et al., 2014; Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014). Indeed, within sport, inspiration is often cited as a reason for great, and often surprising, sporting achievements (Arthur et al., 2012). However, despite the recognition of the potential benefits of being inspired, little research attention has been paid to the topic of inspiration within the scientific literature, owing to a range of issues relating to the definition and meaning of inspiration (e.g., is it the origin or consequences of new ideas), uncertainty surrounding inspiration's distinctiveness from related constructs, and the perception that inspiration is unimportant relative to perspiration (Oleynick et al., 2014; Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, et al., 2014). Consequently, in recent times, a body of research has accrued in order to further our understanding of inspiration and address the issues outlined above (Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, et al., 2014).

In the first empirical study of inspiration, Hart (1998) conducted interviews which examined 70 individuals' experiences of inspiration in everyday life. Findings broadly revealed that inspiration is a positive experience that many individuals experience in their lives and in varying contexts (e.g., following either positive or negative situations), is often unexpected and outside of their direct control. Participants reported that inspiration was a state in which they experienced: a sense of connection with something in their environment (e.g., an idea, another person); being opened, clarity or motivation to extend the inspirational stimuli to some form of output; feelings of relating to one's life or a particular issue; and increased positive emotions which could translate into immediate action or provide the impetus to direct one's subsequent behaviour.

Subsequently, Thrash and colleagues (e.g., Oleynick et al., 2014; Thrash, 2007; Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010) provided the first programme of study on inspiration. Thrash and Elliot (2003) conceptualised inspiration

as comprising three core characteristics (as discussed in Chapter 2) which suggest that inspiration is evoked by something (or someone) outside of our control, which makes us aware of better possibilities and, subsequently, drives us to mobilise extra effort to achieve these new possibilities. Building upon their initial work, Thrash and Elliot (2004) proposed that an episode of inspiration comprises two component processes, whereby an individual is: (1) inspired *by* the intrinsic value of an external stimulus; and then (2) inspired *to* actualise or extend the qualities presented by the inspiring stimulus. Finally, Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010) tested the transmission model which posits that inspiration mediates the transmission of values exemplified by the evoking stimulus into some form of tangible action. That is, intrinsically valued qualities of an inspiring stimulus evoke inspiration (e.g., an individual gains awareness of a better future self), which, subsequently, compels an individual to reach for a new-found goal (Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010; Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014).

Research has also begun to examine the correlates of inspiration. Inspiration has been shown to be associated with a range of positive outcomes including, enhanced motivation (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), improved well-being (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010), and increased productivity (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). Given such beneficial correlates of inspiration in contexts where individuals perceive there to be high intrinsic value (e.g., potential for self-growth), it is a surprise that limited research attention has been paid to inspiration in sport, where individuals often compete for intrinsic reasons. To date, only two studies (Gonzalez et al., 2011; Gucciardi et al., 2015) have examined inspiration in sport. Gonzalez et al. used edited video clips (taken from the film Any Given Sunday) to examine the influence of a coach's team talk on athletes' levels of inspiration. Athletes who watched the inspirational video clip reported higher levels of inspiration, increased feelings of dominance, and decreased amotivation. In the only other study to examine inspiration in sport, Gucciardi et al. found that tennis players who experienced inspiration more frequently were more likely exhibit mentally tough behaviours. Taken together these findings suggest that inspiration may be evoked in sport and is related to beneficial constructs (e.g., mental toughness), and, thus, exploring inspiration in sport may provide a fruitful avenue of future research. However, given the limited knowledge surrounding inspiration, particularly in sport, exploratory research is warranted in order to understand how inspiration is evoked in athletes.

In light of the findings that an experience of inspiration can lead to a host of positive outcomes, the aim of this study was to explore athletes' experiences of being inspired in sport. Specifically, the aims of this study were, first, to understand what inspiration means to athletes, and, second, to document the sources of inspiration for athletes and outline potential consequences of being inspired in sport.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Design and philosophical perspective

As the aim of this study was to produce a descriptive summary of athletes' experiences of being inspired in sport (e.g., the sources and consequence of being inspired), the study took a qualitative description approach. A qualitative description approach looks to understand "the *who*, *what*, and *where* of events or experiences" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). This approach has been utilised in previous sport psychology research when exploring novel research areas (e.g., coaching transitions; Knight, Rodgers, Reade, Mrak, & Hall, 2015). Thus, given that little sport psychology research has examined inspiration, this approach was deemed appropriate for the aims of this research. Qualitative descriptive research is not limited to a specific philosophical or methodological framework other than drawing from the general principles of naturalistic enquiry (Sandelowski, 2000). However, the design and analysis of the research were consistent with the perspective of critical realism that underpinned the studies (see Chapter 3 for an overview of the philosophical approach to this research).

4.2.2 Participants

In order to take part in the study, participants needed to be able to recall and describe (in writing) an instane in which they were inspired in sport[8]. Given that the

[8] This could encompass any sporting context that they wished (e.g., competing or watching) as, based upon existing inspiration research (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014), it is conceivable that they may be inspired watching someone else perform but then extend this to their own performance at a later date.

broad main aims of the study (i.e., to identify sources of inspiration for athletes), no other stipulations were set regarding specific participant criteria (e.g., performance level, years of experience, performance statistics). This strategy allowed me to sample participants from a wide range of sports at different levels and, thus, capture a wide range of inspirational experiences.

The sample consisted of 95 athletes (67 male and 28 female) aged between 18 and 37 years (M = 20.3 years, SD = 2.75). The participants had between 1 and 30 years of experience (M = 10.9 years, SD = 4.6) of competing (between amateur and international standard) in their sport and reported being White British (*n* = 89), Black British- African (*n* =2), White British-American (*n* = 1), Russian (*n* = 1), Asian British-Indian (*n* = 1), and Black British-Caribbean (*n* = 1). The participants competed in a range of team and individual sports including: football (*n* = 31), rugby (n = 12), cricket (*n* = 8), netball (*n* = 5), golf (*n* = 5), swimming (*n* = 4), athletics (*n* = 3), gymnastics (*n* = 2), equestrian (*n* = 2), sailing (*n* = 2), trampolining (*n* = 2), martial arts (*n* = 2), badminton (*n* = 2), basketball (*n* = 2), tennis (*n* = 1), handball (*n* = 1), American football (*n* = 1), lacrosse (*n* = 1), long-distance running (*n* = 1), boxing (*n* = 1), kayaking (*n* = 1), and handball (*n* = 1). Written informed consent was gained from all participants prior to the commencement of the study.

4.2.3 Procedure

Prior to conducting the study, institutional ethical approval was obtained. Participants were invited to participate via email or face-to-face meetings, both of which included information regarding the aims of the study, details regarding confidentiality, and the requirements of the participants should they wish to take part in the study.

Following the receipt of informed consent, each participant was asked to write about a situation in which they were inspired in sport. As this was the first study to explicitly explore inspiration in a sporting context, written accounts were considered an appropriate method for data collection, as this approach allowed access to a range of experiences which could provide the basis for further research within the thesis. Written accounts are considered to provide rich qualitative data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014), have been utilised to examine inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Van Kleef et al., 2015), and

have been used in previous sport psychology qualitative research (e.g., Sitch & Day, 2015). The participants' written account was guided by two main questions. The first question asked participants to describe what being inspired in sport meant to them. The purpose of this question was to encourage participants to consider what inspiration feels like to facilitate easier recall of a moment in which they were inspired. The second question asked participants to think of and, subsequently, write about a time when they had been inspired in sport[9], which allowed exploration of the sources and consequences of inspiration.

4.2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative research tool that minimally organizes and describes data in rich detail and is used for identifying, analysing, interpreting and reporting themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Strengths of thematic analysis include its capacity to: highlight similarities and differences across a data set; summarise key features of a data set; and allow for both social and psychological interpretation of the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Inductive qualitative research is a bottom up approach concerned with producing descriptions and explanations of phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, as the aim of this study was to provide a descriptive summary of participants' experiences of inspiration, an inductive thematic analysis was considered appropriate for this study.

The transcripts were analysed using inductive thematic analysis which followed the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; see Table 3.1). Initially, the written accounts were read and re-read by the lead researcher to ensure familiarity with the data and initial analytic reflective statements of the data were made (e.g., 'the athlete was inspired by the coach outlining their potential'). These initial statements were used to facilitate initial inductive coding and aid theme and category refinement in the latter stages of the analysis. Initial coding involved attaching words or labels to the relevant research questions. Following this, the codes were then refined and sorted into broader

[9] A definition of inspiration was not provided for participants because previous research (Hart, 1998) has demonstrated that, while inspiration holds many shades of meaning, lay conceptualisations of the construct are clear and consistent (Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

themes. Throughout the analysis, the emerging themes were constantly compared against one another to ensure clarity and distinctiveness of themes. A form of questioning as analysis was employed whereby the data were explored in relation to key research questions. Such questions included, for example, what inspiration meant to the participants, the sources of inspiration, and the consequences of being inspired.

Table 4.1 Braun & Clarke's six-phase procedure for thematic analysis

Phase	Description of procedures
1. Researcher familiarizes themselves with the data.	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extract and the entire data set.
5. Defining and naming themes	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	Final opportunity for analysis. Selection of appropriate extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to research question and literature, producing report of analysis.

4.2.5 Methodological Rigour

Given the variety of methodologies and subsequent purposes of qualitative research, it is difficult to assess all qualitative research against the same strict criteria and therefore qualitative research should be judged against criteria which are based upon the context of the study (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Taking this into account, a number of steps were integrated into the design of the study, data collection and

analysis to enhance the methodological rigour of this study and ensure it fulfilled the criteria of a qualitative descriptive study. While the study relied on participants to share their experiences of being inspired, questions were used to guide this process. However, these questions were broad and open in nature in order to allow the participants to tell their story and provide as much detail as possible. The questions were discussed with two other researchers who had experience in qualitative research in order to ensure they were appropriate for the study and would provide rich data (Tracy, 2010). Prior to the main study, the writing task was piloted with participants not included in the main analyses and the written accounts were reviewed by the research team to ensure the data obtained would meet the intended aims of the research (i.e., provide an overview of inspiration in sport, identify sources of inspiration in sport, and provide a basis from which to drive the subsequent research in this thesis). Two further analytical processes were used throughout the analysis. First, I wrote a range of memos in order to keep a clear and detailed account of the decisions made throughout the data analysis process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This was used as an audit trail, which is proposed to enhance authenticity by allowing other members of a research team to scrutinise the decisions made by the lead researcher (Tracy, 2010). Second, I engaged with critical friends who encouraged reflection upon and questioned the emerging interpretations of the data (e.g., by questioning how certain themes identified fit within the three key research questions used to inform the analysis; Smith & McGannon, 2017) . Of particular importance was that the analysis was arranged in a manner appropriate for the data (i.e., a descriptive summary of participants' experiences of being inspired).

4.3 Results

The results are presented as follows. Firstly, participants' perceptions of the meaning of inspiration are outlined. Then the moments of inspiration are described in relation to by what and how participants were inspired. Finally, the consequences of being inspired are discussed. Within each of these sections, themes and salient quotes are presented in order to represent the experiences of the participants.

4.3.1 The meaning of inspiration

In general, participants perceived inspiration to be an emotive state, facilitated by internal or external sources, which they were not regularly used to experiencing. This is highlighted by one participant who described the experience of inspiration as, “Having a moment where you feel overwhelmed by environmental or emotional factors.” Often inspiration was proposed to be the result of an individual “special” moment and have profound impacts on an individual, as alluded to by one participant who described inspiration as, “an exceptional moment or series of actions by an individual that has overwhelmed me in that moment and remains to, still . . . it influences my life in some way.”

Participants’ suggested inspiration to be a state of heightened motivation, emotion and excitement. For example, one participant described inspiration as, “being motivated beyond usual levels due to special circumstances.” In addition, one participant discussed how inspiration was an unanticipated experience that directed their attention toward something new writing that inspiration meant, “to be shown a new light and see something that is unexpected but engaging and exciting, that makes me want to take part or be involved.” The feeling of inspiration was proposed to be something that takes hold instantaneously and spontaneously, as highlighted by one participant who wrote, “[inspiration is] seeing . . . something that you see to be extraordinary, sparking you into life.”

4.3.2 The source of inspiration

The participants wrote about one experience of being inspired and analyses showed that participants were inspired by a range of sources (see Figure 3.1). While these sources of inspiration were varied they have been categorised into three main sources: (1) Personal performance, thoughts, and accomplishments; (2) interacting with and watching role models; and (3) demonstrations of leadership.

Personal performance, thoughts, and accomplishments. Participants wrote about instances where they were inspired by themselves. Specifically, participants reported being inspired by their own performances, their previous experiences (in training or competition), and their thoughts pertaining to upcoming competition.

Personal performance. Participants reported being inspired by unexpected performances that they did not know that they were capable of (e.g., beating an opponent of higher skill). For instance, one club cricketer recounted being inspired by their own performance when trying and successfully executing a new skill that they had not used in a competitive game before:

> I was playing in the annual cricket match between my local side and a touring side. [The touring side] turned up and was two players short, and I was chosen to join their squad . . . Heading on up to bowl, aged 16, to the most senior and skilled batsman from my team felt daunting, so I decided to bowl leg-spin for the first time . . . I had never been confident enough to compete with it. To my surprise I took 3 wickets and haven't looked back since.

Participants also cited being inspired by their performances and ability to deal with testing competitive circumstances. For instance, one amateur tennis player described:

> The thing that inspired me was that despite losing the first set, I was able to regain my focus and eventually comeback to win the match . . . it was very inspirational because of the level of skill of the opponent and because it was my first game for the [team] and my first significant competitive match for a while.

Thoughts regarding previous or future performances. Participants were also inspired by their thoughts regarding their upcoming performances (e.g., imagining what could happen if they reach their goals). For example, one participant described being inspired by, "The thought that I could win . . . The thought that I could cause an upset, and the feeling of awesomeness [I would experience] when I destroy the stereotype over sprinters." In contrast, an international cricketer described how letting go of negative thoughts and remembering the effort expended previously inspired him:

> I got the 'fuck it' factor. I said to myself "I have worked too hard to just give up. Next time I get the opportunity I will get in the battle and show people I belong." I was aggressive and nothing was going to stop me. When I did bowl things worked for me and it went very well.

Interacting with and watching role models. Participants were also inspired by external sources. Indeed, one of the major sources of inspiration for participants within this study came from situations in which they viewed or interacted with athletes whom they held in high regard. Often these athletes were at the elite level or performing at a level that participants aspired to reach.

Viewing successful role-model performance. Inspiration was drawn from elite-level athletes' ability, demonstration of skill, and exceptional performances in highly pressurised situations. For example, one amateur football player wrote about being inspired by the performance of a role-model in a pressurised situation:

> It was David Beckham versus Greece in 2001, the world cup qualifier. The importance of the goal he scored inspired me . . . how did he do that with the weight of a nation on his shoulders? [When he scored] I was relieved, happy and excited.

Participants were also inspired by the performances of sub-elite level athletes. For instance, participants were inspired by the ability and skill of these athletes: "The level of play was amazing to watch; their ability was top level." Participants were inspired by athletes with whom they felt they could relate, as alluded to by an academy level football player who stated, "I never thought that a player smaller than the rest would be able to make it as a pro . . . Michael Owen inspired me to keep playing as he was smaller footballer than the rest playing at the highest level."

Dealing with setbacks. Other athletes' experiences of adversity also provided the catalyst for participants' experiences of inspiration. Participants wrote about being inspired by the way in which their role models dealt with difficult circumstances and were still able to perform. For instance, one county-level rugby player was inspired when watching the Paralympics:

> Watching the Paralympics it amazed me to see that individuals who have been dealt a tough hand in life manage to overcome their disability and perform at the highest level. Especially ex-soldiers who were once able bodied but are now disabled . . . [to see] how they overcome the trauma of being at war and being injured are able to put that to one side and have the drive and determination to

> succeed in sport, when they could easily have around feeling sorry for themselves.

Perceptions of role models' thoughts and characteristics. Participants were also inspired by their perceptions of role models' confidence in themselves, as outlined by a regional-level swimmer who wrote, "It was Phelps' belief in himself, that he could achieve his goal of 8 gold's [that inspired me]. There were some close calls where he nearly missed out (like the 100 metre fly) but he still pushed himself to the very end." The perceived motivation and determination exhibited by elite-level athletes also inspired participants. For instance, one amateur hockey player recalled her experiences of watching the Olympic and Commonwealth games, "[There was] lots of hype around the events and a sense of anticipation and excitement. It was my first time watching Hockey live . . . I was inspired by the commitment and drive of the players."

Perceptions of group dynamics (e.g., perceived togetherness of the team) were also seen to be inspiring. For example, a county-level golfer reported being inspired by a team's show of support and cohesion:

> The being part of a team and how they all supported each other inspired me to want to become a part of it. The moment they won and the whole team celebrated together inspired me to improve my game, make the team and have that experience myself.

Interaction with role models. Interacting with role models was also seen to be inspirational. Participants wrote about incidents where they were inspired by listening to higher-level athletes discussing their past experiences, how they prepare for competition (e.g., training patterns and general lifestyle), and when receiving tips from them in a coaching capacity. For example, when describing her experience of seeing a role model present at a coaching conference, one national-level trampolinist wrote:

> I was a body for my coach at a competitive development coaching workshop. We were listening to talks, watching clips and doing practical exercises with all the coaches. One of the course leaders was [a world class trampolinist] and she did a talk about her training and lifestyle, and ran a training session at the same

> time the course was running. Hearing her talk and watching her train was inspirational.

Participants were also inspired when coached by role models. For instance, one county cricketer recalled an experience when an international player turned up to take her team's training: "I was inspired when the England women's cricket captain turned up during our training session. We got to bowl and bat with her and she gave me some useful tips on how to improve my batting and bowling performance." Praise from role models also inspired participants. For example, one academy-level cricketer was inspired by a discussion with a former international:

> I was told by the ex-pro that I could, if I put the effort in, achieve my goals as a player. I was just a club cricketer that loved the game; being a pro had never really been an option. They told me I had what it took so I believed him. He had been there and done it. He had seen and played with the best players ever.

Demonstrations of leadership. Demonstrations of leadership were also deemed an important source of inspiration in sport for participants. The participants reported being inspired by both formal (individuals in a pre-determined leadership position such as coaches and captains) and informal leaders' (individuals within a group or team who have no pre-prescribed leadership role) communication and behaviour.

Verbal communication. Participants recalled a variety of moments when they were inspired by a leader's verbal communication. For example, participants reported being inspired by leaders' team-talks. These talks were reported to happen at a range of times (e.g., before, during, and after games) and in different circumstances (e.g., when performing poorly or feeling nervous). For instance, one amateur footballer said he was inspired when, "the manager and captain gave an emotional speech. They told us that we needed to sort ourselves out and gave us confidence by saying 'we are a lot better than how we are playing'."

Individual talks with leaders were also proposed to evoke inspiration. For example, an amateur boxer recalled being inspired by their coach, writing: "My coach, after warming me up alone, gave me an inspirational talk. He said to me 'now it's your time', making me finally motivated before I went into the ring." Similarly, another

national-level boxer recalled being in a "casual mindset" during a fight before being spoken to by a national coach who believed he had greater potential describing, "[The] England coach was watching me fight. He pulled me to one side [during the fight] and said that he believed I was better than I knew, and if I really went for it I would surprise myself."

Other participants proposed that they were inspired by leaders providing them with specific information on how to improve. For instance, one amateur netball player highlighted this when recalling their experience of being inspired by their captain following a mistake during a game, "[the captain] also gave me a few pointers on how to improve in the game . . . applying the new marking and feeling relaxed about it [the mistake] helped us to win."

Participants were also inspired by displays of leadership away from the competitive environment. One amateur rugby player described the following situation that he found inspiring:

> I told my coach what I was feeling [that I didn't want to carry on playing or training]. He pulled me aside during training and pointed out my friends, all working hard, he told me that these boys are my brothers, my family, and you can't quit on family. [The coach] told me that I had "special talent" and that I shouldn't quit because I was tired and in pain, instead I should keep going and get reward from it. That [what the coach said] blew my mind and I carried on.

Providing opportunities, challenging individuals, and having high standards were also cited as ways leaders could inspire athletes. This was highlighted by one amateur netball player who described how a coach had inspired her by providing her with an opportunity to switch to a preferred position: "[The coach] gave me the opportunity, showed her confidence in me and gave me the challenge. [The coach] said that if I practiced and showed competency I could play that position in the next game." This was supported by an amateur footballer who wrote:

> A previous manager I had was strict, firm, and enforced discipline, but was always fair and used his influence to get the best out of you as a player . . . he would pull me out from the team either after the game or on the coach and praise

> me . . . but then in training would push me harder and be strict on what I did; he always expected better.

Nonverbal communication and behaviour. As well as verbal communication leaders inspired athletes by setting the right example for athletes to follow. Participants discussed instances of being inspired by their leaders' effort, performance and skills displayed during games. This was highlighted by one rugby player who recalled an instance where he was inspired because, "our captain never gave up when chasing the opposition. [The captain] was very positive throughout and fully gave 110%." Participants were also inspired by the skill levels of their peers. For example, a regional-level rugby player wrote, "we were representing East at nationals and lost against Wales. I was feeling very defeated and [my teammate] motivated me to improve my performance . . . She made every tackle, every run, and I wanted to be like that."

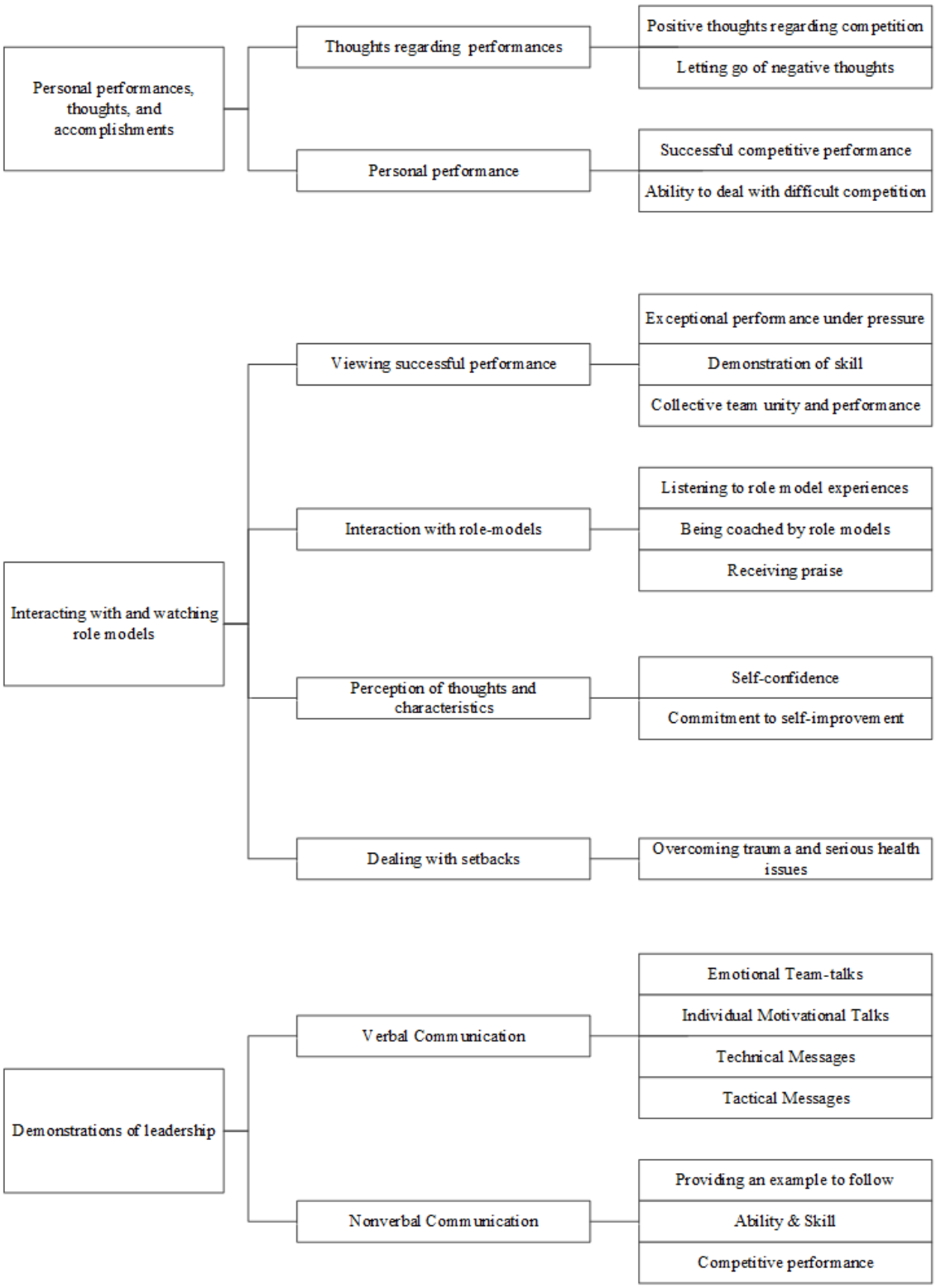


Figure 4.1 Sources of inspiration in sport.

4.3.3 Consequences of being inspired

A range of positive outcomes were associated with being inspired. Specifically, these outcomes were related to the athlete's thoughts, feelings and behaviours (see figure 3.2).

Increased positive and more rational thoughts. The experience of inspiration was reported to influence the way participants were thinking. Participants reported inspiration to have an effect on a range of cognitions, including the way they viewed the situation within which they were inspired, and their levels of focus.

Participants reported experiencing an increase in confidence in the capability of themselves or their team as a result of being inspired. For example, one amateur footballer recalled the consequences of an inspirational team-talk from the coach writing, "my confidence to perform well at the competition was much greater. I felt more capable and had much greater belief in myself to achieve what I had targeted."

As well as the confidence to achieve goals, participants reported greater confidence in their ability to deal with challenging situations. For instance, following a poor performance, an amateur cricketer described having increased belief in ability to perform well following their captain's inspirational address to his team, "[After the captain's talk] I felt that I could go out and dominate the opposition, [I thought that] they wouldn't be able to cope with me and my bowling." The increase in belief participants experienced was not just limited to their ability to perform well or achieve performance goals. For instance, participants wrote about increased belief relating to their capacity to deal with setbacks (e.g., injury). This was highlighted by one amateur footballer who wrote that seeing an elite-athlete overcome cancer "changed my attitude because it made me think 'you can overcome anything'." In addition, an international-level basketball player also reported that being inspired increased their belief that they would be able to reach the same performance level following injury:

> Before this talk [from the coach] I felt like I couldn't play the way I did before this injury. After, it made me think positively about my ability to perform at a high level again. I had belief in myself again, especially knowing they had my back.

Inspirational experiences were proposed to result in more rational thoughts regarding performance. For instance, when describing the impact of inspiration, one amateur sprinter wrote, “I accepted that if somebody beats you in a race, that they are faster than you, even if you have a faster PB.” Another consequence of inspiration related to participants’ feelings following poor performance. For example, one amateur netball player felt frustrated following a mistake which resulted in a goal and recalled how being inspired “changed my thoughts about letting the team down . . . I felt more relaxed, but focussed to win.”

Participants also reported feeling more motivated in relation to competing, achieving new goals, improving their own skill-levels, and reaching higher levels of performance. For example, a national-level trampolinist explained, “I felt like I wanted to push training further, and I was determined to improve and reach my goals . . . it made me feel motivated to achieve.” Further, being inspired was seen to result in sport being seen as having greater importance and, thus, leading to increased motivation, as highlighted by one county-level footballer who stated that, “[being inspired] made the sport mean even more [to me], it made me more passionate towards the sport, and changed the way I acted towards the game.”

A further cognitive consequence of inspiration related to participants’ awareness of what they could do. Participants reported that being inspired increased their awareness of what they were capable of achieving, in terms of both performance-level and outcome. Indeed, one county-level athlete recalled:

> The set of amateur runners with leg amputations and other injuries who still managed to complete the marathon and were still smiling with no complaints. It made me think that “if they can do it, then I can do it.”

Participants in team sports also recalled how experiences of inspiration enhanced team- or group-related outcomes. For instance, participants reported improved perceptions of team cohesion. This was highlighted by one amateur hockey player who recalled an inspiring experience following confrontation within his team, “After that [being inspired] I had a feeling of being in a strong team, after the conflicts and confrontation putting a strain on us.” Inspiration was also posited to result in a greater sense of belonging to a team. Indeed, an amateur handball player reported identifying more with

his team following a speech by a senior player stating, “I have never felt more part of a team before.” Episodes of inspiration also facilitate increased levels of trust within a team as underlined by an amateur footballer who wrote, “[the coach] then listed every player’s qualities which allowed me and my teammates to trust each other.”

Increased positive (and decreased negative) feelings. Inspiration was posited to have an impact on participants’ emotional states. Specifically, as a result of being inspired participants reported experiencing a range of positive emotions. For instance, a county-level footballer recalled being “relieved, excited, and happy” after being inspired. Participants described increased pride, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for their sport following an episode of inspiration. This was alluded to by one county-level golfer who described the impact of watching a role-model perform writing, “It [seeing the role-model perform] showed me that any situation can be enjoyable . . . it has had a long-term impact as I have always had this enthusiasm since then in any games I have played.” In the main, these positive feelings were directed towards participation in sport, training, and or competition. For instance, following initial negative thoughts and feelings when starting a new sport, one amateur triathlete reported increased positive feelings towards their training following an inspirational comment from their coach:

> I felt like I needed to keep training and that was rewarding, [I] learned I really enjoy training sometimes more than competing . . . they [the coach] constantly tell me how much potential I have and that excites me to keep training.

Participants indicated that being inspired gave them a more positive outlook on their own performances and could lead to a positive reappraisal of the situation. For example, one academy-level footballer recalled how an inspirational talk from the coach changed his feelings towards a loss in an important cup-final:

> We thought we could win; we had very little doubt. There were feelings of nerves due to the occasion but excitement to play. We played well fought for each other for the full 90 minutes, but we lost. However, although we lost we were still proud of our performance.

As well as the typical positive feelings facilitated by an experience of inspiration, participants also suggested that inspiration could lead to what are usually considered

negative feelings (e.g., increased levels of aggression). However, in these instances, participants perceived these consequences as positive. For instance, a county-level footballer wrote, "[Inspiration] gave me enhanced anger to drive and focus me."

Behaviour and performance. Experiencing inspiration had positive consequences for participants' behaviour and performances. In the main, participants experienced a range of positive outcomes relating to their physical behaviour as a by-product of experiencing inspiration. Participants reported changes to effort in training and competition (e.g., more time dedicated to training), performance in competition (e.g., improved performances and results), and improved ability (e.g., learning new skills) as a result of being inspired. Linked with the increase in positive emotions, participants described feeling increases in levels of energy and arousal following an inspirational experience. For instance, an amateur footballer described his team's response to a motivational team-talk from their coach: "All of us became more highly aroused and positive before we went out for the second half."

Being inspired led to participants expending greater effort in training and competition (e.g., to reach a new goal). This was highlighted by a national-level martial artist, who wrote:

> It [being inspired by role models' performance] made me want to work hard to the extent that I could play and perform at a similar level. As a result, I have worked very hard, and put in 100% at every training session in order to enhance my skills.

Changes in effort during competition were also experienced as a result of inspiration. Indeed, one amateur rugby player described how, "each member of the team followed the captain's example and put their body on the line."

Ultimately, participants attributed improved performance and success to the experience of inspiration. Indeed, participants proposed that, because of being inspired, performances (e.g., skills displayed during a game) and results improved. For example, one amateur footballer described how his coach's inspirational half-time team-talk proved the catalyst for improved performance, "the performance after the half-time talk was much better and we won 2-1." The effects of inspiration on performance were not

just limited to the specific context (e.g., current game) in which an individual or team were inspired. This was highlighted by another athlete who stated that their manager's intervention, "inspired us and our performances for the rest of the season." While results were seen to improve as a consequence of inspiration, participants also perceived performance following inspiration to be positive; even when the result was negative. For example, following poor performance early during competition, an amateur footballer described:

> We went out for the second half positive and we all put in extra work-rate. We got it back to 2-1 with 20 minutes left and controlled the game. We got an equaliser in the last minute to take the game to extra time. However, we lost the game 3-2 after extra time but [we] still took a great deal from the game.

Inspiration also provided the stimulus for players to improve skill-levels to reach higher-levels of competition. For example, one cricketer attributed achievement of his personal-goal to inspiration, writing, "I am now an academy cricketer."

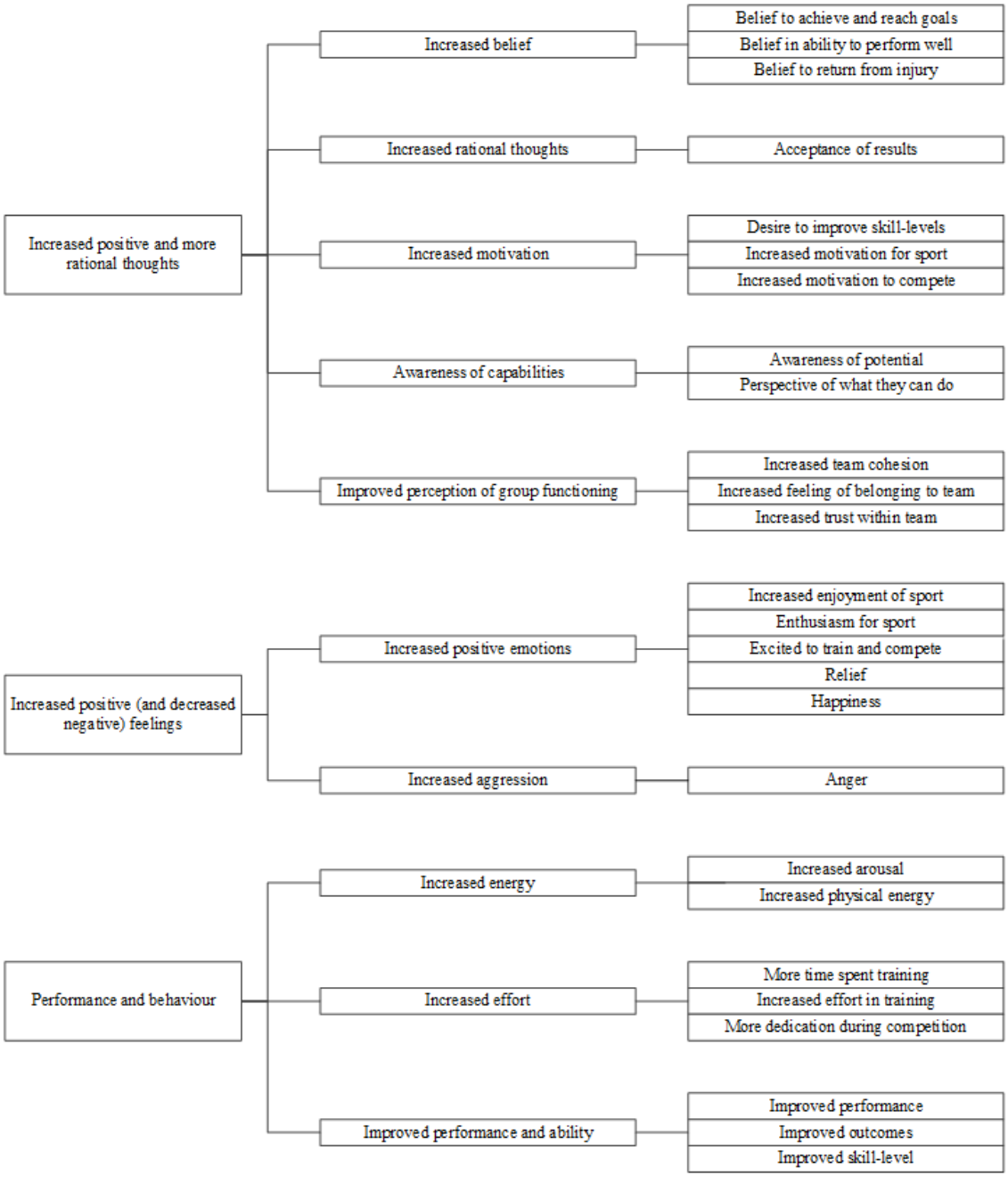


Figure 4.2 Consequences of Inspiration

4.4 Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to provide the first explicit study of inspiration in the sporting context. Specifically, the study aimed to explore and identify (a) what inspires athletes in a sporting context, and (b) the consequences of being inspired. Consistent with propositions outlined in previous literature (cf. Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014), participants perceived inspiration to be a highly emotive and exciting state that can alter perceptions of their or their team's capabilities (in terms of potential or a specific situation) and direct their focus and effort towards a target or goal. Participants indicated that they were inspired by three sources: the self (e.g., an unexpected good performance); role models' accomplishments, characteristics and skills (e.g., an Olympian winning a medal); and displays of leadership (e.g., a coach's team-talk). In addition, participants reported that an experience of inspiration facilitated a range of positive effects on their subsequent thoughts (e.g., increased awareness and belief of their own capabilities), feelings (e.g., heightened sense of enjoyment for sport), and behaviour (e.g., increased effort in training). As such, these findings offer both empirical and applied contributions with regards to how to evoke inspiration in athletes.

