UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

THE MICROPOLITICS OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL YOUTH

FOOTBALL

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Abstract

Organisational change plays a significant role in the employment and working lives of coaches in professional football. However, research that explores how individual coaches experience the change process is limited. Moreover, the use of interpretative, nested case studies to explore individuals' experiences of organisational change is lacking. In response to such an absence, the aim of this research project was to investigate the experiences of individuals employed within the academy of a professional football club (Alder Football Club) during a period of organisational change.

The research project was broken down into four interrelated studies. Study one focussed on the experiences of Ian, an Academy Coach; study two focussed on the experiences of James, a Head of Foundation Phase; study three focussed on the experiences of Richard, an Academy Manager and study four focussed on the experiences of George, a Head of Professional Development Phase and U18's Coach. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analysed through a process of vertical narrative analysis. In addition, ethnographic observational data were collected by the primary researcher who was employed as U16's Academy Coach at Alder FC. Ethnographic observational data consisted of field notes, informal and formal meetings, in-house coach development sessions, academy training sessions and academy fixtures. Following the process of vertical narrative analysis, all interview and ethnographic data were subject to a process of horizontal thematic analysis. A micro-political theoretical framework was used to guide the analysis of all data sets through an iterative process. Specifically, notions of *professional self-understanding, professional self-interests, micro-political literacy, sense-making,* and *professional leadership identity* were included in the framework.

Findings from study one revealed the impact of organisational change on Ian's professional self-understanding as an Academy Coach, along with the impact on his working conditions and subsequent employment in a similar role.

Findings from study two highlighted the micro-political actions and strategies of James in his role of Head of Foundation Phase and how he sought to manage the relationships with those around him to further his own professional self-interests.

Study three evidenced the sensemaking processes of Richard, in his role of Academy Manager. Richard sought to strategically manage the micro-political nature of the relationships of those *vertically* (e.g. Chairman, 1st Team Manager) above, *vertically* (e.g. Academy Coaches, sport science and medical staff) below and *horizontally* (e.g. Head of Professional Development) around him in the organisation.

Study four outlined how George, who was recruited to the role of Head of Professional Development Phase and U18's Coach, developed a professional leadership identity to both implement and support organisational change within the academy. Data also highlighted the vulnerable nature of engaging in micro-political identity work when implementing and supporting change as an 'outsider'.

Findings from the horizontal thematic analysis of both the interview and ethnographic observational data highlighted the micro-political nature of changes being made to the image and branding of Alder FC following the appointment of a new Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager. Specifically, the development of a new vision for the club and the academy evidenced the vulnerable nature of implementing and coping with the changes being made amongst staff members within the academy, and the micro-political nature of successfully responding to the changes being made.

Overall, the findings of this thesis have provided evidence to suggest that enhancing one's professional self-understanding, the development of micro-political literacy and a repertoire of actions and strategies should be included in formal coach education to better prepare coaches to cope with organisational change in professional football. Furthermore, educating those tasked with implementing and supporting organisational change of the importance of managing relationships with significant others through skilled micro-political activity, and the vulnerable nature of creating a professional leadership identity in doing so, should be included in the development of leaders in professional football.

Publications Resulting from this Thesis

Published Journal Articles:

Gibson, L., & Groom, R. (2018). The micro-politics of organizational change in professional youth football: towards an understanding of the 'professional self'. *Managing Sport & Leisure, 23*(1-2), 106-122.

Gibson, L., & Groom, R. (2019). The micro-politics of organisational change in professional youth football: towards an understanding of 'actions, strategies and professional interests'. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 14*(1), 3-14.

Gibson, L., & Groom, R. (2019). Developing a professional leadership identity during organisational change in professional youth football. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health:* DOI:10.1080/2159676X.2019.1673469.

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Gibson, L., Draper, N., & Groom, R. (2016). Understanding the behaviours and actions of others during organisational change in professional youth football. Paper presented at the 5th International Conference for Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, University of Chichester, UK, 1st September, 2016.

Gibson, L., & Groom, R. (2017). Actions and strategies of a professional football coach during a period of organisational change. Paper presented at the 11th Annual ICCE Global Coach Conference, Liverpool John Moores University, UK. 1st August, 2017.

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Alder FC (Alder Football Club)
The RFU (Rugby Football Union)
CEO (Chief Executive Officer)
The FA (The Football Association)
UEFA (Union of European Football Associations)
EPPP (Elite Player Performance Plan)

1. Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Background

Organisational change is of paramount importance to the field of organisational studies (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Indeed, the study of organisational change has developed significantly following early critiques of a largely de-contextual and asocial understanding of *change in practice* (Pettigrew, 1985). In light of this, organisational change has been widely explored by business management scholars (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Barrett-Pugh, Bahn & Gakere, 2013; Burnes, 1997; Hermann & Nadkarni, 2014 Pettigrew, 1985; Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). Organisational change is a complex, multi-level process and has been defined as 'any planned or unplanned response to external or internal pressures and forces which can be developmental, transitional or transformational in nature' (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012, p. 171). Furthermore, organisational change encompasses 'directing (and redirecting) resources according to a policy or plan of action, and possibly also reshaping organisational structures and systems' (Teece, 2012, p. 1398). Such change has been characterized as an increasingly evident feature of the dynamic and competitive nature of organisational life (Petrou, Demerouti & Shaufeli, 2016), with the need for change to increase performance and efficiency at the heart of competitive business environments.

However, within the sporting context, investigations into organisational change have only recently received scholarly attention (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). Specifically, previous research has focused on change processes and the leadership of change (Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2004; Welty Peachey, Bruening & Burton, 2011), culture change within professional sport (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012a, 2012b; Cruickshank, Collins & Minten, 2014), and repeated organisational change in professional football clubs (Wagstaff, Gilmore & Thelwell, 2015, 2016).

With the nature of elite professional sport dependent on consistent success, the environment in which employees have to practise can become extremely volatile, leading to 'high levels of intentional, managerially owned change' (Wagstaff, Gilmore & Thelwell, 2016, p. 40) due to the demands of such consistent success. Furthermore, Dowling, Reeves, Littlewood, Nesti and Richardson (2018) have

highlighted the increased pressure on professional football clubs to maintain success because of the significant financial rewards for doing so. With the commercialization of the football industry increasing, the intensity of an environment characterized by a 'need to win' and 'survive at all costs' will significantly influence the club's organisational position and working practices (Relvas et al., 2010). Subsequently, periods of organisational change become ever more pertinent to success in professional football clubs and the employment experiences of those working in those clubs. To add substance to such an argument, within the English Premier League and English Football League, the League Manager's Association have reported that the average reign for a 1st Team Manager stands at 1.55 years (League Managers Association, 2013) with Audas, Dobson and Goddard (1997) and Day, Gordon and Fink (2012) portraying chronic insecurity as an immutable aspect of a 1st Team Manager's career.

Whilst professional football clubs are prone to constant organisational change, the field of scholarly investigations addressing such change remains limited. Indeed, as Gilmore and Gilson (2007) have stated, 'elite sport offers a fascinating view of change' (p. 410). Furthermore, as Ogbonna and Harris (2015) have highlighted 'the idiosyncratic nature of football business, including entrenchment of values, emotional attachment and connection, multiplicity of interests, diversity of stakeholders and fluidity of operations distinguish football clubs from conventional organisations on which much research is based' (p. 218). Consequently, the capacity for investigating periods of change within professional football becomes challenging.

As a result of the constant change discussed above, individuals undertaking management roles following a period of change tend to employ members of staff who they have worked with previously, resulting in not only turnover at a managerial level, but also turnover affecting stakeholders throughout different levels of the football club (Gibson & Groom, 2018). Moreover, such staff turnover may include the promotion or dismissal of current employees and the external appointment of new staff, increasing the level of complexity during periods of change and the unsettling of the club's organisational structure and professional working relationships.

Whilst each professional football club's organisational structure may differ (Relvas et al., 2010), the majority of football clubs operate an academy that is tasked with developing youth players for a career in professional football (Relvas et al., 2010). Consequently, a change in ownership, directors or a 1st Team Manager may also result in significant organisational change within other departments of a professional football club, and in particular, a club's academy and the staff working within the academy. In addition, Gibson and Groom (2018) investigated the experiences of an English Premier League Academy Manager who was appointed following a period of organisational change. Specifically, the findings highlighted the ambiguous nature of implementing a new playing philosophy and working practices and the overseeing of a period of staff turnover to achieve success. However, the study was limited to the experiences of a single agent of change, ignoring the experiences of other key individuals employed within the academy during the change process.

1.2 Research Problem

In light of the above, further investigations into understanding organisational life, and organisational change in particular, within professional football are required (Ogbonna & Harris, 2015; Wagstaff, Gilmore & Thewell, 2016). In particular, Gibson and Groom (2018) have called for more in-depth and contextually sensitive methodological approaches to understanding organisational change. Specifically, Gibson and Groom (2018) state that 'nested case studies could be used to further explore the impact of reciprocal, sequential and overlapping change, both within and between system levels' (p. 19). Such a methodological approach would aid a comparative relational understanding of interactions within the football environment, from the perspectives of 'multiple interrelated actors' (Gibson & Groom, 2018, p. 19), painting a picture of organisational life within the context of professional football (Potrac, Nelson & O'Gorman, 2015) during organisational change. Furthermore, building on the work of Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011), in their reflection on the lack of empirical investigation into how stakeholders respond to forces of change, Wagstaff et al. (2016) have suggested that an 'embedded researcher' (p. 52) might allow for further insight

into change and understanding individual's responses to, and methods of coping with, organisational change. Indeed, Wagstaff et al. (2016) continue to outline that 'another potential benefit of adopting ethnographic approaches in similar future research is the exploration of what *actually* changes when one manager leaves and another joins' (p. 52). Consequently, such recommendations have informed the methodological approach of this study.

From a theoretical perspective, the use of theory surrounding micro-politics, micro-political literacy, professional leadership identity and vulnerability has been advocated as a useful lens to understand organisational life within a variety of domains. Within the business and management literature, previous research (Dorrenbacher & Geppert, 2006; Ferris et al., 2007; Ferris, Perrewé, Daniels, Lawong & Holmes, 2017; Munyon, Summers, Thompson & Ferris, 2015) has portrayed the political nature of organisational life and the political skill required by employees at various hierarchical levels to both effectively work within and survive in such competitive and fast-moving environments. Educational settings have equally received attention, with the work of Ball (1987) and Kelchtermans (1993, 1996, 2005, 2009) providing us with an understanding of micro-political literacy and teachers' development of a 'professional self-understanding' and 'personal interpretative framework' used to guide political action and successfully negotiate the micro-political nature of working life in a school. Finally, recent scholarly work within sport coaching (Huggan, Nelson & Potrac, 2015; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne & Nelson, 2013; Thompson, Potrac & Jones, 2015) has attempted to understand the (micro)political lives of a variety of specialists, such as coaches, performance analysts and fitness coaches. Specifically, issues around conflict, power and cooperation have been highlighted by Potrac and Jones (2009), with Potrac et al. (2012) outlining the self-interests of football coaches in furthering their individual agendas. More recent findings evidenced by Thompson et al. (2015), and Huggan et al. (2015) shed light on the experiences of support staff working in professional football. The insights provided above, coupled with the complex and political characteristics of change (Petrou, Demerouti & Shaufeli, 2016; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012), suggest

that the use of related micro-political theory may guide a suitable theoretical framework for understanding organisational change in a professional football academy.

Whilst an argument for the theoretical use of micro-politics and political skill has been discussed above, there are still calls for related investigations to further our conceptual understanding of micro-politics. Indeed, in their review of the literature around political skill within the business and management domain, Ferris et al. (2017) concluded that 'it is apparent that the political skill construct has been around a while in concept, but only about 15 years as an empirically investigated area of work. Although quite a bit has been learned about political skill to date, there is still much to investigate' (p. 13). Moreover, within the context of professional football, Thompson et al. (2015) have urged 'scholars and coach educators to give serious consideration to how coaches understand the micro-political nature of their work and the strategies they use to deal with it' (p. 16).

Drawing on the arguments provided above, an investigation into organisational change in a professional football academy and understanding the experiences of different stakeholders working in a professional football academy during periods of change are warranted (Wagstaff et al., 2016). Furthermore, the use of micro-political theory to understand such experiences during organisational change has yet to receive scholarly attention. Finally, in an attempt to adequately explore the phenomena of organisational change and build on the literature that has gone before, the use of embedded, nested case studies as an alternative method of data collection has been called for (Gibson & Groom, 2018).

1.3 Outline of Studies and Key Research Questions

The aim of this programme of research was to investigate the social complexities and micro-political nature of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club. Specifically, attention was given to understanding the perceptions of how organisational change affected the day-to-day working practices of Academy Coaches and their professional relationships with other staff and the micro-political actions demonstrated by both the coaches and others during organisational change.

The case study for this project was Alder Football Club (FC) (pseudonym), a professional football club within the English Football League. Each participant was employed at Alder FC during the same period of organisational change. In addition, the primary researcher and author of this project was also employed in a part-time role as an Academy Coach at Alder FC during the same period. More contextual detail of the case study and each participant is presented in the Methodology chapter.

To address the overall aim of the research project, this investigation was sectioned into four interrelated studies and guided by the following key research questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of the stakeholders who were removed from the change process within a professional football environment? What are their perceptions as to why they were removed and how did they cope with such change both during and after this process?

RQ2: What can be learnt from the experiences of coaches and other stakeholders who remain during the change process in a professional football environment? How do such stakeholders manage to maintain their role within this environment during the change process and why?

RQ3: How do coaches and academy managers manage 'upwards' in a professional football environment? How do they construct the knowledge to do so? What methods and strategies are utilised and why are they successful or unsuccessful?

RQ4: How do 'new' coaches who have been brought into the professional football environment during a period of organisational change integrate into that environment and socialise with current staff. What strategies do 'new' coaches use to implement a new playing philosophy to a squad of football players?

At the time of data collection, all participants were employed within the academy at Alder FC. However, at the time of the submission of this thesis none of the staff remained working at Alder FC. The programme of research consisted of four studies. Study one, which focused on the experiences of an Academy Coach and addressed RQ1. Study two, focused on the experiences of the Head of Foundation Phase and addressed RQ2. Study three, focused on the experiences of the Academy Manager addressed RQ3. Finally, study four, focused on the experiences of the Head of Professional Development Phase/Under 18 Coach and addressed RQ4.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

The Introduction (chapter one) is followed by the Review of Literature (chapter two) which aims to provide a critical analysis of previous literature investigating organisational change and micro-politics. Completing such an analysis highlights how the process of organisational change in a professional football academy can be better understood.

Chapter three, presents the Methodology and outlines the philosophical underpinnings and the selection of methods of data collection and analysis for the study. Following on from the Methodology, chapters four to eight focus on the vertical narrative analysis of the data from each study. Specifically, chapter four outlines the findings of study 1 and provides a detailed discussion highlighting the development of a micro-political professional self-understanding during organisational change. Chapter five, details the findings of study 2, highlighting the use of a personal interpretive framework to guide micro-political action during organisational change. Chapter six, presents the findings of study 3 and depicts the vulnerable nature of middle management during organisational change and the political skill needed to negotiate such an ambiguous period. Chapter seven provides the findings of study 4 and outlines the development of a professional leadership identity when employed as an 'outsider' during organisational change.

Chapter eight, details a discussion of the findings generated from a horizontal thematic analysis of the individual narrative accounts and the ethnographic observational data. Such a discussion aims to provide an understanding of the 'nested', interrelated nature of organisational change at a professional football academy.

Finally, chapter nine draws the thesis to a close, offering a number of conclusions, detailing the key findings, novel contribution, reflections on the research process, limitations of the study, theoretical and applied implications of the findings and future research directions within the field of organisational change in professional football.

2. Chapter Two - Review of Literature

2. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature surrounding the working lives of those employed within professional football environments. Following this, relevant literature relating to the process of organisational change in business, teaching and sporting contexts is considered in an attempt to demonstrate the contested, complex and micro-political nature that may be inherent during periods of organisational change in professional football, and the impact such periods may have on individuals working in the professional football environment. By undertaking such a critical analysis of the related bodies of literature, this chapter will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of existing knowledge, from both a conceptual and methodological perspective. Finally, this chapter distinguishes how this knowledge can be enhanced and built upon to develop our understanding of how coaches, managers and other stakeholders experience, implement and manage organisational change when working within a professional football club from both an individual and interrelated perspective.

2.1 Defining and Studying Organisational Change

Before reviewing the literature, which focused upon organisational change, it is important to understand conceptually how organisational change has been defined within the academic literature, and to consider issues surrounding conceptual clarity. Indeed, Van de Ven and Poole, (2005) highlight that:

'Most scholars agree that organisational change is a topic that is central and important to organisational studies. However, they disagree on the meaning of organisational change and how to study it' (p. 1377).

Indeed, organisational change to maximise performance and efficiency is a key feature in highly competitive and dynamic environments (Evans & Davis, 2005). Defined by Teece (2012) as the 'directing

(and redirecting) of resources according to a policy or plan of action, and possibly also the reshaping of organisational structures and systems' (p. 1398), organisational change has become a progressively significant component of the competitive and dynamic nature of organisational life (Petrou, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2016). Furthermore, as Thomas, Sargent and Harvey (2011) indicate, 'change is endemic, natural and ongoing' (p. 22).

2.2 Studying Organisational Change

From an academic perspective, Van de Ven and Poole (2005) suggest that organisational change has become pertinent in the field of organisational studies. In studying organisational change, two predominant methodological approaches have become prominent within organisational studies. Poole et al. (2000) and Van de Ven and Poole (2005) outline the first approach is the observation of change in an organisation over time and second, is understanding the narrative of the sequence of events during periods of change. Such contrasting research approaches are underpinned by different beliefs regarding the nature of organisations and organisational life. Moreover, the different views of an organisation have significant implications for studying organisational change (Van de Ven & Poole, 2005).

Van de Ven and Poole (2005) suggest that perceptions of an organisation may either take the form of a *thing* or a *process*. The identification of an organisation as *thing* prompt methodologies for investigating change that entail the statistical analysis of qualitative data, where change is analysed as the impact of a set of independent variables upon the dependent variable of change. However, when an organisation is perceived as a *process*, change is illuminated through the temporal order and sequence in which the change events occurred based upon the social actors re-telling the narrative events (Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). Interestingly, *process* methodologies are particularly useful for understanding the sensemaking process of individuals, when change is conceptualised as context-dependent, unpredictable and non-linear and where intended strategies often lead to unintended consequences (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Heyden, Fourné, Koene, Werkman & Ansari, 2017). Rouleau and Balogun (2011) highlighted that 'managers' sense-making

capabilities are critical to the role they perform' (p. 953) and have defined sense-making as 'a social process of meaning construction and reconstruction through which managers understand, interpret, and create sense for themselves and others of their changing organisational context and surroundings (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011, p. 955). In light of this, the study and understanding of employees' sense-making capabilities during periods of organisational change in a professional football club would be useful in furthering our understanding of the micro-political realities that managers, coaches and other stakeholders experience. Further critical discussions of the literature surrounding sense-making within organisational life will be evident in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Organisational change research has developed substantially following early evaluations of a particularly decontextual and asocial understanding of *change in practice* (Pettigrew, 1985). Subsequently, Pettigrew et al. (2001) suggested that research examining organisational change has begun to recognise the importance of a temporal understanding of change and that 'context and action are inseparable' (p. 697). In light of this, the traditional and rationalistic objective perceptions of change have been questioned (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). Therefore, such methodological developments in the study of organisational change have enhanced our understanding of change in an increasingly sophisticated, complex, non-linear, context-dependent and unpredictable manner, which often produces unintended consequences (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Wallace, 2003), and in turn, providing an insight into the more nuanced social processes at play during change.

2.3 Organisational Change in Elite Sport

Whilst previous scholarly activity has sought to examine the organisational structures in professional football (e.g., Relvas, Littlewood, Nesti, Gilbourne & Richardson, 2010), there remains a limited literature set investigating the causes of, the implementation of and the management of organisational change in professional football. Notably, Gilmore and Gilson's (2007) study remains one of the few studies to examine the business of organisational change in a professional football club. Using a case study approach,

the authors investigated the transition of the football club as an organisation against the business and administrative performance indicators set in line with demands of the external environment. The prominence of the study rested in the external environment of the English Premier League, which in itself, was undergoing increased socio-economic and cultural changes within the sector of professional football. The case study approach to examine such transitional change was a novel strength of the study and allowed both semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation to take place over a period of two football seasons.