Overall, the findings provide support for Thrash and Elliot's (2003, 2004) conceptualisation of inspiration and extend it to the context of sport. A central tenet of the conceptualization is that inspiration results from an "epistemic event in which new or better possibilities are revealed by, or revealed in an evocative stimulus object" (Thrash & Elliot, 2004, p. 959). Such an explanation aligns with perceptions shared in this study, which characterised inspiration in sport as intense feelings of emotion and motivation, an appreciation of something new, a change in cognitions, and a desire to act upon these feelings. The findings also support the tripartite conceptualisation of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) as, in all the inspirational moments described by participants, inspiration was: *evoked* by an external source (e.g., a leader); *transcended* their initial concerns (e.g., moving from a negative to positive state); and increased their awareness of possibilities, and influenced *motivation* as athletes' behaviour was energised and directed (e.g., increased effort to reach potential).

In line with existing literature on inspiration (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, et al., 2014) the present findings suggest that inspiration can be evoked by both intrapsychic and environmental sources. Participants indicated that they were inspired by (a) personal performance, thoughts and accomplishments, (b) interacting with and watching role models, and (c) demonstrations of leadership. When inspired by the self, participants were inspired by surprise or unexpected performances. These findings provide support for Thrash and Elliot's (2003) conceptualisation of inspiration, specifically the transcendence component (whereby individuals are inspired when they gain an awareness of new or better possibilities), and for the findings of Thrash and Elliot (2004) which found that the content of narratives of inspirational experiences involved appreciation of a greater ability to achieve as a result of unexpected success. That is, when an athlete produces a performance which exceeds their perception of their own capabilities, and/or is better than the performances that they have produced previously, they may be inspired as it presents an image of what they are, or may be, capable of in the future. Thus, in order to capitalise on the inspirational potential of excellent athletic personal-performances, sport psychologists and coaches might encourage athletes to attribute the performance to internal and stable factors, such as personal ability, rather than external or unstable factors, such as luck or opponents performing below expectation (Coffee & Rees, 2008).

Participants also attributed inspirational experiences to role models. That is, participants were inspired by the perceived positive characteristics, dedication, and performances of athletes competing at a higher level (e.g., elite athletes). This finding is in line with previous empirical research which has demonstrated that witnessing Michael Jordan performing exceptional skills can lead to inspiration and elevated levels of positive affect (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010), and that exposure to high-performing role models in self-relevant domains can have a positive impact on an individual's perceptions of their own potential (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). From an applied perspective, sporting clubs and national governing bodies may be advised to expose athletes to role models (e.g., invite elite-athletes to training or take athletes to view them in training) in order to provide them with an idea of what is required to reach that level. If the athletes (e.g., athletes in elite-junior squads) do not see the role-model as self-relevant (i.e., the role-model is from a different sport) or if the role-model's

accomplishments are not congruent with the athletes' perception of their future potential then they are less likely to be inspired, and may even suffer from a decrease in motivation (Lockwood & Kunda, 1999). Thus, selection of an appropriate role-model may be important. For example, if an athlete is in an elite-junior football academy, rather than exposing them to club's best foreign player who was not associated with the academy, it may be more profitable, and potentially more inspiring, to expose them to a home-grown player who has come through the same system. However, this may be dependent on age (i.e., the younger a player is the less self-knowledge they are likely to possess) as the negative consequences of upward comparisons to role models only occur when knowledge surrounding one's best self is accessible and when individuals have low self-esteem (Lockwood & Kunda, 1999).

The findings also demonstrated support for the contention that leaders can have an inspiring influence on followers (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011). Indeed, the current findings demonstrated leadership to be the major source of inspiration for athletes in a sporting context. Specifically, participants reported being inspired by verbal (e.g., team-talks) and nonverbal (e.g., setting a positive example) communication and behaviour. As such, these findings further our understanding of inspiration in the leadership context by indicating that in addition to providing a compelling vision of the future (Callow, Smith, Hardy, Arthur, & Hardy, 2009; Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) other leadership behaviours may also be inspiring (e.g., setting an example and providing technical and tactical information). Further, these results provide some support for the proposition that inspirational leadership may come from more than just rousing team-talks (Smith, Young, Figgins, & Arthur, 2017). While some suggestions could be drawn from the current study (e.g., that leaders can utilise team-talks as a way of inspiring athletes) further research is needed to gather more in-depth information regarding the ways in which leaders utilise both verbal and non-verbal behaviour (e.g., what is the content of communication that inspires athletes) to inspire athletes.

Previous research has found inspiration to correlate with self-determined motivation and approach motivation (Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004), performance (e.g., efficiency and productivity Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010), goal progress (Milyavskaya et al., 2012), energy (Hart, 1998), mental toughness (Gucciardi et al., 2015), and positive affect (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010). The present study appears to support these

findings but also extends our understanding of the potential consequences of inspiration in the sporting context. Indeed, participants reported that experiencing inspiration facilitated a range of positive outcomes related to their thoughts (e.g., higher-levels of confidence and motivation), feelings (e.g., increased happiness, higher-levels of arousal, reduced feelings of negativity), and behaviour and performances (e.g., improved performance, increased effort). The unique contribution to the literature regarding the consequences of inspiration relates to the finding that inspiration may enhance group functioning. Specifically, when inspired by leaders in group settings participants reported improved team-bond, trust, and increased connection and identification with their team. These findings provide some support for the findings of previous research which suggests that leadership can improve cohesion (Smith, Arthur, Hardy, Callow, & Williams, 2013). and have an impact upon a team's social identity (Slater, Barker, Coffee, & Jones, 2014). Given that inspiration may lead to these important outcomes, future research should take a more detailed look at how these are facilitated by inspiration.

While research could explore the inspirational potential of personal performances, thoughts, and accomplishments, and interacting with and watching role models, given that many athletes, especially as they progress up the developmental ladder, are exposed to numerous leaders (e.g., coaches, captains, performance directors, and senior players), enhancing the inspirational potential of leaders would appear to hold numerous cognitive, affective, and behavioural benefits for individuals and groups. However, while the findings of this study offer some applied suggestions, the design of this study did not allow for in-depth exploration of how leaders' actions inspired athletes and, thus, further research is needed to investigate what it is leaders do to inspire followers in greater depth (e.g., the specific content of coaches' individual- and team-talks that evoke inspiration). Given that research has demonstrated that leadership behaviours can be taught and developed (e.g., Arthur & Hardy, 2014; Hardy et al., 2010; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2013) findings of such research could not only inform future research but also form the basis of an educational program aimed at enhancing leaders' capacity to inspire their followers.

In summary, to my knowledge, this is the first qualitative study to explore athletes' experiences of inspiration in the context of sport. First and foremost, this study

demonstrates that inspiration is a powerful experience that can be evoked by internal and external sources and can have a profound impact on athletes' participation and performance in sport. The findings identified that athletes may be inspired by a range of sources, including their own performances and cognitions, the performances and accomplishments of role models, and demonstrations of leadership. While it may be possible to influence the way in which athletes evaluate their own performance, and we could recommend that athletes be exposed to role models in order to elicit an experience of inspiration, the inspirational potential of these sources may be limited. Thus, given that leadership permeates all levels of sport, and empirical research has demonstrated that leadership behaviours can be taught (Hardy et al., 2010), using qualitative research to explore the ways in which leaders inspire athletes is an important avenue of future research.

Chapter 5

Review of Literature: Inspirational Leadership

5. Review of Literature: Inspirational Leadership

Findings from Study 1 revealed that athletes' experiences of inspiration were triggered by three main sources: personal performance, thoughts, and accomplishments; interacting with and watching role models; and demonstrations of leadership. While all three sources could prove interesting avenues of further research, the focus of the remainder of this thesis is the ways in which leaders (specifically coaches) inspire athletes in sport. Leadership was chosen because leadership is proposed to be one of the most influential factors for athletes performing in sport (Cruickshank & Collins, 2016), and leader behaviour has been shown to have an impact on psychological variables (e.g., confidence, motivation, and well-being), as well as group and individual success from junior (e.g., Vella et al., 2013) to super-elite level (e.g., Rees et al., 2016).

As stated, future research might look at the self and role models as sources of inspiration, however, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore all three sources in sufficient depth. Thus, the remainder of this thesis will focus on exploring inspirational leadership. Consequently, the following review of literature will focus on existing theory and research on leadership which discuss the potential ways in which leaders inspire followers.

5.1 Leadership

Researchers have long been interested in the psychology of leadership and, consequently, a multitude of conceptualisations and definitions have been developed to encapsulate what leadership is (Gould, Voelker, & Griffes, 2013; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2013). Based upon this extensive research, a number of components have been identified which appear to be central to leadership, which are: (a) leadership is a process; (b) leadership involves influence; (c) leadership occurs in groups; and (d) leadership is focused on striving towards common goals (Northouse, 2015). Consequently, leadership has been broadly defined as a behavioural process which involves influence over/with/through others in individual or group contexts in order to achieve common goals (Barrow, 1977; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016; Northouse, 2015).

In particular, leadership researchers (e.g., Bass, 1985; Hogg, 2001) have sought to identify how effective leaders interact with followers in order to mobilise followers to achieve goals. Such research has led to a plethora of theories explaining how effective leaders influence followers (Vroom & Jago, 2007). While numerous theories have been developed in order to explain leadership, given the findings of Study 1 (i.e., that leaders are a major source of inspiration) and that inspiration can facilitate a range of positive outcomes (see Chapter 2 for details), this review of literature will predominantly focus on theory and research relating to how leaders *inspire* followers. Initially, this review of literature will provide a brief overview of the historical development of leadership theory and, subsequently, an in-depth focus on what theory suggests regarding how leaders inspire.

5.2 Historical development of leadership theory

5.2.1 The trait approach to leadership

Initial research on leadership aimed to identify personality traits that were common in successful leaders, with the aim of establishing what set leaders apart from other individuals (Chelladurai & Saleh, 2007; Slater, Coffee, Barker, & Evans, 2014). This approach to examining leadership termed the "great man" [sic] model of leadership (Haslam et al., 2013) was developed in the 18th Century, whereby historical events were attributed to the genius and vision of great people (Vroom & Jago, 2007). The main premise of this approach was that leaders possess innate (or heritable) intellectual and social characteristics which mark them as superior to others, that these leaders will be effective in all situations, and that leadership characteristics are stable and cannot be developed (Haslam et al., 2013; Zaccaro, 2007). However, the trait approach was criticised for failing to account for the influence of context on leadership behaviour, and was proposed to be too simplistic to comprehend the nuances of leadership (Mann, 1959; Smoll & Smith, 1989; Stogdill, 1948).

5.2.2 The interactional approach to leadership

To address the criticisms of the trait approach, theories of leadership incorporating both situation factors and leader traits were developed (Fiedler, 1964, 1967; Hersey &

Blanchard, 1969). Fiedler (1967) developed the contingency theory of leadership, which proposes that effective leadership is the product of the interaction between leader traits and the favourableness of the situation. Fiedler contends that leaders have stable characteristics (either relationship orientated or task orientated) which are not subject to adaptation, thus, leaders with relationship-focussed or task-focussed orientations are likely to succeed in different situations. Fiedler's theory postulates that leaders should either be placed in a context that is favourable to his or her style or alter the situation to fit with their style (Vroom & Jago, 2007).

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) built on the work of (Fiedler, 1967) by proposing the situational leadership theory. In contrast to the contingency theory, the situational theory suggests that, in order to influence followers, leaders *adapt* their *behaviour* to match the situation. Specifically, the situational theory suggests that leader behaviour (levels of task-orientation and relationship-orientation) should be examined in conjunction with situational determinants of a leader's behaviour (task-relevant maturity of the follower). Task-relevant maturity consists of job maturity, which reflects a follower's ability to perform their job, and psychological maturity, which relates to the follower's motivational state as indicated by their level of self-esteem and confidence. In order to be effective, a leader's behaviour needs to adapt based upon followers' maturity. When a follower has low levels of maturity, effective leadership consists of high levels of task-orientation and low-levels of relationship-orientation. As the follower becomes more proficient (demonstrates increasing levels of maturity) the need for task-orientated support decreases, whereas the need for relationship-orientated support increases. At the highest levels of task-relevant maturity, task-orientated and relationship-orientated leader support is no longer required to facilitate effective follower performance. One criticism of this theory relates to the situational variable used. That is, while the theory highlights behaviours that successful leaders might use in certain situations, the use of one situational variable (maturity of followers) disregards other contextual features which may play a role in the interaction between leader and follower (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Moreover, while the early theories of leadership provide an insight into the complex process of leadership, none offer a comprehensive theory which could be applied to all contexts. However, given the diversity of factors (e.g., personal and contextual) influencing the leadership process, researchers (e.g.,

Smoll & Smith, 1989) proposed that it may be more effective to produce context specific theories of leadership. Subsequently, the interactional approaches to leadership provided the stimulation and guidance for the early theoretical and empirical investigation of leadership in the sporting context.

5.2.3 Initial perspectives on leadership in sport

Initial research examining leadership in sport was divided into two main approaches, the cognitive-mediational model of leadership (Smoll & Smith, 1989; Smoll, Smith, Curtis, & Hunt, 1978) and the multidimensional model of leadership (Chelladurai, 1978, 1990). Smoll and Smith (1989) developed the cognitive-mediational model in youth sport. Specifically, Smoll and Smith added to the leadership literature by proposing that individual difference variables (e.g., coach and athlete characteristics) are of equal importance to overt behaviours and situational factors when it comes to understanding the process of effective leadership. Thus, according to the cognitive-mediational model, the influence a coach's behaviour has on athletes is mediated by athletes' perceptions of coaches' behaviour. The model consists of three fundamental elements: (a) coach behaviours (b) athletes' perceptions and recollections of those behaviours, and (c) players' evaluative reactions. In turn, these three elements are affected by three factors: coach individual difference variables (e.g., coach's goals, behavioural intentions), athlete individual difference variables (e.g., age, self-esteem), and situational factors (e.g., the nature of the sport, level of competition).

While the cognitive-mediational model focussed on leadership in youth sport, the aim of the multidimensional model (Chelladurai, 1978, 1990, 2007) was to explain leadership in adult and elite-level populations. Chelladurai's (1978) model posits that group performance and member satisfaction are a function of three interacting states of leader behaviour: required behaviour, whereby the demands placed by situational characteristics (e.g., type of task, context of the group) dictate the appropriate behaviour of the leader; preferred behaviour, which relates to athletes' preferences for instruction and guidance, social support, and feedback; and actual behaviour, which is a function of the leader's characteristics and represents the real behaviour displayed by the coach. In turn, these three states are determined by the antecedents of the leader's characteristics (e.g., years of experience), the athlete's characteristics (e.g., skill level), and the

situation (e.g., type of sport). A central tenet of this theory is that outcome variables (e.g., group performance, member satisfaction) will be influenced by the degree of congruence between the required behaviour, the preferred behaviour and the actual behaviour. Thus, if a leader's behaviour matches that required by the situation and matches the behaviour preferred by followers Chelladurai's model predicts that followers will be more motivated and satisfied.

Though the cognitive-mediational model and multidimensional model have extended our knowledge of leadership in sport, Duda (2001) proposed that neither model incorporates variables reflecting motivational processes that stem from contemporary theories of motivation. As such, Chelladurai (2001, 2007) revised the multidimensional model of leadership to incorporate the behaviours of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985); which has been shown to influence follower motivation (Charbonneau, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001). Subsequently, contemporary research exploring leadership in sport (e.g., Arthur, Woodman, Ong, Hardy, & Ntoumanis, 2011; Callow et al., 2009; Rowold, 2006) has primarily utilised Transformational Leadership theory as a framework for examining the impact of leadership behaviour in sport.

5.2.4 Transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership research focusses on exploring how some leaders are able to facilitate exceptional performance from followers. While a number of theories of leadership (e.g., servant leadership, self-sacrificial leadership, social identity leadership) have been developed since the situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) none have proved as popular or been applied as widely in different contexts as transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985); indeed, since its inception transformational leadership has been cited as the most widely used theory of leadership in the organisational context (Lowe & Gardner, 2000).[10] Transformational leadership

[10] Lowe and Gardner (2000) reported that between 1990 and 2000 transformational and charismatic leadership made up a third of all research accepted in The Leadership Quarterly. Further, I conducted a Web of Science search (in April 2018) using 'transformational leadership' in the title term, which produced 1341 citations, with 204 of those having a publication date of 2017 or 2018. This figure was much higher than other major leadership theories including ethical leadership (486), servant leadership (258), social identity leadership (45), visionary leadership (45), and self-sacrificial leadership (5).

has sought to explain how leaders are able to inspire followers to perform beyond expectations (Bass, 1985). Further, transformational leadership is of particular interest to this review of literature as inspiration is central to the theory. That is, transformational leaders are proposed to *inspire* followers and one of the key transformational behaviours is termed *inspirational motivation*.

Initially, Burns (1978) developed the theory of transforming leadership.[11] Based upon observations in politics, Burns argued that leadership is about more than satisfying followers' wants or needs in exchange for cooperation. Rather, Burns suggested that true leadership results from an ability to inspire followers to carry out tasks through choice, rather than a sense of obligation, because followers believe that what they are doing is right and serves a higher purpose. Bass (1985) built upon the work of Burns (1978) in the organisational context in order to address shortcomings within prevailing theories of leadership, which had predominantly focused on transactional behaviours where follower behaviour is regulated by exchanges with the leader (e.g., working overtime for monetary incentives). Bass argued that a new framework was required to comprehend how leaders inspire followers to transcend self-interest for the good of their organisation in order to achieve and exceed organisational goals.

To develop his theory of transformational leadership, Bass (1985) conducted an open-ended survey with 70 male senior industrial executives. In this pilot study the executives were provided with the following description of a transformational leader:

> Someone who raised their awareness about issues of consequence, shifted them to higher-level needs, influenced them to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group or organisation, and to work harder than they originally had expected (Bass, 1985, p.29) .

Following this, the executives were asked to describe someone whom they had encountered in their own careers who fitted all or part of the description. The executives identified at least one person who fitted the description (e.g., former boss or family member). The transformational leaders identified were seen to work long hours and do

[11] This has since been termed transformational leadership and will be referred to as such herein.

more than they ever expected to do. The executives reported working more hours, putting in more effort, having increased motivation to develop, and greater belief in the organisation because of their leaders' behaviour. In addition, the executives reported having increased trust, strong liking, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader. Based upon these findings, Bass theorised that while transactional behaviours may have positive short-term consequences, transformational leadership is likely to have a greater long-term influence on followers' levels of effort, creativity and productivity.

Bass (1985) utilised the findings from the open-ended survey in conjunction with a review of the leadership literature to inform his conceptualisation of transformational leadership. Subsequently, Bass conceptualised transformational leadership as comprising four key behaviours: (a) idealised influence, where leaders enthuse pride in followers, set a good example for followers, and earn followers' respect by behaving in ways that maximise values; (b) inspirational motivation, where leaders develop, articulate and inspire others with their vision for the future; (c) intellectual stimulation, where leaders actively encourage followers to challenge commonly held assumptions about their work and be creative in producing solutions to problems; and (d) individualised consideration, where leaders display consideration for the unique needs and desires of each individual. Despite being defined separately, these four components of transformational leadership have often been shown to be highly correlated (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995). Therefore, Bass and Riggio (2006) suggest that leaders who display one component of transformational leadership are also likely to exhibit others.[12]

Most research examining transformational leadership theory has been conducted in organisational settings. Such research has shown transformational leadership to be associated with range of positive outcomes, such as increased well-being (e.g., Barling, Loughlin, & Kelloway, 2002), improved self-efficacy (e.g., Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), improved commitment and satisfaction (e.g., Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Fuller, Morrison, Jones, Bridger, & Brown, 1999; Walumbwa, Orwa, Wang, & Lawler, 2005), and enhanced performance (e.g., Keller,

[12] Recent research and critiques suggest that these high intercorrelations are, in fact, due to poorly defined constructs and measurement issues (Callow et al., 2009; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

2006; Lim & Ployhart, 2004). However, notwithstanding the plethora of positive findings associated with transformational leadership in organisational settings, Charbonneau et al. (2001) suggested that the utility of the theory could be enhanced if it was applied to and validated in other contexts. Accordingly, leadership researchers (e.g., Yukl, 2002) proposed that transformational leadership could be a useful framework through which to explore the behaviour of leaders in the sporting context.

5.2.5 Transformational leadership in sport

Since the year 2000 researchers (e.g., Arthur et al., 2011; Callow et al., 2009; Rowold, 2006) have extended the theory of transformational leadership to sport. In general, research examining transformational leadership in sport has been dominated by quantitative approaches examining the impacts of transformational leadership using correlational designs (Arthur & Tomsett, 2015). This research has shown transformational leadership to be associated with a range of psychological and performance-related variables including, enhanced team- and task- cohesion (e.g., Callow et al., 2009; Cronin, Arthur, Hardy, & Callow, 2015), increased intrinsic motivation (Charbonneau et al., 2001), increased effort (Rowold, 2006), positive perceptions of leader effectiveness and athlete satisfaction with the leader (Zacharatos, Barling, & Kelloway, 2000), and improved performance (Bormann & Rowold, 2016). In addition to the relationship with psychological and performance-related variables, transformational leadership has also been found to be associated with greater prosocial follower behaviour (e.g., less aggressive behaviour; Tucker, Turner, Barling, & McEvoy, 2010), and to have a positive relationship with well-being and need satisfaction (Stenling & Tafvelin, 2013).

Research has also identified variables that mediate and or moderate the impact of transformational leadership. For instance, Smith et al. (2013) found intrateam communication to mediate the relationship between individual consideration, fostering acceptance of group goals, and task cohesion. In addition, Stenling and Tafvelin (2013) investigated the potential of need satisfaction to mediate the transformational leadership-well-being relationship. Findings revealed that the positive impact of transformational leadership on athletes' well-being was mediated by athletes' levels of need satisfaction. Cronin et al. (2015) aimed to address a gap in the transformational

leadership literature by testing a central proposition of the theory that transformational leaders facilitate self-sacrifice within followers. The results revealed inside sacrifice to mediate the relationship between the transformational behaviours and task cohesion. Taken together these findings suggest that transformational leaders can have an indirect impact on outcomes by enhancing intrateam communication, satisfying the needs of followers, and facilitating self-sacrifice among followers.

In the first study to explore moderators of transformational leadership in sport, Arthur et al. (2011) explored the effect of follower narcissism on the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' levels of leader-inspired extra effort. Multilevel analyses revealed the relationships between high performance expectations and effort, and fostering acceptance of group goals and effort to be moderated by athlete narcissism. Bormann, Schulte-Coerne, Diebig, and Rowold (2016) examined the moderating potential of players' win orientation and teams' competitive performance on the transformational leadership behaviour-performance relationship. The findings broadly revealed articulating a vision to have a positive effect on team-level performance, providing an appropriate model to have a negative effect on team-level performance, with high performance expectations and intellectual stimulation shown to have no effect on performance. Specifically, while its effect was seen to be independent of both moderating variables, articulating a vision's strongest effect was seen when win-orientation and competitive performance were low. In contrast, when both moderating variables were low, providing an appropriate model was shown to have a negative impact on team-level performance. Finally, intellectual stimulation had a positive impact on performance when both moderating variables were high. Broadly, these findings suggest that leaders need to be cognisant of contextual factors (e.g., athlete personality, recent performances) to ensure that their behaviour is appropriate for the situation.

5.2.6 Transformational leadership and inspiration

Based upon transformational leadership theory, leaders are proposed to be able to inspire followers by articulating an exciting vision of the future and sacrificing their own self-interests for the good of the group (Bass, 1982). Specifically, we could assume that the transformational behaviours interact to produce inspiration. Interestingly,

though, no research has examined whether transformational leadership is associated with inspiration (i.e., by examining the relationship between transformational behaviours and a measure of inspiration). However, links between the conceptualisation of inspiration and transformational leadership can be made. For instance, the *transcendence* characteristic of inspiration suggests that individuals may be inspired by an evocative stimulus that makes them aware of better possibilities. Thus, a leader who articulates an exciting vision of the future may well inspire their followers. However, while links can be made between transformational leadership and inspiration theory, transformational leadership theory does not explicitly explain how leaders inspire followers. In particular, little is known regarding the full process through which leaders inspire followers; that is, how personal-factors, contextual-factors, and leader behaviours interact in order to facilitate inspiration.

5.2.7 Theoretical issues with transformational leadership

There are several conceptual and theoretical issues with transformational leadership theory highlighted by contemporary reviews of transformational leadership (Arthur, Bastardoz, & Eklund, 2017; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). The conceptualisation of transformational leadership suffers from a lack of clear and consistent definition and underpinning theory that explains what transformational leadership is (e.g., what identifies some elements of leadership as transformational and others not), and a rationale that explains how transformational leadership exerts an influence on outcomes (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Arthur, Bastardoz, & Eklund, 2017). To highlight the theoretical issues, transformational leadership research has been beset by measurement issues. For example, while the MLQ-5X has been the most popular instrument to measure transformational leadership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013), criticisms surrounding the factorial and discriminant validity have led researchers to questions its usefulness (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Specifically, research utilizing the MLQ-5X often finds high intercorrelations between dimensions and in some cases (e.g., Zacharatos, Barling, & Kelloway, 2000) the dimensions are collapsed into one over-arching transformational leadership measure due to high intercorrelation between the four supposedly distinct dimensions, and as such does not support the proposed multidimensionality of transformational leadership.

Arthur et al. (2017) highlight that transformational leadership utilises tautological definitions, whereby transformational leaders are described based upon their impacts on followers. This is problematic as confusing transformational leadership with its outcomes prevents the transformational leadership construct from being used as an independent variable in quantitative research (Arthur et al., 2017). The inspirational motivation dimension of transformational leadership provides an example of this issue. Transformational leadership proposes inspiration to be both part of its constituent dimensions (i.e., inspirational motivation) and a potential mediator of the behaviour-outcome relationship (e.g., Arthur et al., 2012). Indeed, that a behaviour proposed to inspire followers is termed inspirational motivation is an issue because inspiration is a response not a stimulus (cf. Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014). As such, Arthur et al. propose that the theory remains vague as it does not outline how leaders are able to effect (e.g., inspire) followers. In accord with this, Cruickshank and Collins (2016) propose that, while transformational leadership has been the most popular framework to explore leadership in sport, it provides little to inform day-to-day practices of leaders or how and when leaders can employ transformational behaviours. Thus, theoretical clarification is required to advance understanding of how leaders inspire.

The aforementioned limitations serve to highlight issues with the development of transformational leadership theory. Specifically, transformational leadership theory was initially developed by Burns (1978) based upon his observations of political leaders. While observation can be used to inform leadership theory development (Shamir, 2011), attributing effective leadership based upon researcher interpretations alone is a limitation because followers (those that *experience* "leadership") are best placed to explain why and how leaders are effective or not. In addition, as outlined earlier, when building upon Burns' theory, Bass (1985) sought the perspectives of 70 male senior industrial executives, who were asked to describe someone who fitted a description provided by Bass. While this in some way considers the perceptions of followers, the use of a prescribed description of effective leadership is a limitation because it potentially biases participants' responses and does not allow for other potentially important behaviours or factors to be discussed. Having said that, transformational leadership has proved useful in extending our knowledge of leadership. Thus, it may be useful to explore and develop the key facets of transformational leadership to further

our understanding of leadership (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Given how central inspiration is to transformational leadership theory, and the positive influence inspiration has been shown to have on a range of outcomes (e.g., motivation, goal attainment, productivity, and wellbeing), research could use inspiration as its central focus to explore leadership.

5.3 Inspirational leadership

In a recent survey conducted by Zenger and Folkman (2014, July 30), 332,860 managers, peers, and subordinates rated "inspiring and motivating others" as the leadership skill which has the greatest impact on a leader's success. Indeed, examination of the terms used to define different theories of effective leadership demonstrates that inspiration has been synonymous with leadership for many years (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011). However, despite the strong emphasis on leaders being a source of inspiration within leadership theory, as outlined previously, knowledge surrounding the mechanisms through which leaders inspire followers is limited (Frese, Beimel, & Schoenborn, 2003; Mio, Riggio, Levin, & Reese, 2005). Further, there has been little in the way of research explicitly exploring how and what leaders do to inspire followers.

5.3.1 Research exploring inspirational leadership

While inspirational leadership has been acknowledged within the existing leadership research, only one study has explicitly investigated the ways in which leaders inspire followers. Searle and Hanrahan (2011) aimed to analyse the personal and lived experiences of inspiring leaders. Searle and Hanrahan interviewed seven leaders (who were nominated as being inspirational by one or more followers) from a range of contexts (e.g., Public sector CEO, Olympic Coach) concerning their experience of inspiration in the leadership process. Specifically, Searle and Hanrahan focused on a series of broad topics: leaders' experiences of inspiring others, the potential for leaders to intentionally inspire others, the moment of inspiration, and results of inspiring moments. Based upon the findings Searle and Hanrahan (2011) proposed a model of the inspirational process (see figure 4.1). Analysis of the interviews revealed participants' responses to merge into five key dimensions of leading to inspire others: connecting, leading, inspiree, action, and context. The findings indicated that in order for

inspiration to occur there must first be a connection between the leader and the follower. Connection occurs when: (a) there is congruence between the "belief systems" of the leader and the followers, whereby the followers can identify with and understand the values of the leader; (b) leaders communicate with followers (e.g., by telling personal stories) to demonstrate their humility; and (c) leaders create a collective vision in collaboration with their followers. In terms of leading, leaders proposed that it was possible to intentionally alter their behaviour to inspire their followers, but for this to happen the leader must seize the opportune moment. Leaders also recognised the importance of the inspiree in the process, suggesting that for inspiration to occur inspirees must have a burning desire (e.g., goals that they wish to achieve) for the cause. In accord with previous research (e.g., Hart, 1998; Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash & Elliot, 2004), the findings suggested that inspiration occurs in a moment and that being inspired leads to measurable forms of action from followers. Finally, the context is fundamental to the inspirational process. That is, leaders must develop situations in which inspiration is likely to occur by firstly cultivating an environment where followers feel valued and comfortable to express themselves. Following this, leaders proposed that it is possible to recognise and create situations to inspire followers. Broadly these findings suggest that leaders can intentionally inspire followers. Thus, sport, where the opportunities for leaders to interact with and influence followers are plentiful, would appear to provide a platform to examine inspirational leadership.

Though Searle and Hanrahan (2011) have provided the first study of inspirational leadership the study is not without its limitations. While the model identifies some factors involved in the process of leading to inspire others, limited detail is provided regarding the specific elements involved within each dimension of the process. Perhaps this lack of detail could be due to sample used. For instance, although the leaders in the study were proposed as inspirational by followers, it may be that their perceptions of why they are inspiring do not match the perceptions of followers. Thus, future research investigating the construct of inspiration from the perspective of the followers is warranted in order to further understand the process of inspiration and compare the perceptions of both leaders and followers.

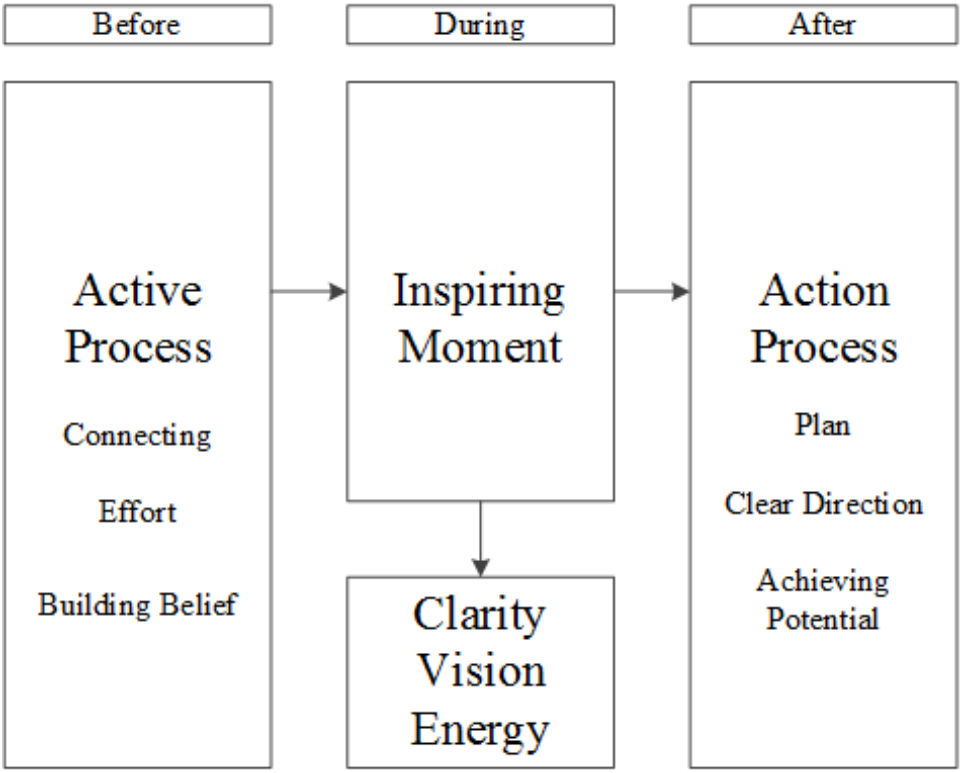


Figure 5.1 A model to show the process of inspiring others (Adapted from Searle & Hanrahan, 2011).

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the one study to explore inspirational leadership in sport, Gonzalez et al. (2011) sought to examine the impact of a coach's pep talk on athletes' perceived levels of inspiration and motivation. While the findings demonstrated that athletes who viewed the fictitious inspirational video clip reported higher levels of inspiration, the study provides little information which coaches can use to try and inspire athletes. Specifically, Gonzalez et al. did not ask participants to provide reasons as to why they perceived the coach's speech to be inspiring. It may have been perceived as inspiring due to the content of the speech and/or the way the speech was delivered but the research design precludes such a conclusion. While this research poses an interesting research question as to whether leaders can be trained to communicate in an inspiring way, first, we must understand what it is that leaders do to inspire by exploring athletes lived experiences of being inspired by leaders.

5.4 Summary and aims of the remaining studies

To date, theories of leadership have paid limited attention to inspiration in the leadership process. Rather research and theories have often loosely incorporated the word "inspiration" to describe the effects of leadership or to define behaviours exhibited by exceptional leaders (e.g., inspirational motivation is a behaviour associated with Transformational Leadership; Bass, 1985) without considering what inspiration is. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, researchers (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003) have now conceptualised inspiration and demonstrated it to be a state (i.e., an outcome rather than a behaviour) that can be experienced by an individual as a result of being evoked by external stimuli (e.g., another person). Considering this, it is conceivable that leaders can be inspiring (an assertion supported by the findings presented in Study 1), however, leadership research has yet to fully explain how leaders inspire followers.

Current knowledge surrounding the mechanisms through which leaders inspire followers is limited. What we know about inspirational leadership in sport is based around research on transformational leadership theory. However, problems with the development and underpinning theory have limited the theoretical and applied understanding gained from transformational leadership in relation to how leaders inspire. In addition, the one study that has explicitly explored inspirational leadership (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) is limited because it has explored the phenomenon from the perspective of leaders; who may be inspirational but unaware of how they inspire followers. Thus, research is needed to explore leadership, with inspiration as the central focus. Indeed, given that the sporting context is "replete with examples and anecdotes of inspirational coaches that have led teams to success" (Arthur et al., 2012, p. 1), it would appear that examining this phenomenon in sport could help further this somewhat untapped area of research. Based upon this, research is needed to explore athlete experiences of inspirational leadership in order to understand the behaviours and actions leaders engage in to inspire athletes. To that end, the aim of the remainder of this thesis is to explore how leaders inspire followers and what impact this has on followers. It is hoped that this will enable the development of a theory of inspirational leadership which can be utilised to inform education programmes aimed at developing leaders'

inspirational potential. Thus, the following broad aims for the remainder of the thesis were generated:

1) Understand how leaders inspire followers.

2) Identify the consequences of inspirational leadership.

3) Advance leadership theory and practice by producing a grounded theory that explains the process of inspirational coach-leadership (this aim is specific to study 3).

Chapter 6

Study 2: A qualitative exploration of athletes' experiences of inspirational coach-leadership[13]

[13] This chapter was accepted as part of a two-study paper for publication as;

Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Sellars, C.N.+, Greenlees, I.A.*, & Knight, C.J.+ (2016). "You really could be something quite special": A qualitative exploration of athletes' experiences of being inspired in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *24*, 82-91.

*Supervisor – Advised on preparation and write up of the thesis, paper, and presentation.

+Collaborator – Advised on write up and analysis of results for the paper and presentation.

6. Study 2: A qualitative exploration of athletes' experiences of inspirational coach-leadership.

6.1 Introduction

A review of the leadership literature demonstrates that the term inspiration has been viewed as synonymous with leadership for many years (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011). Indeed, many theories of leadership (e.g., transformational leadership) propose inspiration to be a central facet of effective leadership (Clemens & Mayer, 1999; Seligman, 2004). The findings of Study 1 support such a contention identifying demonstrations of leadership as a source (with personal performance, thoughts, and accomplishments; and interacting with and watching role models the other two sources identified) of inspiration for the participants sampled. Despite this, research has suggested that there is a paucity of inspiring leaders and little is known regarding the mechanisms through which leaders inspire followers (Frese et al., 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2006). That is, limited knowledge is available surrounding what leaders do to inspire athletes in a sporting context.

In the only study to explicitly examine inspiration in the leadership process to date, Searle and Hanrahan (2011) interviewed seven leaders from a range of contexts about their experience of inspiring followers. Findings suggested that inspiration occurs in a moment and that being inspired leads to measurable forms of outcome from followers. The findings also suggested that leaders can intentionally alter their behaviour to inspire their followers by seizing the "opportune moment". However, while Searle and Hanrahan's model (see Figure 4.1) offers a broad outline of inspirational leadership a number of questions remain. For instance, we still know little regarding what the leader *does* during the inspirational moment to inspire followers and what specifically happens *after* an inspirational moment (e.g., the specific consequences of being inspired). In addition, while the leaders interviewed were proposed to be inspirational they may not be consciously aware of how they inspire followers. Further, in one of the only studies to explore inspiration in sport, Gonzalez et al. (2011) found that a coach's emotional team-talk was more likely to evoke higher levels of inspiration than team talks involving technical or tactical information. However, the study did not

identify what it was about the coach's speech that inspired athletes. Thus, further exploratory research is required to understand, from athletes' perspectives, what leaders do to inspire athletes.

While Study 1 provided some information surrounding the ways in which athletes are inspired by leaders, the major aim of the study was to explore the sources of inspiration for athletes and, thus, the information gleaned is limited. Consequently, the aim of this study was to build on initial research (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) on inspirational leadership by exploring athletes' experiences of inspirational leadership. Coaches were chosen as the leadership role of interest as 31 participants in Study 1 identified coaches as providing inspiring leadership; compared to 11 instances of inspiring captaincy, and 10 instances of inspiring peer-leadership. In addition, research on leadership and coaching has identified that coaches play a vital role in the development, participation, performance and satisfaction of athletes and teams (e.g., Appleton, Ntoumanis, Quested, Viladrich, & Duda, 2016). Specifically, this study aimed to explore (a) the behaviours and actions coaches demonstrate in order to inspire athletes, (b) the situations in which athletes are inspired, and (c) the outcomes associated with inspirational coach-leadership.

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Design and philosophical perspective

As with Study 1, as the aim was to gain descriptive information about athletes' experiences of inspirational coach-leadership, this study took a qualitative descriptive approach (Sandelowski, 2000) to the research question and was underpinned by critical realism (cf. Wiltshire, 2018).

6.2.2 Participants

To be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to: (a) be able to identify a coach that they had perceived to inspire them during their careers; and (b) be willing to share their thoughts, opinions and inspirational experiences of these coaches in an interview. Specifically, participants who were on a University sport scholarship scheme were approached. While this may have limited the 'generalisability' of the

findings to the wider sporting population (e.g., to those at grass-roots, amateur, and super-elite levels), this approach was taken because participants performing at higher levels of sport are likely to have more access to, and interaction with, coaches (e.g., through greater volume of training), have more experiences of coach-leadership to call upon and, thus, enhance the richness of the data gained.

Consequently, the sample consisted of four male and four female National and International standard athletes aged between 18 and 34 years (M = 22.6, SD = 6.5). Participants had an average of 7.6 years (SD = 4.4) experience of competing in their sport and reported being White British. The participants competed in a range of individual and team sports including: hockey, running, triathlon, sailing, trampolining, athletics, tabletennis, windsurfing. Written informed consent was gained from all participants prior to commencement of the interviews.

6.2.3 Procedure

Following institutional ethical approval, participants were contacted via telephone or email to enquire into their interest in taking part in the study. Participants were informed that their involvement in the study would require them to take part in one interview during which they would be asked to discuss their experience of inspirational coach-leadership.

Prior to commencement of the main study, a pilot interview was conducted with one participant (an athlete from a team sport context) to evaluate and refine the content and clarity of the initially developed interview guide. The interview was transcribed verbatim and examined to check the suitability of the interview guide. Following analysis of, and reflection upon, the pilot interview, revisions were made to the semi-structured interview guide and as such a more open-ended interview guide was formed. Specifically, interviews with the main participant pool were centred on situations in which the coach inspired them. These were noted down and used as the basis for the interview. Specifically, the situations were noted on a whiteboard and then used to prompt participant responses related to these moments.

The interviews were conducted as conversations using open-ended questions. Before the interview started, participants were provided with information regarding the

purpose of the study, the ways in which confidentiality would be ensured and their right to withdraw at any time. Participants were also provided an opportunity to confirm their understanding of the study, and complete a consent form, before voluntarily proceeding with the interview. The interview began with introductory questions (e.g., tell us about your major achievements and highlights of your career in your sport) which aimed to gain an understanding of the participants' background and aid the development of rapport between the interviewer and participant. Participants were then asked to talk generally about the inspirational coaches they had experienced in their careers. Next, participants were asked to identify moments in which they were inspired by their coach, explaining what happened leading up to these moments, what happened in the moments themselves, and the impacts of these inspirational moments. Finally, participants were able to share any other information they deemed pertinent to the study. During the interview the interviewer asked probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences of inspirational coach behaviour (e.g., why was that [moment] inspirational for you?). All interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted between 45 and 105 minutes (M = 86. 36, SD = 20.32) and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher.

6.2.4 Data Analysis

An inductive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase procedure (see Table 3.1), was used to analyse the data within this study. Initially, the transcripts were read and re-read by the lead researcher to ensure familiarity with the data and initial analytic reflective statements of the data were made (e.g., 'prior to inspiration the athlete appeared to be in an uncertain state of mind regarding how to progress in that situation'). These initial statements were then used to facilitate initial inductive coding. The codes were then refined and sorted into broader themes relating to the inspirational moment, the consequences of being inspired, and factors that influence athletes' perceptions of their coach. Following this, key themes were identified that best represented the essence of each candidate theme.

6.2.5 Methodological Rigour

Consistent with Study 1, this study integrated a number of steps to ensure methodological rigour and ensure that the study met the criteria for qualitative description. For instance, authenticity was enhanced through the use of an audit trail to ensure clarity to enhance the transparency of the work (Tracy, 2010). The aim of which was to provide a clear and detailed account of decisions and activities relating to the on-going research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This decision making process was maintained by me and regularly scrutinised by two further researchers. Further, authenticity was enhanced through the use of a reflexive journal. The use of a reflexive journal has been proposed as an efficacious tool through which to acknowledge the way in which the researcher's involvement can shape the research process, as well as help the researcher focus on the developing method and content of the study (Culver, Gilbert, & Sparkes, 2012; Etherington, 2004; Sparkes & Smith, 2012). In this instance, the notes referred to my subjective feelings, reflections on the interview process and emerging themes following each interview. Reflections were used to increase my awareness of my own subjectivities during the research process and to assess the interviews and data analysis, and aided the on-going refinement of the interview guide. To further aid critical reflection, emerging findings were regularly presented to two other researchers. The role of these colleagues was to act as "critical friends" throughout the research process in order to provide a theoretical sounding board to encourage reflection surrounding the interpretation of data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This role required the colleagues to reflect upon my decisions and interpretations, and challenge my assumptions and emerging themes.

6.3 Results

In the following sections the categories that depict the participants' experiences of inspirational leadership are presented. The results from the thematic analysis are organised and presented in three sections. First, details surrounding inspirational moments experienced by the participants are reported. Second, consequences of inspirational leadership are presented. Third, though not a pre-set aim of this study, factors that influence athletes' perceptions of their leader are discussed. In each section,

themes are presented, and salient quotations are included to represent the experiences of the participant.

6.3.1 The inspirational moment

Participants discussed a variety of instances in which they had been inspired by their coach (referred to as inspirational moments). These moments happened in a range of situations and inspiration was evoked by different leadership behaviours and actions. As such, this section is divided into two sections outlining (a) the context prior to inspiration and (b) the leader actions which inspired the participants

Context prior to being inspired. Participants reported being inspired in a range of scenarios (see Figure 5.1 for details). For example, prior to being inspired participants reported experiencing situations that could have had potentially negative consequences (e.g., following injury or training in adverse weather conditions). This was illustrated by one participant who recalled how an argument with his coach had preceded inspirational leadership:

> Something went on that prompted a response [from me] . . . we were both really annoyed that it wasn't going well, and we'd had quite a big clash. I was nearly in tears at the time as I was so angry.

Performance outcomes (both positive and negative) were another catalyst for inspirational coach behaviour or action. For example, inspirational moments were preceded by negative performance either during training and competition. This was highlighted by one participant who stated, "before that [the inspirational coach behaviour] we were 3-1 down and everyone was getting deflated".

Participants reported experiencing a range of negative cognitions prior to being inspired, describing feelings of uncertainty relating to their own potential, how to progress and their ability to cope with the demands of a situation. For instance, one participant stated:

> I was like "I'm not going to be able to do it." It was like fifty eight miles and there were like fifty eight hills, massive horrible hills . . . I was really, really nervous, thinking "there's no way I can do this. I'm going to fail."

In addition, participants reported lacking confidence and motivation prior to being inspired by their coaches, as highlighted by one participant who said, "people just seemed not to be motivated . . . in our minds we were thinking 'they're much older than us, they're just going to smash us'." In addition, participants also noted feeling a range of negative emotions (e.g., frustration, worry, and anger) prior to a moment of inspiration. For instance, following poor performance one participant described feeling, "a bit stressed and angry, and a bit depressed."

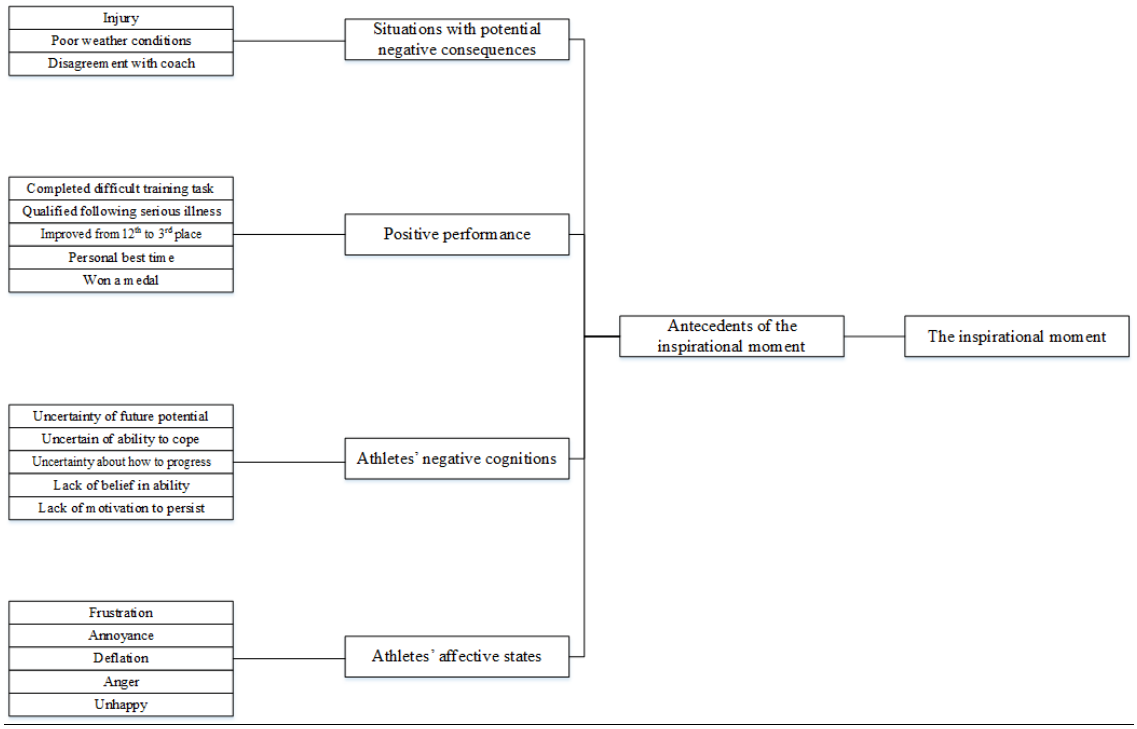


Figure 6.1 Antecedents of the inspirational moment.

Leading to Inspire Athletes. The coaches discussed in the study demonstrated a range of behaviours and actions that were proposed to evoke inspiration (see Figure 5.2). Indeed, coaches evoked inspiration in participants through verbal and nonverbal communication, which included praising and supporting athletes, displaying positive emotional reactions to participants' performances, and by setting a positive example for participants to follow. Specifically, the means through which coaches inspired the participants centred around six themes: Setting a positive example; showing the way

forward; direct expressions of belief; behaviour perceived to demonstrate belief; emotional reaction; and showing support.

Setting a positive example. Coaches inspired participants by providing an example for them to follow in terms of behaviour and characteristics, and performance during competition and training. For instance, participants discussed moments where they were inspired by seeing their leader train, compete, and display exceptional effort. Indeed, one participant perceived seeing their coach perform to be an inspirational moment during his career saying, "Seeing [the coach] compete was inspirational . . . he was amazing; he could beat everyone with his left-hand even though he doesn't play left-handed."

Participants also reported that coaches cultivated opportunities to be inspired. For example, three participants described instances during where they were inspired when their coach provided opportunities for athletes to train with or meet high-level coaches and athletes from their sport. One athlete recalled when another coach with Olympic experience was brought in:

> [The coach] had a lot of contacts and was able to bring people at different levels in to show us what we had to do to get to that next level . . . we had an ex-Olympian come in. He was a great coach and very specific because he's got a lot of experience, he's been in the position we're in. So, it was really interesting to see his ideas.

Showing the Way Forward. All participants reported being inspired by coaches expressing or communicating a strategy to help them move forwards when they were unsure how to proceed (e.g., means to counter uncertain competitive situations, ways to progress, or outlining a vision of an athlete's potential). This could be both short-term and long-term in nature. For instance, with regards to the short-term, coaches provided technical instruction, provided information and demonstrated support when athletes were lacking belief or struggling to cope with the demands of a competitive or training situation. For example, one participant described how her coach inspired her team at half-time by providing technical instruction when they did not know how to compete against difficult opponents:

> [The coach] talked to us about positioning . . . he focussed on specific positional skills, like what the defence needed to do and what the forwards needed to do. Instead of the defence just trying to go straight to the forwards, maybe passing it around and that triggered what we had done in training previously and what had happened in previous matches as well.

Direct Expression of Belief. Participants were also inspired by their coaches' direct expressions of belief which related to participants' potential for future successes and growth, their ability to cope with the demands of a given situation, and expressing higher expectations for the participants. For example, one participant recalled his coach's reaction to a personal best performance early in their career, "Wow! If you've improved that much then you really could be something quite special, quite soon and we must come up with some ideas of how we can improve you." Another participant recalled how her coach expressed belief in her ability to perform better following a frustrating performance by saying, "I know you are frustrated but I know you can do better." Coaches also provided a vision of what participants could achieve in the long-term. For instance, following winning his first medal one participants recalled how the coach outlined further successes that he could achieve: "We reflected on five years and he said 'you've come from twelfth to third. If you do that for another three years you could be winning'."

Behaviour Perceived to Demonstrate Belief. In addition to the direct expressions of belief, Participants also discussed being inspired by behaviours which they perceived to demonstrate their coaches' belief in them. For example, participants were inspired by coaches encouraging them to be more positive (e.g., about their own performances) and when making personal sacrifices to aid participants' development (e.g., giving up personal time to train or support athletes). This was illustrated by one participant's perception of his coach turning up to train him individually despite adverse weather conditions, "the belief, that [the coach] had belief in me. That [the coach] was willing to come down in the snow to train just me, I must have had potential." Similarly, leaders attending competitions to support participants were perceived as demonstrations of belief. As one participant described:

> So he's [the coach] driven all that way just to come and see me and help me. He actually wants to be here; it's not like he's been told to be here . . . I could tell that he believed in me, I knew he wanted to work with me and get the best out of me.

Emotional Reaction to Performance. Inspiration was also drawn from coaches' positive emotional responses to the participants' performances. Generally the coaches were perceived to display positive emotions (e.g., pride, happiness, and excitement) following positive participant performance. For instance, when recalling their coach's reaction to a performance one participant stated, "he [the coach] had a massive grin and elevated voice tone . . . he was happy, he was pleased, he was excited for me." Conversely, following positive performance one participant recalled how their coach displayed a serious expression when outlining his potential, "he kept a very serious, straight face . . . he had like a half smile, as if to say well done, then he put a very serious face on, said that to me [this is what I've been expecting from you]."

Showing Support. Three participants also found coaches' displays of emotional support to be inspiring. Coaches demonstrated their understanding of participants' feelings in difficult circumstances by discussing the participants' concerns and providing support during these moments. For instance, following a difficult build up to the competition and poor performance, which led to feelings of frustration, one participant recalled the coach saying:

> "We both know that the training prior to it wasn't ideal, wasn't what you wanted … it's not the end of the world." He [the coach] did sympathise with me at that point and said, "I know you're frustrated; I know you're going to do better."

Coaches' ability to recognise their own failings was also deemed to inspire participants. For example, following an argument which could have impacted on their relationship, one participant reported being inspired by his coach apologising to his mother:

> [The coach] apologised to my mum first for getting angry, because he said "I'm a man, he's just a sixteen-year-old boy, I shouldn't have got angry at him" … he

> was able to go back and say “look, I was wrong, you’re right, we’re both learning.”

There were also instances where the coach’s behaviour was more long-term in nature. For instance, one participant described being inspired by her coach’s support during a lengthy rehabilitation process:

> There was never a doubt in [the coach’s] mind, that I was never going to not get back . . . [the coach] always supported me through rehab and would always say “why don’t you come in to training and you can do your rehab here, you don’t need to just do it at home on your own, other people will be conditioning you can join in that” … [the coach] kept me in the environment wanting to get back.

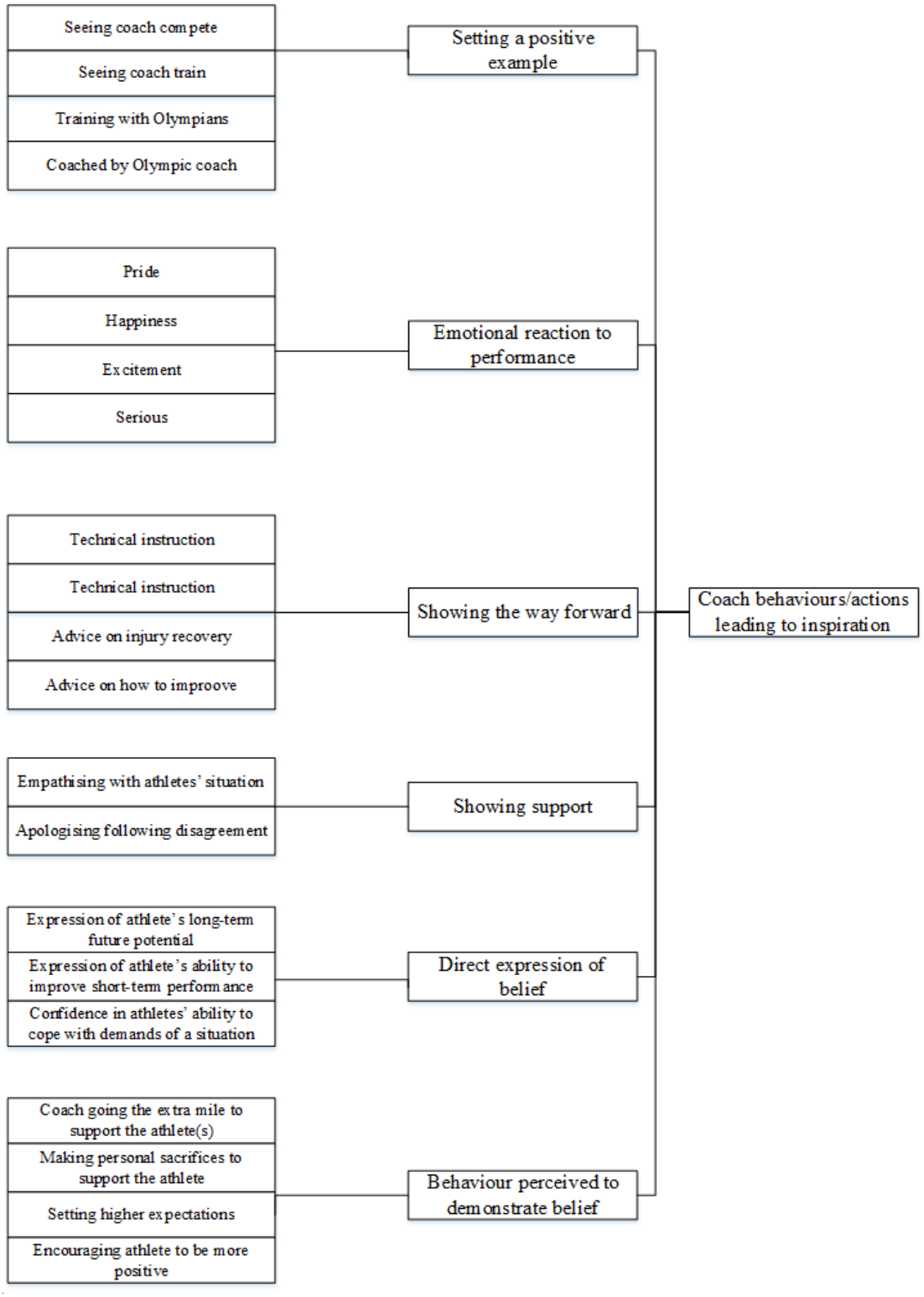


Figure 6.2 Coach behaviours/actions leading to inspiration.

6.3.2 Consequences of Inspirational Moments

Being inspired by a coach led to a range of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses (see Figure 5.3). The current section will make reference to the sources of inspiration (i.e., what behaviour the coach demonstrated) when discussing the consequences of inspiration in order to show the links between the inspirational coach behaviour and the subsequent outcomes.

Cognitive outcomes. Inspirational moments had an impact on participants' thoughts and beliefs. For example, seven of the participants reported inspiration to impact on their motivation (e.g., to train, to improve, to return from injury), as highlighted by one participant who said that inspirational leadership made him, "want to do more to succeed." Five participants described having an increased awareness and understanding of their potential as a result of inspirational coach behaviour. For example, one participant described how his coach's reaction to his performance led him to reassess his athletic potential saying, "suddenly it [the coach's reaction] made me think, well maybe I can improve a lot and like . . . it just made me suddenly think that there would be more in there somewhere." Participants also reported increased awareness relating to the way to progress in their sport or the context in which they were inspired. For instance, when recalling his coach's reaction (showing the way forward) and feedback to an initial performance, where the coach highlighted the participant's natural attributes, one participant described:

> I thought it was all upper body and you just pushed as hard as you can, but it's quite technical and in that moment [the coach's reaction] I realised that I was okay at the physical side, but the technical side needed work.

Inspirational coach-leadership led to increased self-efficacy for all of the participants interviewed. Participants reported having greater levels of confidence in a range of areas including their ability to cope with the demands of a situation or their general ability. For example, one participant described how their coach's reaction to a positive performance led to an increase in confidence in their ability stating, "[the coach] saying that [this is what I expected from you] made me think, yes, that is what I need to do and that gave me more confidence." Further, participants discussed how inspirational coach-leadership led to an increase in confidence relating to their ability to

accomplish further success. This is highlighted by one participant who, when recalling the impact of their coach's reaction (outlining their future potential) to performance in a difficult training task recalled "It was a really positive moment [coach's reaction to performance], I actually realised then that I could achieve . . . it [the realisation of what I could achieve] was a massive."

Inspirational moments also produced a range of other cognitive responses, such as increased focus, the ability to let go of negative thoughts regarding previous performances, and a positive approach to competition and training. One participant proposed that an inspirational moment had an impact on his sense of identity saying, "it [the inspirational coach behaviour] made me feel like a runner. Not just some sort of chancer . . . not really knowing what I was doing . . . it sort of defined me into that environment." Additionally, there were examples of the participants' feelings towards their coach being strengthened after the inspirational moment. For instance, when recalling the impact of the inspirational moment one participant stated, "It [the inspirational moment] just strengthened the bond and the trust between [the coach and I]."

Affective outcomes. While many of the participants reported feelings of negativity and adverse emotions prior to being inspired, a range of positive affective responses were reported as a result of the inspirational moment. Three participants reported feeling happier (in terms of sport and general life) as a consequence of being inspired. For example, one participant who had experienced a range of negative emotions (e.g., anger and frustration) following poor performance described the inspirational impact of their coach outlining that there was still time in the event to improve stating, "I hadn't had a great race when I went and spoke to [the coach] and it [the coach's reaction to the performance] put a smile on my face." Participants described feeling excited regarding their potential and the opportunities that may come their way as a result of inspirational coach-leadership. For example, following an emotional reaction from her coach, one participant recalled, "he [the coach] was really happy, he was really impressed and proud, which for me is quite rare. So, I thought 'That's quite exciting'."

In addition, participants experienced a range of performance related positive affective responses (e.g., decreased feelings of frustration, pride). One participant recalled how an interaction with the coach (who outlined his belief in the participant's capability to improve) led to increased positive performance related feelings saying, "I performed with a lot more passion and enjoyment after that." Further, three participants reported feelings of relaxation following inspirational interactions with the coach. For example, one participant described how the coach enabled them to feel calmer following poor performance:

> He did help me to switch off and just end thinking about it for the day and relax… If you're not relaxed when you're performing I think you get more and more wound up, tightly sprung, and that's not the sort of mindset you want to be in.

Behavioural and performance outcomes. The participants also perceived inspirational moments to have a tangible impact on their behaviour and performance. For instance, five participants changed their training behaviours as a result of the inspirational coach-leadership they received. Specifically, participants described challenging themselves more in training (e.g., focussing on weaknesses) in order to improve and dedicating more time and resources to their development, as highlighted by one participant who said that an inspirational moment "made me put what I'd been doing before that time as a kind of marker and then try and do different things in terms of distance and pace to try and improve."

Experiencing inspirational coach-leadership was reported to have a positive impact on performance. Following an inspirational interaction with their coach, seven participants reported an improvement in subsequent (short- and long-term) performance. For example, one participant described how their coach's reaction (both *perceived demonstration of belief* and *showing the way forward*) following a perceived poor performance facilitated improved performance, describing: "the next two days' racing my performance really improved and went really well for me." As well as the improved performance outcomes participants reported inspiration to influence other performance-related factors (e.g., increased effort). For instance, one participant discussed the impact of a half-time team talk from her coach: "it made me more persistent, so if I lost the ball

I wouldn't just stand there, I'd chase back." The behavioural effect of inspiration was also seen to extend beyond the sporting context. For instance, one participant reported improved performance in other domains as a result of their coach's inspirational behaviour (*direct demonstration of belief*) stating: "[because of the coach's positive reaction] I probably achieved better at Uni, to be honest."

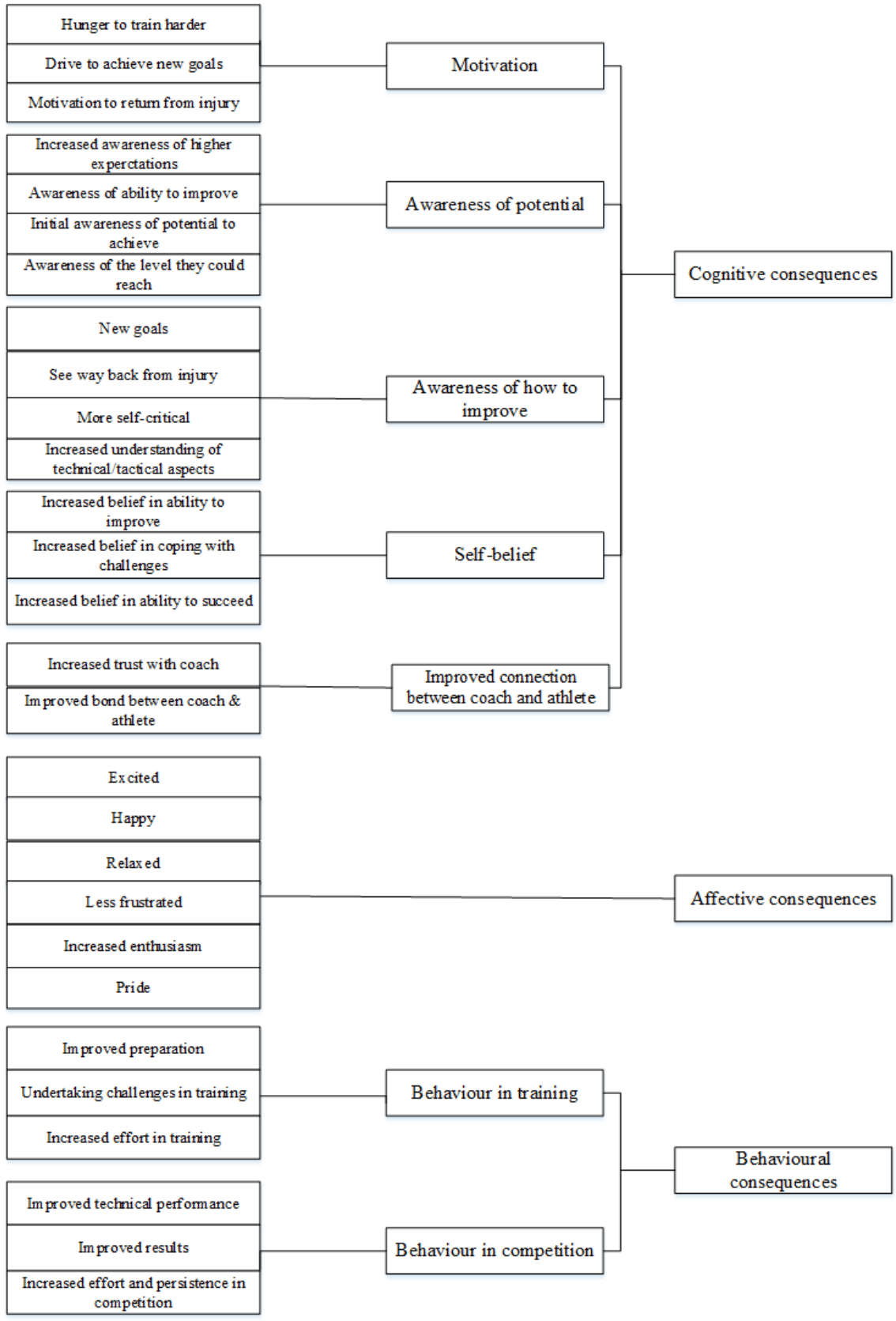


Figure 6.3 Consequences of being inspired.

6.3.3 Factors that influence athletes' perception of their leader

When describing their experiences participants also discussed a range of factors that influenced their perceptions of their leaders. These factors centred on leader characteristics and general behaviour, and athletes' feelings towards the leader.

Leader characteristics and general behaviour. The participants identified a range of behaviours and characteristics that may have influenced their perceptions of the leader. For instance, when discussing how the coach promoted autonomy within the side, one participant described how the coach would, "ask us what we wanted to do before the weekend and then he'd plan sessions around what we wanted to do." There were also several examples of the leader having high expectations, with one participant commenting on the culture of excellence facilitated by their leader saying, "because of the standards he'd set in training . . . we basically had an international environment in a club set-up." The participants also highlighted various characteristics common to leaders they identified as inspirational, including aspects relating to the authority, aura, passion, and enthusiasm. For instance, participants perceived their leader to be genuine, one participant commented, "I think it's just how he [the leader] was totally genuine . . . he wasn't trying to get something from you . . . They were genuinely trying to make you better or genuinely leading the way to make, ultimately, the team better."