Whilst case study approaches have their methodological limitations, Gilmore and Gilson (2007) argued for the increased use of case studies in understanding the change process in elite sporting organisations, 'allowing the researcher to place calamitous events, together with potentially counter-intuitive behaviour and action in proper historical and holistic perspective' (p. 424). Although such an argument has been made; however, case study approaches examining organisational change in professional football have yet to permeate the literature. Although both studies have explored organisational change within the context of the external environment of elite sport, an understanding of the internal, micro level machinations of organisational change within elite sport organisations has alluded scholarly attention.

2.4 Managerial Change in Elite Sport

In light of the above, the work of Cruickshank and Collins (2012a) made the case for examining organisational change in elite sport due to the pressure placed on managers and coaches to deliver immediate, performance enhancing change. The authors continue to highlight the 'inappropriate methodologies and unreliable theoretical underpinnings' (p. 223) of previous literature and the application of such underpinnings to elite sport, championing the benefits of case studies in developing a comprehensive conceptualisation of change.

Whilst previous studies have their methodological limitations in enhancing our understanding of the change process, they have provided us with a platform to build on when examining both managerial

and organisational change in professional sport, offering evidence that such change may not influence performance. In his review of the literature assessing the impact of managerial change over the last eighty years, Andersen (2011) suggests that 'managerial successions in professional teams have little or no impact on team performance' (p. 176). Evidence to support Andersen's claim demonstrated that baseball teams that changed manager tended to occupy lower positions with little to no positive impact on team performance (Grusky, 1963; Gamson & Scotch, 1964; Grusky, 1964; Jacobs & Singell, 1993). Investigations in professional football (Audas, Dobson & Goddard, 1997; Audas, Dobson & Goddard, 2002) highlighted that managerial change had a negative effect on short-term on-field and organisational performance, with such findings building on the work of Eitzen and Yetman (1972) and Fizel and D'Itri (1999).

More recently, Flint, Plumley and Wilson (2014) analysed data on managerial change over a decade between the 2003-2004 and 2012 and 2013 season in the English Premier League. Building on the previous work mentioned above, Flint et al. (2014) sought to examine, not only the change in points per game, but also impact of managerial change on final league position, hypothesising that change would result in improved points per game total and improved final league position. Findings highlighted that points per game had increased as a result of managerial change; however, final league position did not improve across the entire sample. However, the study failed to recognise the timing of managerial change and the impact this may have had on the data. Furthermore, the responses of significant others to change within each club and the ability of incoming managers as successful change agents are also ignored. Consequently, our understanding of effective change management and the guidance for leaders, consultants and other specialists working in elite sport remains scarce.

2.5 Culture Change in Elite Sport

In an attempt to address such a scarcity, Cruickshank and Collins (2012b) suggest that future research investigating organisational change in elite sport takes the direction of understanding the relationship between culture change and performance enhancement. Specifically, the authors call for sound theoretical underpinning to inform solutions for practitioners supporting the implementation of culture change in addressing questions such as 'to what extent should practitioners provide direct or indirect services? How should their support evolve over time? What ethical concerns arise in advising on dark practices? What are the implications for the training and continued professional development of practitioners?' (p. 351). Indeed, addressing these questions would open up discussion around methods and processes for implementing and delivering successful change.

Building on the above, Cruickshank, Collins and Minton (2013) undertook an empirical study aimed at investigating culture change in an English Rugby Union programme, sampling participants from the Team Management, coaching playing staff and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for semi-structured interviews. Findings highlighted the importance of shaping the physical, structural and psychosocial environment and the impact of social power during organisational change. Whilst such an investigation was a welcome addition to an embryonic field, more research and diverse methods of data collection are needed to provide a deeper understanding of some of the concepts discussed within the paper. For example, in understanding the role of power, how does this manifest itself at different levels of an organisation and what does it mean for different stakeholders during periods of organisational change? Moreover, the absence of theoretical underpinnings taken from the management and organisational studies literature was a criticism aimed at the study. In her commentary of the paper, and providing a rationale for the inclusion of such a body of literature when studying organisational and culture change, Gilmore (2013) asserted that;

'the team is part of a wider context which not only consists of the 'business' entity that exists alongside it and consistently interacts with it, but the organisation as a club entity is caught up in and shaped by institutional logics operating both at the level of the institutional field and at the

intraorganisational level; exerting powerful influences on the range and scope of activities and behaviour at all levels of the organisation' (p. 305).

2.6 Implementing Organisational Change in Elite Sport

Recently, Gibson and Groom (2018) provided an insight into the social complexities faced by an English Premier League Academy Manager when tasked with implementing organisational change in a professional football academy. Indeed, the findings highlighted the importance of all staff understanding the changes being implemented and identifying the staff who were on board with the changes and those who were not. Furthermore, the process of building a new culture to enhance the communication was evident, along with the provision of support for staff who were on board with the changes yet required a process of upskilling to successfully cope with change. Whilst, such findings were of interest and provided applied benefits for the preparation of coaches and managers in implementing organisational change, further work utilising varied methodological approaches is required to allow for an interpretation of the interrelationships within professional football and the impact this has on successful organisational change.

Previous work of Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011) highlighted the environmental influences impacting change, specifically focussing on the impact such influences had on the decision making of change agents. A methodological strength of this paper was the length of qualitative data collection lasting a period of five months in an attempt to incorporate the role of time in change. Notably, the benefits of studying and capturing the holistic nature of organisational change through the process of longitudinal data collection have been previously advocated (Gilmore & Gilson, 2007). Findings evidenced the external nature of factors driving change such as conference (league) affiliation, the economic climate and pressures from parents and fans with the authors suggesting the benefits of a change agent from outside the organisation in leading change. Whilst such a suggestion may be warranted, there remains a paucity of empirical research to understand the role of an outsider in directing change and the social complexities of such a task.

Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012) further extended our understanding of organisational change in professional sport and attempted to understand responses to change through another qualitative investigation. Findings suggested an ambivalence towards change and provided an insight into sources of ambivalence during change such as managerial turnover and previous negative experiences of change. The work of Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012) outlines a starting point for understanding ambivalence and resistance as a response to change; however, in advancing our knowledge in this area, more work is needed to understand how ambivalence and resistance manifests itself within the day-to-day working lives and professional practices of employees working within professional and elite sport. Specifically, what are the impacts of ambivalence and resistance on relationships between colleagues within professional environments and how does this influence successful performance?

Whilst the above work highlighted ambivalence and resistance towards change in sport, the work of Wagstaff et al. (2015) focussed on understanding the experiences of sport medicine and sport science practitioners of organisational change in both elite football and cricket clubs. Specific attention was paid to examining the emotional, behavioural, and attitudinal responses to changes over time and how this impacted the performance of individuals within the professional environment. Interestingly, data were collected over a two-year period as part of a longitudinal design, with semi-structured interviews with sport medicine and sport science practitioners taking place at three different phases; building on the work of Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012). Specifically, phase one was at the time of planning and initiation of change, phase two was at two or three months after the onset of change, with phase three taking place six to nine months after the onset of change. Findings highlighted four distinct stages of change: anticipation and uncertainty, upheaval and realisation, integration and experimentation, normalisation and learning. Such findings suggested the possibility that sport medicine and sport science practitioners may need to 'educate, manage upwards and sell their practice to the incoming manager and any backroom staff they may need to bring with them' (Wagstaff et al., 2015, p. 696). Whilst such suggestions are welcomed, more evidence is required

to understand the micro-political nature of educating, managing upwards and selling ideas to senior management and the political skill required.

Building on their previous work exploring emotional and attitudinal responses to organisational change, Wagstaff et al. (2016) investigated employees' (medical and sport science practitioners) responses to *repeated* organisational change within two organisations competing in the English Premier League. Whilst research into organisational change in sport has begun to permeate the wider change literature, investigations into responses to recurrent change is lacking. Subsequently, ten participants from each organisation took part in the semi-structured interview process with the data being subject to a content analysis. The data revealed that participants developed resilience, learning, short-term performance enhancements and increased autonomy following repeated managerial change. However, more interestingly, negative responses were of more significance during recurring change. 'Participants reported many more negative responses to recurrent change events relating to receding trust, and declining motivation, engagement, and commitment, lack of organisational learning, heightened cynicism, and intentions to look for employment elsewhere' (Wagstaff et al., 2016, p. 49). Key to the findings here is the decline of 'trust', 'motivation' and 'commitment' amongst employees brought about by recurrent change in professional sport with the work of Potrac et al. (2013) providing us with evidence of the importance of such concepts in successful high performance and elite organisations. Furthermore, Cruickshank, Collins and Minton (2013) highlighted the need to optimise motivation and well-being amongst staff for a successful change programme to take place in sporting organisations.

Whilst the work of Wagstaff et al. (2016) builds on the literature by increasing our understanding of repeated organisational change, as is the case with previous work (Wagstaff et al., 2015; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012), a more contextually sensitive ethnographic research design has the potential to understand what *actually* happens during managerial and organisational change. Observational methods, field notes and in-situ interviews employed by an embedded researcher would allow for future contextual insight.

2.7 Organisational Change in Management and Organisational Studies

Whilst the literature surrounding organisational change in professional sport is in its relative infancy, extensive literature exists investigating the process of organisational change and change management in the management and organisational studies field. Although it is out of the abilities of this literature review to provide an overview of such an extensive body of literature, key texts and articles related to the theoretical underpinnings that will inform and guide this study around implementing change and middle-management experiences of change will be discussed in this following section.

2.7.1 Insider v Outsider Change Agents

During the process of organisational change, the appointment of the change agent in the organisation, as an insider to the organisation (i.e. those managers who have been promoted internally) or as an outsider (i.e. those managers who have been appointed externally), can have a significant impact on the nature of the change and the success of implementing organisational change. For example, outsiders to the organisation differ from insiders, as their vision for changes can be less constrained by the organisation's internal resources and organisational history (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2010). This is because internal managers often have a deeper understanding of the way that the organisation operates and are therefore more likely to build change upon existing capabilities in an incremental manner (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2010).

In an attempt to understand this relationship between 'insider change agents' and 'outsider change agents', and the affect that both change agents have on the success of organisational change, Zhang and Rajagopolan (2010) examined how this relationship differed between both. Findings highlighted a more complex relationship between organisational change and organisational performance during and following a period of change. When observing organisations that appointed insider change agents, Zhang and Rajagopolan (2010) suggest that, 'because they [insider change agents] have a deeper understanding of their firms' internal resource conditions and also because their visions tend to be constrained by their past experience within the firm, they are more likely to initiate and implement strategic changes that build upon

existing organisational capabilities' (p. 343). Elaborating further, Zhang and Rajagopolan (2010) indicate that insider change agents tend to enhance organisational performance 'in a relatively incremental, but continuous way' (p. 343). However, within the first three years of appointment, the relationship between organisational performance and organisational change does not differ between insider and outsider change agents.

In explaining the suggestion that outsider change agents are less effective than insider change agents, Zhang and Rajagopolan (2010) speculate that outsider change agents 'are usually brought in when immediate changes are needed, and in the early years of their tenure their strategic changes focus mainly on cost-cutting and divestment' (p. 343). However, once these opportunities are less available, the development of long-term organisational growth is required. At this point, insider change agents may be more effective at devising and implementing such growth, than outsider change agents (Zhang & Rajagopolan, 2010).

Whilst this study has provided us with an understanding of the differing impacts of insider change agents and outsider change agents on organisational performance, understanding the underlying reasons as to why this is the case remains to be explored. Specifically, what changes are implemented during the organisational change process and how do stakeholder experience and react to these claims? (Grenier, Cummings & Bhambri, 2003). Indeed, as Grenier et al. (2003) state, 'in each of the phases [phases of organisational change], the CEO plays a different leadership role to move the organisation forward' (p. 3).

2.7.2 Phases of Implementing Organisational Change

Outlining different phases of change that may be utilised either insider or outsider change agents, Grenier et al. (2003) highlight that phase one, is the need to 'design the entry context'. This involves, defining the 'conditions under which they enter the organisation. What are the board's expectation? Does the board support making changes in how the company operates? Will it stand behind the CEO if others resist change? How will the CEO's appointment be communicated to the organisation?' (p. 4).

Phase two, is ensuring the CEO achieves 'early positive impact'. Here, the emphasis is on building credibility and to 'establish oneself as the leader in-charge… by focusing on short-term issues that offer high probability of success' (Grenier et al., 2003, p. 4).

Phase three, relates to the need to 'create competitive logic and tiebreakers'. Here, newly appointed change agents need to 'transition from their short-term orientation to become more visionary and strategic' (Grenier et al., 2003, p.6), focusing on a longer-term vision.

Phase four, outlines the importance achieving a 'fit between new positions and people'. This involves developing a 'new organisation structure… to implement the new strategy' (Grenier et al., 2003, p. 46). Such a process can be extremely political, placing an emphasis on the ability of the change agent to orchestrate change.

Phase five, is defined as 'release and mobilize employee energy'. At this point, changes have been made at a more senior level, prompting the need to communicate such strategic changes down through hierarchical levels. Here, effective change agents 'reach out to make contact with many employees at all levels' (Grenier et al., 2003, p. 7).

The penultimate stage is distinguished as 'alter workforce and customer interface'. After all strategic, organisational changes have been made, the role of the change agent focuses on monitoring implementation to support, guide, and follow-up 'to assure that decisions and actions are consistent with the new strategic direction' (Grenier et al., 2003, p. 8).

Finally, phase seven, results in making 'grassroots employees the primary agents of change'. The effectiveness of this phase rests in empowering staff deep in the organisation 'so that employees see themselves as activists responsible for carrying out change every day' (Grenier et al., 2003, p. 8).

Whilst the phases of organisational change outlined by Grenier et al. (2003) provide us with a formulaic, step-by-step process of achieving this task, more work is needed to understand the complex social and political processes when implementing and managing each phase. For example, how do change agents manage the potential vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 2009) that may arise if they fail to meet the targets

of the conditions in which they negotiated with the board of directors? As Denis, Langley and Cazale (1996) have found, leadership roles bring about increased visibility and multiple pressures. As the reorganisation of organisational structures take place, how does the change agent decide which employees remain in the organisation and which employees are let go? Indeed, within the working environment of professional football in particular, Ogbonna and Harris (2015) have highlighted the importance of camaraderie to sustain success. Furthermore, Buchanan (1999) has highlighted intense political activity surrounding the processes and outcomes of changes that are introduced. In light of this, what level of political skill (Ferris, et al., 2002) does the change agent possess to manage such activity is key. Moreover, when reaching out to employees working in different levels of the organisation, how do change agents construct an identity to ensure cooperation and compliance with the changes being implemented is important? As Petriglieri and Stein (2012) have indicated, an identity that is representative of the social group that is being lead is important for a leader in ensuring success.

Such issues have yet to be addressed within the literature surrounding the appointment of outside change agents. Furthermore, there remains an extremely limited body of literature that explores the processes and impact of outsider change agent appointments in professional football. As previously mentioned, past studies have only sought to highlight the impact of managerial turnover on on-field performance (Audas, et al., 1997; Audas, et al., 2002 etc.). Consequently, exploring the experiences of an outsider change agent who has been appointed to implement organisational change within a professional club would increase our understanding of the complex, political processes behind such findings (Audas et al., 1997; Audas et al., 2002 etc.). To address this issue, Zhang and Rajagopalan (2010) have called for future studies to expand their own qualitative work to draw upon qualitative methodologies in an attempt to contribute a deeper understanding of the dynamics and strategies used to implement organisational change as an outsider change agent.

2.7.3 The Role of Middle Managers During Organisational Change

Research designs examining organisational change typically follow 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' perspectives (Burgelman, 1983; Heyden et al., 2017; Raes, Heijltes, Glunk & Roe, 2011). Top-down approaches focus upon the role of top managers (e.g., CEOs and Chief Executives) as the initiators of change whereas the bottom-up perspective identifies the role of middle managers (e.g., above first-level supervision and operational level managers or two or three levels below the CEO) in initiating change (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Glaser, Fourné & Elfring, 2015). Whilst both top managers and middle managers play important roles in initiating, executing, and supporting organisational change (Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014; Heyden et al., 2017; Huy, Corley & Kraatz, 2014), within a bottom-up perspective, middle managers occupy an important organisational space between top and operating level managers, and 'what makes middle managers unique is their access to top management coupled with their knowledge of operations' (Woolridge, Schmid & Floyd, 2008, p. 1192). Woolridge et al. (2008, p. 1191) have further highlighted that this remains an area of 'great promise for generating future insight' into understanding how organisations operate and the enactment of organisational strategy. Therefore, understanding the role of middle managers' activities and behaviours has important consequences for how strategy forms within organisations (Mantere, 2008; Raman, 2009). Indeed, Woolridge et al. (2008) highlighted that research in this area has demonstrated the importance of understanding the *middle management perspective* in the creation of innovation and organisational learning, strategy implementation, and strategy making processes (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007).

In line with this perspective, Balogun and Johnson (2005) have called for a better understanding of the micro-organisational social processes that are evident outside of the senior management team on strategy formation (e.g. Balogun, Huff & Johnson, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2008; Johnson, Melin & Whittington., 2003). Periods of organisational change are often associated with people trying to make sense of what is going on around them, and these interactions can lead to gossip, stories, and rumours, in an

attempt to contextualise new experiences within personal interpretive frameworks (Balogun & Johnson, 2005).

2.7.4 Sense-Making Activities During Organisational Change

Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) argue for the need to improve our understanding of the individuals' sensemaking activities during periods of crises and organisational change, Specifically, such activities help individuals connect 'cues and frames to create an account of what is going on' (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010, p. 552). Indeed, in their exploration of the social nature of organisational change and the potential personal interpretive frameworks that may be utilised to comprehend this social nature, the work of Balogun and Johnson (2004) sought to investigate the sense-making processes of middle managers during a period of organisational restructuring that imposed a reduction in the interactions between senior and middle managers. The active process of understanding the social interactions that occur during the process of change, information seeking, meaning ascription, and resistance to change has been described as *sensemaking* (Ford & D'Amelio, 2008; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Indeed, such interactions have been evidenced as being important for creating alliances and cooperation in organisations (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Indeed, the rationale behind their (Balogun & Johnson, 2004) study is underpinned by the need to understand how 'middle managers interpret change, and how their schemata or interpretative frameworks, develop and change' (p. 523). Taking a longitudinal case study approach of an organisation that was implementing planned strategic change, Balogun and Johnson (2004) tracked the planned change through the diaries of middle managers. The use of diaries encouraged the middle managers to reflect on monthly instances through questions such as, 'what is going well and why? What is going badly and why? What problems do you foresee? What have been the significant events? What rumours and stories are circulating?' (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, p. 527). Following the diary inserts, one-to-one interviews took place with each middle manager.

Balogun and Johnson (2004) found that periods of organisational change and restructuring led to organisational de-identification (i.e. away from past common goals, trusted practices, and solutions), which led to a loss of meaning, increased ambiguity towards the process of experimentation and active sense making for middle managers. In this situation, as past experiences were unable to inform practice, middle managers developed their own interpretations from their direct experiences of the behaviours of others, and from rumours and gossip about senior management (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). During the implementation of organisational change, the sense making process involves participants trying to determine 'How will change be achieved?' and 'How will this affect me?' Furthermore, the significance of change recipient sense making highlights the influence of colleague actions in shaping and developing those meanings (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). As Balogun and Johnson (2004) state, 'it is important to understand why these interpretations are developing and the outcomes to which they are leading, so that appropriate actions can be taken' (p. 546).

Due to their unique hierarchical position within organisations, middle managers' agency to initiate and support strategic change can be constrained by their own sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991; Mantere, 2005). However, Guth and MacMillan (1986) highlight that middle managers will intervene in strategic decision-making when their self-interest is at stake. Therefore, the way in which middle managers enact and support organisational change should be considered through a micro-political lens, to encapsulate their self-interests, vulnerability, and current and future employment (Ball, 1987; Guth & MacMillan, 1986).

Endeavouring to investigate the interactions between middle managers as change recipients as they try to make sense of organisational change, Balogun and Johnson (2005) devised a longitudinal, real-time analysis of planned, implemented organisational change. Furthermore, this approach allowed the researchers to understand 'how middle managers make sense of top-down change plans... to explore acknowledged links between recipient cognition and the emergent and unpredictable nature of strategic change' (p. 1574). In understanding the data generated, Balogun and Johnson (2005) took an interpretive

approach through a sense-making perspective. The rationale behind such an approach rests in the need to explore the 'interpretations that the middle managers arrive at concerning how they should respond to the change interventions… primarily from lateral, informal, social processes of interactions' (p. 1574). Moreover, Balogun and Johnson (2004) highlight that sense making is 'a conversation and narrative process through which people create and maintain an intersubjective world' (p. 524). Balogun and Johnson (2005) further explain that the sense making perspective encourages us to focus our attention on processes of interaction between individuals and groups. This level of analysis is particularly important during periods of organisational change, as change requires social actors to act in new ways, and therefore change can be highly challenging and ambiguous (Ford et al., 2008).