Athletes' Feelings toward the Coach. A number of factors were identified concerning the feelings participants held toward their leader. One example highlighted by participants was the respect that they had for the leader; with reasons for such respect including the leader's reputation and conduct. For example, one participant highlighted how the whole team, "had full respect for [the leader] because they knew what a competitor he was." Trust in competence and on a personal level was seen to play an important role in the interactions between participants and leaders. Indeed, one participant referred to the trust she had in her coach's training structure:

> Sometimes I'll be like "oh, I can't do that" . . . I panic that I'm going to push myself too hard, but I go and do it and I'm alright. So, I do trust the way that he sets out the timetable as well.

6.4 Discussion

The present study sought to build on the findings of Study 1 by using in depth interviews to examine athletes' perceptions and experiences of inspirational leadership. Specifically, this study aimed to (a) identify the behaviours and actions coaches' demonstrate in order to inspire athletes, (b) identify the situations in which athletes are inspired, and (c) explore the outcomes associated with inspirational coach-leadership. Participants indicated that their experiences of inspirational moments occurred in a range of contexts (e.g., following poor performance). Coaches inspired athletes in these contexts by demonstrating a range of behaviours, including displays of belief in athletes' ability, showing athletes the way forward (e.g., how to progress in unfamiliar situations), and through their emotional reactions to athletes' performances. As a result of being inspired by the coach, participants reported a range of outcomes, such as increased effort in training, increased self-efficacy and improved performance. As such the findings offer empirical and applied contributions to the literature, with specific regards to coaches' understanding of when and how to inspire followers.

These results provide support for the contentions of previous research (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) that leaders can have an inspirational impact on followers' approach to their own sporting development (e.g., improved motivation) and performance. In addition, this study builds on that of earlier research and the findings from Study 1 by providing a more comprehensive understanding of inspirational leadership (in this instance coaching) in a number of ways. For example, Searle and Hanrahan (2011) proposed a model of inspiration, but offered little detail regarding the key dimensions of the process. The present study identified facets relating to: the context in which inspiration occurred (e.g., what happened before inspiration occurred); the inspirational moments (e.g., inspirational coach behaviour); and the consequences of inspiration. Specifically, Searle and Hanrahan posited that leaders could pick the "opportune" moment to inspire followers, without providing details of the contexts in which leaders had inspired followers. The present study builds on this by identifying situations that coaches could target when trying to inspire athletes. Participants recalled inspirational moments to occur in both negative and positive contexts (e.g., following poor performance, disagreement), which were accompanied by a range of, mainly negative, cognitions and emotions, including feelings of uncertainty regarding their potential,

frustration and anger. These findings are consistent with previous research which has found inspiration to occur on the same day as other positive experiences and following moments of difficulty, frustration and struggle (Hart, 1998; Thrash & Elliot, 2003). In addition, these findings also have parallels with those of Bormann et al. (2016) who found that the transformational behaviour of articulating a vision's (whereby leaders try to inspire followers with an exciting vision) had its strongest impact on followers when win-orientation and competitive performance were low.

Previous research examining inspirational leadership (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) and existing theories of leadership (Callow et al., 2009) suggest that leaders can behave in ways intended to inspire followers, primarily by creating a vision of the future that encapsulated both individual and organisational goals. Based upon the results of the present study, in the context of sport, this may be too simplistic, and, thus, suggest that current theories of leadership do not fully capture the leader's role in inspiring followers. To highlight, participants in this study reported being inspired by a range of behaviours that extended beyond just the coach's vision. Specifically, coaches inspired athletes by demonstrating belief in the athlete's ability (e.g., outlining an athlete's future potential), cultivating opportunities for athletes to be inspired (e.g., providing opportunities to train with higher-level athletes), making personal sacrifices to support athletes' development (e.g., supporting athletes at competitions during their free time), showing the way to forward (e.g., outlining how to progress in a specific situation), as well as showing empathy and apologising.

Though previous research (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) acknowledges that inspirational leadership can exert an influence on followers, it has so far failed to identify the specific outcomes. For instance, Searle and Hanrahan proposed that inspiration always leads to some tangible form of outcome but did not identify what these outcomes may be. Inspirational coach-leadership was perceived to facilitate a range of positive cognitive (e.g., increased self-efficacy), affective (e.g., increased passion), and behavioural outcomes (e.g., increased effort in training) for athletes. Consequently, inspirational coach-leadership is likely to elicit tangible behavioural responses from athletes.

With regards to the consequences outlined above, of particular note is that inspiration resulted in a change of athletes' cognitive and affective states (e.g., from negative to positive) by influencing their perception of their capabilities. This finding offers a potential theoretical explanation regarding the impact of inspiration on athletes and their behaviour. This finding overlaps with self-discrepancy theory (cf. Carver & Scheier, 1982; Higgins, 1987) which posits that individual's engage in self-regulation to deal with the perceived discrepancy between their present state and self-standards. Specifically, an individual will compare their perception of their present (actual-self) state against where they wish to be (ideal-self) or feel they should be (ought-self). If the actual-self does not match the ideal-self or ought-self, they will alter their behaviour in order to reduce this discrepancy (providing they have confidence in their ability and the knowledge to do so). In relation to this study's findings, it appears that leaders are able to change athletes' perceptions of their capability (i.e., change their perceptions of their ideal-self) as well as increase athletes' expectancy of reducing this discrepancy, which subsequently inspires them to strive towards their ideal-selves. Within the present study, examples include the coach showing a team the way forward (i.e., providing technical or tactical information) that raises the teams' awareness of how they can achieve their ideal performance standard (i.e., providing information that should help reduce the discrepancy between their actual- and ideal- or ought-selves) and the coach telling an athlete that they have the potential to reach the elite-level (i.e., changing their perception of their ideal-self).

Further, considering the link between the coaching behaviours which inspire action on the athlete's behalf, it appears that these behaviours relate to the three forms of transmission (replication, actualization, expression) which explain the way intrinsic qualities presented by a stimulus inspires an individual to extend these qualities to a self-relevant object. To explain, setting an example relates to *replication* which refers to how one is inspired by the qualities of a pre-existing object (e.g., dedication to self-improvement displayed by a leader) in the environment and seeks to reproduce these qualities in a new object (e.g., showing greater dedication to own training and development). Demonstrating belief appears to overlap with *actualization*, where appreciation of a compelling seminal idea enters awareness during a moment of insight (e.g., a leader outlining an athlete's potential) and as such an individual is energized

(e.g., the athlete has greater confidence and is motivated to work towards this potential) by the possibility of bringing the idea into fruition. Finally, showing the way forward has links with *expression*, whereby transmission is facilitated by a compelling idea that is already well formed when it enters awareness (e.g., specific technical advice provided in order to counter a difficult situation) and is acted upon immediately (e.g., the team have an understanding of how to deal with the situation and adapt their behaviour accordingly). Thus, this research provides some support for the proposition that the forms of transmission apply to all content domains (Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, et al., 2014) by demonstrating them to apply to the context of sport.

Although not a predetermined aim of this study, participants also outlined some factors that influenced their perceptions of leaders, which may influence the likelihood of leaders being seen as a source of inspiration. For instance, the participants frequently mentioned the reputation of the leader. Research has shown positive reputation information results in leaders having a stronger influence on their athletes (e.g., Manley, Smith, Greenlees, Batten, & Birch, 2014). Such information might lead to an athlete having a greater respect for their coach or developing stronger other efficacy beliefs (e.g., Jackson, Knapp, & Beauchamp, 2009) that make it more likely for an athlete to be inspired. However, further research is needed to explore the factors that influence the likelihood an athlete is inspired by their coach.

Overall, the present findings add to our existing knowledge of the ways in which coaches inspire athletes. However, while the findings do add depth to previous theorising on inspirational leadership (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011), there is still a great deal to know surrounding this complex process. Indeed, despite widespread recognition that inspiration is at the heart of effective leadership (Bass, 1985; Clemens & Mayer, 1999; Davis, Jowett, & Lafrenière, 2013; Slater, Evans, & Barker, 2013), theories surrounding the process of inspirational leadership are underdeveloped and do not fully capture the process through which leaders inspire followers. For example, as the study was looking to describe athletes' experiences of being inspired, it was beyond the scope of the research to examine the reasons why the sources identified were inspirational. As such, future research should look to understand the factors that influence the potential of leaders to inspire athletes. In accord with this, recent critiques of leadership literature have suggested that in order to further understanding, researchers

should look to investigate specific and distinct aspects of leadership (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), and use qualitative methods that enable us to examine the dynamic *process* of leadership in order to produce grounded theories (Shamir, 2011). Using a grounded theory approach would allow us to develop our understanding of inspirational leadership by building upon the limitations of existing leadership theories (see Chapter 5 for a discussion) by producing a theory that more clearly articulates the process of inspirational leadership. Specifically, this would enable us to understand the process of inspirational leadership as a whole (e.g., how leaders are able to develop an inspiring influence over time) by exploring multiple perspectives (e.g., leaders and followers), have the potential to inform leadership development, and drive future research examining specific facets of inspirational leadership.

Chapter 7

Study 3: The process of inspirational coach leadership in sport: A grounded theory approach[14]

[14] This chapter was accepted for verbal presentations as;

Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Knight, C.J.+, & Greenlees, I.A.* (2016). Laying the foundations for inspirational leadership: Establishing mutual trust, respect, and loyalty. Paper presented at British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Conference, Cardiff, UK, December 2016.

Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Knight, C.J.+, & Greenlees, I.A.* (2016). Grounded theory: Developing the theoretical underpinning of inspirational leadership. Paper presented at the 5th International Conference on Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, Chichester, UK, August 2016.

Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Greenlees, I.A.*, & Knight, C.+ (2015). Using grounded theory to explore the process of inspirational leadership in sport. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Conference, Leeds, UK, December 2015.

Figgins, S.G., Smith, M.J.*, Greenlees, I.A.*, & Knight, C.J.+ (2015). Towards a grounded theory of inspirational leadership. Paper presented at the Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group Annual Conference, Glasgow, July 2015.

*Supervisor – Advised on preparation and write up of the chapter and presentations.

+Collaborator – Provided expertise on the grounded theory methodology and advised on the preparation of the write up and presentations.

7. Study 3: The process of inspirational coach leadership in sport: A grounded theory approach.

7.1 Introduction

Despite the assertion within leadership theory and research that leaders can inspire followers, our knowledge surrounding the ways in which leaders inspire their followers is limited (Frese et al., 2003). Chapter 5 discussed the limitations regarding current theorising surrounding the process through which leaders inspire followers; that is, what leaders actually *do* to inspire followers and the factors that may impact upon this process. After demonstrating that leaders were indeed a source of inspiration (see Study 1), the aim of Study 2 was to add to our existing understanding of this phenomenon by exploring how leaders (specifically coaches) inspire athletes. The findings revealed a number of situations in which inspiration can occur (e.g., following poor performance), behaviours coaches display in order to inspire followers (e.g., demonstrating belief), consequences of being inspired (e.g., increased motivation), and some factors that may influence the potential for an athlete to be inspired (e.g., leader reputation). However, owing to the descriptive nature of Study 2, several questions remain surrounding the process of inspirational leadership in sport; specifically relating to the factors that impact on the potential for a leader's behaviour to be perceived to be inspiring.

Though Study 2 has added some detail to the findings of Searle and Hanrahan (2011), research has yet to provide a comprehensive model or theory which *explains* the process of inspirational leadership. Thus, further research is required to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this important leadership process. As previously discussed, Study 2 identified some factors that influence athletes' perceptions of their leader's behaviour. However, this was not a predetermined aim of the study and consequently limited information was gained regarding these factors. Thus, further research is required to understand what factors underpin this process. While leaders may act in the appropriate manner during times of need for inspiration (i.e., the leader might be demonstrating belief in an athlete's ability following poor performance), the extent to which the leader's behaviour is perceived as inspiring is likely to depend upon other factors. This problem is not just restricted to inspirational leadership, indeed,

Grounded theory of inspirational coach-leadership

Cruickshank and Collins (2016) recently suggested that while numerous effective leadership behaviours have been identified, research has yet to fully consider the contextual factors that interact to effect leaders' decisions and actions. Thus, while Study 2 has begun to identify some factors that impact on athlete perceptions of leader behaviour and has furthered our understanding of coach-leadership behaviours that inspire athletes, knowledge regarding the factors that impact on the process of inspirational leadership is sparse and leads to several questions. Specifically, what factors relating to the athlete, coach, and context within which they are working interact to determine the potential that an athlete or team can be inspired by their leader?

Given that questions remain surrounding inspirational leadership, further qualitative research is warranted to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the process of leading to inspire. Consequently, the aim of study 3 was to utilise a grounded theory methodology to explore the process through which leaders inspire followers. Specifically, it was anticipated that developing a grounded theory of the inspirational process of leadership would provide a framework to help direct future research and guide applied practice.

Grounded theory is particularly useful when (a) utilised to explore social processes involving interactions between participants and their social context, (b) where adequate theories do not exist for a specific population, or (c) where existing theories are underdeveloped (Holt & Tamminen, 2010a, 2010b; Weed, 2017). Considering the above points, in light of the findings of Study 2 and existing theories of leadership in sport, it is clear to see how the utilisation of a grounded theory approach would further our understanding of the inspirational process of leadership. First, theories of leadership have been developed to consider the interactions between individuals (e.g., leaders and followers) and the context in which these happen (Bass, 1985; Chelladurai & Saleh, 2007; Fiedler, 1967), and leadership has been defined as the "behavioural process of influencing individuals and groups" (Barrow, 1977, p. 232). Second, a theory of leadership that explains the inspirational impact of effective leaders in sport does not yet exist (Arthur et al., 2012). Third, theories of leadership currently cited in contemporary sport and organisational psychology research (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) have yet to propose a theoretically underpinned model of the process of inspirational leadership. Indeed, the most heavily cited theory (i.e., transformational leadership) proposed to

explain how leaders inspire has been criticised for poor theoretical and conceptual development and because it provides limited information to guide applied practice (cf. Arthur et al., 2017; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Consequently, using a grounded theory methodology, that includes several methods to enhance the rigour (e.g., theoretical sampling, iterative process of data collection and analysis) and is based upon experts' (i.e., athletes and coaches) lived experience, should address the theoretical and conceptual criticisms aimed at transformational leadership theory by enabling the development of a more robust theory of the process of inspirational coach-leadership. Therefore, the aim of this study was to create a grounded theory that explains the process through which leaders (in this case coaches) inspire athletes in sport.

7.2 Method

7.2.1 Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory is a method to produce theories which explain social processes, while recognising the complexities of the social world (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Specifically, the present study was underpinned by the Straussian variant of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Consistent with Corbin and Strauss' (2008) variant of grounded theory, this study was underpinned by a pragmatic philosophical perspective. Pragmatism proposes that one's experiences, and the meanings we attach to them are developed and meaningful through the interaction of our beliefs and actions (Dewey, 1922). That is, one's experiences are shaped by the social environment and knowledge is developed in conjunction with other people in the environment (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatists acknowledge the role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge. Consequently, the findings and knowledge developed in this research are a product of participants' (i.e., coaches and athletes) and my beliefs and experiences. Further, another central premise of pragmatism is that knowledge should be of practical utility and inform every day action (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), but that the knowledge gained is fallible, constantly evolving and open to revision (Bryant, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Thus, the knowledge gained from this study is intended to enhance understanding of inspirational leadership and guide applied practice, rather than directly

mirroring the world (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Given that pragmatists acknowledge that knowledge is co-constructed it is important to outline the prior and current experiences and interests that shaped my approach to this research. Regarding prior experiences, as an avid sportsperson (as amateur now but having been involved in junior Cricket academy set ups) with captaincy and coaching experience (I am qualified to UKCC Level 2+). Further, I have provided consultancy work within a football club aimed at developing leadership and group cohesion which has also enhanced my understanding of the importance of leadership and inter-group relationships. I have varied experiences that gave me insight into the research topic in question. These experiences have enabled me to build rapport with participants and enhanced my theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

7.2.2 Sampling and Participants

In total, 37 participants (22 athletes and 15 coaches) took part in this study (see Table 6.1 for details). Participants were British (n = 28), Irish (n = 1), Australian (n = 1) and German (n = 1), and competed or coached in a range of sports: Netball, Football, Rugby Union, Cycling, Sailing, Triathlon, Goalball, Trampolining, Swimming, Judo, Tennis, Badminton, Hockey, Canoeing, Athletics, and Running. The competitive levels of the participants ranged from recreational (e.g., local and regional clubs) to international level (e.g., competing or coaching at the Olympics). In addition, the coaches had a range of qualifications with the lowest being the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) level 2 or equivalent (e.g., Rugby Football Union level 2) and the highest being UKCC level 4 or equivalent (e.g., UEFA A).

Table 7.1 Participant demographics

Population		Age (years)			Gender		Competitive Standard				Experience (years)		
	n	M	SD	Range	Male	Female	Club	County	National	International	M	SD	Range
Athletes	22	23.68	7.84	18-51	11	11	3	4	6	9	13.95	9.54	2-46
Coaches	15	39.90	12.91	24-64	13	2	3	2	1	7	15.11	9.27	5-30

In line with the core components of a grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), initially, purposeful sampling was used to recruit information-rich participants. In this instance, adult athletes who perceived that they had first-hand experience of being inspired by a coach were sampled. As data collection progressed, theoretical sampling was used to further explore concepts identified within the initial data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Specifically, following the initial interviews with athletes, the sample was broadened to include coaches (5 of the 15 coaches were coaches of athletes interviewed within this study) and other athletes (e.g., more experienced athletes and team-sport athletes). To illustrate, many of the athletes sampled in the initial phase of data collection were young and described being inspired by their coaches at early stages of their career whereby coaches changed their awareness of their capabilities and potential. As a result, the researcher decided to interview more experienced and retired athletes to examine how and if they were inspired during latter stages of their careers and to assess whether performer level and experience impacted upon the process. Other examples of theoretical sampling included interviewing: (a) coaches in order to identify athlete characteristics which impact upon the potential for athletes to be inspired; (b) high-level coaches (e.g., coaches who had experience of coaching at national and international level) to explore how group factors influence the level of trust in the coach; and (c) participants who had experiences of a coach who did not inspire them (i.e., negative cases) to further challenge, refine or extend the

developing theory, and to ensure that negative cases were considered in the study (see figure 6.1 for a diagram of the theoretical sampling process).

7.2.3 Data collection

Before data collection commenced ethical approval was obtained from the researcher's institutional ethics board. Following this, athletes fulfilling the initial sampling criteria were approached to take part in the study via face-to-face meetings and/or e-mail. This e-mail outlined the purpose of the study and requirements of participation. In order to participate in the initial phase of data collection, participants had to be able to recall a coach who they perceived had inspired them. As data collection progressed, negative cases were used to gain a deeper understanding of inspirational leadership. That is, participants who had experience of not being inspired by a coach were interviewed to understanding what was lacking from their experiences. Prior to all data collection, participants were provided with a verbal explanation of the study, informed about the voluntary nature of their participation, and reminded that all information shared would be confidential. All participants were over 18 years of age and provided written informed consent.

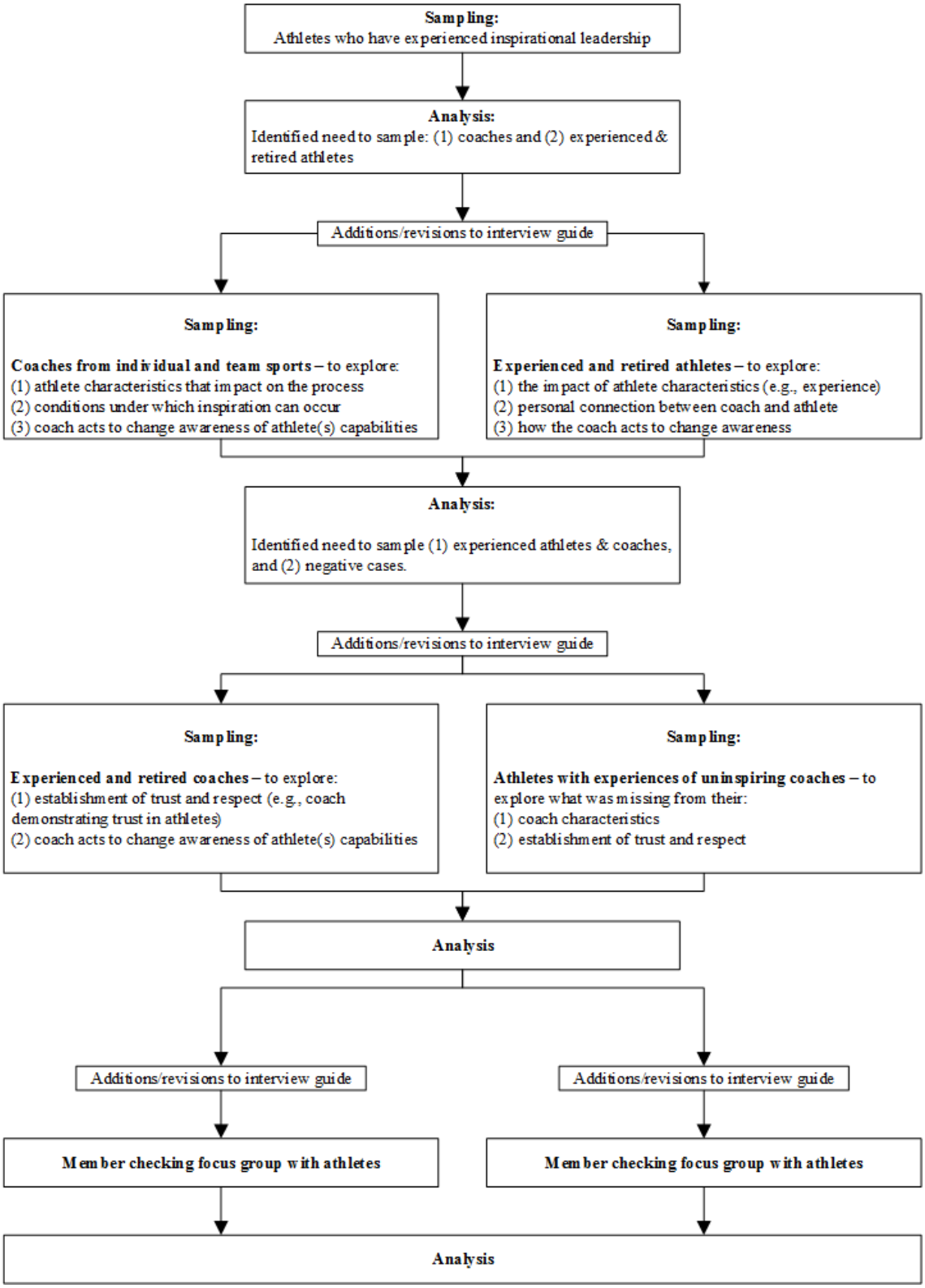


Figure 7.1 Theoretical sampling process (with concepts and categories explored during each phase illustrated).

7.2.3.1 Individual interviews

In total, 28 individual interviews were conducted (18 athletes and 10 coaches). Interviews ranged between 34 and 97 minutes (M = 61.84, SD = 16.27). In line with previous grounded theory studies (e.g., Knight & Holt, 2014; Roy-Davis, Wadey, & Evans, 2017) semi-structured interviews were used to explore the process of inspirational leadership in sport, as they are deemed to enable the collection of rich, in-depth data that captures participants' stories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). An initial semi-structured interview guide was created, which covered: (a) what coaches did to inspire athletes (e.g., "Can you tell me about any instances where you have been inspired by your coach during your sporting career?"); (b) when (i.e., the situation) athletes were inspired (e.g., "What happened before you were inspired?"); and (c) why athletes found that moment inspiring (e.g., "What is it about the [coach] that made you perceive this moment as inspirational?"). Probe questions were utilised to develop a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. For example, when discussing the context prior to being inspired probes were used to elicit further information (e.g., "What was the situation?" and "How were you feeling?"). To explore the suitability of the interview guide, a pilot was conducted with one athlete whose data was included in the study. Throughout data collection, the interview guide was consistently reviewed and revised based upon the principles of theoretical sampling to explore emerging concepts and categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For instance, when interviewing experienced and high-level athletes, questions were added which focussed on their experiences of inspirational leadership throughout their career (e.g., "Are there any differences between the ways you were inspired when you were less experienced to later in your career?"). Also, during the later phases of data collection, the emerging theory was shown to participants to evaluate its applicability to their experiences.

7.2.3.2 Focus groups

Following the individual interviews, two focus groups were conducted: one with athletes (n = 4) and one with coaches (n = 5). Primarily, the purpose of these focus groups was to examine the emerging grounded theory, as well as to provide additional data. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Knight & Holt, 2014) the focus groups were used to gain insights into whether 'experts' (i.e., those with experience of the

phenomena in question) felt the emerging theory was appropriate and applicable to their experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

7.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis began following the first interview and followed an iterative process whereby analysis was conducted following each interview throughout the data collection process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As many interviews as possible (n = 24) were fully transcribed and coded during the data collection phase. However, owing to short time periods between interviews sometimes this was not always possible. In accord with previous grounded theory research (e.g., Knight & Holt, 2014), where this was the case, I reflected upon the interviews and listened to the audio files, making notes on his perceptions of emerging concepts and potential relationships between these concepts. Reflective memos were then used to inform the refinement of the interview guide for the next interview. For example, in one of the early memos I discussed the potential impact of athlete experience:

> Other factors relating to the athlete that may influence the likelihood of inspiration relate to the athlete's age and experience. That is, all athletes interviewed thus far have been fairly young and many have discussed experiences that occurred at early stages during their development . . . this [the impact of experience] could be something to explore further in a different phase of data collection with older, more experienced athletes . . . to see whether (a) they are still inspired at such a stage and (b) whether (if they are still inspired by leaders) the way in which they are inspired differs to that of athletes at an earlier stage. (Memo 19).

Consequently, when interviewing experienced athletes, questions related to their experiences of inspiration at later stages in their career were added (e.g., Are there any differences between the way you were inspired when you were less experienced to later in your career?). The interviews (n = 4) that were not formally analysed during the data collection/analysis process were subsequently transcribed and analysed when time permitted (e.g., during breaks in data collection). The focus groups were conducted following the interviews and analysed in accord with the iterative process outlined.

7.2.4.1 Coding

Transcription produced 431 pages of single-spaced data, which were analysed using the formal coding procedures outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Specifically, analysis comprised three levels of coding: open coding, axial coding, and theoretical integration (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This process enabled analysis to move from a descriptive to theoretical level. Open coding involves "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. At the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). Initially, during open coding, line-by-line analysis of the transcript was conducted to identify concepts, their properties, and dimensions related to inspirational leadership. Open coding was used to fracture the data into the smallest units of data (i.e., concepts) whereby each unit of data was given a descriptive label (e.g., 'past coaching experiences' or 'showing care for the athletes'), which is referred to as a code. Throughout this phase concepts were compared with other concepts to establish any similarities and differences.

Once key concepts started to be identified, axial coding was used to develop, describe and establish relationships between concepts (Holt, 2016). Through axial coding the concepts that were identified during open coding were grouped into categories to specify a more holistic explanation of the processes that underpin a leader's ability to inspire athletes. For example, descriptive codes relating to coaches' ability to demonstrate competence and coaches' ability to create a connection with their athlete(s) were grouped under the category 'Establishment of mutual trust and respect with athlete(s)'.

The final stage of analysis was theoretical integration (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As with the other coding processes, theoretical integration was conducted throughout data collection/analysis in a cyclical manner and began once initial relationships between concepts were identified. Theoretical integration was used to identify the core category (i.e., athlete inspired through changed awareness of capabilities), establish links between categories and the core category, and add density to categories. For instance, the concept of 'establishing mutual trust and respect' was identified as important to the coach's ability to inspire athletes and, thus, was integrated into the

developing grounded theory. During the theoretical integration stage, the developing theory was presented to participants who were asked to comment on the extent to which the theory represented their experiences of inspirational leadership. The feedback provided by participants during this stage enabled further refinement of the theoretical framework by ensuring that findings were grounded in the data and reflected participants' experiences as they could "recognize themselves in the story that is being told" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 113).

7.2.4.2 Delayed literature review

An initial review of inspiration and leadership literature was conducted to (a) inform the rationale for the earlier studies conducted in this thesis and (b) to construct a research proposal required for ethical approval (McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). However, this served to ensure that the lead researcher was thinking theoretically from the start of a grounded theory (and thus demonstrated theoretical sensitivity; Holt, 2016). Moreover and importantly, concepts identified during analysis were not compared with existing literature until the latter stages of data analysis/collection. At this point, a delayed literature review (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was undertaken to examine the emerging theory in relation to existing leadership research. Previous research was examined to contrast, compare, and integrate findings from the present study with relevant theories and constructs. Specifically, the delayed literature review enabled the researcher to scrutinise the identified concepts for similarity with existing constructs to reduce conceptual overlap and confusion. For example, athletes within the present study discussed how they trusted coaches who had aligned values with them, a concept which was termed 'respecting, representing, and embedding the values of the group' to preserve consistency with similar constructs within existing leadership literature (i.e., the social identity approach to leadership; Haslam et al., 2013).

7.2.4.3 Additional analytical tools

As well as the methods described previously (i.e., the use of focus groups, theoretical sampling, and the iterative process of data collection and analysis), further analytical tools (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) were used to enhance the study. First, throughout data analysis, the data were subjected to constant comparison whereby codes were compared with each other for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008;

Holt, 2016). Specifically, during analysis, emerging concepts were compared with the previously identified concepts to ensure that data were coded into distinct categories. For example, during the latter stages of the data collection/analysis, negative cases were sampled which enabled the comparison of athletes' experiences of inspiring versus uninspiring leadership. This comparison allowed the identification of factors which impact on a coach's ability to inspire athletes.

A range of analytical memos were also written throughout data collection and analysis. In total, 53 memos were written ranging from half a page and two pages long. The writing of memos enabled me to organise my thoughts and reactions to data, develop the properties and dimensions of concepts and categories, make comparisons between codes, concepts and categories, as well as assist my understanding of the processes being discussed by encouraging reflexivity, clarification, category saturation, and concept development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The memos covered a range of topics including the impact of perceived coach care and individual interest on developing personal connections with athletes, the complexity of influencing a group, and how athlete experience effects the ways in which they are inspired. These memos enabled further refinement of the theory by allowing me to question the data, relationships between concepts and categories, and the emerging theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)—which subsequently enabled me to identify gaps in the theory and, thus, help drive the theoretical sampling procedure.

Diagramming was used during the process of data collection/analysis. Within this study, diagrams were used to integrate concepts, illustrate relationships between concepts and categories, and ensure that relationships between concepts and categories were clear and logical. Diagrams also enabled me to consider the data as a whole and enhanced my ability to think theoretically and at an abstract level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Diagramming was used throughout the study and resulted in numerous iterations of the grounded theory. The diagrams were refined and edited throughout data collection/analysis before arriving at the final substantive theory.

7.2.5 Methodological rigour

The criteria by which qualitative research is judged should ultimately be dependent upon the philosophical assumptions of the researcher, the purpose of the study being conducted, and type of methodology used (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Indeed, rather than relying on post-hoc validity techniques, grounded theorists have been encouraged to adopt methods which enhance the rigour of the study during the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Consequently, a range of tools specific to grounded theory studies were used to enhance the rigour of this study. In addition to the methodological and analytical tools discussed earlier (e.g., theoretical sampling, writing memos), two further methods were used to enhance the rigour of this study. Firstly, a reflexive journal was written throughout the study, which allowed me to record any preconceived ideas or biases in relation to the data (Sitch & Day, 2015). Further, throughout the process two of the supervisory team (one experienced in grounded theory research and one experienced in leadership theory and research) acted as "critical friends" and a theoretical sounding board by challenging my interpretations of the data (Smith & McGannon, 2017). This process took place several times during both formalised presentations of data, more informal discussions, and via comments on the memos. Discussions with the supervisory team proved particularly useful when trying to clarify the relationships between categories and identification of the core category. For example, during one informal discussion, I was asked to explain the theory with one member of the supervisory team diagramming the process based upon this explanation.

To further judge the methodological rigour of the study, the resulting grounded theory should be evaluated in relation to the implementation of the eight core elements of grounded theory outlined by Weed (2017): an iterative process; theoretical sampling; theoretical sensitivity; codes, memos and concepts; constant comparison; theoretical saturation; fit, work, relevance, and modifiability; and substantive theory. Whilst the first six have been discussed previously, readers can evaluate the quality of the resultant grounded theory based upon: (1) the extent to which this grounded theory 'fits' with the phenomena it is proposed to represent (i.e., inspirational leadership); (2) whether the theory 'works' in offering analytical explanations of the process of inspirational leadership: (3) the 'relevance' of the theory to coaches working with athletes; and (4) if the proposed concepts and theory presented are flexible to 'modification' in relation to

future research on inspirational leadership (e.g., in other contexts and considering other leadership positions).

7.3 Results

The data collection and analysis process led to the development of a substantive grounded theory of the process of inspirational coach-leadership in sport (see Figure 6.2). Based upon the experiences of participants interviewed in this study, inspirational leadership is proposed to change athletes' perceptions of their capabilities (in both the short- and/or long-term). The grounded theory is constructed around the core category of 'athlete inspired through changed awareness of what they can achieve'. The core category is underpinned by three other categories: (1) establishment of mutual trust and respect with athlete(s); (2) conditions under which inspiration has the potential to occur; and (3) coach acts to change athlete(s) awareness of their capabilities. In addition, the theory outlines some contextual factors proposed to impact upon the process. The following sections present an overview of the core category and the underpinning categories. Finally, the overall grounded theory is presented to establish the theoretical claims made and outline links between the categories.

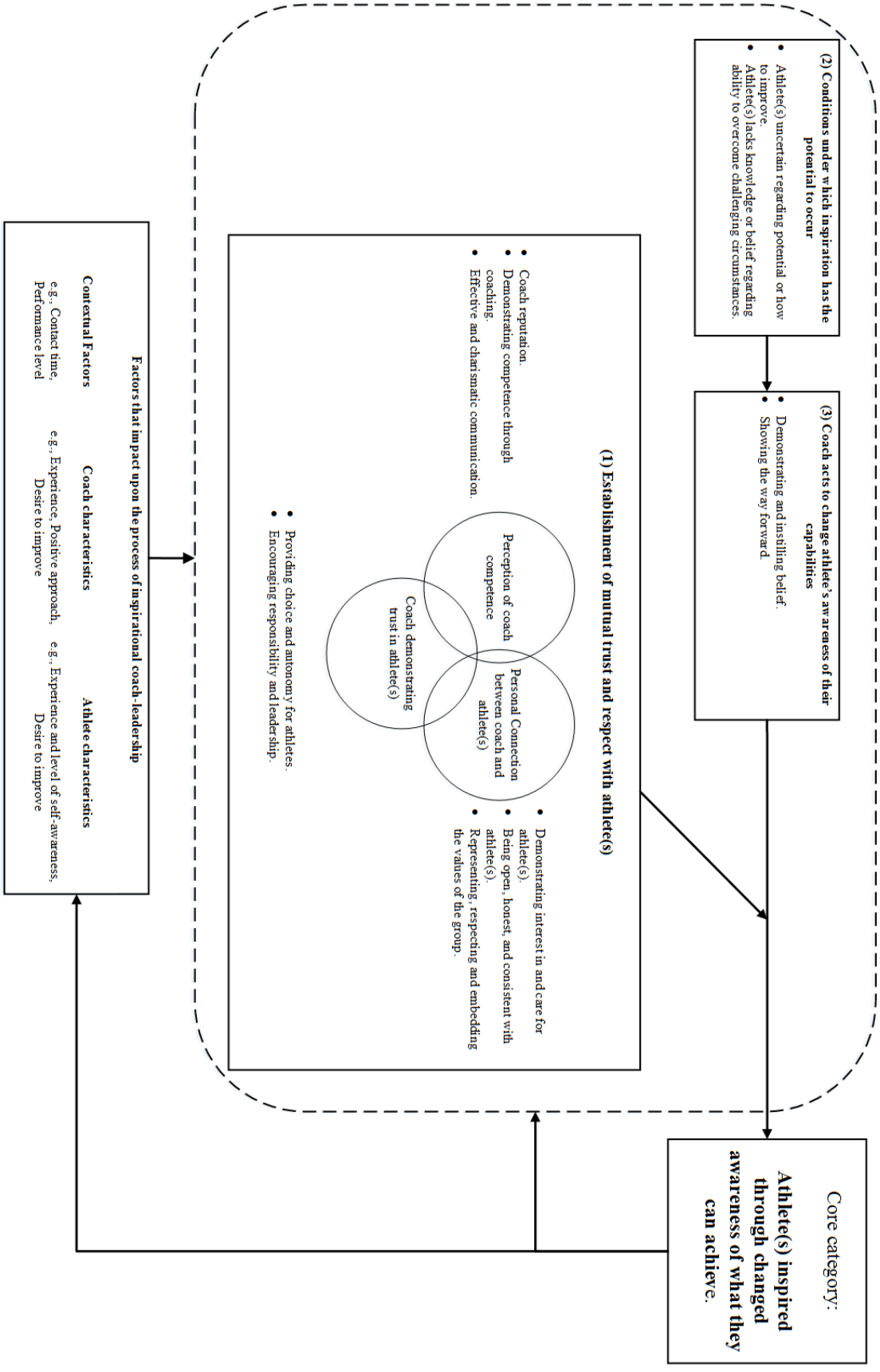


Figure 7.2 A grounded theory of the process of inspirational coach-leadership in sport.

7.3.1 Core category: Athlete(s) inspired through changed awareness of their capabilities

Based upon participants' combined experiences it appeared that coaches inspire athletes by changing their perception of their capabilities. For example, when discussing their understanding of being inspired, one athlete said:

> I guess it's [inspiration] giving someone a new perspective and new…giving them the idea that they could become something, do something. The idea that they can do anything they want to do, it is not about ability it's about them and their mental state. Seeing others do things and thinking oh I can do that (Athlete 5).

Athletes discussed how the change in their perception of their capabilities could be proximal or distal, thus, highlighting differences in the process through which leaders inspire athletes. For instance, one athlete discussed how a coach's half-time team-talk inspired his team to perceive that they could turn the game around in the short-term (i.e., second half), having initially lacked belief about their ability to do so, stating that the coach "just made us all think that 'yeah, we can beat these guys. Yeah, they are better than us, but what is to say we can't go and score two and not concede one.' So, he gave us the belief to go and do it" (Athlete 4).

In addition, many athletes discussed how the process of being inspired was apparent when a coach was able to change their perception of their long-term potential. One athlete discussed how being inspired by their coach altered their long-term goals:

> I thought my potential was a lot higher [after my coach said that]. My goal always then was just to compete for GB one time, but once that was achieved I had to set myself a new goal. So, rather than just compete for them, compete and do well. I set more challenging goals in general (Athlete 8).

Coaches also proposed that inspiring athletes occurred as a consequence of a change in athletes' views or increased clarity in relation to their future potential and goals. This was illustrated by one coach who described how inspiration could allow athletes to, "channel their aspirations in a way that makes them seem more achievable I guess. . . . it could also be something that somebody has said something to you which focusses your mind on the difficult thing you are trying to do" (Coach 1).

Further, coaches suggested they were not consciously trying to inspire athletes, but through their behaviours, and the subsequent change in an athlete's awareness, they are seen as inspiring. This was highlighted by one coach who discussed how his focus was on raising awareness:

> Sean: . . . So, in your experience how do you inspire athletes in your team?
>
> Coach 3: . . . I don't try and inspire, I try and increase awareness of possibilities and capabilities . . . So, it is just trying to constantly let people know where they are and what is possible . . . Sometimes you are trying to get them to look at the big picture and sometimes the big picture might be too scary or too far away 'right, let's focus on the here and now, let's focus on the boring words like process.' But, overall, I think it is this constant trying to raise awareness, self-awareness.

Based upon this, inspiration, as experienced by athletes in this study, can be short- or long-term in nature as long as the coach is able to change an athlete's awareness of their capabilities. Further, whilst not necessarily aware of their inspirational impact, coaches are consciously trying to change or increase an athlete's awareness of what they can achieve in either the short- or long-term.

7.3.2 Category 1: Establishment of mutual trust and respect with athlete(s)

In order to inspire athletes, participants proposed that, first, trust and respect needs to be established between the coach and their athletes. For example, one coach outlined the importance of trust to the process of inspirational leadership, stating "it [trust] is important, umm, because if . . . I can trust and I get the trust we're building on a really good site . . . If there is no trust from the athlete to the coach, it won't work" (Coach 4). Athletes agreed that trust was the foundation for coaches to be able to inspire athletes. This was illustrated by one athlete who said:

> . . . that's [trust and respect] kind of like the core isn't it, it does boil down to that I think, umm, having that trust and having that respect between the coach and the athletes, because if you don't have that then you're not going to feel inspired are you, by them (Athlete 16).

Trust was proposed to facilitate belief and buy-in to the coach's methods as well as enhance communication between coaches and athletes. For instance, one athlete discussed:

> If you trust them [your coach] you are more likely to listen to what they say, . . . and you are more likely to tell them like if you have a specific goal you want to aim for or if you don't want to do something, you are more likely to speak to them if you trust them (Athlete 10).

The establishment of mutual trust and respect was based around three factors: (1) athletes' perception of coach competence; (2) the level of personal connection between coaches and their athlete(s); and (3) the extent to which coaches demonstrated their trust in athletes.

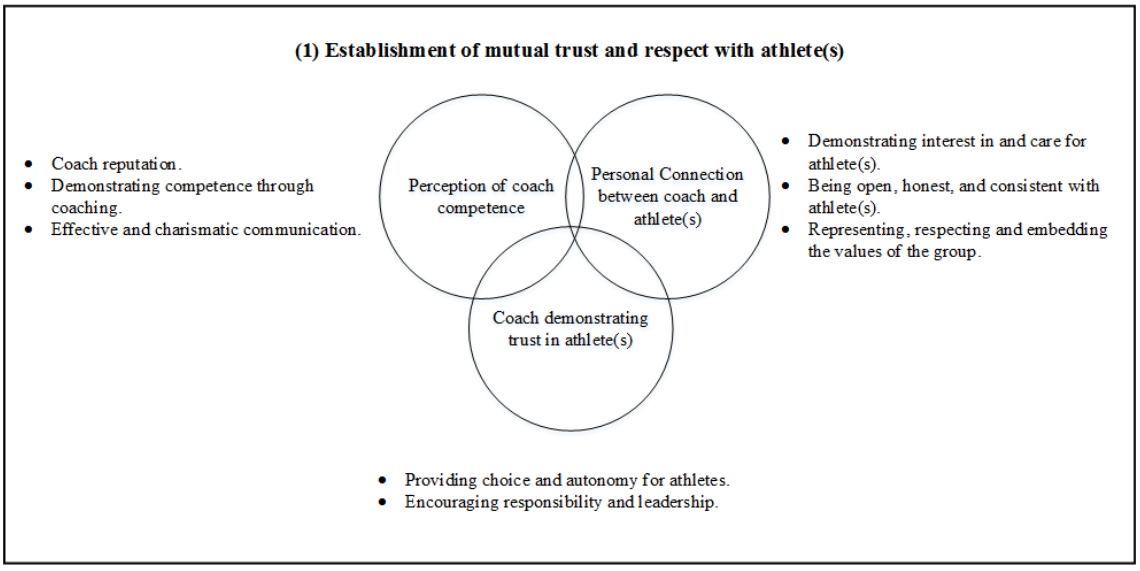


Figure 7.3 Category 1: Establishment of mutual trust and respect with athlete(s)

Coach Competence. Coach competence was suggested to be an important factor in athletes trusting and, thus, being open to being inspired by the coach. Athlete's perception of coach competence was proposed to be informed by a coach's reputation, impact on athlete performance, and communication. Having trust in coach competence was proposed to inform athletes' expectations of the coach, belief in the coaches' technical and tactical instructions, and lead them to be more open to being inspired by their coach. This was highlighted by a former international level athlete who stated:

> . . . you need to trust in what they're saying. There's no point in going effectively half-heartedly trying something that they suggest because you need to go in with the open mind-set that this should work because the person who's telling me that it should work is a great coach. Umm, if you go in and think "I'm not really sure in what this coach has said, I'm not really sure I believe what he's saying about this certain aspect" or whatever, then instantly it's, you're not going to get the outcome that you want, almost. Umm, it's just very much kind of going in with a positive mind-set of "this person knows what they're talking about, let's listen to them" (Athlete 12).

Coach reputation. Previous coaching and competitive accomplishments were proposed to impact upon their ability to inspire athletes. This was highlighted by one elite-level female athlete when discussing why her coach was inspiring:

> I had a coach two years ago who . . . was one of the best coaches I've ever had . . . and he'd coached a swimmer to 3 Olympic gold-medals. He had this tally of this great swimmers that he'd coached, and that actually greatly influenced my decision to come to University, because . . . I'd be able to be coached by . . . this legend kind of thing; he's known as a legend within the swimming world. So, yeah that definitely had a massive kind of influence on feeling inspired and wanting to kind of perform if you're going to be coached by someone like that . . . because you feel as if "ah, if they did it under that certain coach then why can't I?" (Athlete 16).

This was supported by coaches who discussed how without a reputation (especially as a player) it was more difficult to gain trust and evoke inspiration. Indeed, one national-level coach, discussed how it took him more time to gain respect from players stating "it did take me time to get that buy-in because I had to show . . . that actually I am a really good coach . . . that my coaching ability far outstripped my playing ability" (Coach 10).

Past accomplishments were suggested to enhance athlete perceptions of coaching knowledge, increase buy in and compliance from athletes and, thus, enhance the likelihood that a coach could inspire athletes. This was illustrated by one athlete when outlining why he found his coach inspiring:

> Just the experience where he has managed other teams in the past, so he has been in that position before, whereas I hadn't, it was my first experience of that. So, he would have known that situation better than us so he could give us his experience and pass it on and know what to say to us – he'd know the right things to say to inspire (Athlete 7).

Specifically, athletes suggested that if their coach had past experiences of success they were more likely to believe in what their coach was telling them to do. As one athlete described:

> So, if [the coach has] been there and they have done it, they know a lot more . . . if you have a coach that hasn't necessarily been to that high level of competing internationally then it is difficult to always trust what they are saying 100% (Athlete 8).

Coaches agreed that past experiences play a role in an athlete's perception of their competence. For instance, one international coach suggested that reputation "gives you a start, it gives you an in" (Coach 3), but this would only last for a limited period of time if the coach did not get results:

> I think it [reputation] helps, initially; it counts diddly-fuck in a short space of time. It'll count for nothing, unless the coach can translate it really well across . . . to improve and impart on his player. If you are the best player in the world, as we all know, it doesn't mean you're going to be a good coach, having great personal achievements (Coach 3).

Reputation was proposed to be particularly important for younger or less experienced athletes. This was highlighted by one female coach who, when discussing the importance of having respect from athletes, described "So, there's . . . playing level, who you're producing, those are . . . the two biggest things that get you the respect from the players. Especially young kids, they want to be working with whoever the best players are working with" (Coach 8).

Demonstrating competence through coaching. Although reputation was important in athletes' perceptions, seeing the fruits of their coach's labour was proposed

to make or break athlete perceptions of coach competence. Indeed, one athlete discussed the importance of seeing improvements as a result of their coach's training:

> What they [the coach] do in general leaves you open to being inspired, because of the things they say. For example, in training if they tell you to do x and y and they change things and let's say you are doing a swimming session and you have made those changes and you see your times improving. I suppose you can see it is actually having an effect then and there (Athlete 8).

Coaches recognised that improvements as a result of their advice (e.g., technical and tactical) lead to increased trust. This was illustrated by an international-level coach who stated that establishing trust "probably starts I guess from them [athletes] . . . probably them having a good result, for sure, and it's like "Hey, Craig knows what he's doing here" (Coach 2).

One coach discussed in detail his experience of how trust in his competence developed over time as a consequence of getting results with the team he coached. Specifically, the coach suggested that it lead to increased belief in his coaching methods and compliance from his athletes:

> Yeah, that, when I first took [the team] there was probably a 50/50 divide in my competence to take that role at the time, because there were players who were my age if not older than me . . . So, we finished fourth in my first season in the league; we reached . . . the FA [Football Association] Cup quarter final and got knocked out to the best team in the country at the time. So, at the end of that season the kind of trust in my competence was higher . . . We, umm, then started the season very well, . . . and as the season was going, I put this wacky system in . . . it was an asymmetrical formation where . . . It's four at the back, three in the middle, two up top, with then one player on the right-hand side . . . When I first put it out there, again they were like "what are you doing?" But we won the championship with that formation last year . . . I just thought "I'm going to do it." So, as the season was going on, we were winning games, and we were winning games well, and the players were doing the things that I'd asked them to do, so that trust was growing . . . and we won the championship and it was like bang . . . the trust in your competency grows only with success (Coach 7).

In addition, recognising and playing to athletes' strengths was also proposed to enhance athletes trust in their coach's competence. Indeed, one elite-level athlete stated:

> I think when coaches know what your strengths are and play you to your strengths . . . you've got confidence and are inspired . . . yeah, you can be changed, but if your strengths are a very big positive then you may as well use them (Athlete 17).

Effective and charismatic communication. The way that coaches communicated with athletes was also proposed to inform athletes' perception of coach competence. Participants suggested that coaches need to provide clear and logical instruction in order to gain buy in from the athletes. This was illustrated by one athlete who stated, "I've got a science background so I'm very logical; if things don't make sense so I find them hard to believe . . . So, if I think they're talking rubbish then I find it harder to believe them" (Athlete 17). To further highlight the importance of providing clear and logical communication, one athlete discussed the communication of a coach who did not inspire them:

> In terms of, I was going to say more game specific, the pre-match and at halftime when he would speak to us in the changing rooms a lot of the information I felt was just hot air and irrelevant, and I found I'd turn off very, very quickly. So, he didn't motivate me to go out before a game, you know, in the initial moments prior to performing (Athlete 15).

As well as the content of coach communication, participants also stated that the delivery of communication was important to the process of inspirational leadership. Coaches who were outgoing, passionate and demonstrated charisma were perceived as being able to inspire athletes more readily. For example, when discussing the factors which impact upon a coach's ability to inspire, one athlete said "I think actually someone with a bit of what I would say is charisma" (Athlete 15). Further, another athlete suggested that the coach's charisma and personality increases the likelihood that an athlete will be open to listening to the coach and, consequently, be inspired by them:

> I just think it's his personality I suppose. He's not a dull person to be around, even though he can be sort of quiet sometimes . . . he gets lively if you start talking to him . . . about stuff that's interesting both to him and to you, then he is

> loving it. And yeah, he's just a lovely guy, his personality shines through. So, like that's what it can be with coaches sometimes isn't it, like one turns up with a personality of wet dish rag, then you don't particularly listen to them I suppose. Well that might just be me, but I need someone bubbly, and somebody that can get through to me and be energetic about it. And he was, he was all of that (Athlete 3).

Creating a personal connection with athlete(s). The connection between coaches and athletes was proposed to be central to an athlete's perception of a coach's inspirational capabilities. For example, one athlete said, "So, I think for me, to be inspired, it means you need to have that connection, if you were to be inspired by an individual" (Athlete 10). Athletes suggested that personal connection was as, if not more, important than coaching competence. This was outlined by one athlete who described how connection contributed to their coach's ability to inspire them:

> I think football knowledge is not as influential as someone who can talk to people and understand people . . . respect every member of the team and make you feel valued . . . it's not necessarily where they've played, it's more about their ethos and the way they deal and communicate with people, which is more inspiring to me (Athlete 15).

Athletes and coaches highlighted a number of factors which impacted on a coach's ability to connect with athletes. These were the coach: (1) demonstrating interest in and care for the athlete(s); (2) being open, honest, and consistent with athletes; and (3) representing, respecting, and embedding the values of the group.

Demonstrating interest in and care for the athlete(s). Coaches who evoked inspiration were perceived to demonstrate genuine interest in their athletes. For instance, one elite athlete described how her coach provided personalised feedback and support in order to help her improve:

> So, when he [the coach] first came into [the club] he obviously wanted to do well as a team but he pulled me aside and said that like I was a very able individual and he had that genuine interest, and he saw that I wasn't achieving my potential, and so he dedicated time and effort to get that out of me; and he did (Athlete 14).

Coaches understood the importance of tailoring their approach to meet their personal needs. To facilitate their understanding of athletes, coaches would seek out opportunities to get to know their athletes. For example, one coach highlighted his approach to integrating new athletes into his training group:

> . . . what happens at our track is I'll tend to get an email saying if somebody new is coming down . . . and I'll make sure I read it before I go to the track so that when that person arrives that I'll always know their name and so I can remember it throughout the session. But I make sure that I know their motivations for what they are doing and why they want to come to the track and first of all what they want from coaching. So, I ask a lot of questions and listen. And I think then you get an idea of what they are trying to achieve, and that is the first point where the trust starts to build I guess . . . making them feel that you have an interest in what they are trying to achieve (Coach 1).

As well as demonstrating interest in athletes from a performance standpoint, coaches who evoked inspiration were proposed to demonstrate care for athletes outside of sport. Athletes suggested that coaches did this by enquiring about athletes' lives outside of sport, providing social and emotional support to athletes (e.g., support during tough personal circumstances), and protecting them in public (e.g., not openly criticising them in the media). For example, a former elite junior athlete described how her coach demonstrated care for her by doing "simple things, like I had to take my car to the garage for an MOT and he followed me there and took me home, because obviously I couldn't get home, and dropped me back again" (Athlete 16). Further, one athlete perceived her coach to care for her because she asked her about studies:

> I think that because she [my coach] took an interest in not only the hockey but . . . also my exams and my academic work . . . She actually took an interest. She used to ask how things went, how my lessons were . . . Again, she showed she cared (Athlete 5).

Coaches developed trust with athletes by being approachable and available (both during and outside of scheduled contact time) to athletes. For instance, one athlete described how her coach provided ample time for athletes to discuss issues saying "she'll spend a lot of time with people. If anyone has an issue, there is always an

opportunity to have a look at the video find out what you did wrong and the way to put it right" (Athlete 17). For coaches making themselves available to support athletes was a conscious decision. This was outlined by one coach who discussed his experiences of doing this on international duty:

> . . . there were a couple on tour where it would be you wanted to go and intervene in the nets or straight after his net, you wait, wait for that time, that coffee, and sometimes let them come to you. Sometimes they'll come, if you put yourself in a position where they can talk to you then they will come and tell you and ask a bit more. You might have facilitated it cleverly, like making sure you are around at breakfast when they're there, or you are in a bar having a drink, "how's it been going generally then? You been alright? Hitting them okay?" because you are just in a different environment it allows them to go "You know, I'm really struggling at the moment, I was going to have a chat with you" or they'll go "do you mind if I have two minutes" (Coach 3).

However, in order to maintain trust, coaches recognised the need to treat information shared with them as confidential and is "going to stay between the two of you . . . it's probably more important than, you know, having trust in your ability to do your job" (Coach 8).

Being open, honest, and consistent with athlete(s). As well as showing interest in athletes, it was important for athletes to consider their coach to be genuine and altruistic in order to be inspired by them. This perception of coaches was fuelled by open and honest communication. For example, one athlete discussed the importance of honest communication from their coach in relation to selection:

> Even if it is not what a player wants to hear, I think that [honesty] is more beneficial . . . for instance, I've been dropped or something like that and they tell me exactly why and given me a pathway to get back . . . So, actually, players will respect coaches more if they give them feedback. And also . . . I learned with things like selection is that it is not personal it is just a matter of opinions and that is what it is, but players will take it more personally if there is no communication I think (Athlete 11).

This was supported by one coach who discussed the importance of speaking honestly with players in order to be perceived as being genuine by his players:

> I still feel that I have that belief in them and therefore they can understand that if I believe in them, then they can believe what I'm saying a bit more. And there's a difference between having belief and blowing smoke up someone's arse, umm and . . . yeah, like authenticity . . . Like the behind of what I'm saying, like the authenticity of it, it's real and I mean it. I'm not just saying it for the sake of saying it (Coach 10).

Having active lines of communication was also proposed to impact on athlete's perceptions of coach authenticity. This was highlighted by an elite athlete who discussed how a lack of communication can lead to a lack of trust in the coach and less chance of being inspired:

> . . . if there is a lack of communication it can create a lack of trust, because ultimately, if you are not speaking to your players, players don't really know what you are thinking . . . and they might get ideas in their heads about what you are thinking and as humans they'll often be negative ideas . . . So, if you don't communicate well I think you will definitely lose a lot of trust, and you won't survive without that trust (Athlete 11).

While being honest with athletes was perceived to be important, athletes proposed that coaches need to consider the appropriate time when honest criticism was delivered. For example, one athlete stated:

> . . . One lad, wicketkeeper, a week before the tour he got told he's not good enough and when he got back from the tour he's going to be replaced by another player! I think a week before a tour when you've worked with someone all summer, you shouldn't say to them "firstly, you're not good enough and you are going to be replaced when you get back." I think it just puts them in a negative mind-set straight away (Athlete 13).

This was supported by coaches who highlighted the importance of being sensitive to the context and timing of honest feedback. Indeed, coaches suggested that, at times, they did not truly believe in what they were telling athletes. For instance, one coach said:

> Coach 3: . . . authenticity is a big thing . . . your team has to . . . believe in the messages that you are saying . . . believe in the authenticity where it is coming from.
>
> Sean: . . . do you always believe in what you are saying to [your athletes]?
>
> Coach 3: I don't know. I suppose, sometimes, you have got more doubt . . . To players who you know you are possibly going to drop, that's quite hard, when you know they are one innings away, well you don't tell 'em that [they are going to be dropped], when you are speaking to them you have got to be very careful what you say.

Athletes also suggested that it was important for coaches to back up their words with action. For instance, one athlete discussed how this would impact on their trust in the coach and thus the potential to be inspired stating, "if someone sells a player the dream . . . and gives this big speech about how we are gonna do it and . . . those actions aren't backed up with his body language or whatever then you lose trust immediately (Athlete 11).

Being consistent in their treatment of athletes also impacted on the connection between the coach and athlete. This was highlighted by one athlete who discussed how their coach "hasn't got any favourites, he puts you in the team because he thinks you deserve to be there . . . So, he has an honest view of things" (Athlete 7). Athletes' level of personal trust with the coach was also informed by how coaches treated other players within the team. For instance, one athlete discussed how he lost trust in his coach:

> Instead of giving you all the time that he had to coach you, he would just be like "yeah, good", "nice" or whatever and then just walk away, and then he wouldn't talk to you for the rest of the session. You would go up to him and ask him for feedback, and he wouldn't give it to you, he would just walk away. And it was just rude, like so rude. Whereas he would invite you out to the club, all socials and they would have like barbecues every month or like dinners . . . and, umm, all of a sudden that just stopped for these people. And they got told that if they didn't come to this amount of training sessions a week, and didn't pay this amount of

> money a week, then they wouldn't get to be with him, and they wouldn't get the experience that they'd had for months and weeks before hand (Athlete 3).

Respecting, representing, and embedding the values of the group. Aligned values were also proposed to enhance the connection between coaches and their athlete(s). Indeed, coaches suggested that representing the values of the group and translating them to their athlete(s) also impacted upon a coach's ability to connect with players, gain trust and, thus, inspire their players. For example, one coach discussed the importance of translating the values to enhance connection:

> So, when [the old coach] left I thought it was my duty to, yes win, but look after the soul of the club to what it means . . . I also think . . . I get the club; I get what it stands for and what it believes in, what its point of difference is. I think I have been very good at translating that, not just to players, to members, to supporters, to helping this unification (Coach 3).

This was supported by one of the coach's athletes who reiterated the importance of the coach representing and embedding club values in order to be considered inspirational:

> Another big thing for him was that, I suppose it was inspirational, he made sure that players bought in to what the club was about . . . as much as it was important to be a player at the club, it was important to know what else went on at the club. So, it was certainly something that I really started to embrace because I thought it was important and I think a lot of the players did (Athlete 11).

The importance of representing the group's values to the process of evoking inspiration was highlighted by athletes discussing their experiences of uninspiring coach-leadership. Specifically, one athlete recalled how the coach sacrificed the values of the group to indulge one athlete, which lead:

> . . . certain individuals that were brought into the team that were probably of a similar mould in terms of their ego, but also in terms of general behaviour at University, it didn't really fit the profile in terms of what we thought the team was about. And it just kind of disrupted and, umm, disgruntled a lot of people. There

> was just disregard for rules I think as well . . . so the coach kind of bent the rules in order to accommodate a player, and principally it was wrong (Athlete 15).

Coach demonstrating trust in athlete(s). In order to be able to inspire athletes, coaches and athletes agreed that it was important for trust to be reciprocated by the coach. This was highlighted by one athlete who said that one of "the reasons why I wasn't inspired [by my coach] was because . . . [I] didn't feel that he really trusted me" (Athlete 15). This importance of mutual trust was further highlighted by one coach who stated that trust is "two-way, I think the coach needs to believe in the athletes, as well. Umm, for them to have the belief in the coach, I think the coach has to believe in the athletes" (Coach 10).

Providing choice and autonomy for athletes. Coaches who evoked inspiration were deemed athlete-centred and were proposed to demonstrate trust in athletes by empowering them to "make certain decisions, I'm inspiring them in a way to make some good decisions for themselves" (Coach 2). Indeed, one Paralympic athlete discussed how his coach was able to inspire him by demonstrating trust in him:

> He was all about giving visually impaired people that independence and doing things for themselves and I have taken that on and I've passed that on to others. So, I know he has inspired me because things that he has done I am passing on myself (Athlete 9).

Providing athletes with control and choices in relation to training, and listening to athletes and actively making changes based upon feedback was proposed to demonstrate trust in athletes. For example, one athlete recalled how her first coach provided her with the opportunity to make choices in training:

> There were five or six of us to start with and he just gave the time to coach and he asked our opinions on what we thought, even though we were only 10 at the time . . . he used to ask things like if we enjoyed the session, what we'd prefer to do, what we liked doing and things like that (Athlete 5).

Coaches recognised the importance of ceding some control in order to be able to inspire athletes, especially with younger athletes. For instance, one coach stated:

> It is a relationship, it's not a dictatorship. And in . . . that sort of dictatorship role where the coach is telling them what to do and they can't ask questions saying, "why are we doing this?" and so on, like they might be inspired in the short term; and sometimes its inspired for the wrong reasons because they don't want the coach to be mad at them afterwards. (Coach 2).

Encouraging responsibility and leadership. Providing leadership responsibility was also proposed to demonstrate trust in athletes. However, providing athletes with this responsibility also served another important function, to preserve and reinforce the coach's influence over, and thus ability to inspire, athletes. For instance, coaches suggested it was important to have a "core group" of athletes on side. For instance, one elite coach stated:

> you do need some core people, enough, and they need to be . . . some really senior influential core people who live and drive by the values of the organisation and the club. You are not going to get 12 or 13 but you have to get the majority or enough of the influential ones to be driving and then that allows you to absorb your maverick (Coach 3).

Indeed, coaches suggested that if key, influential athletes were not "on side" they could "become a little bit poisonous, a bit infectious. They might actually be working against me" (Coach 5). The importance of having key athletes "on side" was reiterated by one athlete who suggested that having several influential athletes' support allowed his coach—who he found to be uninspiring—to maintain influence over the group:

> I think if more of the players had my opinion he wouldn't have been coaching us for very long. Yeah, he wouldn't have been coaching us for very long. Umm, it's hard to gauge the impact he had on other people. I mean Paul, Paul would go and say he was a brilliant coach (Athlete 12).

7.3.3 Category 2: Conditions under which inspiration has the potential to occur

When recalling instances of being inspired, athletes discussed the situation prior to being inspired by their coach. Indeed, athletes were lacking knowledge relating to their capabilities and or their future potential prior to being inspired.

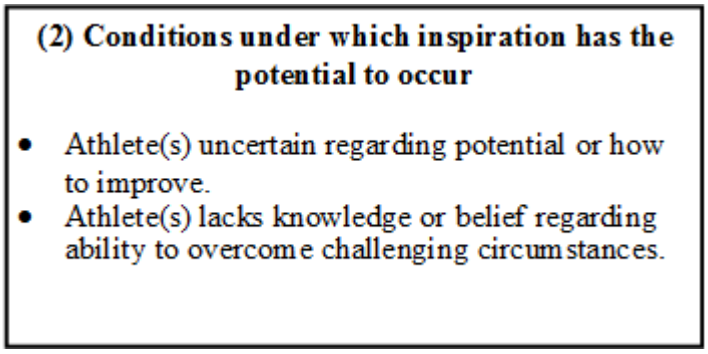


Figure 7.4 Category 2: Conditions under which inspiration has the potential to occur.

Athlete uncertain regarding potential or how to improve. Athletes discussed how they were inspired by coaches when they lacked direction; specifically, they lacked awareness of what they could personally achieve. For example, one athlete discussed how, prior to being inspired, she perceived she was not good enough for representative trials despite her coach putting her forward, describing "I wasn't actually going to go [to county trials] because I thought there were other people better than me and I had slightly lower confidence at that point" (Athlete 6). This was supported by one ex-international coach who discussed how athletes he had worked with were often oblivious to their potential:

> . . . uncertainty regarding potential is again what I said to you that "I want to convince you, you can do what you think you are unable to do", right. So, I wouldn't say it's uncertainty, it's rather lack of knowledge . . . you just don't know what you are capable of (Coach 9).

Experienced athletes discussed how a lack of awareness of what they could achieve following a high-level of personal achievement could precede inspiration. This was highlighted by one international athlete who discussed how towards the end of his career he was uncertain of what his next goal could be:

> . . . for me personally when I gave up the captaincy and stopped playing for England I struggled . . . because I didn't know what the kind of next goal was . . . I think that is very dangerous for a coach because they can think they can stop inspiring those older guys because they feel that they know everything, and they feel that they should know everything themselves. So, in my opinion it is very easy to inspire young players who have got everything ahead of them, but it is those guys who are a little bit older who have been through the kind of, have achieved a lot of what they wanted to achieve when they were younger but what is the next kind of thing? (Athlete 11).

Further, athletes were inspired in scenarios where they lacked knowledge regarding how to improve their own performance. This was illustrated by one athlete who discussed the situation prior to an episode of inspiration:

> When I wasn't the most effective swimmer like last year, I kicked more and he [my coach] went behind me for one length and then we finished, and I was quite out of breath. I thought that was good because I wanted to show that I was working, I didn't really understand that we weren't meant to be going that hard, and he said like, you need to like, basically he was telling me to pull more and to kick less and relax when I swim . . . . this swimming example was like so obvious and such a big issue, especially being in triathlon because as soon as you get out of the water you're onto the bike and run, so if you get out the water and you're out of breath, you know you've like killed all the blood away from your legs then like, well it makes such sense and I can see how obvious it was to him, so I needed to get a better grasp on it for myself (Athlete 2).

Athlete lacks knowledge or belief regarding ability to overcome challenging circumstances. Athletes were inspired in situations where they were struggling or lacked experience, and in challenging circumstances (e.g., competing in games they were not expected to win). For instance, one athlete recalled how she and her teammate were feeling pressure as they did not have experience of competing at that level of competition recalling, "I think, the main issue with that is we hadn't had the previous experience of medal racing . . . I think there was going to be an element of we didn't know how to deal with the pressure" (Athlete 1).

Athletes were also proposed to be open to inspiration when they were lacking confidence. This was illustrated by one athlete how she felt prior to being inspired stating, “I got into this other club. Umm, and I didn’t know that I was [good enough] . . . so when I got there, I didn’t think that I was actually worthy of being there” (Athlete 21). Athletes were proposed to be more open to inspiration from coaches after experiencing extreme lows. This was illustrated by one athlete who described how she felt prior to being inspired by her coach, “This is pointless. Why am I here? What am I doing? This is rubbish. You’re meant to be getting better. That kind of thing really” (Athlete 5). This was further highlighted by a coach who described how one his athletes was in a desperate state prior to being inspired:

> I think a little bit earlier in the year I had one athlete that was really struggling with burnout and she is one of the girls that, using this next gen programme, I’m working with now. She had about 4 to 6 weeks sort of in March and April this year where she was just close to saying “that’s it, I’ve had enough. I’m not going to do this anymore” (Coach 2).

Athletes were also proposed to be prone to inspiration following poor performances or when performances were not meeting expectations. For example, one coach discussed how a team he was coaching were feeling negative following a difficult first race in a new league that they were promoted to the previous season:

> . . . I’d spoken to people about it in the week after the first race and saw the results, and people just sounded a bit flat about it, and sounded like they didn’t really enjoy it and they found it really hard and were thinking “ooh, it’s really tough in this league”; we got promoted last year . . . I think that there had been a bit of negativity about it . . . And I felt that by the way people approached the first race, it was gonna be a bit negative if that carried on throughout the rest of the season (Coach 1).

7.3.4 Category 3: Coach acts to change athlete’s awareness of their capabilities

In order to inspire athletes, coaches needed to change athletes’ perceptions of what they were capable of; either in the short- or long-term. Based upon athlete and

coach experiences, the ways in which coaches inspire athletes is by (1) demonstrating and instilling belief in their ability, and/or (2) outlining what an athlete can achieve—and how they can achieve it—in the future (i.e., providing a clear pathway to achieve their goals).

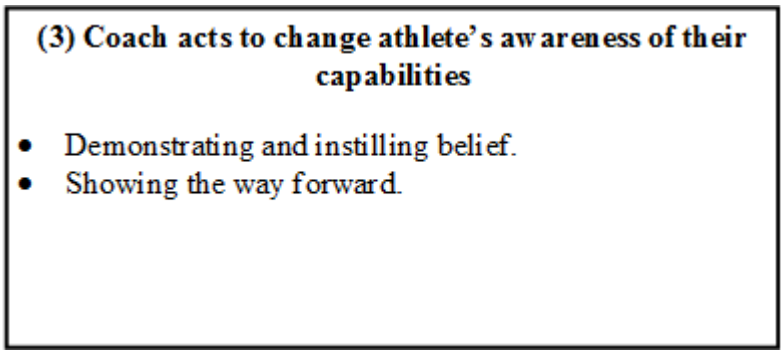


Figure 7.5 Category 3: Coach acts to change athlete's awareness of their capabilities.