The findings from the work of Balogun and Johnson (2005) highlighted the link between unexpected outcomes associated with organisational change and the relationship of such outcomes with the sense-making activity of the recipients of change. Findings also suggested that emergent change outcomes are the product of not only interactions between recipients and senior managers, but also more informal interactions between middle managers themselves. However, 'models of change typically do not incorporate informal processes' (p. 1595). Taking into consideration the work of Balogun and Johnson (2005), such an absence within typical change models may be a limiting factor against the efficacy of such change models. As Balogun and Johnson (2005) suggest, 'the senior managers provide a blueprint for change, but the way the blueprint actually operates is determined by the new behavioural routines created by the change recipients through their interpretation of and response to senior management change plans' (p. 1596). Consequently, the management of change tends to be less concerned with directing and controlling the implementation of change and more concerned with understanding and facilitating the sense-making processes of the change recipients to achieve a congruence of interpretation (Balogun & Johnson, 2005).

Importantly, Balogun and Johnson (2005) highlight that 'we need to understand more about how middle managers, given their central role in change, and recipients, in general, make sense of and therefore contribute to change outcomes in different change contexts' (p. 1597). Reacting to the need to understand

'different change contexts', the exploration of understanding the sense-making processes of middle-managers working in professional football clubs has yet to receive academic attention. Indeed, as has been highlighted in previous sections in this chapter, the structural make-up within a professional football club (Relvas et al., 2010) prompts numerous vertical and horizontal relationships (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Furthermore, Obgonna and Harris (2015) have outlined the tensions between the needs of individuals working in a professional football club and the organisational needs of the club.

In response to the above, an investigation that endeavours to understand the sense making processes of an Academy Manager (a middle-management role that is responsible to the 1st Team Manager and Board of Directors) may be beneficial in understanding the social nature of organisational change in a professional football club to build on the literature that has investigated this phenomenon in other contexts (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). For example, how do Academy Managers initiate sense making opportunities and what influence does reputational social capital (Ahearne et al., 2014) play in constructing effective sense making processes amongst peers? As has been previously discussed, understanding who can be trusted within a professional football club is important to positive working relationships (Kelly & Harris, 2010; Gibson & Groom, 2018). Moreover, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) have indicated the significance of *performing the conversation* and *setting the scene* in effective sense making processes. The importance of the relationship between the middle manager and senior manager has been advocated previously (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). However, understanding the relationships between 1st Team Managers (senior management) and Academy Managers (middle management) remains unexplored. Specifically, how do Academy Managers make sense of these relationships in an attempt to strategically influence (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011) senior management? Indeed, the process of 'managing up' (Balogun & Johnson, 2004) has been highlighted as essential in the pursuit of successful organisational change.

From a methodological perspective, the interpretive work of Balogun and Johnson (2005) provides us with a strong rationale for utilising such a perspective to understand the sense making process of middle

managers and 'capture contextual richness and complexity' that helps us to comprehend how middle managers 'make sense of change events' (p. 1576). Indeed, the use of interpretative case studies have been advocated previously in investigating organisational change in professional football (Gibson & Groom, 2018). Therefore, such an approach would be a good starting point to study the sense making processes of an Academy Manager during a period of organisational change in a professional football club.

2.8 Overview of Paradigmatic Positions and Theoretical Frameworks in the Study of Organisational Change

At this point in the review, and prior to discussing some of the theoretical concepts that will guide this project, it is worth reflecting on the theoretical frameworks that have informed some of the studies of change that have been discussed above. Furthermore, understanding the chosen paradigmatic positions guiding these studies can inform the decisions taken in the designing future studies of change. Of the studies outlined, a variety of theoretical frameworks have guided scholars' investigation of change in both the mainstream organisational, and sport literature.

In earlier works, the study of organisational and managerial change tended to be driven by more quantitative, positivist paradigms that sought to understand the statistical change in on-field performance following an event of change (i.e. a change in Manager) (Audas et al., 1997; Audas et al., 2002; Grusky, 1963 etc.). Typically, in investigating the impact of a change in manager on numerous variables that characterise performance, such studies have suggested that the impact that such a change has on on-field performances is inconclusive (Flint et al., 2014). Moreover, Hermann and Nadkarni (2014) adopted a positivist stance to investigate the effect of CEO personality on the success of strategic change through the collection and analysis of quantitative surveys. A similar approach was also taken by Heyden et al. (2017) in an attempt to investigate the role of middle managers during change. Specifically, Heyden et al. (2017) developed a number of hypotheses around the impact of middle-managers' different roles on the success of change. Finally, Zhang and Rajagopolan's (2010) study of the effect of insider change agents and outsider change agents on the success of change was informed by a positivist approach with the authors analysing

the statistical difference between both change agents in a variety of settings. Whilst the above studies have provided us with a useful starting point in understanding the varied nature of change, a more diverse paradigmatic approach can build on such findings and explore the nuanced and sociological factors that may be at play during change.

More recently, numerous researchers have adopted an interpretivist stance (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Gibson & Groom, 2018; Rouleau et al., 2011). In adopting such a position, scholars aimed to capture the contextual richness and complexity (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) of change. Consistent with an interpretive approach, the authors of the aforementioned studies utilised theoretical frameworks that predominantly have roots within the discipline of sociology. Indeed, adopting an interpretivist approach allowed Balogun and Johnson (2005) to understand middle-managers experiences as recipients of change through the theoretical lens of 'sensemaking'. Moreover, the work of Rouleau et al. (2014) sought to explore the manner in which middle-managers enact their roles during periods of strategic change. Similar to Balogun and Johnson (2005), Rouleau et al. (2014) took an interpretive approach through the use of 'sense-making' as a theoretical lens to explore the manner in which middle managers make sense of how they enact their roles during strategic change. Finally, Gibson and Groom's (2018) aim of exploring an Academy Manager's experiences of implementing change was also addressed with the authors taking an interpretivist position. Such a position allowed for a theoretical understanding of how an Academy Manager 'orchestrated' the process of change within an English Premier League football academy.

In contrast to adopting an interpretivist perspective, Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011) studied stakeholders' conformity to, and decision-making during change from a social constructivist perspective. In an attempt to understand such a phenomenon, Welty Peachey and Bruening (2011) used both institutional theory and stakeholder theory as a theoretical lens to make sense of the data. Building on the above findings Welty Peachey and Bruening (2012) adopted the same paradigmatic approach to further investigate attitudes to change within a case study setting. In order to do so, theory from the field of social psychology were drawn on with 'ambivalence' forming the theoretical framework to guide conceptualisations of the

data. Again, moving into the field of sport psychology and social psychology, Cruickshank et al. (2013) endeavoured to understand culture change through the theoretical lens of 'decentred theory'. Indeed, in an attempt to investigate the decentred nature of culture change, Cruickshank et al. (2013) also adopted a social constructionist approach to explore how multiple stakeholders conceptualise culture and change of culture within a professional sports team.

Finally, recent studies of organisational change in sport have focussed on psychological constructs such as emotional, behavioural and attitudinal responses to change (Wagstaff et al., 2015; Wagstaff et al., 2016). Whilst not explicitly stated within the write up of the respective articles, the aim and research questions outlined, and the use of content analysis to analyse the related data would suggest a position that is situated within the paradigm of social constructionism.

Key to the discussions highlighted above is the need to reflect on the different collections of knowledge that have been generated through contrasting methodologies and theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2013) to further the field of organisational change. Indeed, whilst a critical review of previous findings is needed to ascertain potential 'gaps' in the literature, an evaluation of chosen paradigmatic assumptions and related theoretical lens' that have been used by scholars to generate different types of knowledge is required to inform the methodological design of this project to ensure that our understanding of organisational change in professional football is furthered. In light of these discussions, the following sections will begin to provide an overview of the theoretical frameworks that have guided this study, along with a rationale to justify such theoretical choices.

2.9 Working in Professional Football

With Roderick (2006) highlighting professional football 'as a form of entertainment work' that lacks in 'long-term security' and leads to a 'sense of insecurity' (p. 245), the need to understand further the nature of working in such an environment is warranted. The work of Roderick (2006) built on the tentative previous studies of Gearing (1997) and McGillivray, Fearn and McIntosh (2005) to provide us with an

insight into the uncertainty surrounding the working lives of professional footballers and the nature of the professional football environment. Roderick's (2006) paper utilises a sociological perspective to highlight the insecurity and vulnerability that is a product of employment within the professional football environment. Specifically, fears of unemployment and the impact this can have on the personal lives and economic status of professional footballers became evident. Furthermore, Roderick (2006) highlighted the dramaturgical Goffman (1959) efforts of professional footballers to manage the impressions received by significant others through methods of 'workplace humour' and 'appearing to be devoted to the first team and the goals of the management' (p. 260) to further their professional interests. Further work by Roderick (2014) continued to examine the careers of professional footballers, highlighting the process of dis-identification towards the values, norms and practices associated with professional football as a result of the perception of the professional football environment lacking authenticity, and increasing in exploitation.

With previous work highlighting the 'individualistic workplace attitudes' and 'direct rivalries among teammates' (Roderick, 2006, p. 251) and the vulnerability that can lead to fears around job security within professional football, the work of Roderick and Schumacker (2017) aimed to build upon this work. Roderick and Schumacker (2017) provided a narrative account of a professional footballer struggling with the insecure nature of employment within professional football, highlighting issues around a loss of identity synonymous with a lack of fixed term employment. Moreover, Roderick and Schumacker (2017) illustrate the precariousness and uncertainty around whether or not a player will be selected to play by the manager and the impact this has on identity and insecurity. Significantly, Roderick and Schumacker (2017) expand on these notions to outline that, 'match day performances are for players understood as the only context to sustain their careers in a practical, material sense' (p. 167). Indeed, in an environment where players are given a market value, determined by their performances on match day, Szymanski (2010) highlights the large drop in 'value' should a player suffer a long-term injury.

Whilst the above work has highlighted the sociological nuances of employment within professional football from a players' perspective, further scholarly investigations have begun to unpick the experiences

of coaches and managers in the same environment. By undertaking semi-structured interviews with numerous professional football players and professional football managers, Kelly (2008) began to explore the role of the professional football manager, taking a Weberian approach, through the notion of authoritarianism to inform the exploration of the data generated. Similar to the work of Roderick (2006) and Roderick and Schumacker (2017), Kelly (2008) adds weight to the argument that emphasises the insecure and precarious nature of professional football by stating that 'very few managers, for example, even have a job description' (p. 403); therefore, adding to the rationale for a deepening in our understanding of working in the professional football environment. In exploring the role of the professional football manager, the findings of which study illustrated the unrealistic expectations placed on professional football managers, with one participant indicating that, 'I'm around long enough to know what's expected of a manager. If you don't win things… you won't be around long' (Kelly, 2008, p. 414). Whilst the findings added substance to a field that is in its infancy, more varied methodological approaches are needed to understand the day-to-day working practices of a professional football manager and how this might impact the role of the football manager. Finally, Kelly (2008) touch upon the political activity of professional football managers with one participant, when providing a rationale for employing a certain coach, stating that, 'I have known you for a long time, I need you here… you're here to watch my f****** back. 'Cos if I go, you're f****** gone as well' (p. 415). Such findings indicate the agendas that inform the actions and behaviours of managers in the pursuit of desired goals. Further investigations would benefit from understanding how different stakeholders within the professional football environment experience and respond to such actions and behaviours.

2.9.1 Trust & Distrust in Professional Football

Building on their work in understanding the varying role of professional football managers (Kelly, 2008), Kelly and Harris (2010) examined the relationship between 1st Team Managers, owners and directors of professional football clubs. With the increase in commercialisation of professional football (Gilmore &

Gilson, 2007), and the influx of foreign owners into the English Premier League, the work of Kelly and Harris (2010) emphasise a key relationship within a professional football club between the manager and those above the manager in the club hierarchy. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with 25 professional football managers, the findings of the data generated highlighted significant issues around trust. Specifically, the findings illustrated the hostility and distrust towards the directors and owners of professional football clubs that emanated from the perception that the directors and owners had a lack of 'football knowledge' and interference from the latter in matters falling under the remit of the 1st Team Manager. Whilst these findings have been useful in understanding the issues evident between different levels of hierarchy within the organisation of a professional football club, an understanding of how coaches and managers educate more senior and executive stakeholders who may be perceived as having a lack of a knowledge around football (Kelly & Harris, 2010) would be useful within future scholarly investigations. Specifically, attempting to understand the political nature of educating such executive stakeholders who may occupy positions within the board level of a football may serve to help future coaches and managers negotiate similar situations.

2.10 Micro-Political Working Life in Professional Football

More recently, empirical studies have begun to illuminate some of the micro-political realities of working life within a professional football club, with such realities resulting (Potrac & Jones, 2009) from an evolving body of literature that has altered our perception of the nature of the coaching environment. Indeed, whilst previous understandings of sports coaching environments have tended to be conceptualised by reductionist, bio-scientific frameworks used to inform practice design and performance improvement, scholarly investigations began to illustrate the more complex realities associated with coaching and the coaching environment (Jones, 2006; Jones, 2007; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2002; Potrac, Jones & Cushion, 2007; Purdy, Potrac & Jones, 2008). In doing so, Jones, Potrac, Cushion and Ronglan (2011) situated the coaching environment as a sociological endeavour with Jones (as cited in Jones et al., 2011) suggesting that:

Questions of significance related not so much to which exercise to use, but what to say to whom, when and how? What would be the consequences of such actions? And is the social cost worth it? Within our (the authors) coaching, every utterance seemed to count; every gesture had an effect in terms of securing, maintaining or losing the respect of those we wanted to influence (p. 3).

In reacting to the need to better understand the behaviour of coaches within their socio-cultural environments (Jones et al., 2011), the work of Thompson, Potrac and Jones (2015) examined the experiences of a newly appointed fitness coach [a coach responsible for the physical attributes and readiness to train of players] at an English Premier League football club, focussing on the process of becoming 'accepted' within the professional football club environment and amongst his professional peers. Taking a narrative-biographical approach as part of a single-study design, the findings demonstrate the political and contested nature of the participant's experiences of starting employment within a professional football club. Thompson et al. (2015) highlighted the impression management that participant engaged with in trying to present himself 'to his new colleagues' (p. 12) in an attempt to align himself with the current norms and values of the other 1st team staff. Such findings were evident within the work of Roderick (2006) who found that professional football players also engaged with impression management in an attempt to 'hide their feelings about their present situations behind a demeanour of enthusiasm for the job' (p. 259). Specifically, one participant, when being ignored and treated unfavourably by the manager, outlined that, 'we were all disappointed but you don't show that in the dressing room, because everybody's been there and everyone knows what it's like so, you know, it usually gets treated with some sort of humour and that' (p. 259). The work of Thompson et al. (2015) and Roderick (2006) highlights the impact that such a competitive working environment can have on self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) and the influence that micro-political actions and behaviours on self-presentation. In light of this, further investigations are needed to understand such actions and behaviours of employees during different periods of working life within a professional football

club such as managerial and organisational change to comprehend the challenges inherent within these periods and how these periods can impact the coaching practice.

Following Thompson et al.'s (2015) work, Huggan et al., (2015) built on the notion of micro-politics and investigated the experiences of a performance analyst [video analyst] in an attempt to understand their organisational life within a professional football club. In an attempt to demonstrate that micro-politics is inherent across a number of different roles within professional football organisational life, Huggan et al. (2015) employed a narrative approach to understand the career experiences of a participant with over 10 years of experience within the elite-level English football clubs. The findings revealed the vulnerable nature of working in professional football. Specific attention was paid to the struggles of getting professional colleagues to buy into his role and the development of an identity that is coherent with the social make-up of organisational life within professional football and the influence that these factors have on successful organisational performance. Both papers (Huggan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2015) support the notion that micro-political activity not only affects the coaching practice, but the working lives of others employed within professional football clubs. Whilst both studies (Huggan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2015) take the form of a single-study design, the narrative approaches utilised in these studies have allowed for the development of rich insights into the manner in which employees make sense of their roles, social positions and everyday life in professional sport (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). Significantly, such studies have also introduced the theoretical notions of micro-political literacy, vulnerability, professional interests and professional self-understanding into the sports coaching literature.

Indeed, the potential for such theoretical frameworks in understanding the working lives of employees working in professional football have been evidenced in both studies. However, to date, previous research has only understood how such theoretical frameworks influence professional working lives from individual narrative-biographical approaches. To develop this field of inquiry further, methodological approaches that consider the *relational* micro-political complexities between employees within the same

football club and how these experiences are intertwined would be beneficial to enhance our understanding of the micro-political relationships between employees working in professional football.

In reviewing the literature surrounding the working lives of professional footballers (Roderick, 2006, 2014; Roderick & Schumacker, 2017) several trends have emerged throughout the findings within those studies highlighting the vulnerable and unstable environment of professional football and the methods, such as impression management, that players engage in, in order to develop an acceptance and sense of competence within that environment. Similarly, these findings have resonated with the data generated within studies investigating the working lives of coaches employed within professional football (Huggan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2015), with both studies highlighting the vulnerable nature of searching for acceptance amongst peers and the 'facework' engaged with to maintain the presentation of self when working in professional football. However, whilst such scholarly activity has provided us with significant insight into a traditionally closed world, this body of literature is still in its infancy. Consequently, much work is needed to develop our understanding of the working lives of professional coaches, managers and staff in the vulnerable and precarious nature of professional football. Specifically, investigations that aim to explore the interrelated and relational nature of micro-political activity that manifests between employees working in professional football is required. Furthermore, such an investigation would enhance our understanding of how such micro-political activity influences the actions, strategies and behaviours of individuals and how individuals develop a sense of micro-political literacy when negotiating professional working relationships. In light of this, whilst previous research has provided narrative explorations of individual participants, it would be beneficial to explore the narratives of individuals working at different hierarchical levels of a professional football club through a case study approach.

2.10.1 Micro-Politics

'Political theorists have made no bones about identifying working organisations as political systems of a kind' (Burns, 1961, p. 257) with the exponential complexity of organisational life and constant 'organisational paradoxes and double blinds' (Butcher & Clarke, 2003, p. 477). For Leftwich (2005), there are three key ingredients that comprise the political nature of human behaviours; people, resources and power. Elaborating further, *people* tend to have conflicting ideas, preferences and interests, governed by *power* and the ability to achieve one's desired outcome and the *resources* available to each individual such as material (land, equipment or money) or non-material (time, status, support and opportunity) in nature. Whilst, there remains a unified definition of micro-politics, one that has been frequently used throughout the literature, and aids our study of organisational change in professional football, is Blasé's (1991, p. 11) definition which states that:

> [m]icro-politics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with a motivation to use power and influence and/or protect.

Though the study of micro-politics is in its relative infancy, such conceptual frameworks have allowed for a detailed insight into the fabric of organisational life and the challenging nature as a social actor within organisational life.

Such an approach to understanding organisational life allows us to comprehend the inherent political nature of social life that is evident within any circumstance that brings two or more people together in any formal, public or private setting (Leftwich, 2005). Consequently, taking this approach contests the popular notion that politics and political activity solely occurs within the realms of political institutions and amongst those who are socialised within such institutions. Conversely, Leftwich argues for the recognition that political activity is a key component of everyday social life. In light of the above, Leftwich (2005) indicates that politics is not 'simply an unnecessary, temporary' or, a 'distasteful phenomenon that we could do

without' (p. 107). Subsequently, politics is an 'absolutely intrinsic, necessary and functional feature of our social existence' (Leftwich, 2005, p. 107). In addition, Ball (1987) suggests that 'to deny the relevance of micro-politics is in effect to condemn organisational research to be for ever ineffectual and out of step with the immediate realities of life in organisations' (p. 4).

The study of (micro)politics within organisational life has been evident within numerous organisational domains, such as, schools (e.g. Ball, 1987; Kelchtermans, 2002), business environments (e.g. Dörrenbächer & Geppert, 2006), and sports clubs (e.g. Potrac & Jones, 2009b). The following section will provide an insight into such studies and the development of micro-political theory.

2.10.2 Micro-Politics in Sport Coaching

Whilst the case has been made for the utilisation of micro-political theory as a lens to understand the business environment, Potrac and Jones (2009a) have called for such theory to inform scholarly investigations tasked with understanding the working environment of football coaches. Building on previous assertions outlining the limitations of rationalistic explanations of the practice of coaches (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2004; Jones & Wallace, 2005), 'recent research has positioned coaching as a personal, power-ridden, everyday pursuit where practitioners' management of micro-relations with other stakeholders, be they athletes, other coaches, managers or owners, form the principal aspect of their duties' (Potrac & Jones, 2009a, p. 223-224). Making the case for examining coaching from a micro-political perspective, the rationale behind the efficacy of such a perspective lies in the need to understand the relational nature of power relations inherent within coaching, and in particular, football (Gardiner, 2000), in an attempt to shed light on the 'dark side of organisational life' (Hoyle, 1987, p. 87).