Demonstrating and instilling belief. Athletes discussed being inspired when they perceived that their coaches demonstrated belief in them or their team. This was illustrated by one athlete when discussing how her coach inspired her by outlining her potential:

> . . . he's [the coach] always said to me "I'm watching your results. I'm watching what you're doing. Why are you going to Uni? Why are you not going full-time sailing? Why are you still at college? I want you to be full-time sailing." And I think it was somebody else having that full belief in me that I found inspirational . . . He always just said "this is what you should be doing. You can get to the Olympics. Why are you not going for it?" (Athlete 1).

However, when outlining an athlete's potential, coaches need to ensure that the messages are both feasible (i.e., the athlete believes they can achieve them) and personal. This was illustrated by one athlete who discussed the importance of providing individual messages to athletes:

> I think you inspire people by allowing them to get the best out of themselves . . . and being treated like an individual. Because I think the coach will lose a lot if they went round to 10 players . . . and sold them all the dream and it was exactly the same dream because everyone would go "well he said that to me" and

> someone else would go “he said that to me” and then you look at those players and think “well actually I think I’m a bit better than him” and that I think it would lose its message. So I think you have to very much be individual (Athlete 11).

In addition, coaches inspire athletes by outlining how they were valuable to the team (e.g., providing clear roles and responsibilities), challenging them to lead from the front in difficult situations, and by showing trust in their team to reach their performance targets. For example, one athlete recalled:

> . . . a lot of teams went out and bought import players and what she did was use a lot of players that we’ve had around for a number of years who have been warming the bench, she gave them a shot . . . So, I think they were inspired and got confidence from the fact that she didn’t go out and buy players from abroad, she had trust in the players that we had. So, that instilled belief in the squad knowing that we didn’t need to bring in other people to win . . . it gave everyone that belief that internally we could do the job and we did (Athlete 17).

As well as directly outlining belief, athletes were inspired when they perceived coach behaviour to demonstrate belief in them. For instance, athletes discussed how coach effort (e.g., putting in time to prepare for important matches), and making sacrifices for athletes (e.g., giving up their own time to provide extra support to athletes) was deemed inspirational. For instance, one athlete recalled how she was inspired by her coach’s support:

> . . . she’ll always take us to the competitions that allow us to progress and organise extra sessions; extra fitness sessions or extra sessions at another club when we haven’t got the hall, just to make it the maximum opportunity to be what we can (Athlete 10).

Athletes were also inspired when coaches showed belief via reactions to performances, demonstrations of passion, and outlining their pride in the athlete(s). For example, one athlete discussed how their coach consistently demonstrated passion, even when not in direct contact with the team:

> One way [the coach demonstrated passion] was in his emails. We frequently got very, very long emails from him and as soon as you read the first line of one of

> his emails you knew it was from him . . . because of the way he wrote. He was always going on about how proud he was of us, as a goal ball team and staff . . . these emails were always long, pretty deep and emotional emails . . . you could see his passion in those emails and you could see that he wanted us to do really, really, really well . . . you could see that he loved it and loved coaching us, loved coaching us, loved the sport and things like that (Athlete 9).

Coaches also instilled belief in athletes by having a strengths-based approach. For instance, one athlete discussed being inspired when his coach "emphasised my strengths" (Athlete 15). As well as highlighting athletes' strengths, coaches inspired athletes, by playing to these strengths. This was highlighted by a retired professional athlete who described how his coach inspired them despite being physically inferior to their opponents:

> . . . so, Liam obviously masterminded this way of play . . . we had the handling skills, we had the fitness and the speed and ultimately, we'd wear them down. So, for the first thirty or forty minutes it would be a war of attrition and just hang on, and then the last ten or twenty minutes we would then tear teams apart. You know that was quite inspirational in terms of he gave us confidence in our ability, our handling skills and certainly confidence in our fitness and physical preparation because you know we were fitter than them and he built the whole game plan around that, so that was inspirational because it made you feel good about yourself (Athlete 18).

Coaches could indirectly instil belief in, and inspire, athletes via their past accomplishments and reputation. For example, one athlete described how she was inspired by her coach:

> . . . if I know that I could be coached by someone who, umm, has coached an athlete to five Olympic gold-medals then I would . . . if I was to start being coached by them then I would think that I could do that . . . yeah, definitely that would kind of motivate me to think that "why can't I do that if I'm under this certain coach that's coached this girl to five Olympic gold-medals?" and it builds your confidence, as well. I think that's . . . a massive thing because when

> I was being coached by this certain coach I felt as if no one was going to stop me because he was such a renowned coach and his training was so renowned (Athlete 16).

Showing the way forward. Athletes were also inspired when coaches set goals or provided them with information that would allow them to reach their goals or overcome challenges. Athletes proposed that having long-term goals to work towards was inspirational, but in order for them to be truly inspiring they needed to understand how to reach those goals. For example, one athlete stated, "I think inspiration is seeing the goal that you want, umm, and . . . seeing the goal that you want to get to and being able to highlight the steps that you want to get there" (Athlete 12). Alongside understanding the path towards their goals, it was also proposed that in order to maintain inspiration athletes needed to understand how what they were doing (e.g., in practice) was related to the long-term goal. This was highlighted by an international coach who discussed how he perceived he maintained inspiration on a day-to-day basis with his athletes:

> . . . 'We are doing these hard yards now because in 4 weeks' time we are hitting the dirt at Leeds first game of the season, and that is why we are doing this run, that's why we are doing it, so we can bowl that spell after tea. That is why we are doing this run now in the middle of winter; we are out here in the middle of winter because nobody else does it. That is what winners do, that is what we do. And we come at 7 o'clock at night, we come at 9 o'clock at night because we are going to go to that first game of the season.' It is just actually reminding them why we do it sometimes, what is at stake. You know, you are doing the first one day game in May and you talk about road to Wembley, 'you know, this finishes at Lords. It's May today but it finishes in August at Lords if we go all the way in this. So, this game today counts just as much as that one at Lords' (Coach 3).

As well as being inspired towards long-term goals, athletes were inspired when coaches were able to provide information that allowed them to overcome short-term obstacles. For example, one athlete described how the coach provided specific instructions to inspire her and her teammate:

> He didn't speak to us about racing before the race and we'd never had that before, before a race. The Coaches would usually say to us the shifts are doing this, the

> breeze is at this angle, this is where the course is, constantly thinking about it. What I think he was doing is he knew we already knew that. We had already been racing there for a week; we knew what was going on . . . Then when we set off to do the race he gave us three bullet points, like "this is what you're going to do, that is what is going to happen, and here you go" . . . So, he would tell us "start under this group because you know they are going to be quick" so we'd do that and execute that, and we knew we put ourselves in a good position to start the whole race. So, I think that was pretty inspiring because he took our mind off and then said "focus on that, that's all you have to do. Now go and do it" (Athlete 1).

Indeed, providing clear and simple solutions was an important approach especially when athletes were struggling or lacked experience in their current performance-situation. To inspire athletes in these situations, coaches discussed how athletes needed to have "clear objectives to what they need to do" (Coach 3). Further, a coach described how he inspired a team following a poor performance:

> Coach 1: . . . A couple of weeks ago actually, we run a cross country league in the winter and I was called in by the team manager there to do the team talk because they'd had a bit of a bad performance in the first race . . . So, I went along and . . . essentially give a little team talk at the beginning focussing on approaching the race with a bit of intelligence and using their strengths and stuff. And, actually, I had a bit of direct feedback that . . . they felt inspired by that two-minute sort of chat.
>
> Sean: . . . can you remember anything specifically that you said to them in that instance?
>
> Coach 1: Yeah, I remember it quite well actually; I prepared it a little bit . . . I then talked to them about how everybody worked very hard in the first race, but it's not just about working hard, you need to run with intelligence as well . . . So, I told them to try and channel their enthusiasm into a more intent, so making sure they are overtaking in the second half of the race.

When athletes had a higher level of self-awareness relating to their potential or had reached their long-term goals, they were less likely to be inspired by coaches

outlining a long-term goal. In this instance, providing athletes with responsibility was proposed to inspire them. For instance, one athlete discussed how he was inspired following deselection from the international team when his coach provided him with the opportunity to work with the junior players:

> "We've got a young player here, you know a really good player, we need you to work with him." You know actually take the focus off the big goal and get some energy in here, yes to help the other player but to give you another goal (Athlete 11).

7.3.5 Factors that impact on the process of inspirational coach-leadership

Based upon the athletes' and coaches' experiences, a range of factors (see figure 6.6) were proposed to impact upon the process of inspirational coach-leadership. These factors were seen to impact upon the other categories identified within the grounded theory and consequently the potential for athletes to be inspired by coaches.

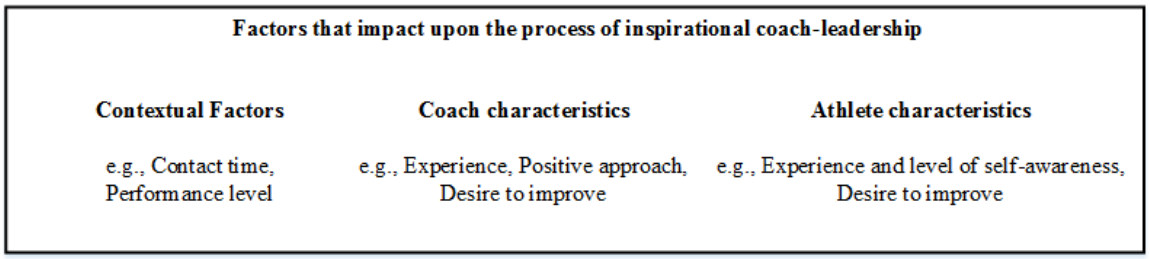


Figure 7.6 Factors that impact upon the process of inspirational coach-leadership.

Coach characteristics. The participants outlined a range of factors relating to the coach which they perceived impacted upon the process of inspirational leadership. These factors were related to coaching experience, having a positive outlook, and demonstrating a desire to improve.

Competitive and coaching experience. Participants reported that the experience level of coaches had an impact on the process of inspirational leadership. Indeed, one athlete highlighted the how coaches previous experience can impact on athlete perceptions of their capability stating, "well, some coaches have played as well, so you've seen them do it and you know they're good and that they know what they are talking about" (Athlete 17). As well as impacting upon athletes' perceptions of the

coach's competence (see category 1), coach experience was proposed to impact on coaches': decision making, reflective practice, level of self-awareness in relation to coaching, and ability to establish trust and respect with athletes. For example, one coach discussed how their own competitive experiences and experiences of different coaches had shaped their coaching philosophy and ability to understand what is required to inspire athletes:

> Coach 5: I think it's [competitive experience] important. That's not to say it's the be all and end all. I think it's my journey. I think I've learnt a lot more because I've played, and I've coached, and I've been coached by many, many coaches. Some that I look back on and think they were good, inspiring, role model coaches. Others, I'd wonder why they coached and . . . I do have some … horrific sessions that I've been a part of, sadly, and I didn't enjoy them, and, you know, how they motivate a young player . . . I really struggled with that. So, I think my experiences and the diverse level and range of coaching that I've been coached by . . . has supported me on my journey. I look at other coaches as my role model and they inspire me, and that's where I like to go.

Desire to learn and improve. Although coaches' previous experience was deemed to be important, these experiences were only deemed useful to the process of inspirational leadership if coaches reflected upon them in order to improve their practice and, ultimately, their ability to inspire athletes. Coaches proposed that this desire to continually improve was underpinned by being open-minded, motivated to learn, and intrinsic motivation to develop and inspire others. One coach discussed the importance of reflecting upon and learning from her previous experiences:

> Well [your previous experience is] going to impact on your behaviour and how you act isn't it, what you've had before? You change, when you make mistakes, and you get it wrong, you try not to do that again, so you will do something different . . . So, you are open, to the fact that you go on, to get better and that you haven't arrived and that's it, you know (Coach 6).

The desire to learn and improve was shown through coaches' engagement with formal and informal continued professional development. For example, one coach spent time observing higher-level coaches in order to develop their ability to inspire athletes:

> I spend a lot of time when I can, with like the GB coaches and England coaches, and watching international games and being around the premiership before I took on the roles, you know just like spending time just understanding about what is important. I think that's given me the ability in training or a game to know what good looks like and I know the finer details (Coach 10).

Unwavering positive approach and outlook. Having a positive approach and outlook was deemed another factor to impact upon athletes' perceptions of the coach and, thus, enhance the potential for them to be inspired. This positive approach and outlook was in relation to the coach's general demeanour and their thoughts about their athlete(s). This was illustrated by one athlete who said that their coach was "always positive about the team, even if we were losing every week, he'd still be like next week we will win. If he did have any negative thoughts we wouldn't have known about it" (Athlete 7). This perception was impacted upon by athletes' perception of their coach's personality, their coach's communication with the team, and their coach's focus during and following training and competition. In contrast to the positive approach of inspirational coaches, athletes who discussed coaches who did not inspire them, noted a lack of positivity from their coach. For instance, one athlete described:

> I think another style of Christopher's coaching was he would, he would never pick out the positives in anything. Umm, it would never be "great shot" it would never be, umm, "good, great stop." It would always be "stupid mistake", umm, "why have you let that in?", "stop throwing a penalty" . . . I mean, he'd talk very much all about the psychological stuff and using positive words, but when it came to him, it just didn't happen. (Athlete 12).

Athlete Characteristics. Participants identified some important factors relating to the athlete which they perceived to impact on the process of inspirational leadership. Specifically, athletes' experience, desire to learn and improve, and level of self-awareness were seen to impact the extent to which they were open to being inspired by their coach.

Experience. Athletes' previous experiences were seen to impact on the extent to which they were open to being inspired by their coach. The general consensus between athletes and coaches was that less experienced athletes were more open to being inspired. This was highlighted by one athlete who stated that at an early stage in their career their coach had a major influence on them stating, "yeah, maybe because I was a bit younger and at the start of my trampolining career I think [the coach] had a really big influence on what my views were at the time, what my goals were" (Athlete 10). An experienced athlete suggested that this was because less experienced athletes have greater room for improvement whereas experienced athletes were proposed to be less inspired by coaches' due to their own increased knowledge base:

> I think the biggest thing when you are older in your career, you kind of know more. I would argue to a certain extent, someone can't keep selling you a dream. So, it's like when you are 19, 20, 21, 22 and a little bit older you are kind of a little bit wet behind the ears and you'll believe anything and think I can achieve that. Whereas, I think sometimes when you get later on in your career it is difficult to kind of keep selling those dreams because in a bad way you've got those experiences and had those knocks that make you think "actually it doesn't kind of work out like this" (Athlete 11).

Past experiences with coaches were also suggested to impact on whether an athlete could be inspired by a coach. For example, one coach discussed the difference between dealing with inexperienced and experienced athletes:

> Umm, maybe it's easier when they [athletes] aren't very experienced because they haven't had many other people working with them, so anything is good. Anything that's constructive, anything that's productive and purposeful will work and when they're more experienced they've had lots of other people working with them, so they've had lots of influences . . . perhaps it's harder to inspire … they're hungrier for it, so that is a bonus, but maybe it's harder because they've had lots of other people (Coach 7).

These experiences with previous coaches were proposed to provide a baseline against which to compare new coaches and could lead athletes to question new coach's methods. Therefore, impacting upon a new coach's ability to inspire athletes. Indeed,

one athlete illustrated this saying “If these current coaches I have now are doing something wrong, I will always say “ah, well, [my previous coach] did this with me, why can’t they do that?” You always make reference to them because that’s ultimately what you expect from a coach” (Athlete 15).

Level of Self-awareness. In conjunction with their experience, participants discussed how athletes’ understanding of themselves, the sport, and their capabilities impacted upon how open they were to being inspired by their coach. One athlete discussed how their increased awareness made them more critical of their coach’s methods and less likely to take inspiration from the coach:

> Umm, so I think yeah the first time I met him, definitely the first couple of years you kind of think that everything that he says is obviously correct, but I think as you develop in the sport and as you sometimes, umm, when you get an understanding of the sport and you might want to question it a little bit like “where does this come from?”. . . you shouldn’t just assume that because you’ve known something for a few years it doesn’t mean it’s correct. Umm, it still should be questioned (Athlete 12).

This was supported by one coach who also noted that athletes became more critical as they gained more experience:

> You’ve got to get it right. It’s much more demanding and your subject knowledge is challenged, and whether you get it right or not, because as you say their awareness, they’ve had lots of other people feeding them information. So, you feed them something and they’re going “what are you talking about?” So, it’s more demanding. But they are hungrier as well, they’re also more discerning, they’re more aware (Coach 6).

Desire to learn and improve. A commonality among athletes who coaches had inspired was that they appeared to have an intrinsic desire to develop. For example, one coach described the players as being “motivated, they are committed, they do have . . . desire and have, umm, aspirations” (Coach 5). This idea was supported by athletes. For instance, one athlete described, “you wouldn’t be in that situation or in that kind of elite environment if you didn’t want to learn or improve . . . So, I think . . . you kind of

always want to be the best you can be" (Athlete 13). Having the desire to learn and improve was demonstrated by athletes approach to training. This was illustrated by one coach when contrasting the approach of two of his athletes:

> You sort of turn up to the club house to training and Edward sets up and puts his bike in the trainer; this is in the winter when there's a foot of snow outside and its minus 30. Yeah, Edward sets up goes in the changing rooms gets changed and just gets at it. Whereas David [Edward's brother] is goofing around and having a chat and asking me did I see that news article on cyclingnews.com or whatever it might be, and 15 minutes have gone by and David is only just getting ready (Coach 2).

As well as being motivated and committed to improving, athletes who were inspired were proposed to be open-minded. That is athletes were willing to listen to and learn from their coach. This was highlighted by an experienced international athlete who discussed the importance of remaining open-minded:

> It's also trying to remain open, as well . . . you might make some opinions . . . but also you do need to remember that they might . . . have a way of doing things and then they may adjust. So, it's, yeah, still remembering that they can still change; which, again, is good when that happens . . . you then are open to listening to them more (Athlete 17).

In contrast, those players whom coaches were unable to inspire were described as being closed-minded and inflexible. For instance, one coach described his experience of such players:

> . . . I can think of a couple of hockey players who are extremely gifted, but I don't think they'll ever be world class or the best player in the world because they're not consistent, and they feel like they have almost made it because they have a couple of Olympic medals or whatever . . . but I don't think they'll ever step onto that sort of world class [level] because they haven't got that ability to reflect and to really be able to take a step back and be humble (Coach 10).

Contextual factors. The athlete and coach characteristics were also proposed to interact with the environment within which these coaching interactions took place. Specifically, participants identified that the amount of contact time (e.g., number of

training sessions and competitive situations) between coaches and athletes had to interact with athletes, and the performance level at which they were operating impacted upon the potential for athletes to be inspired by their coach.

Performance level and contact time. The competitive level at which athletes and coaches were operating was proposed to impact upon the process of inspirational leadership. Specifically, competitive level was suggested to impact upon the resources available and contact time available with players, and commitment of athletes. This was highlighted by one coach when discussing the difference between a University side and representative side that she coached:

> Coach 6: . . . the ones we get come here [University] because we aren't so serious, so we have to step down our expectations to fit the mould of what we're working with. So, that's a limitation on how much impact you can have because the people who are in front of you . . . are like "oh I'm not really sure I want to go up to the premiership, I have to travel a long way then on a Wednesday and we could get thrashed" . . .
>
> Sean: So, do you notice a difference between those and when you were doing the [representative side] then?
>
> Coach 6: Oh, oh, god, yes. When you put a practice on, umm, with the [representative side] they were like all over the place, and it's like "stop now, reign it in." With the University you put on the same practice and you've got to hustle and you've got to galvanize.

Coaches also perceived that whether they were dealing with individuals or teams had an impact on the likelihood that they could inspire athletes. For instance, one coach discussed how it was easier to inspire individual athletes as you can solely focus on them:

> . . . individual sport is very different from team sport. Err, inspire an athlete . . . in an individual sport is easier; you can allocate more time for that athlete . . . Inspiring a team is you have to combine the individual needs to one, but it's still a team interest which has to prevail for success (Coach 9).

The amount of time that coaches and athletes had with each other was deemed an important factor within the process of inspirational leadership. For example, when asked about what impacts on her potential to inspire athletes, one coach responded:

> Whether you've got enough time with them; that is probably the biggest thing [in terms of inspiration]. I don't have that with the [team] at the moment, don't have enough time with them. The impact I've had on them in the last 18 months hasn't been nearly as powerful because now they have got so big you don't have enough time with anybody to get the impact (Coach 6).

This time was proposed to enable coaches to have more influence with their athletes by facilitating greater mutual understanding, and allowing increased technical and tactical work. For example, one coach discussed how time had an impact on developing mutual trust and respect with his athletes, stating:

> So, yeah, with Louise specifically, and with five, six, or seven other players, it has taken time, but I know now genuinely we have got at least 70, 80 % of this current squad that will do anything for me, and I'd do anything for them, I don't know if that was the case immediately (Coach 7).

Athletes agreed that time was an important factor because it made them perceive that the coach was dedicating time towards them. For instance, a former national level athlete said:

> I think time, as well, I think that's crucial. I think if they dedicate a lot of time to you, so if we see each other three times a week, I think that's more beneficial than just seeing someone an hour a week. I think that would inspire me more because they are putting so much time into me (Athlete 14).

7.3.6 A substantive grounded theory of the process of inspirational coach-leadership in sport

The proposed grounded theory (see figure 6.2) suggests that athletes are inspired when coaches are able to change their awareness of their short- or long-term capabilities (see core category). In order to change athletes' awareness, and thus inspire them, this theory posits that coaches need to establish some level of trust and respect with their

athletes (see category 1) by demonstrating competence (e.g., showing they have the ability to have a positive impact on athletes), creating a connection with their athletes on a personal level (e.g., showing interest in their athletes' welfare), and showing trust in their athletes (e.g., empowering athletes to take responsibility). Having established a level of mutual trust and respect coaches are then able to inspire athletes when the athlete is in a situation where inspiration has the potential to occur (see category 2). The theory suggests that these situations are characterised by athlete vulnerability, whereby athletes are unsure or lacking in awareness regarding (a) their short- or long-term potential or (b) how they can overcome challenges or reach their goals. In order to change awareness, coaches need to act in ways that demonstrate belief in athletes (e.g., outlining an athlete's long-term potential) and or provide them with information or resources that enables them to overcome challenges or reach their goals (e.g., provide clear solutions to problems). Also, the theory proposes that factors relating to the context, athlete, and coach interact to impact upon: (1) the establishment of mutual trust and respect between coaches and their athletes; (2) the conditions under which inspiration has the potential to occur; and (3) the way athletes' perceive their coaches behaviour aimed at changing athlete(s) awareness of their capabilities.

The theory is also cyclical in that it proposes that the changed awareness associated with becoming inspired impacts on the other categories within the process. More specifically, being inspired has the potential to: (1) enhance the level of trust between coaches and athletes (e.g., an athlete's perception of their coach's competence is higher), (2) impact upon the conditions under which inspiration may occur (e.g., athletes are more aware of what they can achieve, thus may not lack knowledge of their capabilities anymore), and thus make it less likely for athletes to be inspired by coaches demonstrating belief in their ability; and (3) change the factors that impact upon the process of inspirational coach-leadership (e.g., athletes have increased self-awareness).

7.4 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a substantive grounded theory of the process of inspirational coach-leadership. The grounded theory suggests that inspirational coach-leadership is a process which involves the athlete being open to being inspired (e.g., lacking confidence and or knowledge in their ability to overcome an immediate challenge) and the coach acting in a way to change their awareness (e.g., providing clear information that shows them how to overcome the challenge). Importantly, the theory highlights the need for coaches to have established trust and respect with the athletes before they are able to inspire them. In addition, the theory identifies that a range of factors relating to the athlete, coach, and context interact to impact upon the situations in which athletes can be inspired, the way the coach acts to inspire athletes, and the establishment of trust and respect between coaches and athletes.

This study adds to existing leadership literature by providing the first theory of inspirational leadership derived specifically in the sporting context. Through the use of a grounded theory methodology, a context-specific overview of athletes' and coaches' experiences and perceptions of inspirational leadership within sport is provided. Specifically, the findings demonstrate the complex process of inspirational leadership in sport and highlight the key factors which underpin a coach's ability to have an inspirational impact on athletes and, therefore, goes some way to addressing the criticisms of previous leadership theory and research which fail to take into account the factors which may impact on leaders decision making (Cruickshank & Collins, 2016, 2017). Indeed, this study outlines not only *what* leaders do to inspire, but also outlines *when* and *why* leaders might engage in behaviours which are proposed to inspire athletes. Consequently, the related categories within the theory provides coaches with a resource through which to evaluate their leadership and understand why they are, or are not, able to change an athlete's awareness of their capabilities and inspire them.

Crucially, given the complexity of the leadership process, the current study identifies the need to study contextual factors, coach behaviours, and athlete outcomes in unison when exploring leadership practices in sport. The core category (i.e., Athlete(s) inspired through changed awareness of their capabilities) aligns with the central proposition that inspiration occurs as a result of an individual gaining

appreciation of new possibilities (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Also, there are clear parallels between the proposed theory's propositions and the established conceptualisation of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003, 2004; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010). Central to the conceptualisation is the proposal that inspiration is 'evoked' by a stimulus encountered in a given environment that provides the inspiree with insight (e.g., new information) which 'transcends' their previous awareness of the possibilities within that context (Belzak et al., 2017). The present grounded theory suggests that coaches are a stimulus that can 'evoke' inspiration (e.g., by demonstrating and instilling belief or showing the way forward) when athletes lack knowledge or awareness of their potential or how to overcome challenges (thus, this information 'transcends' their current awareness).

While recognising situations in which athletes are open to inspiration and engaging in behaviours that might inspire athletes is important, according to the theory, coaches' efforts to inspire are impacted by the extent to which an athlete trusts and respects their coach; that is, the more the athlete trusts the coach, the more likely they are to be inspired by them. Thus, a central proposition of the theory is that, in order to inspire, leaders need to establish trust and respect with athletes. This finding could be explained by existing theorising on inspiration. Central to the conceptualisation of inspiration is the idea that individuals are inspired by an *intrinsically valued* external stimulus which highlights something considered to be good, right, or true (e.g., a leader outlining an athlete's potential which changes the athletes awareness of what they are capable of) elicited by an external source (Belzak et al., 2017). Taking this into account, it could be suggested that if an athlete does not have trust and respect for their leader (i.e., the potential source of inspiration) they are unlikely to see what the leader is saying as 'intrinsically valuable' and, consequently, are unlikely to be inspired by them. To explain, this study highlighted a contrast between inspiring and uninspiring leaders, with inspiring leaders perceived as authentic, altruistic and consistent in their treatment of athletes. Therefore, if a coach does not demonstrate these qualities, it is unlikely that an athlete will view what their coach is saying as good, right or true, and the athlete is less likely to be inspired by them.

Additionally, the grounded theory's propositions in relation to trust and respect appear to provide some clarity to recent debates within leadership literature (i.e., that leadership should be about what the leader does and/or who the leader is; Cruickshank

& Collins, 2016, 2017; Mills & Boardley, 2017). The proposed grounded theory suggests both. For example, that the coach should represent the values of the group (in order to establish trust and respect with athletes) supports Mills and Boardley's (2017) argument that value congruence (between the coach and athlete) has the potential to enhance trust by suggesting that the coach has genuine motives (i.e., suggests who they are is important to the process of inspirational leadership). Further, athletes were more likely to trust coaches if they perceived that trust was reciprocal (e.g., the coach providing athletes with leadership responsibility). While such behaviour was proposed to demonstrate trust in athletes, at times, it was reportedly used to ensure that the coach maintained trust with the group (i.e., suggests what the coach does is important to the process of inspirational leadership). This has links to the trait of Machiavellianism whereby leaders manipulate followers to have control and maintain power over them (McHoskey, 1999) and supports Cruickshank and Collins' (2015) suggestions that 'dark' behaviours may be important within leadership. However, that is not to say that using 'dark' behaviours will always enhance trust, but that such behaviour may be necessary in order to maintain the trust of the group and, thus, enhance the coach's potential to inspire athletes. A caveat to this, based upon exploration of negative cases, is that other 'dark' behaviours (e.g., hubris and social dominance) appeared to be associated with leaders who did not inspire athletes. This highlights that (a) leaders need to consider the appropriate time to use 'dark' behaviours (e.g., to maintain trust within the group) and (b) that the key to maintaining trust on a personal level is that coaches are *perceived* by athletes as altruistic and authentic; regardless of whether they actually are.

In agreement with Chelladurai's multidimensional model of leadership (Chelladurai, 1990, 2001, 2007), the proposed grounded theory also suggests that contextual factors (relating to the athlete, the coach, and performance-level) might impact on the process of inspirational leadership. Taking these in turn, athletes who had a desire to improve were deemed to be more open to being inspired. This supports previous research that has shown intrinsic motivation to moderate the extent to which an individual experiences inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). In addition, athlete's experience and level of self-awareness was proposed to influence the extent to which they could be inspired, with experienced athletes proposed to be more difficult to

inspire. This may be because their awareness of their actual- or best-self hinders the appreciation of a potential future-self (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997, 1999). Specifically, experienced athletes knowledge of their limitations may hinder their appreciation of a better future-self because it is inconsistent with the limits of their previous best-self (Lockwood & Kunda, 1999). Coach experience and level of motivation was also posited to impact upon the process of inspiring athletes by impacting upon a coach's confidence, decision making, and their ability to establish trust and respect. This finding aligns with research into coaching practice which has shown that a coach's previous experience and motivation can impact upon their behaviour and subsequently athlete's perceptions of the coach (Boardley, 2018). With regards to performance level, it was proposed that greater levels of contact time allow for increased interaction between the coach and athlete, which enhanced the level of trust between coaches and athletes (e.g., suggesting that coaches were dedicating increased time to athletes). Indeed, this supports Shamir's (2011) proposition that "it takes time for the majority of leadership inputs to produce the outcomes and the likelihood that the inputs, the outcomes, and relationships between them may change over time" (p. 307). Therefore, the theory suggests that coaches need to consider such factors when considering how to inspire athletes.

In conclusion, this study offers a substantive grounded theory of the process of inspirational coach-leadership in sport. In doing so, this study highlights the complex and nuanced process the coach engages with in order to inspire athletes. As well as behaving in a manner to change athletes' awareness when they are lacking in knowledge or are having a crisis in confidence, the grounded theory highlights that athletes' level of trust and respect for the coach has the potential to make or break the potential for a coach to inspire athletes. This suggests that, in addition to what the coach *does* or who the coach *is* (cf. Cruickshank & Collins, 2016, 2017; Mills & Boardley, 2017), athletes' perception of the coach is an important, if not the key, factor to leaders being able to influence (in this case inspire) athletes. Thus, in order to have an inspirational influence coaches should engage in practices aimed at establishing trust and respect with their athletes. Moreover, this theory provides coaches and coach developers with recommendations on which to develop their own or others' ability to inspire athletes. Given that this is the first sport-specific theory of the process of

inspirational coach-leadership, these results offer an important theoretical foundation for future research and a first framework on which applied practice can be based.

Chapter 8

General Discussion and Conclusions

8. General Discussion and Conclusions

The goal of this thesis was to explore athletes' experiences of inspiration to understand what inspires athletes and the consequences associated with being inspired. Three studies were conducted to address this purpose. Study 1 explored athletes' experiences of inspiration in order to understand the sources and consequences of inspiration for athletes. The results indicated that athletes are inspired by three main sources (i.e., demonstrations of leadership, interacting with role models, and personal performances and accomplishments) and inspiration could lead to a range of positive outcomes (e.g., increased confidence, positive emotions, improved performance). Given that leadership was seen as a source of inspiration, that most athletes interact with leaders, and that inspiration is central to several theories of leadership, the remainder of the thesis explored how leaders inspire athletes. To this end, Study 2 investigated how coaches inspire. The findings revealed that athletes were inspired when coaches demonstrated belief in them (e.g., by outlining their potential), showed the way forward (e.g., provided technical information to overcome a plateau in performance), or demonstrated support (e.g., empathising with athletes during tough times). Though Study 2 identified coach behaviours that inspire, the study failed to explain how leaders are able to exert an inspiring influence. Considering this point, and given that previous theories of leadership fail to clearly explain how leaders inspire athletes, the aim of Study 3 was to produce a grounded theory that explains the process through which coaches inspire athletes. The grounded theory highlighted the importance of coaches changing athletes' awareness of their capabilities in the short- or long-term. The theory proposes that, to change athletes' awareness (and thus inspire them), coaches could demonstrate and instil belief in athletes or show them the way forward when athletes are feeling vulnerable or lack awareness of what they could achieve. Further, the theory proposes that coaches need to establish trust and respect with athletes in order to have an inspirational impact on them. Overall, this theory highlights the importance of considering the interplay between coach behaviour, coach and athlete characteristics, and the context when attempting to understand how coaches inspire.

These studies highlight the complexity of the process of inspirational leadership in sport and emphasise the importance of researchers considering not only leadership

behaviours but, also, contextual factors which might impact on leadership effectiveness. From a theoretical perspective, this research suggests that a coach's impact is influenced by an athlete's perception of the coach. Specifically, it appears that the level of trust and respect an athlete has for their coach influences the extent to which they will buy into, and be influenced (i.e., inspired) by, what the coach does. To put it simply, the findings suggest that leadership effectiveness depends upon how leadership is perceived by followers.

8.1 Theoretical links and contributions in relation to inspiration

The findings of this thesis contribute to the inspiration literature by extending Thrash and Elliot's (2003, 2004) conceptualisation of inspiration to the context of sport. Specifically, the findings provide support for the three core characteristics of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) whereby inspiration can be *evoked* by external sources (personal performances and accomplishments, role models, and leadership), *transcends* the individual's initial concerns by changing their awareness of new possibilities (e.g., a new long-term goal), and leads to enhanced *motivation* and action from the inspired to achieve these possibilities. Second, the findings support the two (*by* and *to*) component processes of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2004) which suggest that an individual is inspired *by* the intrinsic value of a stimulating object and is inspired *to* extend this to a self-relevant context (Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, et al., 2014). To illustrate, an athlete appreciates the intrinsic value of a leader outlining their potential (i.e., is inspired *by*) and then acts to realise their potential (i.e., is inspired *to*).

Findings from this thesis (primarily Studies 1 and 2) also highlight a range of positive consequences associated with inspiration. In accord with existing research (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2011; Gucciardi et al., 2015; Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010) the findings suggest that inspiration could have an impact on athletes' cognitions (e.g., enhanced confidence), emotions (e.g., increased happiness), behaviour (e.g., increased effort), and performance (e.g., improved finishing position). The present findings also identified team-level outcomes proposed to result from inspiration (e.g., increased cohesion and identification with the team). This adds to recent findings that group identification relates to the strength and

frequency of the experience of inspiration (Chadborn & Reysen, 2016), by suggesting that being inspired may enhance athletes' identification with their group.

Perhaps most importantly, this thesis contributes to the inspiration literature by adding to the limited exploration of the sources of inspiration (e.g., Stephan et al., 2015; Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2015) by identifying sources of inspiration for athletes (i.e., the self, role models, and leaders). In particular, this thesis (specifically Studies 2 and 3) has provided a comprehensive exploration of how leaders inspire and subsequently makes several contributions to our understanding of inspirational leadership.

8.2 Theoretical links and contributions in relation to inspirational leadership

The major thrust of this thesis was to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how leaders inspire followers. First, findings from this thesis build upon Searle and Hanrahan's (2011) study of inspirational leadership by identifying: specific behaviours leaders engage in to inspire; situations in which followers are more open to inspiration; and how leaders 'connect' with followers by establishing trust and respect. In doing so, this research has also addressed limitations within Searle and Hanrahan's research by comparing and contrasting leader and follower experiences and proposing a grounded theory that considers the interaction of the leader, the follower, and the context.

Further, the contribution of this thesis to the inspirational leadership literature should be considered in relation to critiques (Arthur et al., 2017; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) of the established theories (e.g., transformational leadership) proposed to explain how leaders inspire (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of these limitations). Firstly, transformational leadership is proposed to lack a clear underpinning theory that explains how transformational leadership exerts its influence on individual and group outcomes (Arthur et al., 2017; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Considering this point, the present thesis provides a theory, developed using a rigorous grounded theory methodology, that outlines the process through which leaders inspire athletes by highlighting the situations in which athletes are more open to being inspired and behaviours that coaches might exhibit to inspire. As such, while

transformational leadership has been criticised for its failure to inform leaders' decision making and action (e.g., how and when to employ transformational behaviours; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016), the proposed grounded theory provides a framework that might enhance coaches' understanding of when and how to inspire athletes.

Secondly, van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) criticised transformational leadership for failing to specify the underpinning mechanisms (i.e., moderators and mediators) that explain transformational leadership's impact. The proposed grounded theory proposes that leaders are only able to evoke inspiration if they have the trust and respect (based upon athlete perceptions of (a) coach competence, (b) their connection with the coach, and (c) the coach's trust in them) of their athletes, and that the process is impacted upon by contextual (e.g., performance level) and individual difference factors (e.g., coach experience, athlete motivation). However, given that leadership is a complex process involving the interaction of leader inputs (e.g., behaviours), follower perceptions, and contextual and individual difference factors (Dinh et al., 2014; Smoll & Smith, 1989), and due to the nature of the research (e.g., using retrospective qualitative designs) causality and the direction of these relationships can only be inferred.

While these contextual and situational factors impact upon the process of inspirational leadership, the establishment of trust and respect between the coach and the athlete appears to provide the foundation for a leader's potential to inspire their athletes. That trust and respect for the coach were seen as central to the process of inspirational leadership highlights the importance of *athlete perception* to leadership. Consequently, as well as furthering our understanding of the process inspirational leadership in sport, this thesis goes someway to answering calls from leadership researchers (Arthur et al., 2017; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016, 2017; Mills & Boardley, 2017; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) for leadership research to illustrate the factors that impact upon leader effectiveness and, thus, provides theoretical suggestions for leadership more broadly.

8.3 Broader theoretical implications for leadership: The importance of trust

A recent debate discussed the relative importance of what a leader does (i.e., their behaviour and decision making; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016, 2017) and who the leader

is (i.e., their intentions; Mills & Boardley, 2017). This thesis provides support for both propositions, finding that elements relating to what the leader does (e.g., their behaviour and actions) and who the leader is (e.g., inspirational leaders were perceived to be authentic) are important to the process of inspirational leadership. However, based upon the results from this thesis, it could be argued that *athlete perception* is key to effective leadership. The proposed grounded theory suggests that athletes' perceptions of their leader (based upon the extent to which the athlete trusts and respects the leader) colour their interpretations of their leader's behaviour and intentions; regardless of the leader's actual intentions. That is not to say that leader behaviour and intentions are not important, rather that leadership is a complex process involving leader behaviours, intentions and, ultimately, follower perceptions. Consequently, the findings resonate with the central proposition of Smoll and Smith's (1989) cognitive-mediational model that "leader effectiveness resides in both the behaviours of the leader and the eyes of the beholder" (p. 1544).

The cognitive-mediational model (Smoll & Smith, 1989) suggests that player reactions to leader behaviours are mediated by athlete perceptions and recall. The model hypothesises that situational (e.g., level of competition) and individual-difference factors (e.g., coaching goals/motives, athlete age) impact upon coach behaviours, athlete perceptions and recall, and athletes' evaluative reactions to coach behaviours. While there are clear similarities between the propositions of the grounded theory and the cognitive-mediational model (e.g., that contextual factors such as player and coach experience impact upon coach behaviour and athlete perceptions of coach behaviour), the grounded theory builds on Smoll and Smith's work by extending it beyond the youth sport context and identifying trust and respect as central to athlete perceptions of coach behaviour and intentions. Further, the proposed theory, arguably, provides a simpler framework for researchers and practitioners to understand the process through which leaders establish influence (i.e., by establishing trust and respect with athletes; see figure 7.1 for a diagrammatic representation of how trust and respect impact on athlete perceptions of leader behaviour).

In accord with this, trust is recognised as central to leader effectiveness and has been shown to impact on followers perceptions of and satisfaction with leadership (Gillespie & Mann, 2004), team and individual performance (Dirks, 1999),

communication and cooperation between the leader and followers (Ferrin, Dirks, & Shah, 2003), and turnover (Connell, Ferres, & Travaglione, 2003). Ultimately, trust is perceived to impact on the extent an individual is likely to 'follow' and take influence from their leader (Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007). However, while trust has long been perceived (particularly in the organisational leadership literature) as important to the leadership process, our understanding of the factors that foster trust is less conclusive (Burke et al., 2007). Indeed, research (e.g., Dirks, 2000; Mach & Lvina, 2017) has demonstrated that trust in the leader can impact on a team's sporting-performance, but research has yet to explicitly identify how trust is developed by leaders in sport. Consequently, this research provides insight into how several existing theories of leadership may interact to enhance our understanding of how and why leaders are able to develop trust (i.e., by demonstrating competence, creating connection with athletes, and showing trust in athletes), and thus influence, their followers in sport.

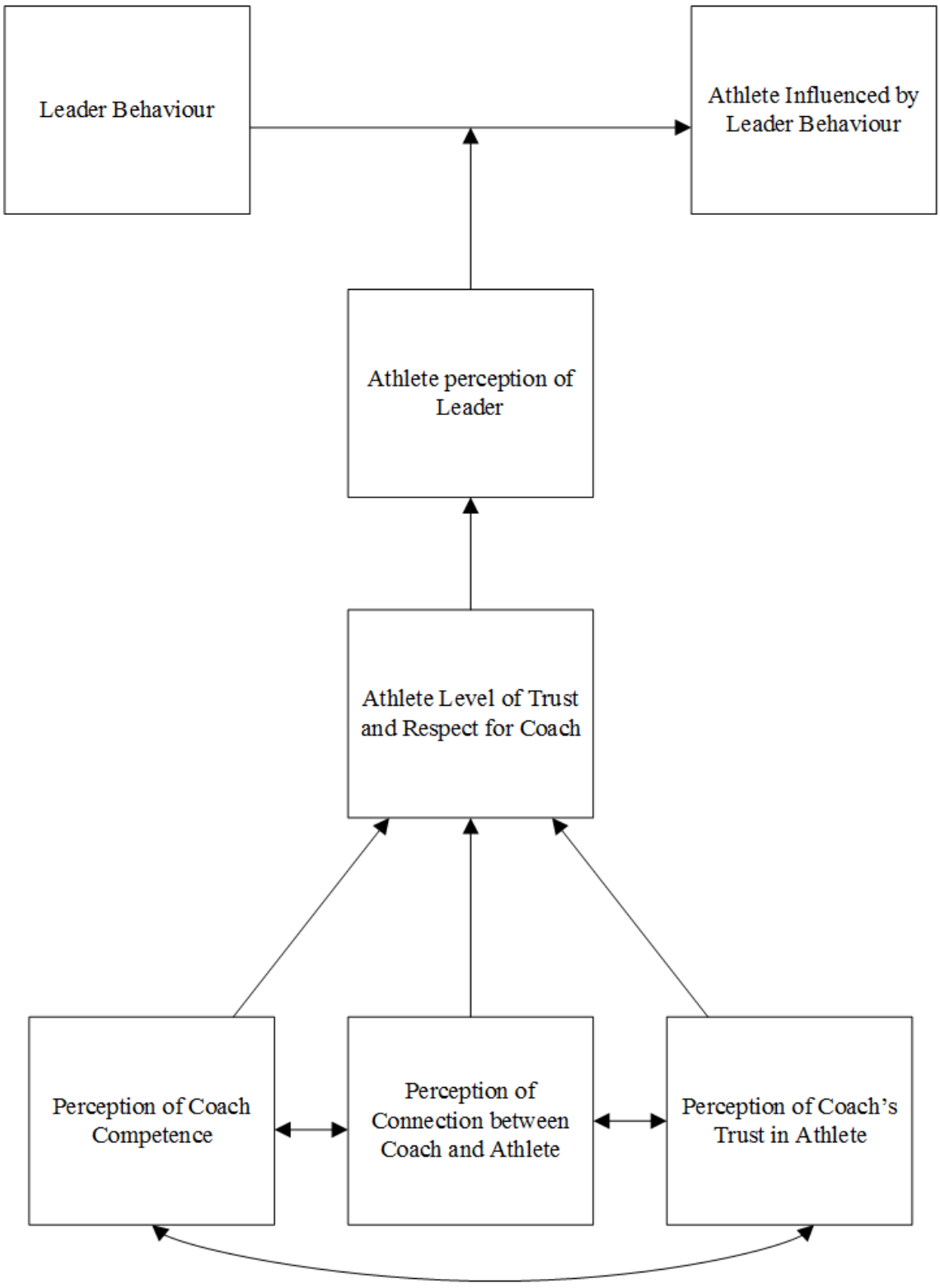


Figure 8.1 A model to demonstrate how trust and respect impact on leader influence (based upon the category 'establishing mutual trust and respect with athlete(s)' from the grounded theory).

8.3.1 Leader competence

The grounded theory suggests that athlete perceptions of leader competence were informed by leaders' reputation (e.g., their past achievements), demonstration of competence (e.g., providing technical advice that enables the athlete to develop), and communication (the content and tone of what they say). With regards to the importance of reputation, this supports the finding that athletes form impressions of coaches based upon "third party" reports (e.g., reputation and coaching experience; Thelwell, Page, Lush, Greenlees, & Manley, 2013). These expectancies can impact upon athlete's expectations of coach competence in relation to the coach's ability to build character, technical and tactical information, and motivational capabilities (Manley, Greenlees, Thelwell, & Smith, 2010). In turn, expectancies can impact on physical behaviours of athletes, such as attention paid to coach instructions, enhanced motivation, and increased effort and persistence (Manley et al., 2014). This suggests that early in the relationship with their leader, reputation is likely to impact upon an athlete's perceptions of their leader and, consequently, the level of influence a leader can have on the athlete. For example, a strong reputation built upon success (e.g., winning trophies or developing players) is likely to enhance a leader's influence on their athlete.

As well as reputation, leader communication was proposed to impact upon athlete's perception of leader competence. Specifically, inspirational leaders were suggested to communicate in a concise, passionate, and convincing manner across situations (e.g., during training, matches, and in general interactions). Such characteristics are central to charismatic communication (cf. Antonakis, 2017) and this suggests that leaders who communicate in a charismatic way are more likely to have greater influence on athletes. Interestingly, followers are more likely to view a leader as charismatic when their values are aligned with the leader (Antonakis, 2017), thus highlighting the interactive nature of the factors proposed to enhance trust and respect identified within this thesis. Therefore, it appears that the three broad factors suggested to impact on trust and respect may have positive and reinforcing impacts upon each other.

8.3.2 Connection between the leader and their athlete(s)

The connection between leaders and athletes was suggested to be important to the establishment of trust and respect. One way leaders were proposed to create the connection was by having an individual approach to the treatment of their athletes. This has links with the individual consideration dimension of transformational leadership whereby leaders appreciate and accommodate the personal needs and desires of their athletes (Callow et al., 2009). Another way athletes perceived leaders to show care for them was by being approachable, showing empathy, and providing support. This finding aligns with research on social support and coach-athlete relationships, which has shown coach support (e.g., providing emotional- and esteem-related support) to enhance the connection between coaches and athletes (Coussens, Rees, & Freeman, 2015; Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007; Sheridan, Coffee, & Lavallee, 2014). As well as providing social support, findings from Study 3 suggest that coaches who provided protection for athletes (e.g., not openly criticising them in the media) were seen to be more trustworthy. This could be explained by self-sacrificial leadership theory (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998), whereby leaders sacrifice personal interest for the benefit of their followers. To illustrate, taking blame for performances is not in the direct interest of coaches as it can damage public perceptions (e.g., of the fans and media) of them which can affect their reputation. By directing blame away from athletes, leaders are shielding them from criticism which, theoretically, could demonstrate to athletes that the leader has their best interests at heart and, thus, enhance athlete perceptions of a leader's trust and loyalty (Hollander, 1992).

Leaders who were perceived as being honest with and consistent in their treatment of athletes were also perceived to have a better connection with athletes, and perceived by athletes in Study 3 to be authentic. This supports the suggestion that authenticity is important to effective leadership (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977) Findings from Study 3 suggest that coaches' demonstrated authenticity when they were perceived to provide honest communication, supported their words with actions, and treated athletes equally. The reason such behaviours may be important to leadership is that it could inform athlete perceptions of their leaders' morals and intentions. Research exploring ethical leadership has consistently found that followers' perceptions of leader morals are based upon their perception of the extent to which their leader demonstrates

authenticity, fairness, and honesty (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Interestingly, coaches within Study 3 suggested that they were not always honest with athletes. For example, coaches might try to instil belief in their athletes despite not necessarily having faith in the athlete at the time. While this could be interpreted as being manipulative (e.g., lying to the athlete because you want them to perform for the benefit of the group or yourself) this is not necessarily inauthentic if the underpinning motives are related to concerns for followers (Brown et al., 2005; Dierendonck, 2011).

Another factor proposed to impact on the connection between the leader and the athlete was the extent to which the leader represents the values of the group. Social identity theory suggests that when leaders are prototypical of the group's identity (i.e., behave in a manner consistent with group values) their followers are more supportive of them (Haslam et al., 2013; Slater, Coffee, et al., 2014). Specifically, by representing or embedding group values leaders are able to enhance their connection with group members which, in turn, enhances follower trust in the leader and the leader's ability to influence followers (Giessner, van Knippenberg, & Sleebos, 2009; Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra, & Haslam, 2011).

8.3.3 Empowerment of athletes

Athletes proposed that trust needed to be reciprocated in order to fully trust and respect their leader. In order to demonstrate trust in athletes, coaches (in Study 3) were proposed to empower them (e.g., by allowing them to have input into the content of training). This finding has links with autonomy supportive environments (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2000; Duda, 2013), whereby providing athletes with choice, and acting upon this choice, can enhance an athlete's sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Specifically, by encouraging choice (providing autonomy), coaches are conveying trust in their athletes' capabilities (thus increasing an athlete perception of competence) and demonstrating respect for their athletes (thus influencing athlete perceptions of relatedness; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Overall, this finding suggests that by empowering athletes leaders are perceived to demonstrate trust in their athletes which, subsequently, enhances the level of trust athletes have in their leader.

Another way coaches empowered athletes was to provide them with leadership responsibility. Whilst this was perceived as an indicator of trust that leaders had in athletes, it was suggested that athletes were also used to reinforce the coach's influence over a group. This has links with previous research exploring group culture (e.g., Cruickshank, Collins, & Minten, 2014, 2015), whereby leaders identify, recruit, and harness influential group members in order to foster acceptance of leader decisions. Such behaviour has links with the trait of Machiavellianism whereby leaders manipulate others in order to maintain power and influence (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). Thus, this finding provides some support for the suggestion that the strategic use of "dark" leadership behaviours are important in order to maintain the trust of athletes (Cruickshank & Collins, 2015). However, while leaders may need to demonstrate some form of "dark" behaviour to maintain their influence, an athlete's perception of this behaviour is key to leader influence. That is, athletes could see this in two ways: (1) as the coach empowering them and trusting them by including them in important team decisions or (2) as manipulation in order to maintain power over the group. If athletes see being provided with leadership responsibility as manipulative then it is likely to degrade the leader's influence (Mills & Boardley, 2017).

Taken together, the theoretical links and suggestions made within this section support the contention that leadership is a complex process that involves contributions from multiple individuals (e.g., the coach, the athlete, teammates) and a bidirectional (i.e., top-down, bottom-up) influence that evolves over time (Dinh et al., 2014). Indeed, the findings highlight the importance of follower perception to leadership effectiveness. The follower's perception of the leader will, theoretically, impact the influence of leader behaviours on followers. In essence, the findings suggest that leader inputs—namely the leader's intentions (e.g., morals; Mills & Boardley, 2017) and behaviours (Cruickshank & Collins, 2016, 2017)—impact upon follower perceptions of the leader which, in turn, affect the influence a leader can have. These suggestions highlight links between several current theoretical perspectives on leadership and demonstrate that a more holistic approach to leadership research and development is required.

8.4 Implications for leadership practice and development

Findings from Study 1 highlight several potential considerations for applied practitioners (e.g., sport psychologists and leaders) when considering how to inspire athletes. It appears that athletes can be inspired by their own performances, role models, and demonstrations of leadership. With regards drawing inspiration from their own performances, thoughts, and accomplishments, sport psychologists may be able to work with athletes in order to raise esteem or have a more positive and rational appraisal of their own performances via attribution training (see Coffee & Rees, 2008) or rational emotive behaviour therapy (see Turner & Barker, 2014). In terms of harnessing the inspirational impact of role models, national governing bodies should be encouraged to expose junior athletes to elite-level athletes who have been through the same performance pathway to provide the junior athletes with an understanding of what is required in order to reach that level of performance. Considering the inspirational impact of leadership, coaches and captains should be made aware that their behaviour and communication can have an inspirational impact on athletes by, for example, providing them with a positive example to follow (e.g., demonstrating the effort expected in training and competition) or outlining what is required in a given context (e.g., technical and tactical information).

The findings of this thesis are of particular relevance to coaches and those working to develop leaders' inspirational capabilities. For instance, coaches may take some suggestions from this thesis (Studies 2 and 3) to apply within their own practice, such as *when* (e.g., when athletes are feeling uncertain about their ability to complete an upcoming task) and *how* (e.g., by showing the way forward) to inspire athletes. For instance, when athletes are unaware of their potential, a coach could inspire an athlete in the long-term by outlining that they have the potential to achieve international honours (i.e., demonstrating belief). One caveat to this is that leaders need to consider athlete characteristics (e.g., experience and age) in order to ensure that the message they are conveying is appropriate for the athlete(s). For example, outlining long-term potential to an experienced athlete is less likely to inspire them because they are more aware of their potential or have already peaked (i.e., they are not ignorant regarding their capabilities).

The grounded theory (Study 3) proposes that an athlete's level of trust and respect for their coach should also be considered when attempting to inspire athletes. Therefore, practitioners might target the three broad factors (competence, connection, and empowerment) proposed to impact upon athletes' perception of trust and respect for the coach. In relation to perceptions of coach competence, when entering a new coaching role, coaches and potential employers may wish to engage in impression management (e.g., highlighting past accomplishments via social media) to enhance the positive potential of the coach's reputation by emphasising positive aspects of their reputation prior to their first direct meeting with athletes (Manley, Thelwell, & Greenlees, 2016). Also, findings from Study 3 indicate that more competent (and inspirational) coaches communicate in a charismatic manner. Practitioners could draw from the existing literature on charisma (e.g., Antonakis, 2017; Antonakis, Bastardoz, Jacquart, & Shamir, 2016) to target both verbal and non-verbal communication and enhance athlete perceptions of leader charisma. For example, when communicating, leaders need to frame the message to focus followers' attention on key goals (e.g., use stories to make the message memorable, use three-part lists to simplify complex goals); provide substance to justify the key goals (e.g., set ambitious goals and communicate confidence that followers can achieve them); and deliver the message in a compelling manner (e.g., demonstrate passion using voice, facial expressions, and gestures; Antonakis, 2017).

To enhance connection with athletes, coaches should consider the personalised support provided to athletes, ensure that they are representing the values of the group, and the extent to which they are viewed as authentic by their athletes. Coaches could be educated on the benefits and types of social support (e.g., emotional, esteem, informational, tangible; Freeman, Coffee, Moll, Rees, & Sammy, 2014). Connection was also proposed to be enhanced when leaders represent the values of the group. Considering this, practitioners could support coaches in understanding the group's current values or creating values which represent the group. Such work could be underpinned by the established 3R (reflecting, representing, realizing; Haslam et al., 2013) social identity leadership program which ask leaders to: (a) listen and observe the group to understand the identities that matter to them (i.e., reflect); (b) act in ways that embody the group's values (i.e., represent); and (c) embed the group's identity and associated goals (i.e., realize). The 3R program has been utilised in sport and shown to

enhance athlete perceptions of coach-leadership and identification with the group (Slater & Barker, 2017). To enhance perceptions of their authenticity, leaders are encouraged to be honest and consistent in their treatment of athletes. However, leaders suggested that at times they did not fully believe what they were saying. Such a behaviour could be considered pro-self (i.e., in the best interest of the coach) or pro-social (i.e., in the best interests of the follower; Peck & Hogue, 2018). Thus, this thesis disagrees with the proposition that coaches need to engage in moral behaviour at all times (Mills & Boardley, 2017), suggesting that coach's should engage in impression management that enhances followers' perceptions of their authenticity. Therefore, coaches need to be aware of feedback (e.g., athlete perceptions and the impact of their behaviour on the connection with athletes) to aid their ability to manage impressions effectively and enhance their connection with athletes (Peck & Hogue, 2018).

To demonstrate trust in athletes, coaches are encouraged to empower athletes by creating an empowering climate characterised by task-involvement, autonomy support, and social support (Duda, Appleton, Stebbings, & Balaguer, 2017). To do so, practitioners could utilise the empowering coaching workshop with coaches (cf. Duda, 2013; Duda & Appleton, 2016). In addition, coaches could provide athletes with leadership responsibility. Based upon the findings of this thesis, as well as enabling athletes to feel trusted, this could enable coaches to maintain or enhance their influence over a group. Specifically, recruiting supportive and influential allies can impact group perceptions of leader practice and optimise internal trust by minimising the prevalence of resistance to the coach's methods (Cruickshank et al., 2014, 2015). Thus, practitioners are recommended to refer to elements (i.e., the recruitment and harnessing of cultural architects) from Cruickshank et al.'s (2014, 2015) grounded theories of culture change when working to enhance the influence coaches can have on groups.

8.5 Limitations and future research directions

The findings and recommendations from this thesis should be considered within the limitations of the studies conducted. In Study 1, the use of written accounts to explore athletes' experiences of being inspired in sport precluded the exploration of participants' responses in greater depth. However, as this was the first study to explore the sources of inspiration in sport, this method of data collection did enable the

researcher to sample a greater number of athletes and provide a large range of responses and experiences to draw from. In addition, the aim was to provide a description rather than a detailed explanation of how and why athletes are inspired in sport in order to provide a broad base to drive future research surrounding the construct of inspiration in sport.

This thesis primarily relied on retrospective accounts (written accounts and one-off interviews) to explore experiences and perceptions of inspirational leadership. Thus, the retrospective nature of data collection may have meant that data was limited by inaccurate recall of participants' experiences, hindsight bias, and self-preservation bias (Nestler, Blank, & Collani, 2008). However, in relation to this point, it is important to consider that inspiration is not something that you can necessarily observe as it happens in the "natural context of everyday life" and is usually "not the result of deliberate effort of one party . . . to inspire another" (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014, p. 505); indeed, coaches interviewed in Study 3 suggested that they did not intentionally aim to inspire athletes. However, given that inspiration is an experience that it is practically difficult to observe, the retrospective nature of these interviews is not a limitation from that perspective. Indeed, as inspiration is difficult to consciously manipulate (Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014), it may be important for researchers to consider how to explore in greater depth the way in which leaders are able to exert an inspiring influence on athletes. That is not to say that observational methods (e.g., participant observation and ethnography) would not be useful to enhance our understanding of this process, rather that they would need to compliment other methods (e.g., interviews). Thus, future research may utilise observational methods to enhance our understanding of coaches' (identified as inspirational by athletes) practices (primarily the day-to-day interactions which may impact on the establishment of trust and respect) that inspire athletes. In addition, exploring the experiences of high-profile coaches identified as inspiring may be fruitful. However, given that access to such coaches may be limited, utilising available media sources (e.g., televised interviews, autobiographies, social media accounts)—as utilised successfully in previous sport-leadership research (e.g., Slater, Barker, et al., 2014; Smith, Arnold, & Thelwell, 2018)—may be useful in extending our understanding of this process. Therefore, future research could use

longitudinal designs using multiple qualitative methods to explore how leaders inspire followers.

The primary focus of this thesis was coach-leadership. Given that research in sport has identified that leadership can be provided by individuals in both formal and informal leadership roles who can provide different types of leadership (e.g., Fransen, Vanbeselaere, De Cuyper, Vande Broek, & Boen, 2014), the current research could be extended by understanding how other leaders within a team (e.g., captain, senior player) can inspire athletes. This research relied on leader and athlete perceptions and, though follower perceptions appear key to understanding effective leadership, future research could look to examine other parties' (e.g., support coaches, sport scientists, parents, sport psychologists, medical staff) perceptions of leaders to inform our understanding of inspirational leadership. Further, the number of coach-athlete dyads sampled in Study 3 was limited (n = 5). However, all athletes within the study had experienced being inspired by coaches and all of the coaches had extensive experience of working with athletes at different levels and were proposed as being inspirational. Further, the inclusion of additional players and coaches was required as part of the theoretical sampling process in order to explore and saturate emerging concepts and categories. Future research examining the proposed grounded theory with more dyads would be useful in exploring the consistency between coach and athlete perceptions of inspirational leadership. Further, while athletes and coaches are the two parties directly involved in the process, future research could gather a more holistic view on the way coaches inspire athletes by exploring perceptions of peers, parents, other coaches, support staff and administrative staff. Taken together, these suggestions would allow us to develop the proposed grounded theory from a substantive theory to a more formal, generically applicable theory of inspirational leadership in sport (Weed, 2017). Also, while the grounded theory can be used by practitioners as a framework to underpin work to enhance a leader's inspirational capabilities, future research should look to develop and evaluate interventions based upon this research.

However, before interventions can be developed, research first is needed to identify ways of establishing when athletes are inspired (e.g., observational markers of behaviour that would indicate that an athlete has been inspired). Based upon the existing inspiration literature (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Elliot,

et al., 2010; Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014) and findings from this thesis, it appears that several consequences occur when an athlete is inspired by their coach. Firstly, inspiration is associated with motivational constructs. For instance, when inspired, individuals will potentially be high in approach motivation (Elliot, 2006) whereby the inspired individual will be energised to invest effort to work towards a goal, idea, or possibility identified in the stimuli that inspired them. In addition, participants in this thesis reported having increased belief in their ability when inspired. Thus, it appears that inspiration results in enhanced self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Inspiration also has an impact on behaviour; with findings from this thesis and existing research suggesting that the experience of inspiration leads to increased effort, improved performance, and enhanced efficiency (Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010). As well as cognitive and performance markers, we could also suggest that inspired athletes will experience positive changes in affect and well-being (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010). However, while we could use these cognitive, affective, and behavioural constructs as indicators of inspiration, this would still leave us basing our understanding of inspiration purely on its consequences. Consequently, this serves to highlight issues with the current definition of inspiration.

While this thesis provides support for Thrash and Elliot's (2003) conceptualisation, a central issue for future research is to more clearly define inspiration. As summarised in Chapter 2,at the end of their seminal paper on inspiration, Thrash and Elliot (2003) suggested that, while lay understandings of inspiration appeared to be consistent, a limitation of their study was that "in relying on the word inspiration and its various forms, we have assumed that the lay public understands the concept" and in order to further knowledge surrounding the construct it was important to "learn about inspiration from the participants who experience it" (p. 886). While Thrash and his colleagues have provided a conceptualisation of inspiration, it could be argued that we still do not conclusively know what inspiration is and are still relying on "lay conceptualisations". To highlight, inspiration is often simply referred to as a "motivational state" (Oleynick et al., 2014, p. 4). Further, at present, inspiration appears to be conceptualised and defined based upon its antecedents and consequences. To explain, Thrash and Elliot (2003) conceptualised inspiration based upon three core characteristics: (1) transcendence, whereby an individual gains awareness of better

possibilities; (2) evocation, whereby the experience of inspiration is attributed to an external stimulus; and (3) approach motivation, whereby inspiration motivates an individual to act to achieve these better possibilities. Thrash and Elliot suggest that an episode of inspiration includes all three of these characteristics. However, when outlining inspiration theory and research, Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al. (2014) appear to contradict this by stating that "inspiration inherently plays the role of mediator in a statistical sense; intrinsically valued qualities of an elicitor object evoke inspiration, which, in turn, motivates the individual to extend the intrinsically valued qualities to a new object" (p. 497). This statement suggests that, rather than being a part of what inspiration is, evocation and transcendence are antecedents of inspiration (e.g., an individual is inspired by the transcendent nature of an idea from an evocative stimulus) and approach motivation is a consequence of inspiration (e.g., whereby an individual is motivated to bring into fruition the idea as a result of being inspired; see figure 8.2 for a diagrammatic explanation of this). Therefore, while research (e.g., Gucciardi et al., 2015; Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010; Thrash et al., 2017; Van Kleef et al., 2015) has demonstrated that inspiration is experienced by individuals in a range of contexts, research is needed to define inspiration irrespective of its antecedents and consequences. Such research would allow for the creation of a measure or observational instrument of inspiration and, from a leadership perspective, allow researchers to develop and assess the impact of interventions aimed at enhancing leaders' inspirational capabilities.

Finally, findings in this thesis demonstrated that leaders established connection with athletes (and thus trust and respect) by being seen as honest and consistent, showing interest in their athlete(s) both in and outside of sport, and by representing the values of the group. Leaders demonstrating these attributes are often seen as authentic, ethical, and follower-orientated (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2018). Consequently, considering recent controversies regarding poor leadership and the culture of elite sports teams (e.g., the Australian Cricket team, British Cycling) and UK Sport's desire to develop leadership-practice that contributes to healthier cultures that enhance performance and well-being (cf. Nicholl, 2017), findings from this thesis provide initial suggestions to develop such leadership-practice. However, further research is needed to explore how leaders can be not only inspirational, but also ethical,

moral, and effective in order to create healthier environments for athletes and staff to thrive.

8.6 Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis has furthered knowledge surrounding how leaders can inspire athletes, as well as the factors that impact upon this process. The thesis offers support for the contention that the conceptualisations of inspiration can be extended across contexts (cf. Belzak et al., 2017; Thrash, Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014) by providing evidence that inspiration is experienced in the sporting context. By exploring athlete experiences of inspiration, this research has also expanded our understanding of sources of inspiration by identifying how leaders inspire athletes and what factors enable them to have such an influence. In addition, this thesis has added clarity to an important construct (i.e., inspiration) in the existing sport leadership literature as well as answering calls for leadership research to be informed by follower and leader perspectives, recognise the 'shades of grey' nature of leadership, highlight some of the cognitive drivers of leadership action, and identify boundary conditions that impact on leader effectiveness (Bormann et al., 2016; Cruickshank & Collins, 2016, 2017; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). In doing so, these findings offer suggestions for both theory and practice, suggesting that the establishment of trust and respect is a key mechanism that provides the foundation for a leader's ability to inspire and influence followers. However, given the complex and dynamic nature of leadership, it is clear that future research is needed to fully explore all aspects that might influence leadership within sport; with a particular emphasis on how leaders can enhance performance and well-being of athletes, as well as inspire them. As such, it is hoped that future research and practice will build upon the findings of this thesis in order to enhance leadership development and practice in sport.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Information Sheets for Studies 1, 2, & 3.

Appendix 2 – Interview Guides for Studies 2 & 3.

Appendix 3 – Examples of Grounded Theory Diagrams

Appendix 1

Study 1 Information Sheet

D*epartment of Sport and Exercise Sciences*

Project information sheet for participants

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY

Study title: Inspiration in sport: What is it and where does it come from?

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research and how will the research be carried out?

- This study will investigate athletes' experiences of inspiration in sport.
- This study will explore what being 'inspired' in sport means, sources of inspiration and the consequences of being inspired in sport.

What will you be asked to do?

- It will involve you writing a narrative account about the most inspirational moment you have experienced in sport (guided by a worksheet).
- Following this, participants may be asked to take part in a one off interview to more fully explore the experience of inspiration.

What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

- The findings will further our knowledge surrounding the concept of inspiration (e.g., antecedents, sources and consequences).
- Findings might also inform workshops and/or other resources (e.g., web resource).

Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

- You will be giving information about your experiences of inspiration in sport.
- While the information you provide may be used in workshops, academic publications, and in general feedback about the main findings of the study, your name and the names of any individuals discussed will not be mentioned in any literature and, as such, the comments you make would not be linked back to you.
- The information that you provide about other individuals will not be made available to them.

Do you have to take part?

- This is entirely your decision. If at any time during the project you feel that you don't want to continue, then you can tell the researcher you want to stop.

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project?

Appendix 1

If you have any questions about the project, contact the research co-ordinator, Sean Figgins (Tel: 01243 816345; email: s.figgins@chi.ac.uk) or Dr. Matthew Smith (01243 816341; email: matt.smith@chi.ac.uk).

What happens if you change your mind and want to withdraw?

Participation is purely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time if you so wish.

What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

- Narrative accounts will be kept in a secure location at the University of Chichester, which can only be accessed by the lead researcher.
- Recordings of the interviews will be transferred to an encrypted memory stick. Subsequent transcripts of the interviews will also be stored on an encrypted memory stick. All answers and associated data will be summarised in the final report so individual results will be anonymous.
- All records will be retained and stored by the University of Chichester for a period of 5 years. All signed consent forms will be stored separately to maintain confidentiality. Upon your instruction, answers and subsequent data can be destroyed.

Who can you contact if you have a complaint about the project?

If you have a complaint related to this project please contact Dr. Matthew Smith (01243 816341; email: matt.smith@chi.ac.uk).

This project has been approved in accordance with the University of Chichester Research Ethics Policy

Thank you for your time

Study 2 Information Sheet

Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences

Project information sheet for participants

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY

Study title: An examination of athletes' experiences of effective coaching.

What is the purpose of the research and how will the research be carried out?

- This study will investigate athletes' experiences of effective coaching in sport.
- This study will explore the way in which your coach has communicated to inspire you and the outcomes associated with this.

What will you be asked to do?

- It will involve one interview session (lasting approximately 60 minutes).
- In the interview, you will be asked to talk about your experiences of being inspired by a coach, with particular reference to the situations in which this happened and what the coach did or said to inspire you.