Although, previous research had not taken the form of a micro-political perspective as a theoretical lens to examine sport coaching specifically, examples of coaches engaging in micro-political action had been identified throughout a body of literature aimed at understanding the practice and relationships of coaches (Cushion & Jones, 2006). In particular, Jones, Armour and Potrac (2004) illustrated the use of

strategies by coaches aimed at manipulating the behaviours of others to ensure that such behaviours were aligned to the personal agenda of the coach. Prior research (e.g., Partington & Cushion, 2013; Potrac, Armour & Jones, 2002) has highlighted the actions of coaches in attempting to protect their positive self-image through fear of losing respect amongst their athletes. Moreover, the work of Cushion and Jones (2006) focused on the actions of professional youth football coaches and the impression management (Goffman, 1959) engaged with in order to portray the perception that they were coaching in a manner that was aligned to the 'occupational demand'. Similarly, Gale (2014) provided insights into the emotional labour and face-work that community coaches engaged with in an attempt to receive favourable feedback from the players that they were coaching. Furthermore, the coaches associated such favourable feedback with coaching 'effectiveness' and suggested that positive player feedback may lead to successful future employment.

The significance of such findings rests in highlighting the conceptualisations around the use of social power within coaching domains and the effect such social power can have on garnering or deterring support from the athletes being coached. Interestingly, the findings built on previous literature (Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Thompson et al., 2015) to suggest that 'face-work' (Goffman, 1959) is not only utilised by coaches working at the elite level of football, but also coaches working in a more participation based, community football environment; particularly in the use of social power to achieve buy-in from athletes. Such findings add weight to the argument for understanding the micro-political behaviours of coaches and stakeholders working at different levels within the same professional football.

With the case for a micro-political understanding of sports coaching and the practice of sports coaches being made, Potrac and Jones (2009b) explored the micro-political strategies of coach (Gavin – pseudonym) in persuading the players, assistant coach and chairman to accept his coaching philosophy and methods. Through the use of semi-structured interviews within a single-study design, the authors utilised a micro-political perspective to make theoretical sense of Gavin's experiences. Whilst the findings highlighted the political nature of the coaching environment, most interesting was the micro-political

strategy used by Gavin to have an assistant coach, appointed without the consent of Gavin, removed from the club. Indeed, Gavin's actions to manipulate the situation to expose the coach's limitations to outmanoeuvre the coach highlighted the Machiavellian behaviours inherent within the coaching climate.

Building on this work and using an ethnographic approach, Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne and Nelson (2013) provided a first-hand account of the uncaring nature of the working relationships between coaches. From a methodological perspective, such an approach was novel in attempting to understand the political activity amongst coaches. Indeed, taking a ethnographic approach can provide a fruitful means for exploring coaching's more elusive faces' (Potrac et al., 2013, p. 84). The study revealed the insular thought processes of a performance coach relating to his career goals, as well as efforts to increase social status within the unforgiving nature of the coaching environment. Interestingly, whilst the data supported findings from previous literature (Potrac and Jones, 2009b), the novelty of the methodological choices allowed for the first author (ethnographic participant) to reflect upon his own experiences of the coaching environment and his relationships with other coaches, adding weight to the notion of coaching as a micro-political endeavour. Specifically, the author stated that 'I relived the shame of my past; its intensity, my battles to activate my defences against it, and the feelings of contempt, self-absorption and disgust that were attached to its residue (Potrac et al., 2013, p. 85). Undertaking a similar methodological approach, Purdy, Potrac and Nelson (as cited in Potrac, Gilbert & Denison, 2013) highlighted the political conflict between organisational administrators and coaches by portraying the undercurrents of trust and distrust within the coaching environment. Moreover, the study focused on the issues around navigating the social climate associated with conflicting philosophies, agendas and tensions between individual coaches and organisational administrators and the influence this had on the coaching practice. Whilst the strategic and micro-political actions of coaches have been explored, Purdy and Jones (2011) investigated the manner in which athletes can resist the authority of coaches and their coaching methods. Specifically, data exposed the actions of rowers who opposed what they believed to be poor coaching practices and highlighted instances around

openly challenging and scolding coaches, creating informal complaints to senior administrators above the coaches as well as a perceived lack of effort within training sessions.

2.10.3 Micro-Politics in Education and Teaching

Whilst the study of micro-politics within sport and sport coaching has started to gather traction (see previous section), much of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings informing such research draw on the study of micro-politics within the school environment and how teachers experience, develop and maintain level of micro-politics and micro-political literacy. In light of this, it becomes important to draw on the key elements of this body of literature to both inform our understanding of micro-politics and discuss the theoretical underpinnings that may be used to guide the study of the micro-political nature of organisational change in professional football. Furthermore, with Bergmann Drewe (2000) arguing for the increased similarities and decreasing contrasts between coaches and teachers, the use of theoretical frameworks used to study the working lives of teachers may also be fruitful in studying the working lives of coaches and other practitioners within a professional football environment.

Ball's (1987) study of micro-politics in the school provided us with a starting point for understanding the [micro]political nature of the school environment, with his work being widely cited in subsequent, relevant literature. Indeed, in embarking on his investigations, Ball (1987) outlined some underpinning questions that would inform his data collection:

> On most occasions the intention was to get respondents to reflect generally upon the micro-politics of their school – the head teacher's style: the key, influential actors; how decisions were made; who tended to support and oppose the head teacher; the conduct of meetings; the distribution of resources; how promotions were made; and so on – and I asked for examples of micro political activity (p. 2).

Such questions are specific to the context of the school environment; however, the questions highlighted above may also be applicable to the professional football environment. Specifically, in developing our understanding of organisational micro-politics within professional youth football; lead coaches, coaches, sport science support staff and medical staff may be asked to reflect on the Head of Youth Development/Academy Manager's management style. In addition, questions to be addressed may also include, who are the influential actors within the academy? How are key decisions made? As the work of Relvas et al. (2010) indicates (see figure 1), professional youth football environments have a large number of staff employed within the organisational structure.
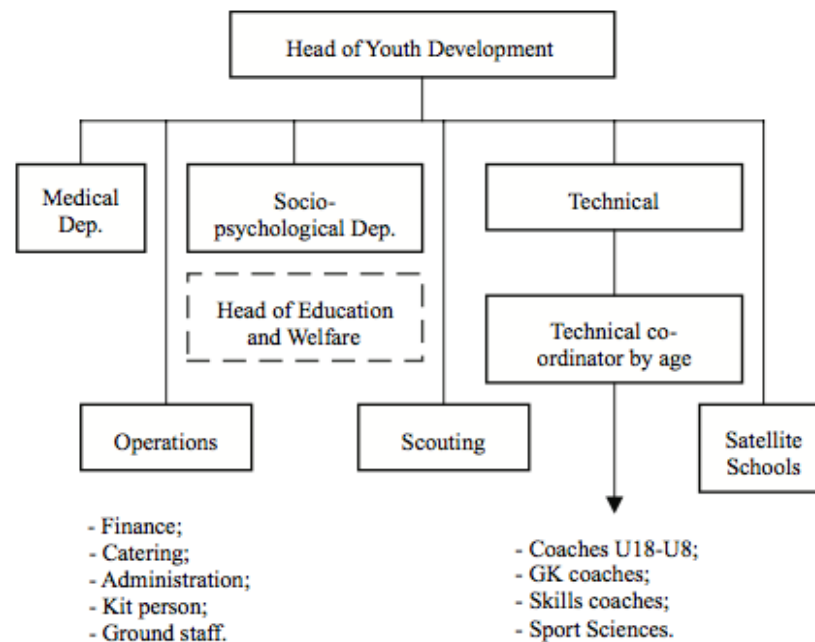
Figure 1. Youth Development structures within Portuguese, Spanish and English [professional football] clubs studied (Relvas et al., 2010).

Indeed, in understanding the micro political and intertwined nature of the relationships between different levels of professional youth football structures, would provide us with a detailed insight into the impact that

these relationships have on the day-to-day working practices of those who are responsible for developing professional youth footballers.

Furthermore, in attempting to understand organisational life within the school environment and the supposed micro political struggles inherent within this arena, Ball (1987) highlighted the conflictual nature of the school as an organisation as well as the dominance of the head teacher to maintain particular definitions associated with each school context. Such micro political concepts (conflict and domination) were evident in data exploring teachers' 'immediate experiences of organisational life' and how each teacher understood the 'interweaving of personal lives within the organisation and social structures' (p. 278 – 279). Indeed, Ball (1987) concludes to emphasise the 'ideological struggle inherent within the school organisation, suggesting that they are 'arenas of competition and contest over material advantage and vested interest. Careers, resources, status and influence are at stake in the conflicts between segments, coalitions and alliances… teachers' interests, individual and collective… are being challenged in the micro-politics of the school' (p. 279).

Reflecting on Ball's (1987) findings highlighting the micro political nature of the school environment, and as mentioned in previous discussions in this section, there appears to be numerous similarities between organisational structures of the school environment and professional youth football environments. Whilst Bergemann Drewe (2000) has portrayed the close relationship between coaching and teaching; there remains any clear, empirical evidence to suggest that the social structures that make up the school environment hold any relevance to the professional youth football environment. The discoveries made by Ball (1987) such as schools being 'arenas of competition', with teachers experiencing 'interweaving personal lives' along with 'conflicts between segments, coalitions and alliances' are key to understanding the micro political realities of working within a school organisation. However, empirical investigations have yet to investigate whether these notions form the social structures of those working within professional youth football. Such an investigation would improve our understanding of how different coaches, managers and other staff form such alliances and manage any potential conflict that may arise in

an 'arena of competition' that is driven by performance and results (Wagstaff et al., 2016) and how individuals make sense of these experiences.

2.10.4 A Micro-Political Framework for Understanding Organisational Change in Professional Football

Building on the work of Ball (1987), Kelchtermans (1993, 1996, 2005, 2009) and Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) further developed the conceptual and theoretical framework of micro-politics in understanding working in school environments and how teachers make sense of their working lives.

Kelchtermans (1993) provided us with a different methodological underpinning by understanding the career stories of primary school teachers from a narrative-biographical approach. As outlined by Kelchtermans (1993), 'the biographical perspective is characterized by five general features: it is narrative, constructivistic, contextualistic, interactionistic and dynamic' (p. 443). Central to Kelchtermans' (1993) micro-political inquiry in the educational workplace are two frameworks: (1) *subjective educational theory*, which is the personal ('subjective') system ('theory') of knowledge and beliefs about education that teachers use to perform their jobs (i.e. 'know how'), and (2) the *personal interpretive framework*, which is the set of beliefs and representations developed over time that operates as a lens through which employees perceive their job situation and their behaviours. Within this study, the focus is specifically on Kelchtermans' (1993) notions of *the professional self* and *professional self-understanding* in order to further our appreciation of the micro-political reality faced by coaches when experiencing organisational change.

2.10.5 Professional Self-Understanding

The *personal interpretive framework* comprises the career experiences of workers, which provide them with a conception of themselves in their work-based identity and a system of knowledge and beliefs concerning their professional activity (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2005; Potrac & Jones, 2009a, 2009b). Within the *personal interpretive framework*, identity is viewed as dynamic and biographical in nature (i.e.

developed over time), in that identity relates to the understanding one has of oneself at a certain moment in time (*product*), and this understanding forms part of an on-going sense-making (*process*). While the experiences of life situations define who employees *are*, this sense of identity is also developed through reflection on *past* and *future* understandings of the *self*. Kelchtermans' (1993, 2005) notion of the *professional self* is the product of interaction with the environment and encompasses five sub-constructs: *self-image*, *self-esteem*, *job motivation*, *task perception* and *future prospects*.

Self-image is important because it matters to practitioners how they see themselves and how others see them, and how they would typify themselves as an employee or more specifically *who* and what they *are* (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2005). According to studies of professional teachers, employees tend to reveal *self-image* in *self-descriptive* statements (Kelchtermans, 1993), for example, how they would describe themselves to others (i.e. 'what I am doing'). Description is often informed by general principles that govern an employee's professional behaviour, aligned with the perceptions of other colleagues, leaders and significant others (Kelchtermans, 1993).

Related to self-image*,* Kelchtermans (1993, 2005) highlighted that *self-esteem* refers to the *evaluation of oneself* as an employee (i.e. 'how good am I at my job?'). Answers to such questions lead to positive or negative levels of self-esteem. For example, within the teaching context, pupils appeared to be the most pertinent factor in determining a teacher's level of self-esteem (Kelchtermans, 1993), with good results and the quality of the pupils' relationship with the teacher at the heart of a positive level of self-esteem. Similarly, in coaching, a coach's sense of self may be mediated by the views of athletes. Furthermore, positive comparison with others is noted as important for maintaining self-esteem (e.g., with other coaches) as 'recognition by others is understood as a politics of identity' (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 111). Within this context, self-esteem can be understood to be constructed from the result of balancing self-image with the implicit professional norms of one's employment role and working practice (Kelchtermans, 1993). Therefore, the judgments of others play an important role in mediating the

perception of role performance from the ideal and reality, where a negative balance causes employee demotivation (Kelchtermans, 1993).

According to Kelchtermans (1993, 2005), *job motivation* is *conative*, premised upon *directional effort* to select, stay in, or leave an employment position (i.e. 'the drive to be a teacher or coach'). Decreases in job motivation may be due to increases in workplace demands and a decrease in social status and respect. Therefore, job motivation is interrelated with an employee's self-esteem (Kelchtermans, 1993).

In relation to an appreciation of the professional self, premised upon the importance of retrospective experiences, Kelchtermans (1993) identifies *task perception* as the penultimate sub-construct, and it refers to the way that employees define their job (i.e. 'what ought I to be doing?'). Similarly, the quality of relations with students/athletes and the recognition of professional competence are significant in the evaluation of such an understanding. For example, key components that have been identified in relation to teachers who have developed a positive and satisfied perception of their job include autonomy and cooperation with colleagues, and stability in the work environment, rather than educational innovation and change (Kelchtermans, 1993).

From a prospective employment outlook, Kelchtermans (1993, 2005) identified *future prospects* as the final dimension in understanding the professional self. It encompasses the feelings and expectations that an employee has about their job situation and future employment opportunities (i.e. 'how do I see myself in my role in years to come and how do I feel about that?'). The desire to maintain the status quo dominates employees' expectations (Kelchtermans, 1993). However, the interrelated nature of self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, and task perception tends to influence employees' perception of future prospects. Where employees anticipate problems with role performance, they may seek to move away from the role to avoid the risk of developing low self-esteem (Kelchtermans, 1993).

Such a theoretical lens has provided a useful tool in understanding teachers' lives and how they make sense of these lives, themselves as teachers, and their own professional development as a teacher. However, to date the personal interpretive framework and professional self-understanding (Kelchtermans,

1993) have yet to be utilised as a theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of a coach working in professional youth football. Specifically, how do complex periods such as organisational change within a professional football club influence how a coach perceives themselves as an effective coach, their perception of how others view them as an effective coach, the impact that organisational change has on their job motivation and both their internal and external employment opportunities as a coach. Such insights would provide a useful tool for educating coaches around coping with and managing the ambiguous nature of organisational change (Gibson & Groom, 2018) by reflecting on their own professional self-understanding and developing micro-political literacy as part of their approach to coaching.

2.10.6 Professional Interests

Developing the micro-political framework further, Kelchtermans (1993), Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) and Kelchtermans (2009) introduced the role of *professional interests* as an analytical frame for understanding micro-political action. This framework is premised upon Kelchtermans' (2009) subjective educational theory as the "personal system of knowledge and beliefs about education that teachers use when performing their job" (p. 263). Specifically, questions such as "how should I deal with this particular situation?" and "why should I do it that way?" are addressed. Key to answering these questions is the teacher's ability to judge and interpret certain situations prior to the decision-making process of which action to take. As Kelchtermans (2009) states, "this ability to read, judge and then act is essential for competent teaching" (p. 264).

Building on the work of Blasé, (1991) Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) highlighted that understanding *professional interests* is central to micro-political theory. *Professional interests* arise from the characteristics that teachers attribute to their beliefs around effective teaching and the desired conditions for teachers to carry out their tasks effectively. *Professional interests* can be distinguished into five separate categories that may also be evident simultaneously (2009) (see Table 3). Moreover, the *actions, strategies*

and tactics that make up a portfolio of micro-political literacy will also inform the theoretical framework of this study.

The first category of professional interests is that of *self-interests.* Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) note that when self-esteem or task perception is threatened, self-interests tend to emerge. Specifically, *self-interests* protect integrity and identity. To elaborate further, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) identify the importance of looking for self-affirmation, coping with vulnerability and coping with visibility within the category of *self-interests.* Here, the judgment of significant others plays an important role in searching for self-affirmation. When coping with vulnerability, coaches may feel their social recognition is threatened, particularly within professional relationships (Kelchtermans, 1996) Coping with visibility also places a burden within organisational settings. As Blasé (1988) explained, the professional context can be described as "working in a fishbowl," where significant others observe and evaluate day-to-day working practices (p. 135).

Material interests relate to the accessibility to materials, funds or specific infrastructure. Within the coaching context, this may be access to facilities and other coaching equipment that can influence the coaching practice. Kelchtermans (1996) has highlighted the importance of understanding the symbolic meaning attached to material issues within the organisational context if we are to comprehend lived organisational experiences.

Organisational interests relate to the roles, positions, procedures and formal tasks within the organisation. Primarily, retaining a job and choosing among job offers are central *organisational interests* for employees. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) explain that the longer the time of uncertainty about a job, the more self-esteem becomes threatened, leading to a doubt about professional competencies.

Cultural-ideological interests revolve around the explicit norms, ideals or values acknowledged within a professional football club, for example, and form the make-up of organisational culture. As Altrichter and Salzgeber (2000) suggested, these interests also embody the interactions and procedures that define the culture.

Finally, *social-professional interests* refer to the quality of interpersonal relationships with key stakeholders within the organisational setting. Indeed, the work of Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) highlighted the importance of these relationships in allowing for discussions that positively or negatively affect working conditions (e.g., a climate of mistrust, conflict, suspicion and gossip). Furthermore, in developing micro political literacy to negotiate, manage and protect *professional self-interests* Blasé (1988) described a continuum of political strategies that consist of reactive and proactive endeavours. Reactive strategies are utilised in an attempt to maintain the situation and protect against external influences. Proactive strategies are aimed at improving the situation and working conditions within the organisation. It is important to understand that micro-political action be recognised as cyclical in nature rather than distinct points on a continuum (Kelchtermans, 2009). In reality, micro-political activity becomes evident in a range of forms: talking, pleading, arguing, gossiping, flattering, being silent, avoiding taking sides, accepting extra duties, changing the material working conditions and the use of humour (Blasé, 1991). Blasé further noted that "a simple inventory or list, summing up all micro-political strategies and actions, is not relevant, and probably not even possible, because almost any action can become micro-politically meaningful in a particular context" (p. 11).

While such a framework has been used to inform the understanding of micro political action of teachers (Kelchtermans, 1993; Kelchtermans, 2009; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002), studies investigating the micro political actions of coaches working in professional football have yet to emerge. Specifically, within the context of this project, the notion of organisational change being characterised as ambiguous with high levels of staff turnover has been identified previously (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Wagstaff et al., 2018). Therefore, understanding how coaches develop their own micro political actions, strategies and behaviours to protect their professional self-interests during periods of organisational change would be beneficial in supporting the development and education of future coaches faced with similar periods in professional football.

2.10.7 Professional Leadership Identity

The previous two sections have discussed the application of micro-politics and micro-political theory in both the sports coaching and teaching and education domains. However, recent scholarly attention has also focussed on the concept of professional leadership identity and the process of constructing a professional leadership identity as a micro political activity (Brown & Coupland, 2016; Croft, Currie & Lockett, 2015; Koveshnikov, Vaara & Ehrnrooth, 2016). This section will aim to evaluate the literature around professional leadership identity in order to highlight potential areas for investigation in understanding the working practices of those employed within professional football clubs.

In defining self-identity, Giddens (1991) states that self-identity is 'the self as reflexively understood by the person' (p. 53). As highlighted by Sveningson and Alvesson (2003) indicate, 'identity themes are addressed on a multitude of levels; organisational, professional, social and individual. Sometimes these are linked, as when organisational or (other) social identities are seen to fuel the identities of individuals' (p. 1163). Furthermore, 'identity is viewed as central for issues of meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, logics of action and decision-making, stability and change, leadership, group and intergroup relations, organisational collaborations etc.' (Sveningson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1163-1164). Consequently, the process of understanding concepts of 'identity' and 'identity work' have become key to understanding organisational life.