What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

- The findings will inform present and future coaches as to how they may behave/communicate more effectively to inspire athletes to improve their performance.
- Findings might also inform workshops or and other resources (e.g., web resource) that coaches will be able to access.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

- You will be giving information about their perceptions of their coach's behaviours – in terms of how you view the way they communicate and how this does/does not have an effect on you.
- While the information you provide may be used in workshops, academic publications, and in general feedback about the main findings of the study, your name and your coach's name will not be mentioned in any literature and, as such, the comments you make would not be linked back to you.
- The information that you provide about the coach/coaches discussed will not be made available to them.

Appendix 1

Do you have to take part?

- This is entirely your decision. If at any time during the project you feel that you don't want to continue, then you can tell the researcher you want to stop.

What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

- Recordings of the interviews will be transferred to an encrypted memory stick. Subsequent transcripts of the interviews will also be stored on an encrypted memory stick. All answers and associated data will be summarised in the final report so individual results will be anonymous.
- All records will be retained and stored by the University of Chichester for a period of 5 years. All signed consent forms will be stored separately to maintain confidentiality. Upon your instruction, answers and subsequent data can be destroyed.

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project?

If you have any questions about the project, contact the research co-ordinator, Sean Figgins (Tel: 01243 816348; email: s.figgins@chi.ac.uk) or Dr. Matthew Smith (01243 816341; email: matt.smith@chi.ac.uk).

Study 3 Information Sheet for Athletes

D*epartment of Sport and Exercise Sciences*

Project information sheet for participants

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY

Study title: Towards a grounded theory of the inspirational process of leadership in sport.

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research and how will the research be carried out?

- This study will investigate athletes' and leaders' experiences of inspirational leadership in sport.
- This study will explore the ways leaders inspire followers and the factors that may influence this process.
-

What will you be asked to do?

- It will involve one interview session (lasting approximately 60 minutes).
- In the interview, you will be asked to talk about your experiences of inspirational leadership.

What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

- The findings will inform present and future leaders as to how they may behave/communicate more effectively in order to inspire athletes to improve their performance.
- Findings might also inform workshops and other resources (e.g., web resource) that leaders will be able to access.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

- You will be giving information about your perceptions of the inspirational leadership you have experienced/provided.
- While the information you provide may be used in workshops, academic publications, and in general feedback about the main findings of the study, your name and the names of individuals discussed will not be mentioned in any literature and, as such, the comments you make would not be linked back to you.
- The information that you provide about the leaders/athletes discussed will not be made available to them without prior consent.

Appendix 1

Do you have to take part?

- This is entirely your decision. If at any time during the project you feel that you don't want to continue, then you can tell the researcher you want to stop.

What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

- Recordings of the interviews will be transferred to an encrypted memory stick. Subsequent transcripts of the interviews will also be stored on an encrypted memory stick. All answers and associated data will be summarised in the final report so individual results will be anonymous.
- All records will be retained and stored by the University of Chichester for a period of 5 years. All signed consent forms will be stored separately to maintain confidentiality. Upon your instruction, answers and subsequent data can be destroyed.

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project?

If you have any questions about the project contact the research co-ordinator Sean Figgins (Tel: 01243 816345; email: s.figgins@chi.ac.uk) or Dr. Matthew Smith (01243 816341; email: matt.smith@chi.ac.uk).

Study 3 Information Sheet for Coaches

D*epartment of Sport and Exercise Sciences*

Project information sheet for participants

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY

Study title: Towards a grounded theory of the inspirational process of leadership in sport.

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research and how will the research be carried out?

- This study will investigate athletes' and leaders' experiences of inspirational leadership in sport.
- This study will explore the ways leaders inspire followers and the factors that may influence this process.

What will you be asked to do?

- It will involve one interview session (lasting approximately 60 minutes).
- In the interview, you will be asked to talk about your experiences of inspirational leadership.

What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

- The findings will inform present and future leaders as to how they may behave/communicate more effectively in order to inspire athletes to improve their performance.
- Findings might also inform workshops and other resources (e.g., web resource) that leaders will be able to access.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

- You will be giving information about your perceptions of the inspirational leadership you have experienced/provided.
- While the information you provide may be used in workshops, academic publications, and in general feedback about the main findings of the study, your name and the names of individuals discussed will not be mentioned in any literature and, as such, the comments you make would not be linked back to you.
- The information that you provide about the leaders/athletes discussed will not be made available to them without prior consent.

Appendix 1

Do you have to take part?

- This is entirely your decision. If at any time during the project you feel that you don't want to continue, then you can tell the researcher you want to stop.

What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

- Recordings of the interviews will be transferred to an encrypted memory stick. Subsequent transcripts of the interviews will also be stored on an encrypted memory stick. All answers and associated data will be summarised in the final report so individual results will be anonymous.
- All records will be retained and stored by the University of Chichester for a period of 5 years. All signed consent forms will be stored separately to maintain confidentiality. Upon your instruction, answers and subsequent data can be destroyed.

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project?

If you have any questions about the project contact the research co-ordinator Sean Figgins (Tel: 01243 816345; email: s.figgins@chi.ac.uk) or Dr. Matthew Smith (01243 816341; email: matt.smith@chi.ac.uk).

Appendix 2

Study 2 Interview Guide

Interview schedule

- Provide participants with information about the study and its purpose.
    i. Go through consent form & information sheet.
    ii. Right to withdraw at any time.
    iii. Emphasise confidentiality – personally identifiable information about you and coaches will not be disclosed at any time during the research process.

- Encourage participants to talk openly about situations they have faced.
    i. Feel free to use names in the interview.
    ii. In subsequent publications names will be removed to ensure confidentiality.
    iii. No comments will be able to be attributed to you.

- There may be times where there will be silence/pauses – this is alright.
    i. It may be that it allows us both time to think.

- I will be using the board to note down key things that you mention that I would be interested in exploring further.

- Interview will be split into two sections.
    i. Considering your individual experiences.
    ii. Group experiences.

- Provide opportunity to confirm participant understanding.
    i. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- Get the participant to complete demographic information and sign the consent form.

Rapport questions… (Use whiteboard to produce a table – don't use titles outlined below - and note down key points)

Appendix 2

Coach & Behaviours	What makes you buy into what the coach is doing/saying?	What does the coach do to facilitate aims?	Inspirational/Key moments	Outcomes

- What made you take up your sport?
- Just take a moment to think and tell me about your sporting career to date…
- Tell me about your major achievements and highlights…
- Can you tell me about any instances that have inspired you during your sporting career/life to date?

Try to get a feel for the athlete and their personality…

- How would you describe yourself as a person?
- How would you describe yourself as a sports performer?
- What is your approach to sport?
- What motivates you to compete?

- Can you give me an outline of your training/competition schedule…
    i. Any training outside of specified schedule? Why?

- Considering what you have told me considering your career to date – just take a few moments to think about some important moments that have led to you being in the position you are today… (write these on the board)
    i. What was the situation (what happened)?
    ii. What did the coach do/say?
    iii. Why did that impact upon you?
    iv. What was the consequence of this? What did you do to achieve this? Was it different from before?

- Tell me about the best coach or coaches that you have worked with… (write behaviours on board as prompts)
    i. Take a moment to reflect – what are their key characteristics? Why?

ii. What is their background?
iii. What is their approach to sport/coaching?

– What are your aims and goals for your career?
  i. Long-term…
  ii. Short-term…
  iii. Why? What has brought these about?
  iv. How does the coach fit into this process/facilitate these?

Which of the moments that you have mentioned (refer to whiteboard) would you rate as the most inspirational?

i. Can you elaborate on that?
ii. Why? What was it about this moment that makes you think it is more important?
iii. What impact did this have on you/what were the outcomes (e.g., behaviour change)?
iv. What led to these outcomes?

Key words to look out for and probe further…

– Trust.
– Respect.
– Motivation.
– Confidence.
– Inspiration.

Try to get specific details by using probes…

– Take a moment to think about that situation…
– Can you elaborate on that…
– Tell me more about that…
– Can you explain that in more detail…

Appendix 2

Study 3 Interview Guide for Athletes (Original Version)

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the leader behaviours which inspire followers?
- What are the factors that influence the likelihood that an athlete is inspired?
- What are the feelings experienced during the inspirational moment?
- How does inspiration influence certain outcomes?
- Experiences of uninspiring (opposite end of the spectrum) moments/leaders.

Interview schedule

- Provide participants with information about the study and its purpose.
    i. Go through consent form & information sheet.
    ii. Right to withdraw at any time.
    iii. Emphasise confidentiality – personally identifiable information about you and coaches will not be disclosed at any time during the research process.

- Encourage participants to talk openly about situations they have faced.
    i. Feel free to use names in the interview.
    ii. In subsequent publications names will be removed to ensure confidentiality.
    iii. No comments will be able to be attributed to you.

- There may be times where there will be silence/pauses – this is alright.
    i. It may be that it allows us both time to think.

- I will be using the board to note down key things that you mention that I would be interested in exploring further.

- Provide opportunity to confirm participant understanding.
    i. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- Get the participant to complete demographic information and sign the consent form.

Rapport/initial questions

- Can you tell me about your sporting career to date?

- What are your major achievements and highlights?

- What is your goal/dream for your sport?

INSPIRATION – (WHAT IS IT?/WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?/HOW DO YOU KNOW?)

- **What does inspiration/being inspired mean to you?**

- **What does the experience of being inspired feel like?**
  - **Thoughts?**
  - **Emotions?**
- **How do you know that you have been inspired?**

Transition Questions

Ask about leader being described (if more than one leader – tackle each at a time)

- Tell me about your leader…
  - Characteristics?
  - Personality?
  - Background/experience?
  - Relationship?
  - General coaching behaviours?

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- Can you tell me about any instances where you have been inspired by your coach or a teammate coach during your sporting career/life to date?

IMPORTANT QUESTION…

- What made it feel like an inspirational moment?
  - How did you feel in that moment?
  - What made it different to other average/general experiences?
  - Emotions/thoughts/affect?

Inspirational moment questions

- What happened before you were inspired?
  - What was the situation?
  - How were you feeling?
  - How do you know you were inspired?

- What lead to you being or feeling inspired?
  - Why was that behaviour inspirational?
  - What is it about the leader that made you perceive this moment as inspirational? (IMPORTANT QUESTION).
  - Why is this moment inspirational compared with the average/everyday interactions with the leader?

- What impact or effect did this moment have on you?
  - Why did it have this impact? E.g., if someone says it made me more confident – why?
  - How long did the effect last?

- When did you realise the moment was inspirational?

Look for differences between "chronic/discrete" moments vs "acute/non-discrete" moments of inspiration questions (e.g., inspired by coach over a long period of time)

- How has your leader inspired you?
    - What did they do?
- What impact did/has this had on you?
- Why was/has this been inspirational for you?
- What is it about this coach/captain that you found inspirational?

Negative cases/uninspiring coach examples

- Have you had any experiences that are the opposite of this? (instances from same vs. different coaches) – WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES (e.g., environment/contextual/situational factors…)
    - Why was this moment not inspiring?
    - Why did you not find the leader inspiring?
    - How did the moment feel?
    - How would you describe/what would you call this moment?

Summary questions

- Which moment was most inspirational?
    - Why?

pull out key points re. inspirational leaders, uninspiring leaders, consequences etc

- From what you have described today what are the key points?
    - What does an inspirational moment feel like?
    - What inspired you? Why? / What impacts on the likelihood that you are inspired?
    - What were the impacts?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think might be important to this study?

Study 3 Interview Guide for Athletes (example edited version)

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the leader behaviours which inspire followers?
- What are the factors that influence the likelihood that an athlete is inspired?
- What are the feelings experienced during the inspirational moment?
- How does inspiration influence certain outcomes?
- Experiences of uninspiring (opposite end of the spectrum) moments/leaders.

Interview schedule

- Provide participants with information about the study and its purpose.
    i. Go through consent form & information sheet.
    ii. Right to withdraw at any time.
    iii. Emphasise confidentiality – personally identifiable information about you and coaches will not be disclosed at any time during the research process.

- Encourage participants to talk openly about situations they have faced.
    i. Feel free to use names in the interview.
    ii. In subsequent publications names will be removed to ensure confidentiality.
    iii. No comments will be able to be attributed to you.

- There may be times where there will be silence/pauses – this is alright.
    i. It may be that it allows us both time to think.

- Provide opportunity to confirm participant understanding.
    i. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- Get the participant to complete demographic information and sign the consent form.

Rapport/initial questions

- Can you tell me about your sporting career to date?
- What are your major achievements and highlights?
- What is your goal/dream for your sport?

INSPIRATION – (WHAT IS IT?/WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?/HOW DO YOU KNOW?)

- **What does inspiration/being inspired mean to you?**
- **What does the experience of being inspired feel like?**
    - **Thoughts?**
    - **Emotions?**
- **How do you know that you have been inspired?**

Appendix 2

Transition Questions

Ask about leader being described (if more than one leader – tackle each at a time)

- Tell me about your leader…
    - Characteristics?
    - Personality?
    - Background/experience?
    - Relationship?
    - Trust? In relation to what (e.g., their ability or emotional)? How is this built up?
    - What were your first impressions of the leader? Are these important?

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Look for differences between "chronic/discrete" moments vs "acute/non-discrete" moments of inspiration questions (e.g., inspired by coach over a long period of time)

- How has your coach inspired you? (Is the coach inspirational in general?)
- Can you tell me about any instances where you have been inspired by your coach or a teammate coach during your sporting career/life to date?

IMPORTANT QUESTION…

- What made it feel like an inspirational moment?
    - How did you feel in that moment?
    - What made it different to other average/general experiences?
    - Emotions/thoughts/affect?

Inspirational moment questions

- What happened before you were inspired?
    - What was the situation?
    - How were you feeling?
        - How does this differ to when your coach has an impact?
    - How do you know you were inspired?

- What lead to you being or feeling inspired?
    - Why was that behaviour inspirational?
    - What is it about the leader that made you perceive this moment as inspirational? (IMPORTANT QUESTION).
        - How did this happen? (e.g., if it is to do with relationships how has this been built up?)

  - Why is this moment inspirational compared with the average/everyday interactions with the leader?
  - What were your first impressions of the leader? Were these important?

- What impact or effect did this moment have on you?
  - Why did it have this impact? E.g., if someone says it made me more confident – why?
  - How long did the effect last?
  - Does inspiration make changes to how you view the leader?

- When did you realise the moment was inspirational?

- Does the leader inspire you in general or does what the leader does in general lead you to be inspired?
- Would this have had the same impact from someone else? Why did you find it inspirational coming from them?

- **Things to look out for…**
  - Differences between inspirational moments at different stages of career.
  - How do moments differ?
  - If athlete feels negative prior to inspiration – did they want the leader to do something to inspire them?
  - Has the experience with this leader impacted upon how you view others? Did you work with anyone before this leader – did that impact on your perception of them?
  - How did the rest of the group view the leader? Did their perceptions impact upon yours?
  - Why do you want to do well for the coach?

<u>Negative cases/uninspiring coach examples</u>

- Have you had any experiences that are the opposite of this? (instances from same vs. different coaches) – WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES (e.g., environment/contextual/situational factors…)
  - Why was this moment not inspiring?
  - Why did you not find the leader inspiring?
  - How did the moment feel?
  - How would you describe/what would you call this moment?

<u>Summary questions</u>

- <u>Which moment was most inspirational?</u>
  - <u>Why?</u>

Appendix 2

pull out key points re. inspirational leaders, uninspiring leaders, consequences etc

- From what you have described today what are the key points?
    - What does an inspirational moment feel like?
    - What inspired you? Why? / What impacts on the likelihood that you are inspired?
    - What were the impacts?
- When do you think inspiration is most needed?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think might be important to this study?

Study 3 Interview Guide for Coaches (original version)

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do leaders perceive that they do to inspire athletes?
- **What characteristics do inspired athletes possess?**
- **How do leaders gain trust?**
- What are the factors that influence the likelihood that an athlete is inspired?
- How does inspiration influence certain outcomes?
- Experiences of uninspiring (opposite end of the spectrum) moments/leaders.

Interview schedule

- Provide participants with information about the study and its purpose.
    i. Go through consent form & information sheet.
    ii. Right to withdraw at any time.
    iii. Emphasise confidentiality – personally identifiable information about you and athletes will not be disclosed at any time during the research process.

- Encourage participants to talk openly about situations they have faced.
    i. Feel free to use names in the interview.
    ii. In subsequent publications names will be removed to ensure confidentiality.
    iii. No comments will be able to be attributed to you.

- There may be times where there will be silence/pauses – this is alright.
    i. It may be that it allows us both time to think.

- Provide opportunity to confirm participant understanding.
    i. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- Get the participant to complete demographic information and sign the consent form.

Rapport/initial questions

- Can you tell me about your sporting/coaching career to date?
- What are your major achievements and highlights?
    - Competing.
    - Coaching.

INSPIRATION – (WHAT IS IT?/WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?/HOW DO YOU KNOW?)

- **What does inspiration/being inspired mean to you?**
- **What does the experience of being inspired feel like?**
    - **Thoughts?**

- **Emotions?**

- **How do you know that you have been inspired?**

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Look for differences between "chronic/discrete" moments vs "acute/non-discrete" moments of inspiration questions (e.g., inspired by coach over a long period of time)

- How do you think you inspire your athletes? (is it in specific moments/ in general/ both).
- Can you tell me about any specific instances where you think you have inspired an athlete/group of athletes?
  - Did you think the athlete needed inspiring?
    - How did you know?
    - Do you recognise certain situations in which inspiration is required?
  - How do you know that an athlete is inspired?
    - What are the signs?
    - How long does this last?
  - What impact did/does this have on the athlete/s?
    - Thoughts/feelings/behaviour.
- What characteristics do athletes that you have inspired possess?
  - What are they like?
- After they have discussed this – mention moment/behaviours athletes discussed – see if they remember these & what their recollection is?

- What factors do you think have an impact on the likelihood that an athlete is inspired?
- **Things to look out for…**
  - Are there any differences in the way you inspire athletes at different stages of your career?
  - Do you recognise when the right moment to inspire an athlete is?
    - How do you know? Athlete/situation?
  - When you have inspired an athlete are there any changes in the way you interact?

DISCUSS THE FINDINGS THUS FAR.

- Why is trust important?
  - How do you get trust?
  - Does it work both ways?
- Why and what about the relationship is so important?
- Why do you think your experience/accomplishments (in terms of coaching and playing) important?

- Why is the athlete's level of experience important? (e.g., less knowledge/experience – are they likely to need more inspiring?)

NEGATIVE CASES/UNINSPIRING LEADER BEHAVIOUR

- Have you had any experiences that are the opposite of this? (instances from same vs. different coaches) – WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES (e.g., environment/contextual/situational factors…)
    - Why do you think you didn't/couldn't inspire the athlete/group?
    - What impact did this have on the athlete/s?
    - How would you describe/what would you call this moment?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

pull out key points re. inspirational leaders, uninspiring leaders, consequences etc

- From what you have described today what are the key points?
    - How do you inspire athletes?
    - What impacts on the likelihood that you can inspire an athlete?
    - What are the consequences of an athlete being inspired?
    - What characteristics do athletes who you have inspired possess?
    - Why is trust important? How is trust built up?

- When do you think a coach needs to inspire an athlete?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think might be important to this study?

Appendix 2

Study 3 Interview Guide for Coaches (example edited version)

Initial questions

- Can you tell me about your sporting/coaching career to date?
- What are your major achievements and highlights?
    - Competing.
    - Coaching.

INSPIRATION – (WHAT IS IT?/WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?/HOW DO YOU KNOW?)

- What does inspiration/being inspired mean to you?
- What does the experience of being inspired feel like?
- How do you know that you have been inspired?

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Look for differences between "chronic/discrete" moments vs "acute/non-discrete" moments of inspiration questions (e.g., inspired by coach over a long period of time)

- How do you think you inspire your athletes?
- How do you sell your dream/vision?
- How do you inspire athletes on a day to day basis?
- What happens once vision/dream/LT goal achieved?
- Can you tell me about any specific instances where you think you have inspired an athlete/group of athletes?
    - Are there differences between inspiring individuals and groups?
        - Do you recognise certain situations in which inspiration is required?
        - Do you learn from these critical moments?
    - How do you know that an athlete is inspired?
    - What impact did/does this have on the athlete/s?
        - How long does the impact last?
        - Does this inspire you too?
    - How do you know what to say/do in order to inspire athletes/teams?
- What characteristics do athletes that you have inspired possess (personality/characteristics)?
- After they have discussed this – mention moment/behaviours athletes discussed – see if they remember these & what their recollection is?
- What factors do you think have an impact on the likelihood that an athlete is inspired?
- **Things to look out for…**
    - Are there any differences in the way you inspire athletes at different stages of your career?
    - Do you recognise when the right moment to inspire an athlete is?
        - How do you know? Athlete/situation?

- When you have inspired an athlete are there any changes in the way you interact?

DISCUSS THE FINDINGS THUS FAR.

- Why is trust important?
- Do you need a close relationship with the athletes?
- How important is honesty?
  - Have you ever told someone something that you did not truly believe?
- Why is respect important?
  - How is it gained?
- Why is it important to take an interest in the athlete as a person?
  - How?
- Is it important to establish the goals you are trying to achieve?
  - Differences between amateur and elite?
- Why do you think your experience/accomplishments (in terms of coaching and playing) important?
  - Is it important to get results early?
  - How long does this last?
- Why is the athlete's level of experience important? (e.g., less knowledge/experience – are they likely to need more inspiring?)
- Is the culture important?
  - How is it created?
- Why is it important to get influential players on side?
- Why is it important to support players in tough times?
  - How do you do this?

NEGATIVE CASES/UNINSPIRING LEADER BEHAVIOUR

- Have you had any experiences that are the opposite of this?
- WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES (e.g., environment/contextual/situational factors…)
  - Why do you think you didn't/couldn't inspire the athlete/group?
  - What impact did this have on the athlete/s?
  - How would you describe/what would you call this moment?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- From what you have described today what are the key points?
  - How do you inspire athletes?
  - What impacts on the likelihood that you can inspire an athlete?
  - What are the consequences of an athlete being inspired?
  - What characteristics do athletes who you have inspired possess?
  - Why is trust important? How is trust built up?

Appendix 2

- When do you think a coach needs to inspire an athlete?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think might be important to this study?

Study 3 Interview Guide for Negative Cases

Interview schedule

- Provide participants with information about the study and its purpose.
    i. Go through consent form & information sheet.
    ii. Right to withdraw at any time.
    iii. Emphasise confidentiality – personally identifiable information about you and coaches will not be disclosed at any time during the research process.

- Encourage participants to talk openly about situations they have faced.
    i. Feel free to use names in the interview.
    ii. In subsequent publications names will be removed to ensure confidentiality.
    iii. No comments will be able to be attributed to you.

- There may be times where there will be silence/pauses – this is alright.
    i. It may be that it allows us both time to think.

- Provide opportunity to confirm participant understanding.
    i. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- Get the participant to complete demographic information and sign the consent form.

Rapport/initial questions

- Can you tell me about your sporting career to date?
- What are your major achievements and highlights?

INSPIRATION – (WHAT IS IT?/WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?/HOW DO YOU KNOW?)

- What does inspiration/being inspired mean to you?
- What does the experience of being inspired feel like?
- How do you know that you have been inspired?

NEGATIVE CASE

Have you ever been inspired by your coach?

- Can you think of any reasons why you have never been inspired by your coach? Has something stopped you being inspired?
- What impact did this coach have on you?
- What was the coach like in general?

If the athlete has had a bad experience, ask them to describe this.

Appendix 2

- What did the coach do?
- What impact did this have on you?
- How long did the impact last?
    - Did this effect the way you viewed them?

- Why do you think this coach did not inspire you?

- What factors influence the likelihood you are inspired by a coach?

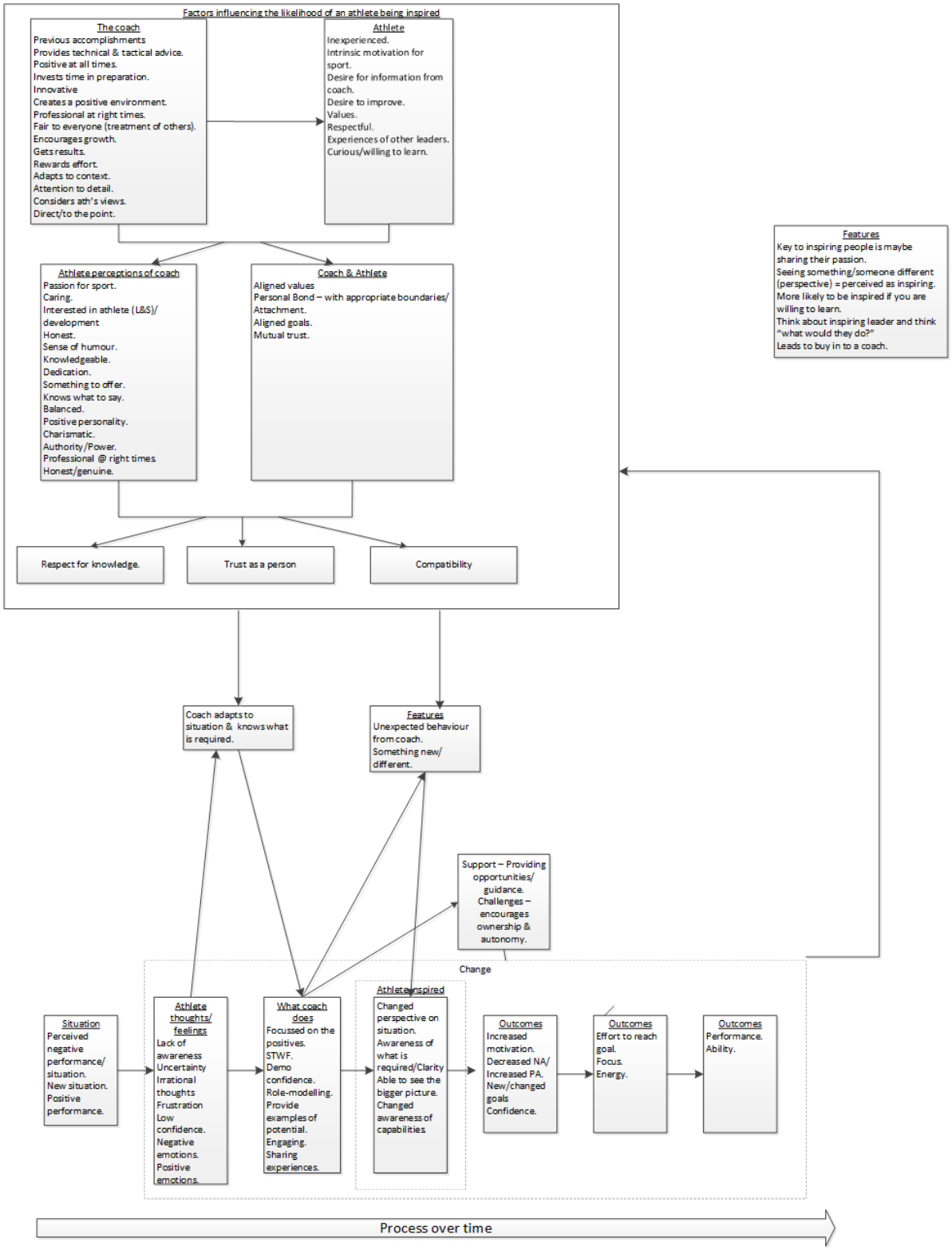
ASK ATHLETE TO LOOK AT THEORY.

Important to get them to mention the specific parts they are discussing (makes for easier transcription)

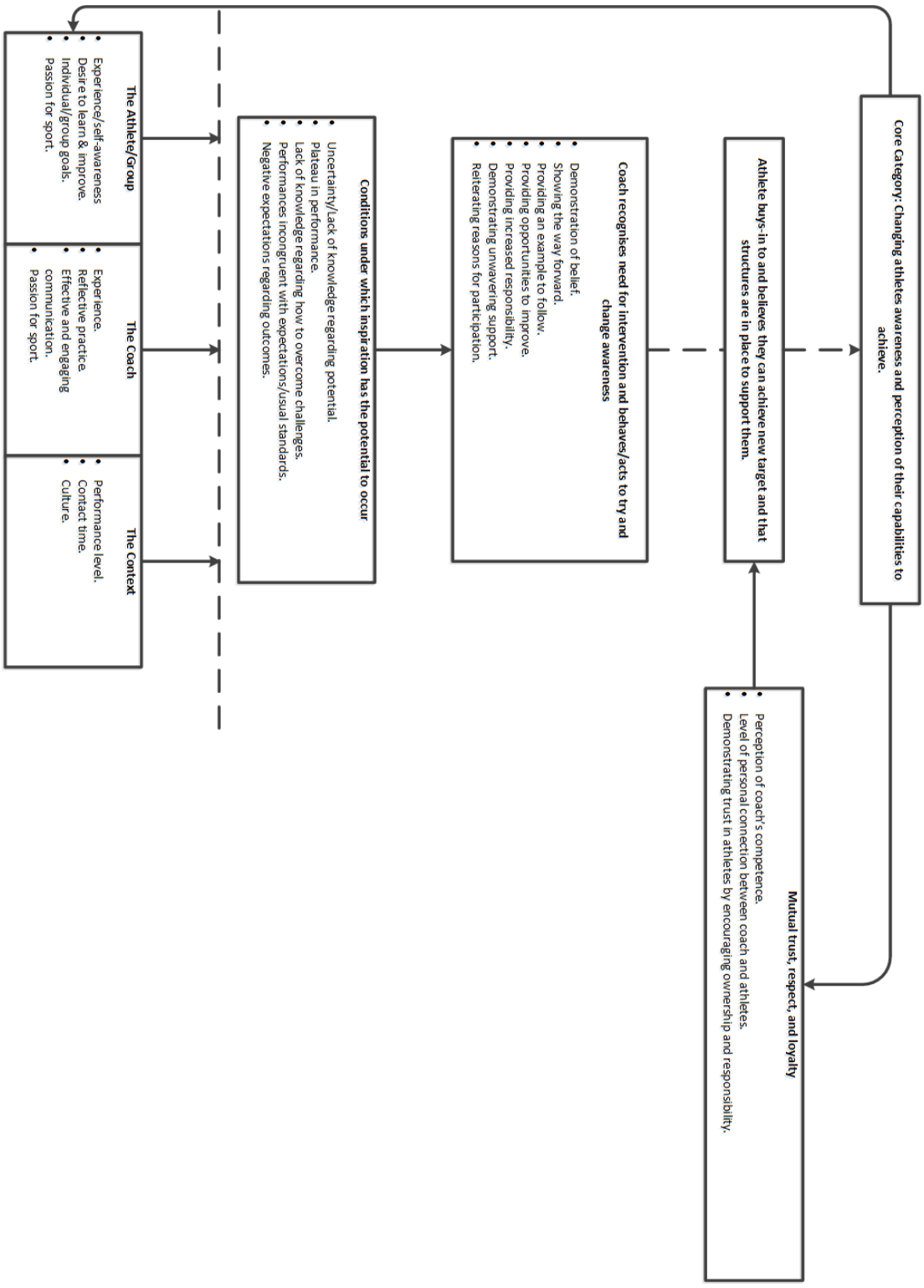
- Can you talk through this with regards to your experiences?
- Does it make sense with regards to why you were not inspired by the coach you have discussed?
- Any additions?
- Can you have all these things in place and not be inspired?

Appendix 3

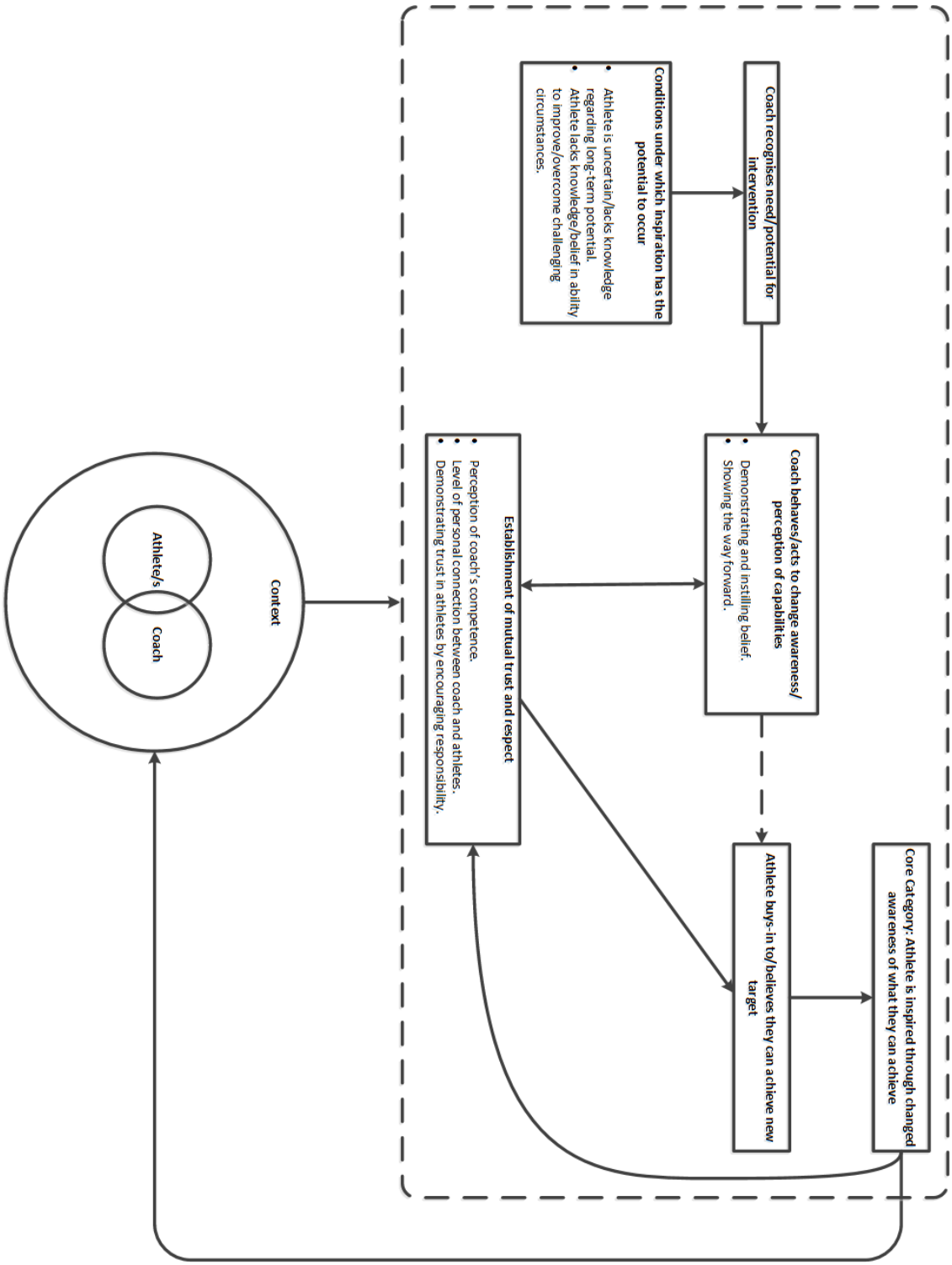
Example diagram of the process of inspirational leadership produced during first phase of data collection



Example diagram of the process of inspirational leadership produced during latter stages of data collection.



Example Diagram of the process of inspirational leadership produced during final stage of data collection.



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