In defining the concept of identity work, Sveningson and Alvesson (2003) outline that:

identity work refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness. Identity work may either, in complex and fragmented contexts, be more or less continuously on-going or, in contexts high on stability, be a theme of engagement during crises or transitions. More generally, specific events, encounters, transitions and surprises, as well as more constant strains, serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity (p. 1165).

Koveshnikov et al. (2016) elaborated further on the concept of identity work by outlining the constitutive power that is formed through the construction of certain situations and relationships. Significantly, Koveshnikov et al. (2016) suggest that identities formed are 'dynamic and relational, because they are continuously (re)negotiated and (re)constructed through and in interactions among employees' with employees making 'sense of who they are and then take up different positions which then influence how employees perceive themselves, others and their relationships with others (p. 1356).

2.10.8 Constructing a Professional Leadership Identity

Understanding the manner in which individuals attempt to construct leadership identities has to received limited research activity. The work of Croft et al. (2015) addressed this gap by investigating the experiences of nurse managers within the National Health Service who were enrolled on a leadership development programme [formative areas of identity transition, which encourage on-going identity work]. In doing so, Croft et al. (2015) adopted a narrative approach, to explore the negotiation, sharing and contesting of identities through the use of semi-structured interviews. Findings highlighted issues around constructing a leadership identity whilst also maintaining a desirable social group identity and the potential impact this may have on group influence. Specifically, Croft et al. (2015) stated that, 'managers reported the biggest source of their identity conflict was their perceived loss of group influence, and the feeling they were no longer able to construct a desired… identity' (p. 124).

The study conducted by Croft et al. (2015) answers the call within the wider identity literature to understand the construction of a professional identity for those progressing into leadership roles and the impact this has on the process of doing so. However, whilst these findings have developed our understanding of professional leadership identity, scholarly investigations have yet to explore the process of constructing a professional leadership identity that an individual may undergo when moving into a leadership role as an outsider within a new organisation. For example, we know little about the experiences of a newly appointed manager, or head coach who was employed during a period of organisational change

within a professional football club. As previously highlighted, employment within professional football is distinguished as precarious and unstable (Roderick & Schumacker, 2017) with acceptance amongst colleagues challenging (Huggan et al., 2015), and relationships between employees, at times, lacking in trust (Kelly & Harris, 2010). The work of Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) adds substance to such an argument by suggesting that 'even turbulence and instability may sometimes by exaggerated, in many organisational and life situations, the elements of change, contradiction and fragmentations are salient and create reactions such as curiosity, anxiety, and search for ways of actively dealing with identity' (p. 1167).

In light of this, how does an outsider understand the social group identities that he or she may be tasked with influencing? How do they build relationships and construct identities that hold currency with staff members already accustomed to previous leadership identities? What is the influence of identity work in building trust amongst individuals who are employed at different hierarchical levels of the organisation? In attempting to answer these questions, understanding the experiences of a leader outsider coming into a professional football club during organisational change would not only advance the body of literature around identity work, but may also provide support for leaders tasked with the same roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, in an attempt to address the methodological flaws in understanding the identification of and the processes and situations that contribute to identity construction, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) investigated managerial identity through a case study of one senior manager and the organisation in which she works. To achieve the depth of understanding around the micro-issues that play out within an organisation and in turn, affect identity construction, data collection took the form of six interviews with the individual senior manager and interviews with forty other middle managers. Further work also consisted of informal discussions with colleagues within the organisation about identity work and the development of the organisation. Ethnographic observations also took place during various managerial gatherings, informal meetings and managerial committees.

Key findings from the study highlighted the struggle of engaging with identity work brought about by the dichotomy of leadership and the bureaucracy that such a senior position is responsible for. However, the key developments from the study rest in the novelty of the methodological approach. Indeed, by undertaking forms of ethnographic and case study approaches allowed methods of data collection that generated thick description of identity and identity work; building on the methodological limitations of previous studies that have utilised questionnaires or single interviews to understand identity construction. As Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) state, 'our aim was to produce a thick or rich case, in opposition to the rather thin notion of identity expressed in, for example, most social identity and organisational identification studies' (p. 1165).

2.10.9 Constructing a Professional Identity in Professional Football During Organisational Change

The argument for understanding identity construction within professional football clubs during periods of organisational change has been made in preceding paragraphs in this section. However, the work of Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) provides a rationale for undertaking methodological approaches such as ethnographic observations and case studies in studying such a phenomenon and the benefits of doing so when aiming to generate 'thick description' and a more in-depth understanding of identity work within organisational life.

To this point, the case has been made for the need to understand the micro-political and relational nature of organisational life within various contextual organisations and professional football clubs. However, understanding how such political action and behaviours are imposed, responded to, and managed during certain, sensitive and contextual periods of working life during professional football has been neglected. As has been discussed in previous chapters, professional football can be an extremely volatile environment in the pursuit of success, prompting significant managerial and organisational change in attempting to achieve success (Wagstaff et al., 2016). In light of these discussions, the need to understand the impact that organisational change has on the interrelated micro-politics of working life, or as Hoyle

(1982) points out, the 'organisational underworld' (p. 87) of those employed within different levels of a professional football club is warranted.

2.11 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Throughout this review of the literature, the working lives of those working within professional football, the micro-political nature of a range of coaching, teaching and other organisational contexts, and the nature of organisational change within sport and business domains have been critically discussed. Insights have been drawn from key findings from relevant forms of research, shaping the current landscape in terms of what we know and what has yet to be investigated from empirical, methodological and a theoretical perspective.

Specifically, the work of Roderick (2006, 2014), Roderick and Schumacker (2017) and Kelly (2008) and Kelly and Harris (2010) among others has provided an understanding of the precarious nature of working within professional football. Such insecurity and ambiguity have shown to be a limiting factor on the working practices of professional footballers and managers. However, we have yet to investigate how such precariousness manifests itself on a day-to-day basis and the experiences of different stakeholders working in a professional football club such as Academy Coaching staff. Furthermore, organisational change has received significant attention within the mainstream business literature (Croft et al., 2015; Teece, 2012; Van de Ven & Poole, 2005; Zhang & Rajahopolan, 2010 etc.), with studies in the sporting context beginning to emerge (Gilmore & Gilson, 2007; Cruickshank & Collins, 2012a; 2012b; Gibson & Groom, 2018; Wagstaff et al., 2015). However, a greater understanding of the process of organisational change in professional football and what actually happens during these periods on a day-to-day basis is absent from the literature. Subsequently, the need to understand how different stakeholders, working at different hierarchical levels in the ambiguous environment of professional football, experience organisational change is warranted.

From a theoretical perspective, the micro-political nature of working environments has been highlighted in numerous studies such as in teaching and education (Kelchtermans, 1993, 1996, 2009), business environments (Brown & Coupland, 2016; Koveshnikov et al., 2016; Sveningson & Alvesson, 2003) and with the arena of sports coaching also beginning to receive some attention (Huggan et al., 2015; Potrac & Jones, 2009b; Thompson et al., 2015). However, whilst the increase in understanding the political nature of sports coaching is merited, understanding the micro-political nature of organisational change in a professional football club has yet to be attempted. With this in mind, a micro-political framework may be a useful theoretical lens for understanding organisational change in professional youth football, given the numerous staff that are employed within different levels of an academy (Relvas et al., 2010) in a professional football club; requiring several horizontal and vertical working relationships in the pursuit of performance. Specifically, how do outsiders recruited into a professional football academy to implement organisational change create a professional leadership identity (Sveningson & Alvesson, 2003) to achieve success and positive working relationships with the staff they have been recruited to lead? How does an individual who has been promoted into a new management role as part of the change process make sense (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) of this experience and how do they negotiate changes to existing working relationships during the complex periods of organisational change? How does an existing member of staff protect their own professional self-interests (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) in an attempt to ensure that they maintain their employment during the process of organisational change and what actions, tactics and strategies do they employ to ensure that they protect these self-interests? Finally, how does the termination of employment during the process of organisational change affect professional self-understanding (Kelchtermans, 1993) and how they interpret themselves as a coach and their future job prospects following this experience? Such questions have yet to be addressed when studying organisational change in professional football and as discussed above, micro-politics may act as fruitful theoretical framework to answer these questions posed.

Methodologically, the need for more novel approaches for understanding organisational change in sport and professional football have been outlined (Wagstaff et al., 2015). To date, studies have examined managerial and organisational change in sport from a positivist, statistical analysis approach (Audas et al., 1997; Audas et al., 2002), and semi-structured interviews with individual participants (Wagstaff et al., 2015). Furthermore, within the organisational studies literature similar methodological approaches have been evidenced (Croft et al., 2015; Heyden et al., 2017; Zhang & Rajagopolan, 2010).

As highlighted above, the case has been made to understand the horizontal and vertical working relationships and practices of individuals employed within the academy of a professional football club during a period of organisational change. Moreover, the work of Gibson and Groom (2018) has suggested that an ethnographic case study approach would provide a methodological advancement to our current understanding of organisational change in professional youth football. Wagstaff et al. (2015) have argued for the advantage that an ethnographic approach would have in investigating organisational change stating that, 'whilst the interview process… yielded rich data, an embedded researcher carrying out more frequent analyses' would help in exploring 'what *actually* happens when one manager leaves and another joins' (p. 52), providing us with a thick description of organisational life (Sveningson & Alvesson, 2003) within a professional football club.

In light of this, adopting an ethnographic case study approach allows for the exploration of the micro-political nature of working life within the environment of professional football during periods of organisational change. The methodological strengths of such an approach rests in the ability to utilise a micro-political theoretical framework to investigate such periods. Consequently, the effect this may have on the intertwined realities of the professional working relationships that coaches create, maintain, and discard, during the complex periods of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club can be understood.

From a practical perspective, this approach would advance our understanding of how coaches implement, manage and negotiate organisational change in the academy of a professional football club.

Such findings would be extremely beneficial in supporting coaches who may be faced with similar circumstances within their current or future working environments. Specifically, the findings from such a study would inform future coach education courses such as the Academy Manager' Licence and the Advanced Football Association (FA) Youth Award. To date, such coach education and development provisions have yet to include any resources or materials that contribute to the readiness of coaches to implement, manage and understand organisational change in professional youth football.

The gaps within the fields of literature discussed above provide a rationale for adopting an ethnographic case study approach to understand the micro-political nature of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club.

3. Chapter Three – Methodology

This chapter will aim to highlight the methodological choices that were made to answer the research questions driving this programme of research. A discussion of the process of developing the research questions and the influence of personal and professional experience on this development process will take place. Second, the importance of considering the philosophical underpinnings when undertaking research investigations will be highlighted, along with the dominant paradigms within scientific research and the philosophical paradigm in which this programme of study will be situated. Upon outlining such philosophical and paradigmatic considerations, the interpretive perspective manifested within this study will be outlined, detailing the data collection choices that have been informed by a narrative, ethnographical framework. Finally, the processes of analysing the data collected through selected methodological tools to provide answers to the research questions are included, along with appropriate approaches to judging and evaluating the quality of this piece of work and the relevant ethical considerations when undertaking interpretive methods of data collection.

3.1 Developing a Research Question

Whilst the argument for studying organisational change in professional youth football and the novel methodological approaches for effectively doing so have been outlined (see chapter 2), the development of the research questions guiding this study has also been informed by my career working as a part-time Academy Coach in professional youth football. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest, 'someone may come across a problem in his or her profession or workplace' (p. 38). Strauss and Corbin (1998) continue:

> Choosing a research problem through the professional or personal experience route might seem more hazardous than choosing one through the suggested or literature routes. This is not necessarily the case. The touchstone of one's own experience might be a more valuable indicator of a potentially successful research endeavour than another more abstract source'. (p. 38)

Moreover, reflections from my own professional career and questions that have arisen from observations during my own working practices as an Academy Coach employed within a professional football club are highlighted below.

After playing football at a variety of levels from county level to semi-professional level during my education, I decided to build on both my undergraduate degree and playing experience, eventually gaining my Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) B Licence and FA Youth Award to begin coaching at the academy of an English Football League One club on a part-time basis. As I got settled into my new role and began to tackle the problems and issues that arose, I started to wonder about the complexities that must present themselves to staff working within a professional setting on a day-to-day basis, and in particular the professional club where I was employed on a part-time basis. I found myself paying particular attention to the relationships between certain members of staff in a variety of hierarchical positions and how coaches and other members of staff interacted with each other. I began to witness staff being fired, with one coach in particular that I worked closely with losing his job, without any clear rationale, just prior to setting out his coaching session for that evening. With the proposals of the new Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) outlined by the Premier League being imposed on professional clubs, an added pressure and intensity began to arise within our working environment. Such changes, coupled with the previous sackings, led me and other coaches to discuss our fear of whether or not our position within the academy was based on our ability to adhere to the changes in the academy philosophy.

Whilst the academy was going through a transition, a new Chairman and a new Board of Directors were appointed after the club faced the possibility of going into administration and going out of business. Again, a level of uncertainty surrounded the club and although we, as part-time Academy Coaches, did not feel the effect to the same extent, we could sense a worry amongst the full-time academy staff, and the Academy Manager in particular. Furthermore, at the time of writing, a poor run of form had seen the 1st Team Manager sacked without a permanent replacement being appointed, bringing about yet more uncertainty within the club.

All of the aforementioned experiences led me to think about questions such as 'what contributes to a successful or unsuccessful change process?', 'what constitutes change?', 'who are the drivers of change – the 1st Team Manager, Assistant Coach, Chairman or Board of Directors?', 'how do managers/coaches implement change within a professional football environment?', 'what are the day-to-day challenges that a coach or manager faces during a change process?', 'how does a new manager or coach implement their philosophy within a professional club?', 'what does the change process mean for other members of staff such as physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches, performance analysts, players and administrative staff and how does it influence their performance?', and 'how is the change process measured in the short term and long term, and what implications does this have for those affected by the change process?'. Finally, I started to draw on my own experiences from coaching courses I had completed and asked myself the question of whether formal coach education courses prepared coaches and managers for the difficult task of managing and implementing change.

It was at this point that I started to paint a picture of a research question that allowed me to put together a proposal that I hoped would provide an insight into the complexities of managing change within a professional football club. The next step was to gain access to the working environment of a professional football club and members of staff within that club.

3.2 Philosophy and Scientific Inquiry

Before engaging with the practical approaches to conducting qualitative research, understanding the philosophical assumptions and paradigms that have informed such related practical approaches is required. Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide us with a rationale for conceptualising a researcher's paradigmatic standpoint by stating that 'they [paradigms] tell us something about what the researcher thinks counts as knowledge, and who can deliver the most valuable slice of this knowledge. They tell us how the researcher intends to take account of multiple and contradictory values she will encounter' (p. 7). In defining a 'paradigm', Guba and Lincoln (1994) indicate that paradigms are a 'set of basic beliefs… that defines, for

its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts' (p. 107). Furthermore, Sparkes and Smith (2014) outline that 'we conduct inquiry via a particular paradigm because it embodies assumptions about the world that we believe in and supports values that we hold dear. As we hold those assumptions and values, we conduct inquiry according to the precepts of that paradigm' (p. 9). In attempting to understand these 'assumptions and values' and the relationship that a specific paradigm has with the researcher and research activity, Lincoln and Guba (2005) suggest that answers to the following questions will be influenced by a researcher's paradigmatic standpoint. Such questions around 'ontology (What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and methodology (How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?)' (p. 22) become pertinent. Depending on the paradigm beliefs of the researcher, the answers to such questions will vary. On a basic level, answers to such questions provoke thoughts around the influence of the related theoretical frameworks, the representation of the data and the voices of the participants and the role that the researcher plays throughout the research process, along with the standards against which the accuracy and trustworthiness of the research is evaluated.

This following section will begin to outline the paradigm chosen to approach this study from ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives and provides the justification for this paradigmatic choice as opposed to other contemporary choices.

3.2.1 Adopting an Interpretive Paradigm

'The philosophical assumptions and interests that drive qualitative forms of inquiry are different from those that inform research conducted in positivist and post-positivist paradigms' (Sparkes, 2002, p. 39). In thinking about the design of this study, from a methodological perspective Crotty (1998) highlights that the researcher must consider which paradigm is the most appropriate to address the research questions, aim and objectives. Similar to other research paradigms, interpretivism provides an outline for thinking about and

undertaking research. From a philosophical perspective, the interpretative paradigm allows for an alternative to approaches associated with the positivist paradigm that continues to permeate scholarly activity in sport coaching (Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014). Both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms are distinguishable by their differing epistemological and ontological positions in exploring human behaviour and interactions (Coe, 2012).

3.2.2 Ontology

Mallet and Tinning (2014) provide a description of ontology as 'that part of philosophy concerned with the nature of reality, the nature of existence' (p. 11). From a positivist perspective, Sparkes (1992) contends that 'individual cognition is a real world made up of hard, tangible and relatively immutable facts that can be observed, measured and known for what they really are' (p. 20). Indeed, research philosophy that is informed from a positivist standpoint is methodologically concerned with quantitative data collection. Ontologically, 'quantitative researchers adhere to a realist or external view of reality. This assumes that a single, uniform and objective reality exists externally "out there" and independent from the person' (Smith & Sparkes, 2014, p. 11). Such assumptions may influence the conscious and subconscious states of the researcher before, during and after the research process.

In contrast, the interpretivist position rejects the assumption that the social world can be examined through naturalistic approaches to scientific methodologies. The interpretivist perspective, then, is underpinned by the notion that the social world is complex, with stakeholders such as researchers and research participants defining their own meanings (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Consequently, the understanding of the subjective experiences of both groups and individuals is paramount to interpretive inquiry. In an attempt to understand such experiences, interpretive inquiry tends to take the form of qualitative methodologies of data collection. Specifically, in contrast to the positivistic approach of generating theory to make future predictions, interpretive inquiry is concerned with how research participants make sense of their experiences and actions (Bryman, 2012; Coe, 2012). From an ontological

perspective, qualitative researchers, and those informed by an interpretivist paradigm, adopt a relativist ontology (Smith & Sparkes, 2014). 'This conceives of social reality as humanly constructed and shaped in ways that make it fluid and multifaceted. Multiple, subjective realities exist in the form of mental constructions' (Smith & Sparkes, 2014, p. 11). Subsequently, a relativist ontological standpoint was adopted for this present, interpretive study based on the design of the study's aim and key research questions.

3.2.3 Epistemology

In addition to ontological considerations, the epistemological standpoint of the research philosophy must also be discussed, with Lincoln and Guba (2005) outlining that epistemology refers to how knowledge is acquired and constructed. Furthermore, Burrell and Morgan (1992) highlight that as a theory of knowledge, epistemology considers 'whether knowledge is something that can be acquired on the one hand or something which has to be personally experienced on the other' (p. 2). Specifically, in Crotty's (1998) view, epistemology allows for a philosophical set of beliefs that consider the forming of knowledge. In exploring the nature of knowledge and how such knowledge is formed, both 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism' provide contrasting perspectives, with positivists aligning their beliefs to objectivism, which is described by Sparkes (1992) as the notion that reality exists independently from consciousness. From this perspective, positivists endeavour to gather impartial and purely objective data to understand forms of knowledge. In doing so, they aim to isolate themselves from the research process and utilise nomothetic methodologies that generate statistical data highlighting relationships between variables.

In comparison, the epistemological position of the interpretive paradigm is based upon the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed. Indeed, the rejection of the positivistic approach through an objective investigation of reality allows for the suggestion that there 'can be no brute data… on which to found knowledge or verify our positions' (Sparkes, 1992, p. 27). Indeed, interpretive researchers subscribe to the view that the research process is a subjective, interactive, and co-constructed activity

involving both the researcher and the researched (Howell, 2013). Furthermore, as Manning (1997) states, research 'is interactive in the way the researcher's questions, observations, and comments shape the respondent's actions' (p. 26), and the participants' responses influence the analysis and interpretations of the researcher (Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014). As Potrac et al. (2014) continue to elaborate, 'the final research report, paper or thesis is the product not only of the researcher's relationships and interactions with participants in the field, but also of the analytical capacities and choices of the research "team" and their understandings of, and subscription to, particular guiding theories' (p. 34). In light of the above, the chosen epistemological standpoint of this study was informed by a social constructionist perspective.

3.3 The Interpretive Case Study

Within the context of this project, an interpretivist approach was adopted in an attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the process of organisational change within professional youth football, and the micro-political nature of the key events during the change process. Indeed, some of the significant events that unfolded during the change process at Alder FC are outlined in table 1.

Utilising such an approach allows for a platform to explore and understand: how stakeholders experience the social processes inherent in a period of organisational change within a professional football club; the effect organisational change has on the working relationships of coaches and other staff within a professional football club, and how they give meaning to these relationships. As previously discussed, the interpretive approach to understanding organisational change provides the opportunity to garner an understanding of the interests, motives and actions of the stakeholders involved and the subsequent meanings that each stakeholder attaches to their behaviour and the behaviours of others (Blumer, 1969).

Thomas (2016) indicates that 'the point of a case study is *not* to find a portion that shows the quality of the whole. You are looking at the selection of your subject… without any expectation that it represents a wider population' (p. 63). As Thomas (2016) supports, the purpose of this study is to investigate

organisational change in professional football in its 'completeness' and to explore the 'process' of organisational change and the 'how' and 'why' of this process.

The choice of focus for this study was influenced by my own employment within the professional football club and experiences of organisational change during this period (see table 1 for a timeline of organisational change). With this in mind, Thomas (2016) states that because of this 'familiarity', this case can be referred to as a *local knowledge case.* Specifically, Thomas (2016) highlights:

> It is, for example, your own work or domestic situation or another situation with which you are familiar. Here, in your own place of work, your placement or even your home, you have intimate knowledge. You know and can 'read' people who inhabit the arena – you may know it like the back of your hand. This is a ready-made strength for conducting the case study… you can gain access to the richness and depth that would be unavailable to you otherwise. (p. 98)

Furthermore, with the purpose of the case study being to explore the perspectives of coaches and other academy staff during organisational change at a professional football club, the study will adopt an interpretive approach.

As described by Thacher (2006), the interpretive case study aims to portray the subjective meaning that participants attach to their actions. Subsequently, 'in no case does it refer to an objectively "correct" meaning or one which is "true" in some metaphysical sense' (Thacher, 2006, p. 1635). Thomas (2016) explains further and indicates that the interpretive case study calls for 'rich, intensive understanding' (p. 148). By interpreting people's words and behaviours, the interpretive researcher builds theory out of the raw data that is collected. At this point, the data has no 'theory'. The role of the interpretive researcher is to *build* a theory from the data through the use of 'analytical frames' such as Kelchtermans' (1993; 1996; 2005; 2009) micro-political framework through an inductive approach. As Thomas (2016) indicates, 'it is important to keep this framework notion in mind when thinking about the theory that you develop as part of an interpretive inquiry' (p. 149). The process of this interpretive case study followed a retrospective

design (Thomas, 2016), in that the focus related to a past phenomenon in order to explore the complex, subjective experiences of academy staff in a professional football club after a period of organisational change as part of a 'nested case study'.

Date	Key Events in the Organisational Change Process	Points of Data Collection
December	New Chairman takes over the football club & a new 1st Team Manager is appointed Academy Manager (Steve) leaves his position	Ethnographic observational data collection
February	Head of Professional Development Phase (Eric) is sacked and replaced by a new one (George – recruited from another professional football club) New Academy Manager (Richard) is promoted from within the football club Lead Foundation Phase Coach (James) remains in his position	Interview data collection starts with U12's Coach (Ian) & Lead Foundation Phase Coach (James)
March	U18 Fitness Coach (Wesley) is sacked from his position U12 Coach (Ian) is sacked from his position	Ethnographic observational data collection
June	U16 Coach leaves his position Youth Development Phase Coach (John) leaves his position and new one (Alfie) is recruited from another professional football club	Ethnographic observational data collection
September	Lead Foundation Phase Coach (James) leaves his position and a new one is appointed (Gerald) from within the football club	Interview data collection starts with Academy Manager (Richard)
January	1st Team Manager is sacked Director of Football and Head of Professional Development Phase (George) appointed in temporary 1st Team Management positions Academy Manager (Richard) manages additional position as temporary Head of Professional Development Phase	Ethnographic observational data collection
March	New 1st Team Manager and Assistant Manager appointed from another professional football club Director of Football appointed 1st Team Coach Head of Professional Development Phase (George) resumes position after temporary 1st Team Management position ends	Interview data collection starts Head of Professional Development Phase (George)

Table 1. Key events in the organisational change process.

3.3.1 An [Interpretive] 'Nested' Case Study

From a methodological perspective, interpretive researchers interactively explore and interpret the subjective experiences of others through hermeneutic methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Here, the emphasis is on the depth and richness of data taken from small populations, in contrast to larger, generalisable data sets (Howell, 2013). As Geertz (1973) highlighted, the production of 'thick description' becomes the focus. In an attempt to gather such data, researchers often spend prolonged periods of time with an individual or group and employ a range of qualitative methods such as interview techniques, narrative enquiry or ethnographical research to gather the required individual, subjective data (Markula & Silk, 2011). As Ball (1990) states, in contrast to the standardized instruments found within positivist inquiry, interpretive researchers 'are themselves the primary research tool with which they must find, identify and collect data' (p. 157).

Reflecting on the above, then, Thomas (2016) distinguishes *nested* case studies from *multiple* case studies as a number of subcases that interconnect with other subcases and the whole, as opposed to a series of individual cases that bare no relationship with the whole. Specifically, nested case studies gain their integrity and wholeness from the wider case. The rationale for selecting the nested case study approach lies in a desire to develop an understanding of each individual case and the contrasting nature with another related case to paint a picture of the wider phenomenon under investigation. In the context of this study, the wider phenomenon is organisational change in professional youth football. The football club in question (Alder FC) becomes the broader case, with several nested case studies (Academy Coach, Head of Foundation Phase, Academy Manager, and Head of Professional Development) within that broader case becoming the participants for data collection.

3.4 A Narrative Analysis Approach

The use of narrative inquiry has recently increased as scholars, particularly within the sport and exercise psychology domain, have sought to seek interpretive forms of understanding (Carless and Douglas, 2008;

Jowett & Frost, 2007; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; etc.). Furthermore, contemporary studies within sport coaching literature have also utilised a narrative approach as their methodological choice (Huggan et al., 2015; Thompson et al, 2013). Although difficulties have emerged in attempting to define narrative inquiry, the aim of such an approach is to study people's 'stories as they unfold over time' (Smith, 2010, p.88). Specifically, Smith (2010) outlines that:

> Humans lead storied lives. In part, we live in, through, and out of narratives. We think in story form, make meaning through stories, and make sense of our experiences via the stories provided by the socio-cultural realms we inhabit. We not only tell stories but do things with them. Stories do things to, on, and for people that can make a difference. They help guide action; constitute human realities; and frame who we are and who we can be. Further, stories are a key means by which we know and understand the world. They offer a way of knowing oneself and others. (p. 88)

The rationale behind adopting such an approach rests in the concerns around the ability of traditional post-positivist research methods to capture the emotional, contextual, temporal and situated aspects of individual experience (Smith, 2010). Specifically, Jowett (2007) highlights the ability of narrative approaches to capture the complex worlds of both groups and individuals. Furthermore, and within the context of organisational change, Buchanan and Badham (2008) have suggested that although larger quantitative methods of data collection may be appropriate for certain contexts, the more nuanced nature of political organisational behaviour may be bettered captured through the use of smaller qualitative methods. Indeed, from a philosophical perspective, narrative inquiry is underpinned by an interpretivist perspective in that it is committed to a social constructionist epistemology and a relativist ontology in the quest to study lives and social worlds of participants.

The analytical benefits of employing the narrative approach have been summarised as having the ability to 'reveal the temporal, emotional, and contextual quality of lives and relationships; honour much of the complexities of the life as lived; instigate personal and social change… illuminate the subjective

worlds of individuals and groups… thereby telling us much about a person or group as well as a society or culture' (Smith, 2010, pp. 90-91). In light of this summary, and as previously mentioned, it is not surprising to see narrative informed methodologies permeate the qualitative, scholarly literature. The work of Sparkes and Smith (2002, 2005) sought to understand the lived experiences of participants who acquired spinal cord injuries through playing sport. Specifically, the narrative approaches utilised in these studies highlighted the process of identity construction (Smith & Sparkes, 2002) and the meaning of 'hope' (Smith & Sparkes, 2005) that manifest in the lives of males after acquiring such significant injuries. More recently, the work of Perrier, Smith, Strachan and Latimer-Cheung (2014) has expanded this area to understand athletic identity through the use of narrative inquiry. Moreover, McGannon and Smith (2015) have advocated the use of narrative approaches in understanding the relationship between culture and identity in sporting environments.

It is not only within the sport domain that the use of narrative approaches has been employed. In attempting to comprehend the use of micro-politics as a theoretical framework for understanding teaching and the lives of teachers, Kelchtermans (1993) advocated the use of a narrative-biographical perspective as a theoretical perspective to understand such professional experiences. Within his work, Kelchtermans (1993) outlined the narrative-biographical perspective as having five general features, describing such a perspective as being narrative constructivistic, contextualistic, interactionistic and dynamic (Kelchtermans, 1993). Such concepts combine to reflect a person's 'so-called subjective career' and 'personal experiences [they have] in their professional lives over time' (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 30). Specifically, 'narrative' refers to the focus on the subjective, narrative nature that teachers use to present their career experiences. Therefore, this implies that the narrative-biographical approach is less concerned with the 'facts' than with the meaning these 'facts' have for the participant. As Kelchtermans (1993) goes on to state, 'the interpretive element as well as the narrative structure of the data (i.e. recalled experiences) constitute the core element of the narrative discourse' (p. 444).

The 'constructivistic' feature emphasizes the notion that the participant actively interprets their professional experiences into a story that is meaningful to them. Therefore, conceptions around successful teaching and teachers are individually construed meanings. Additionally, stories become 'contextualistic'. Within Kelchtermans' work around the similarities and contrasts of the professional lives of teachers, the context is made up of the physical and institutional environment of the school as well as the social, cultural and intrapersonal aspect. Similarly, human behaviour is a result of meaningful 'interaction' with the environment, social worlds, cultural environments and other contextual facets. Finally, the 'dynamic' aspect focuses on the temporal dimension and developmental dynamic (Kelchtermans, 1993). In this sense, the sense-making and meanings that teachers attach to their perceived and experienced reality constitute one moment in a continuous and on-going process. In summation, and as Kelchtermans (2009) indicates, narrative-biographical research is 'considered to be a powerful way to unravel and understand the complex processes of sense-making that constitute teaching' (p. 260).

As has previously been discussed, the use of narrative approaches as methodological choices has started to gather momentum within sport literature. Indeed, as McGannon and Smith (2015) advocate, 'narrative inquiry… holds promise for understanding lives as sociocultural constructions' (p. 86). Employing a narrative-biographical approach comprised of the production-rich, in-depth data allows for an understanding of the subjective meaning and sense-making that coaches and other stakeholders within a professional football club attached to the actions and behaviours of both themselves and others during organisational change. Through the use of narrative inquiry, this study has the capacity to understand the storied lives of coaches and other stakeholders during organisational change in a professional football club and the construction of these lived experiences within their sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, Kelchtermans (2009) indicates that 'in order to understand (but also to influence or train) teachers' [coaches] actions, one needs to identify and analyse their "thinking"' (p. 260). That being said, the lived, narrative constructions of those experiencing organisational change in a professional football club may positively influence the behaviours of individuals trying to negotiate similar contextual environments.

3.5 The Participants

3.5.1 Purposive Sampling

The adoption of a narrative methodological approach, governed by an interpretivist perspective, influenced the manner in which participants were sampled for this study and the criteria that participants were sampled against. A process of purposive sampling (Tracy, 2013) was utilised to select participants for this case study. This process was criteria-based (Smith & Sparkes, 2014) to identify potential participants to take part in data collection. Indeed, the generation of such criteria was based on the need to source participants that were deemed worthy participants who would be able to provide detailed, rich data surrounding the key research questions and phenomena under investigation (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The participant inclusion criteria for this case study were: (1) to hold a specific position within the chosen academy's hierarchy (see table 2) that was different to other participants selected; (2) to hold relevant qualifications to coach players within the chosen academy; and (3) to have been through the process of organisational change whilst working in the chosen academy. Once the inclusion criteria had been created and discussed with the research team, a shortlist of potential participants was generated (see table 2). Once an agreement had been reached, each participant was contacted to explain the aims of the study, the research process and what would be required of a participant in the data collection process, in order to gain informed consent. Subsequently, each participant agreed to participate in the study. As Tracy (2013) states, participants are 'chosen because they are typical of the phenomenon under examination' (p. 136). Furthermore, the participants could be considered an 'opportunist sample' (Tracy, 2013) as the participants were already known to the primary researcher through the working relationship I developed with the participants when I was employed within the professional football club under investigation.

Key Actors	Organisational Role within Alder FC Academy[1]
Richard	Academy Manager[2]
George	Head of Professional Development Phase[3] and U18s Coach
John	Head of Youth Development Phase (YDP)[4] and U13s Coach
James	Head of Foundation Phase (FP)[5] and U11s Coach
Ian	Academy Coach U12s (FP)[5]
Primary Researcher	Academy Coach U16s (YDP)[4]

Table 2. Key social actors within Alder FC.

Notes

[1]Within the Youth Development Rules, an Academy as an establishment for the coaching and education of Academy players operated by a Club in accordance with the requirements of the rules and by the Professional Game Board of the Football Association (PGB).

[2]Within this structure, the Academy Manager is the person responsible for the strategic leadership and operation of a Club's Academy. An Academy Player is a male player (other than an Amateur or a Trialist) who is in an age group between Under 9 and Under 21 and who is registered for and who is coached by or plays football for or at a Club which operates an Academy.

[3]Professional Development Phase (PDP) players aged 17-21 years.

[4]Youth Development Phase (YDP) players 13-16 years of age.

[5]Foundation Phase (FP) players 6-12 years of age.

[6]Under the Youth Development Rules, each club is required to prepare a Coaching Programme that states (a) the Club's Football Philosophy, (b) the Club's Academy Performance Plan, and (c) the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) which stipulates the minimum hours of coaching across each level in the Academy.
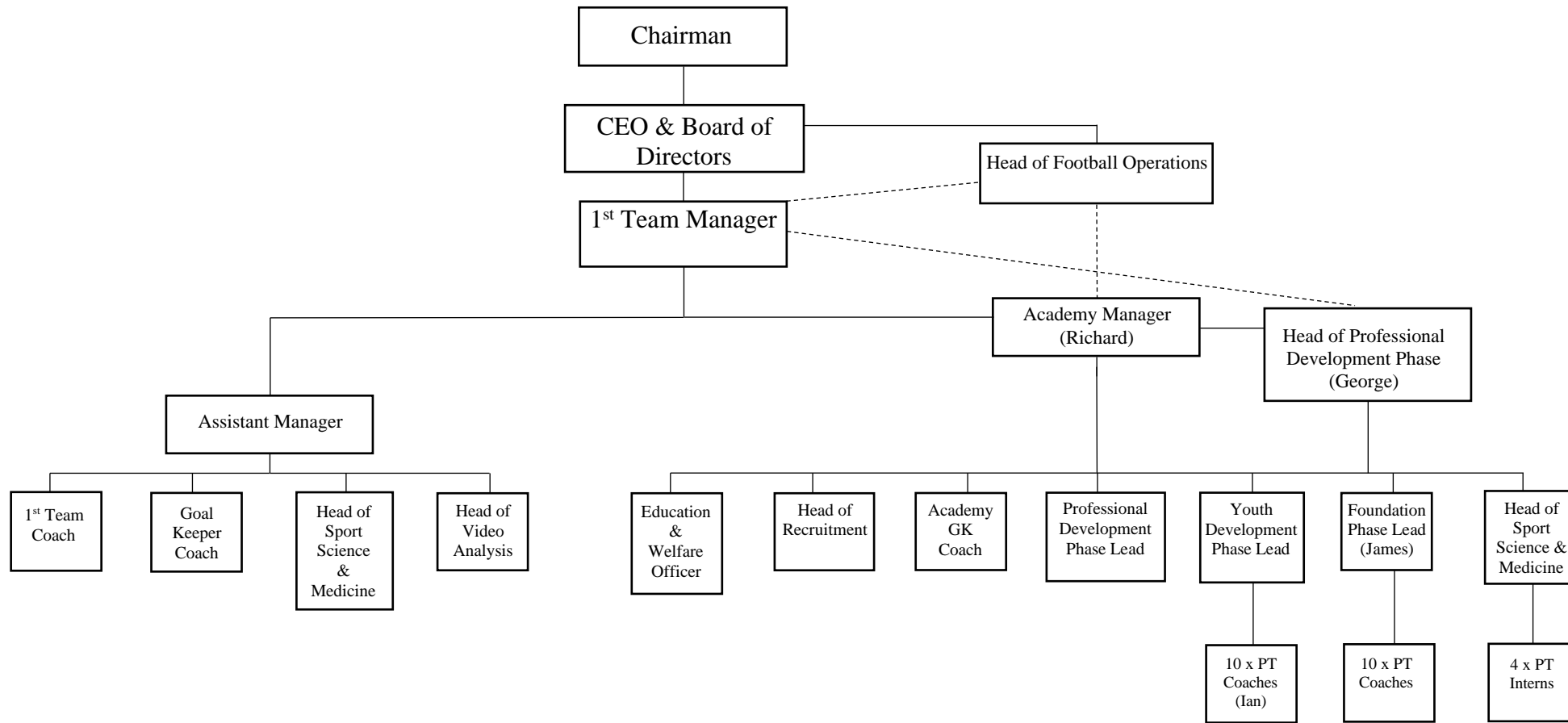
Figure 2. Alder FC Organisational Hierarchy Chart.

The following sections provide background information on each of the participants that formed the individual, narrative case studies. Each participant was employed at Alder FC (as highlighted in figure 1) and met the inclusion criteria outlined.

3.5.2 Ian

Ian (pseudonym), one of the coaches who left the club during the change process, had been working there for a period of six years as both a full-time football development coach and a part-time Academy Coach. Ian was identified as an information-rich source of insight into organisational change within a professional football club. At the time of this study, Ian held the UEFA B Licence. He also held undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications within sport coaching. Ian's most recent role within the club was that of head coach of the U12 team. In addition to working with the U12 team, he also assisted with other groups in the U12-U16 ages. However, prior to being selected and confirmed as a participant in the study, Ian ceased to be employed by the football club and is now coach educator for a national football association and coaches in an academy at another professional football club.

3.5.3 James

James (pseudonym) had been coaching for a period of ten years in a range of different environments such as 'grassroots level', the local county football association and currently as a full-time foundation phase coach within the academy of a professional football club. James holds the UEFA B Licence as well as the English FA Youth Award. In total, James had spent seven years within the professional football club environment. Since the interviews with James took place, James has left the club and is now Head of Foundation Phase in an academy at another professional football club.

3.5.4 Richard

Richard (pseudonym) has been coaching for a period of twenty years in a range of semi-professional and professional football environments. Prior to his roles at Alder FC, Richard was a coach within the academy of a professional football club competing in the English Premier League. Richard holds the UEFA A Licence, the English FA Youth Award, and the English FA Academy Managers Licence. In total, George has spent six years with Alder FC. Before his appointment as Academy Manager at Alder FC, Richard held the position of U14s Academy Coach and Head of Youth Development Phase but now no longer works at the club.

3.5.5 George

George (pseudonym) has been coaching for a period of fourteen years in a professional football environment and is currently the Head of Professional Development Phase and U18s coach at Alder FC. Prior to this, George was a professional footballer for a number of clubs in the English Football League Championship and English Football League One. Prior to his role at Alder FC, George held positions of U16 coach, U18 coach, Centre of Excellence Manager and 1st Team Assistant Manager at a number of clubs in the English Football League Championship and English Football League One. George holds the UEFA A Licence and English FA Youth Award. Since been recruited by Alder FC, George spent a total of three years at the club but now no longer works at the club.

3.6 Collecting Interpretive Case Study Data

A range of data collection methods can be employed when carrying out a case study, such as questionnaires, focus groups, diaries, observations, and statistical quantitative methods (Thomas, 2016). However, here the use of interviews for this programme of research is discussed.

Throughout this project semi-structured interviews were used with each of the participants as the method of data collection. Such an approach has been widely received within the sport coaching literature,

with various qualitative studies employing semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection (Huggan, et al., 2015; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2002; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Thompson, et al., 2013). Here, the researcher devises a pre-planned interview guide to prompt what questions are asked, how often they are asked and when they are asked. 'Rather than closed questions that are designed to elicit very "thin" answers or just a "yes" or "no" response, open-ended questions are mostly used in a semi-structured interview' (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 64). However, as Thomas (2016) states, 'you are not obliged to go through these points in order – or in any way keep to a formal set format for the interview' (p. 190). This approach allows the researcher to probe deeper than the pre-prepared questions in a quest to generate a rich data set through the curiosity of inviting participants to elaborate on their responses or adding clarification or more detail in order to 'fill out the picture of whatever the researcher is trying to understand' (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 64). Semi-structured interviews may also allow for the possibility of relevant information 'previously undetected by the researcher' (Krane & Baird, 2005, p. 98) to emerge in the participant's responses.

3.7 Narrative Data Collection

3.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

In discussing the strengths of taking a semi-structured interviewing approach, Sparkes and Smith (2014) outline that 'guided by their senses and historical knowledge, the interviewer as traveller wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people she or he encounters, asking questions as they travel together, and inviting them to tell tales about their lives along the way' (p. 83). Furthermore, 'an interview can be described as a craft and social activity where two or more persons actively engage in embodied talk, jointly constructing knowledge about themselves and the social world as they interact with each other over time through a range of senses, and in a certain context' (Smith & Sparkes, 2014, p. 83). Data were collected from between four and six semi-structured interviews that took place in an informal manner. Each participant was interviewed for approximately six hours in total. Some participants were

subject to more interview sessions than other participants depending on the time allocated to the process, the progress being made in each interview and the process of reflexivity between the primary researcher and supervisor. All interviews were conducted at a venue that was the choice of each participant to allow the participant to be comfortable with the environment and consequently increase their expressive nature (Tracy, 2013). In agreeing the location and venue for the interviews to take place, it was important to ensure that the level of background noise was kept at a minimum so that the quality of the audio files was not affected (Purdy, 2014 as cited in Potrac, Nelson & Groom, 2014).

Prior to each initial interview taking place, participants were made aware of the ethical guidelines established by the University of Derby regarding the collection and handling of data. Due to the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, sensitive topics emerged from the interview data. Therefore, it was important to highlight the 'confidentiality in relation to people that may have been mentioned' (Purdy, 2014 as cited in Potrac, Nelson & Groom, 2014, p. 269). At this point, the participants were informed that only the primary researcher and supervisor would have access to the audio files and interview transcripts. Furthermore, to protect the identity of the participant and the identities of others discussed in the interviews, each participant was informed that pseudonyms (i.e. an alternative name) would be used to ensure anonymity. In addition, each participant was made aware of the choice they had in deciding whether they would like each audio file to be kept, returned to the participant or erased (Sparkes, 2000).

Typically, professional football is an environment that is fraught with challenges in gaining access to conduct scholarly investigation. As Kelly and Harris (2010) state, access to participants 'normally presents major difficulties for researchers for the professional game is notoriously a closed social world' (p. 490). Such a characterisation becomes problematic when considering Purdy's (2014, as cited in Potrac, Nelson & Groom, 2014) assertion around the importance of researcher's familiarity with the research context. Indeed, with the benefit of being employed within the professional football club in question, the primary researcher was afforded some leverage when accessing participants and data. Indeed, such leverage has also aided in developing a rapport with participants, resulting in a more relaxed conversation when

discussing common ground. As Purdy (2014, as cited in Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014) states, such a rapport allows for deeper illustrations leading to 'richer' data.

The initial interview began with general information surrounding the participant's coaching and background, and coaching philosophy, to 'break the ice' and ensure that the participant was comfortable about partaking in the interview. Following this, the interview focused on the participant's own individual experiences of organisational change, prompting the participant to discuss key, critical incidents during the organisational change process. At this point, some of the questions covered were driven by data that had emerged from the ethnographic field notes (see following section in this chapter). This allowed each individual participant the opportunity to discuss their 'story' and carve their own narrative, with the primary researcher becoming an 'active listener' (Smith & Sparkes, 2005), facilitating the interview process through prompts encouraging the participant to think about the *what, why* and *how* of his experiences. This process of asking the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of the participant's experiences also allowed for identification of a micro-political, theoretical understanding of the individual narratives being created. Furthermore, questions were also driven by the overarching research questions that underpinned this project as a whole. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed and analysed prior to the next interview to identify significant issues with the data as they emerged. This process also informed the topics for the next interview, therefore ensuring a process of reflexivity during the interview procedure. During this process the supervisory team acted as a 'critical friend', questioning the initial interpretations of the data and suggesting additional avenues to explore (Sparkes & Smith, 2002). During this process, both the primary researcher and supervisor would read interview transcripts and discuss narrative segments from the interviews in relation to the research questions. Often, the participant would mention something in initial interviews that was aligned to the research questions, and which was then further explored in detail in subsequent interviews. This might, for example, relate to specific examples from the participant's experiences, the participant's thoughts and emotions during the incident, and the consideration of the wider impact of the incident upon the participant's working conditions. In the second and subsequent interviews with each participant, the

participant was asked to elaborate on previous discussions and invited to explore the relevant themes with the interviewer, prompting a reflexive interviewing approach specifically aimed at exploring the 'how' and 'why' behind their experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

3.7.2 Collecting Ethnographic Field Observations

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) highlight the variable and contested nature of defining ethnography within the academic arena. However, Wolcott (1995) describes ethnography as a 'picture of a way of life of some identifiable group of people' (p. 188). Researchers who undertake ethnography as a method of data collection embed their lives within their field experiences. In doing so, ethnographers harness the ability to accurately describe instances that take place within the field and document an understanding of how and why people (re)act to certain instances (Fetterman, 1989). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) go on to state that 'ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews' (p. 3). Furthermore, Sparkes and Smith (2014) outline the usefulness of collecting ethnographic data in allowing the researcher to 'record the mundane, taken-for-granted, and unremarkable (to participants) features of everyday life that interviewees might not feel worth commenting on. This method can provide data on not just what people say they do (as in interviews), but also on what they actually do' (p. 100). Indeed, a key benefit for a researcher when engaging in ethnographic work is the ability to study 'people's lives in-situ and life as it happens in real time' (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 100). Cushion (as cited in Potrac, Nelson & Groom, 2014) elaborates further by stating that 'a key assumption therefore is that by entering into close and relatively prolonged interaction with coaches and athletes in their everyday lives (becoming an insider), I can understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of the participants better than by using any other approach' (p. 172). Furthermore, direct observation allows for the opportunity to understand behaviours and actions that participants may be unwilling to communicate or discuss during interviews (Cushion & Jones, 2012).

For Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), ethnographic work tends to be characterised by the following features: (1) the actions of individuals are studied in contextual, everyday settings rather than within experimental designs or heavily structured interviews; (2) data can be collected through a range of sources such as documents, media outlets, informal and formal interviews as well observational data; (3) data collection is conducted in an unstructured manner; (4) sample sizes are typically small to allow for a richness and depth to the study; and (5) the interpretation of meanings and consequences of human behaviour and how these behaviours align to the context of the organisation take precedence during the analysis of ethnographic data. Consequently, verbal descriptions, explanations and theories are generated through the process of data analysis.

3.7.3 Gaining Access

Upon developing a research question, the process of gaining access to setting a question began. As a part-time Academy Coach within a professional football club, the opportunity to select that club as a setting to study organisational change in professional football was discussed with the supervisory team. Indeed, Riemer (1977) highlights the nature of 'opportunistic research' where researchers carry out *part-time* ethnography in their places of work, with Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) indicating that the benefits of being a part-time employee whilst conducting ethnographic research are that it can limit 'reactivity' from participants.

The professional football club that is the case for this study was undergoing a significant period of organisational and managerial change. This, coupled with the access arising from my employment within that football club, made the selection of this setting appropriate to study organisational change in professional youth football. This process of assessing the suitability of a research setting 'will not only provide information about potential settings in which the research could be carried out, but also feeds into the development and refinement of the research problem' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 29).

Following selection of the research site, contact was made with the Academy Manager at Alder FC

to confirm permission for the research process to be initiated. At this point, informed consent was gained from the four participants chosen to take part in the interview process. Upon gaining consent, the ethnographic observational data were collected as part of an overt investigation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). However, with the duality of my role (researcher and part-time employee) during the research process becoming apparent, elements of the ethnographic data collection (conversations with other coaches and staff members) were covert in nature in order to gain the 'full story' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 59) of organisational change within the academy at Alder FC. For example, conversations took place with professional colleagues who were not included in the interview process, and they were significant in addressing the research questions guiding the research project. In such instances, the cultural sensitivities of a professional football club were considered when reflecting on the inclusion of such field notes or observations in the data set. At this point, steps were taken to protect the identities and professional and social standing of the related individuals at Alder FC. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) suggest, gaining complete 'openness' during ethnographic research is 'often difficult or even impossible; and sometimes it may not be desirable' (p. 60). Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) go on to state that 'there is also the danger that any information provided by the researcher will influence the behaviour of the people under study in such a way as to threaten the validity of the findings' (p. 60). Furthermore, at the point of data collection, the findings and implications of publishing such findings are unknown (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). However, reflexive conversations took place between the primary researcher and supervisor throughout the research process to discuss initial conceptualisations of the data and the implications of such conceptualisations in protecting the anonymity of the participants.

Upon sampling the research site and gaining access, 'decisions must be made about where to observe and when, who to talk to and what to ask, as well as about what to record and how' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 35). Specifically, the notions of *time, people* and *context* become important when addressing the above issue. Typically, observations took place during the normal hours of my employment, such as academy training sessions (circa 2-3 hours for each session), academy match fixtures (circa 4 hours

for each fixture), in-house training events and coaches' meetings (circa 4-8 hours for each event) and academy player assessment nights (circa 4 hours for each assessment night). It must be noted that observations also took place before and after these sessions, for example, conversations with other coaches and staff during the organisation of training sessions, reflective conversations after training sessions and match fixtures and travel to away match fixtures in order to capture the social complexity of the micro-politics of organisational change.

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) highlight, 'it is as important to include what is routine as it is to observe the extraordinary. The purpose of systematic data collection procedures is to ensure as full and representative a range of coverage as possible, not just to identify and single out the superficially interesting events' (p. 37). In addition, the primary researcher also attended U18 training sessions (circa 2-3 hours for each session). Here, full-time staff were typically present; however, no data collection involving participants under the age of eighteen took place during these observations. The present staff members typically included the Academy Manager, U18 Coach, Head of Academy Sport Science and Medicine, U18 Video Analyst, 1st Team Manager and the 1st Team Assistant Manager. Observations also took place following U18 training sessions where the primary researcher would join the full-time staff for lunch. A detailed outline of the method, quantity and sources of data collection can be found in table 3.

Method of Data Collection	Quantity of Data Collection	Source of Data Collection
Semi-structured interviews	5 Interviews (circa 7.5 hours)	Academy Manager
Semi-structured interviews	5 Interviews (circa 7.5 hours)	Head of Professional Development Phase & U18s Coach
Semi-structured interviews	5 Interviews (circa 7.5 hours)	Lead Foundation Phase Coach
Semi-structured interviews	5 Interviews (circa 7.5 hours)	U12 Coach
Ethnographic observational data	17 Events (circa 34 hours)	Academy training sessions
Ethnographic observational data	11 Events (circa 33 hours)	Academy fixtures
Ethnographic observational data	1 Event (circa 4 hours)	Academy assessment night
Ethnographic observational data	6 Events (circa 12 hours)	U18 training sessions
Ethnographic observational data	2 Events (circa 4 hours)	Coaches' meetings
Ethnographic observational data	2 Events (circa 10 hours)	In-house training sessions

Table 3. Method, Quantity and Sources of Data Collection.

Sparkes and Smith (2014) highlight a range of different roles that the researcher takes when carrying out ethnographic observations and collecting ethnographic data. Each role places an emphasis on the level of active participation from the researcher within the research setting. In this case, the primary researcher took the form of a *complete participant* (p. 101). Here, Sparkes and Smith (2014) describe this role as one that 'is part of the setting and takes an insider role. The researcher does participate in the lives of the people in order to observe them, but rather observes while participating fully in their lives' (p. 101). However, as Cushion (as cited in Potrac et al., 2014) indicates, engagement in the ethnographic process can vary over time due to external factors affecting access and involvement. During observation, questions suggested by Holloway (1997) guided the field notes produced. Specifically, they addressed questions such as 'who can be found in the setting and how many people are present? What are their characteristics and roles? What is happening in the setting, what are the actions and rules of behaviour? What are the variations in behaviour observed? Where do interactions take place? Where are people located in the physical space? When do conversations and interactions take place? What is the timing of activities? Why do people in the setting act the way they do? Why are their variations in behaviour?' (p. 111). Furthermore, Sparkes and Smith (2014) highlight the importance of observing body language, dominating characters, individual responses to action, relationships between individuals and people's emotions. Similarly to the approach explained by Cushion (as cited in Potrac et al., 2014), comprehensive field notes were written from the observations, with all field notes being descriptive, dated and detailing records of key issues such as the location of the observation, who was present, what the typical setting was, the social interactions that took place and what activities occurred. Following each observational occurrence, the field notes were revisited to address any information missing from the notes and to check the accuracy of the notes in line with the events of the observation.

Finally, consideration must be given to the influence that the primary researcher's employment status as an Academy Coach had on his role as a researcher collecting ethnographic observational data. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) highlight the importance of gaining respect and trust as an ethnographer.

However, as Cushion (as cited in Potrac et al., 2014) highlights, my role as an Academy Coach meant that my association with the coaches as 'one of them' (p. 177) meant that the primary researcher was not seen as an outsider, but an insider and one that can be trusted. Indeed, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest, 'the ethnographer will generally try to shape the nature of his or her role, not least through adaptation of dress and demeanour, in order to facilitate gaining the necessary data' (p. 79). Within the context of this study, the primary researcher's role as an Academy Coach and a professional colleague went some way to addressing the need to and process of 'shaping the nature of my role'. However, whilst such a relationship and social identity are perceived to be conducive to the collection of ethnographic data, Cushion (as cited in Potrac et al., 2014) warns against the dangers of 'over-rapport'. Specifically, Cushion (as cited in Potrac et al., 2014) outlines the potential to 'over-identify with the respondents' perspectives and miss or misunderstand what is being observed' (p. 177). In light of this, the importance of reflecting continuously upon relationships with key stakeholders during observations cannot be understated in an attempt to maintain an unbiased outlook upon the key the events being observed.

3.8 Vertical Narrative Analysis

Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) explain that 'narrative (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and this offers insight about the world and/or people's experiences of it' (p. xvi). Drawing upon the work of Bochner (2001) and Crossley (2000), Smith and Sparkes (2009, p. 279) highlight that 'stories and an analysis of them can breathe meaning and lived experience' as part of understanding the *sense-making* process that underpins behaviours. Because narratives play a central role in how people come to develop a sense of meaning from the interactions they engage in and how they understand their experiences, analytic methods that focus upon narratives are well placed to examine such experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Indeed, such an analysis allows us to understand the narratives people tell and

enact (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). As well as focusing on how individuals create meaning, as this process is contextually situated, narratives also reflect and are shaped by the social and cultural worlds that they depict (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Narratives further allow for the representation of idiosyncratic, complex, emotional, contradictory and messy worlds not represented through the quantification and reorganisation of objective observations (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Narrative analysis 'is a technique that seeks to interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, make sense of their words, and perform social actions' (Smith & Sparkes, 2009, p. 281). The purpose of narrative analysis is to examine how people 'impose order on the flow of experiences to make sense of events, actions, and relationships in their lives' (Smith & Sparkes, 2009, p. 281). Data analysis followed an eight-stage process:

(1) The principal investigator conducted an initial interview with the participant, following the semi-structured interview guide.

(2) The initial interview was transcribed verbatim.

(3) Individually, the research team read the full interview transcript and created initial analytical memos of key features of the narrative. This process focused upon key interactions with people at the club and how the participants make sense of these interactions.

(4) The research team then discussed the interview and their initial codes and agreed upon the key features of the narrative. This process entailed a narrative-based interpretation of the following features of participants' narrated experience:

    a. What is the overall narrative that the participant is conveying to us during the period of change ('what is Richard's story about')?

    b. Who are the staff that the participant is interacting with during the process of change ('who are the key characters in the story')?

    c. How does the participant's narrative relate to the co-worker interviews?

    d. What are the key subcomponents of the participant's narrative during the process of change ('what is the overall plotline')?

e. How does this relate to the ethnographic field-based observations?

(5) The principal investigator then collected additional interview data, with the participant focusing upon further contextual information relating to the overall story and key features of the narrative identified at Stage 4 (e.g. the story, the characters, the plotline).

(6) The follow-up interviews were transcribed verbatim.

(7) Collectively, the research team read the full interview transcripts from Stage 5 and started to build links between the data and existing theory. Here, theorising of the selected theoretical framework was useful to make theoretical sense of the participant's experiences.

(8) Follow-up interviews were conducted until the the participant had nothing more to say and repeated previously divulged information.

Specifically, data were analysed in an inductive (themes within the interviews) and deductive (against selected theoretical frameworks, e.g. 'micro-political professional self-understanding', 'micro-political professional interests', 'sense-making' and 'professional leadership identity') iterative processes (Smith et al. 2016; Thomas, 2016).

Indeed, the use of theoretical frameworks to help make sense of the data and further our theoretical understanding of organisational change has been discussed. However, the development of such frameworks, in addition to highlighting the point in which such frameworks informed the research process, is worthy of discussion.

Jones (as cited in Jones et al., 2011) has highlighted the absence of theory in various works aimed at investigating the coaching context. In an attempt to understand the social complexities of coaching and challenge long held beliefs regarding the coaching practice, the place of 'theory' within scholarly research is required (Jones, as cited in Jones et al., 2011). Furthermore, Jones (as cited Jones et al., 2011) continues to state that, 'if we can't understand what is happening and explain why it may be so, we are not in a position to inform our stakeholders' (p. 9).

As previously stated, various theoretical frameworks were used to guide this study. However, the selection of the chosen frameworks occurred at different points in the research process. Following a review of the related literature (Potrac & Jones, 2009; 2009a), micropolitical theory was highlighted as a potential analytical frame that may further our understanding of organisational change in professional youth football and, a framework to inform the design of the study. Although, at this point it was not clear as to which specific theoretical concepts would become used as lens for each participant's narrative account.

Upon the initial reflections on the data of the participant interviews, the relationship between distinct micropolitical theoretical concepts began to become apparent. Specifically, Ian's narrative story was better understood through Kelchtermans (1993) notion of the *professional self* and *professional self-understanding* as theoretical lens. James' experiences of organisational change suggested the impact of change on his *'professional self-interests'* and his *'actions and strategies'* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2005). Interestingly, whilst *organisational micropolitics* and *political skill* (Ball, 1987; Ferris et al., 2017) in particular were useful in understanding Richard's experiences, such micropolitical theory as a whole only stretched so far in this case. At this point, I had to delve into the organisational literature in search of additional theoretical frameworks that may support the analysis of Richard's narrative account. Specifically, theory surrounding *middle-management sensemaking* (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Heyden et al., 2017; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011) aligned theoretically to Richard's experiences. Moreover, such a process was also required when addressing George's narrative story. Indeed, micropolitical theory was useful understanding elements of George's experiences; however, theoretical writings around *managerial identities* (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, 2003b; Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) began to resonate with initial interpretations of the data.

3.9 Horizontal Thematic Analysis

Following the process of vertical narrative analysis, as detailed above, the narrative data from each participant were subject to a process of horizontal thematic analysis. Whilst the vertical narrative analysis

concentrated on the narrative, storied experiences of each participant within the change process, the horizontal thematic analysis compared each participant's narrative data 'systematically, looking for commonalities, remarkable differences and recurring patterns' (Kelchtermans, 1993, p. 445). Furthermore, at this point, the ethnographic, observational data collected by the primary researcher was also transcribed and included alongside participant interview data as part of the horizontal thematic analysis.

The process of horizontal thematic analysis involved the use of qualitative analysis software (QSR NVIVO 11) (Cruickshank et al., 2013) to organise the data and support the process of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) (see figure 3).

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the 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 the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing 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:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 3. Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

The analytical process consisted of reading through the data in order to further familiarise the primary researcher with it, followed by the initial open coding process. Once coded, relevant data were gathered together with the aim of developing potential themes that may have been generated by the coding process (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Key to this process was the relationship with the coded data and the research questions outlined to guide the study (Wegner, Jones & Jordan, 2019). Following this, the generated themes were reviewed to ensure that they 'adequately capture the contours of the coded data' and to highlight the data extracts that do not necessarily 'fit' within an identified theme (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 125). At this point, and in an attempt to bring a level of coherence to the analysis, 'overarching' themes were considered in relation to the micro-political theoretical frameworks (Kelchtermans, 1993; 1996; 2005; 2009; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) that also guided the vertical narrative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Finally, decisions were made regarding naming and describing the themes that were generated across each participant's data. As Sparkes and Smith (2014) indicate, this highlights the need to 'identify and write the story that each individual theme tells. Consider as well how the theme fits into the broader overall story that is to be told about the data and in relation to the research questions' (p. 125). Specifically, this process involved understanding the interrelated nature of how each participant experienced organisational change in the academy of a professional football club and interpreting the data through the theoretical lens of the micro-political theory. Furthermore, the analysis of the data was also influenced during the process of writing up each theme into a story of the data, with 'new ideas emerging along the way' (Smith & Sparkes, 2014, p. 126).

3.10 Judging the Quality of this Study

Whilst Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *parallel position* criteria (*credibility*, *transferability*, and *dependability* to create *trustworthiness*) remain the predominant way to assess the quality of qualitative research in sport research, their position has been subjected to a number of important critiques (Sparkes, 1998, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2009; Smith, Sparkes & Caddick, 2014; Tracy, 2010). Smith et al. (2014) explain that the techniques proposed to achieve *trustworthiness* do not follow the logic of qualitative research (i.e. epistemological subjectivism and ontological relativism). Additionally, Smith et al. (2014) outline that in a social world of multiple realities there can be no privileged position where the researcher/s are able to access truth. Therefore, it is *incompatible* to believe in a word of multiple realities where techniques alone will sort out trustworthy and untrustworthy research (Smith et al., 2014). Finally, Smith et al. (2014) highlight that in light of such philosophical contradictions, Lincoln and Guba (1989) changed their position away from data gathering techniques as criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research (Smith et al., 2014). A *relativistic* perspective proposed by Smith et al. (2014), however, allows researchers to judge the quality of qualitative work in relation to characterising traits (i.e. what might be undertaken rather than what must be undertaken). Indeed, Tracy highlights that 'values for quality, like all social knowledge, are

ever changing and situated within local contexts and current conversations' (p. 837), as such criteria are *contingent* and can be 'added to, subtracted from, and modified in light of what specific research one is judging' (Smith et al., 2014, p. 195).

For the purpose of the present study, readers are invited to consider the contribution or 'goodness' of the work in terms of Tracy's (2010, p. 840) description of *worthy topic* (i.e. 'relevant, timely, significant and interesting'), *rich rigour* (i.e. 'theoretical constructs, data and time in the field, sample, context, data collection and analysis process'), *credibility* (i.e. 'thick description, triangulation, multivocality & members reflections'), *resonance* (i.e. 'aesthetic evocative representations, naturalistic generalisation and transferable findings'), *significant contribution* (i.e. 'conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically and heuristically'), and *meaningful coherence* (i.e. 'achieves what it purports to be about, uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals, meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations with each other').

Fundamental to the *relativistic* perspective is a movement away from *generalisation* towards *naturalistic generalisation*. Here, Ruddin (2006) explains that 'case studies need not make any claim about the generalizability of their findings but rather, what is crucial is the use others make of them – chiefly, that they feed into the process of naturalistic generalization' (p. 804). In this regard, Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that it is often not desirable to generalise case studies because 'good case studies should be read as a narrative in their entirety' (p. 241). Therefore, contextually rich descriptions which capture the unique features of the case become of central importance (Ruddin, 2006), along with the ability of such work to 'close in on real life-situations… as they unfold in practice' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 235).

3.11 Chapter Summary

This Methodology chapter has outlined the professional and academic underpinning around the development of a research question that formed the basis for this project. In attempting to address this research question and as a means of guiding this study, the project was informed by an interpretivist

paradigm. Within this paradigm, the ontological standpoint of this study was developed from a relativist perspective, along with a social constructivist epistemological position. Such philosophical viewpoints have guided the methodological development of this study. In light of this, and in answering the call to understand organisational change in professional football from a case study approach (Gibson & Groom, 2018), an interpretive, nested case study (Alder FC) was chosen as the research site to investigate organisational change in a professional football club. Upon selecting the chosen case study, a narrative approach was taken in collecting data through the use of semi-structured interviews with four participants who were employees of the professional football club in question. At the point of data collection, each participant was working at different hierarchical positions within the academy of that professional club. In addition to the interviews, ethnographic field notes were also collected during a period of organisational change at the professional football club. Upon the completion of data collection, a process of narrative analysis was utilised to make sense of the data and support the understanding of the lived experiences of each participant during organisational change.

Finally, readers are invited to judge the quality of this work against the notions of naturalistic generalisation, as outlined by Smith (2018).

4. Chapter Four - Results - Ian's Narrative Story

4.1 Background

Ian was employed as an Academy Coach at Alder FC at the point of organisational change. During the process of change, Ian and his professional working practices as an Academy Coach came under significant scrutiny from both the 1st Team Manager and the Academy Manager, that eventually, resulted in him losing his job as part of the organisational change process and restructuring of the academy.

This section will provide Ian's experiences following the process of narrative analysis. Particular attention will be paid to the affect that organisational change had on Ian's *professional self-understanding* as an Academy Coach in Alder FC. Ian's narrative story is presented through the themes that were generated following the process of data analysis, with relevant data that underpin each theme, along with the related literature throughout the discussion. The findings highlighted the increased levels of ambiguity following the appointment of a new Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager as part of a period of organisational change. Indeed, at this point, understanding his own *professional self* became challenging during the initial stages of change. Upon reflecting on his task perception at this point, Ian engaged in face-work in an attempt to evaluate his own professional behaviour and that of others during the uncertainty of change. Similar to other members of staff within the academy, Ian was placed under, what was to be perceived as, a test of his own coaching ability by the 1st Team Manager challenging his ability to cope with heightened levels of visibility (Keltchtermans & Ballet, 2002) and maintain a level of *self-image* and *self-esteem* as an Academy Coach as part of the change process. Such 'visibility' and pressure also prompted Ian to reflect on the behaviours of his professional peers whilst his coaching ability was placed under such intense scrutiny. Finally, upon his employment at the academy being terminated, Ian highlighted the impact that a process of organisational change within a professional football club had had on his *job motivation* and *future prospects* as an Academy Coach.

4.1.1 'The New First Team Manager's Coming In'

Ian started by providing an overview of the context of the organisational change at the club and how the initial stages of change affected the behaviour of staff who were employed within both the 1st team and academy departments. Specifically, Ian outlined the atmosphere following the announcement that a change in 1st Team Manager was going to take place:

> It was pretty tense times. The club was struggling financially, there were questions about whether there was going to be a football club, and if there was no football club then there was no academy. It was just a bit of a funny atmosphere where nobody really knows what was going on, nobody really knows who is gunning for who and everybody is keeping their cards close to their chest. The feeling among the staff was a little bit of nervousness. This new 1st Team Manager is coming in; this new regime was coming in. There are a lot of eyes on the academy all of a sudden and there is people trying to strengthen and retain their own positions and justify their job and look good in front of the new gaffer [1st Team Manager]. Nervous and on your toes, would probably be the vibe at the time among the other coaches, I think. We talked about it among ourselves as staff after training, and it was a little bit of Chinese whispers in that … 'Oh well, he's said this to this person and they've said it to another member of staff.' So, that stuff kind of gets passed around. There were secret meetings going on here and there and a lot of… 'oh we can't talk about that, it's confidential'.

Ian provided further insight that highlighted the manner in which he made sense of the 'secret' behaviours of others during the initial stages of change:

> I actually think that they wanted to create a little bit of that atmosphere to keep people on their toes and keep people guessing and to see who was loyal to the club and who was loyal to the previous regime [previous Chairman, Board of Directors & 1st Team Manager] and who wasn't really. So, I think it was a deliberate tactic. It's almost as though, from my experience at the club that there was a division of fear sometimes and that everyone was keeping everyone at arms' length because you

don't know what's going on and people are jostling for positions all the time and nobody can see the impact that this was having on the academy because everyone is a little bit conscious of the changes. These conversations were going on in the car park when there were other coaches about and you would be having an open conversation and all of a sudden you'd have to change it to 'what you having for your tea tonight?', when someone walked past and then revert back to the previous conversation once they'd gone. It was all a little bit cloak and dagger. Backs would be turned in training and then someone would go over to the conversation and it would be, 'psssshhhh' and all that stuff. I think that was a product of the type of place where we were working, the environment that the organisation fostered.

In discussing his own behaviours during these initial periods of change and the micro-political action that he employed, Ian continued to explain:

I think that when new people come in [are appointed], other people are always a bit concerned about their own position and you… I was particularly conscious that you don't want to say anything that (a) might put someone in an awkward position and (b) might give them [senior academy management or 1st Team Manager] an opportunity to bolster their footing by throwing you under the bus if that makes sense? You don't want to give them ammo… you don't want to drop your mates in the s**t, but at the same, you don't want to give other people who are trying to reinforce their position, information that they can use against you.

Ian's narrative indicated that the introduction of organisational change prompted periods of ambiguity and dissonance for the working practices within that organisation (Ball, 1987; Buchanan & Badham, 2004; Kramer & Neale, 1998). Indeed, changes are seldom neutral and tend to benefit or disadvantage certain individuals or groups. Within this case, the Academy Coaching staff were aware that a change in 1st Team Manager may prompt a level of staff turnover within the academy. Ball (1987, p.32)

contends that new ways of working can destabilize traditions and frequently affect 'the career prospects of individuals or groups which may in turn be curtailed or fundamentally diverted'. This was reflected in Ian's description of staff ensuring that they were 'keeping their cards close to their chest' while trying to 'strengthen and retain their own position'. Indeed, Ian's account of how academy staff were conscious of other academy staff listening to private conversations highlighted the behaviours of individual and groups attempting to protect their own professional interests, and in turn, their career prospects (Ball, 1987). Interestingly, Ian also engaged in such micro-political activity when ensuring that he did not leave himself exposed to being made a scapegoat.

4.1.2 Ian and Ian's Age Group Becoming Under Scrutiny

As part of the change process and the increase in the focus on the academy within Alder FC, there was increased attention on particular age groups within the academy that were seen to be under performing. Specifically, the new 1st Team Manager comprehensively evaluated the whole academy including the management, coaching, sport science and medical staff who were working within it. Ian outlined the scrutiny that he, and the age group that he was coaching, faced during the preliminary stages of the restructuring:

> So, going from the previous Gaffer who wasn't really interested in youth and he'd never really given youth a chance to this guy [new 1st Team Manager] coming in and all of a sudden it was all about youth development and giving lads a chance and all this kind of stuff. So, there was definitely more of a focus and attention from the club. There was more of a PR spin from the club to show the emphasis on developing young players in the media but also from the 1st Team Manager himself. He started to take a real interest in certain age groups. Myself and James had a few conversations about it; trying to come up with little strategies to make the scrutiny easier, but James was worrying about his own position too.

Ian indicated how the increased level of attention, and the club's enhanced focus on developing players through the academy affected his understanding of his own *professional self* in managing and coping with such levels of uncertainty brought about by such attention. He highlighted his concern about the comments made by the Academy Manager [Richard] to his age group when they were seen to be underperforming during this period of organisational change and during the 1st Team Manager's evaluation of the academy:

> The group that I was working with was struggling with results for months and the Academy Manager [Richard] came and we were having a debrief and a bit of a chat after the match and they'd been beaten 3–1. It was a close match and he just came in and sort of said 'Listen, lads, if you lot don't improve then you're out', basically at the start of the session. Gave the lads both barrels. Basically, 'If you don't start winning matches' – he didn't use those words, but that's what was implied – 'then we'll just get other lads in who will win football matches.' There were kids there at 11 years of age and 12 years of age who were sort of… really getting upset by this 40-year-old bloke saying, 'you've got to do this, you've got to do that, and if you don't we're gonna release you.' So, that set the tone. That was when the new 1st Team Manager had just come in. So, whether they had to send the results of fixtures through to the Directors and 1st Team Manager, and all that, I don't know. I probably think that was the case. There seemed to be a shift to 'Did you win?' from previously 'How did you play?', and people were making judgments from scores rather than how they played.

Ian described how this scrutiny affected how he managed and carried out his working practices:

> I didn't go down the route of… 'we've got to win today at all costs, we've got to change the way we play'… none of that. I was honest with them [the players] and said 'Listen, you've heard what he's [Richard] said the other night; we're all under a bit of pressure here. We could do with winning today, you could do with it, and I could do with it. But let's play the way that we're supposed to

play and win in the right way', and they responded to it. So, I suppose what I'm trying to say is, I cheated a little in that when people were around asking and observing I changed things to look like I was complying a little bit, but when people weren't watching, I just thought, 'b******s, I'm gonna do what I've always done'. I knew the lads had to win because that was what seemed to matter to the 1st Team Manager and Richard. But you couldn't be seen to be directly telling the lads they needed to win, if that makes sense. There were certain bits that I nipped and tucked I suppose to try and fall into line a little bit. But there were certain things I wouldn't change. I'm not going to change the way I speak to players because they're kids.

Ian continued to outline the conversation he had with Richard when discussing the manner in which the academy players within Ian's age group had been addressed by Richard during the academy training session:

I questioned Richard when he came in and spoke to the kids [players] the way he did and said, 'they're not performing well, they're struggling at the moment, and you've just dumped a load of pressure on them'. His response was, 'they're at a professional football club, it's all about pressure.' So, I disagreed and I told him that I disagreed with it. But he thought it was the right way to go and unfortunately he was in the position of power so…

Ian's strategy of 'complying' with the working practices advocated by senior management when people were 'observing' him reflects Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002) notions of micro-political literacy, and concepts of the *knowledge, operational*, and *experiential* aspects (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1996) of developing micro-political literacy. Ian's indication that he 'cheated a little' represents a tactic in his repertoire of micro-political strategies within the operational aspect of micro-political literacy (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 117) that was aimed at ensuring that his team achieved a positive result to deflect attention away from his age group. However, it should be noted that such strategies are context

specific (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002), in that, what worked for Ian in this instance may or may not be as effective in another professional football club. Indeed, any action can 'become micro-politically meaningful in a particular context' (Blasé, 1991, p. 11). In light of this, the central tenet in guiding such action should be in answering the question, 'to what extent and under what conditions is the teacher capable of effectively influencing the situation, either proactively or reactively' (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 117).

4.1.3 'Your Face Needs to Fit'

Ian was aware of how Academy Coaches and other members of academy staff associated continued employment at Alder FC with the importance of political strategy during organisational change: '… he [a coach] knows football inside out; he knows your face needs to fit. He's very pleasant to people in meetings, makes the right noises and does not oppose anything, he's agreeing with them [academy management staff].' Ian reported a conversation he had with Eric, another coach, at this time, when Eric said: 'He [John] is a snake; watch him because he will be stitching people up left, right, and centre trying to work his way into a full-time job. You cannot trust him; he will be stabbing you in the back to boost his profile.' When prompted further about his interpretation of the conversation, Ian elaborated:

> I think the reason that Eric felt the need to tell me about this was that he was concerned about his own job; maybe he wanted to vent or maybe he wanted me to understand why John [another Academy Coach trying to secure a full-time role during the change process] was acting in such a way. He was pretty aware that John had been in a similar position to him at another club and I think he was saying to me, 'Look, John might do you to try and get his foot higher up the ladder to then try and do me at a later stage', and stuff like that. Eric was an experienced coach so I think he had seen it all before and wanted to make me aware of how coaches tend to work during these periods. After the new 1st Team Manager was appointed, I found that the way he was in meetings and training was a lot less exuberant. He was a little bit more watchful and mindful. He would be people watching, asking questions, his mind-set had changed. He wasn't prepared to kiss a**e.

Numerous studies have highlighted the impact that organisational change has on the employment of staff and the opportunities for promotion and demotion within performance sport teams (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012a, 2012b; Cruickshank, Collins & Minten, 2013). However, a discussion about the underhand tactics of coaches jostling for promotion opportunities or avoiding demotion within the change process is lacking. Ian's experience of other coaches (John) trying to get their feet 'higher up the ladder' provides an insight into the underhand tactics that coaches may employ during periods of organisational change in their search for these opportunities. Specifically, Ian highlighted how a more experienced coach [Eric] was aware of how such underhand tactics are utilized by coaches having witnessed similar actions during organisational change in a professional football club prior to his employment at Alder FC.

Understanding how coaches manage others' perceptions in such situations provides a platform for Ian to reflect on his own professional self, and the *task perception* (Kelchtermans, 1993) he associates with his own role in similar meetings and the possibility of such face-work (Goffman, 1959) in defining his job role. Kelchtermans (1993, p. 449) suggests that the answer to such issues 'operates as a personal program and as a norm to evaluate their own professional behaviour'. The information he received from Eric gave Ian the necessary knowledge to interpret and understand the micro-political character of a particular situation during these periods of organisational change. As previously discussed, Eric was seen by Ian as being an experienced coach who had been through organisational change processes in previous employment. Therefore, the knowledge given to Ian to interpret micro-political situations by Eric held more value. The *knowledge aspect* is crucial in developing micro-political literacy (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002), and without it the development of an appropriate strategy and tactic within the *operational aspect* of micro-political literacy becomes skewed and misinformed. Operationalising the knowledge of how to interpret micro-political activity appeared to be significant in understanding the behaviours of other academy staff at Alder FC during the uncertainty and opportunity of organisational change.

4.1.4 'We're Nothing to do With This Group'

To provide a deeper insight into the actions and behaviours of his colleagues during the process of organisational change at Alder FC, Ian recalled being put through a 'test' that would determine his competence as a coach. The 'test' described by Ian was a match that his age group team were to play against another team from another academy within the same age group. Ian's team were already considered to be underperforming and Ian understood that this was common knowledge among the other academy management staff and Academy Coaching staff:

> Previously at training games, the lads [coaches] would stand just off the left of my shoulder, sort of predominantly on my side, and we would chat during the game, have a bit of banter and discuss the lads and how they were performing. This time they [coaches] were stood on the halfway line, right up against the fence away from me and we didn't talk all game. They've not done that before. It was as if to say, 'We're nothing to do with this group or Ian, we're impartial.' It was as if they thought that if they were seen to be associated with a poor age group then they would be judged accordingly. I think they thought, 'thank f**k I'm not with that age group!' I know that if that had been me, I would have been exactly the same. It was a poisoned chalice… you've got debatably the weakest group at the club.

Ian's perception of the rationale behind the actions of his fellow coaches identifies the possibility that coaches are faced with the challenge of *coping with visibility* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) within their coaching practice during periods of organisational change. Indeed, in their work on teacher socialization, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002, p. 111) suggest the notion of 'working in a fishbowl', and that in spite of their relative isolation in the classroom, teachers are subjected to increased 'visibility' through observations by colleagues, principals, and others (Kelchtermans, 1993). In such cases, Ian's professional practices were being interpreted and judged (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) by the 1st Team Manager, Academy Manager and other academy staff, without an attempt by such individuals to discuss or

understand such professional practices. Ian's response echoes the above situation when he was prompted to make sense of other Academy Coaches' actions during the aforementioned training game against another academy age group team:

> Nigel, John and Omar (pseudonyms) were coming over to strengthen their own position because the microscope was on me … and the 1st Team Manager is there, the Academy Manager [Richard] is there. I'm concentrating on my team and how I can help them out and there's conversations going on behind me about the players and stuff. Like I said, previously they would be stood next to me having those conversations and there would be an honesty about it. So, for me it's a little bit of 'Let's pan these players, let's pan this coach' by saying 'That's not very good, this isn't very good. I've spotted that issue, so I'm a good coach.' It was as if they knew I was under pressure; the lads weren't doing very well and they didn't want to be seen to be associated with it in any way in front of the gaffer [1st Team Manager] or Academy Manager.

In this situation, the 1st Team Manager and Academy Manager being present may have influenced the coaches' negative discussion about Ian being a poor coach, leaving their *true* perception of Ian as a coach open to question, regardless of his interpretation of the discussion. In his characterisation of *professional self-understanding*, Kelchtermans (1993) highlighted that the sub-construct of *self-image* relates to how teachers think others perceive them. As previously highlighted, periods of organisational change can prompt Academy Coaches to feel insecure about the possibility staff turnover and in turn, uncertain career prospects (Ball, 1987). Therefore, the presence of the recently appointed 1st Team Manager, who was perceived as a change agent may result in Academy Coaches attempting to behave and act favourably around them. Indeed, the significance of the 1st Team Manager's presence was enforced through a collective understanding, amongst Academy Coaches, of the fact that he had the scope to restructure the academy and the academy staff. In light of this, the data further support the findings of Thompson et al. (2015) in their discussion about coaches being stigmatized by peers. Ian's interpretation

of the other Academy Coaches 'putting down' him and his players to satisfy their own agendas relates to the work of Leary and Schreindorfer (1998, p. 15), who assert that stigmatization is a process whereby 'individuals are stigmatized to the extent that others shun, reject or ostracize them'. Kelchtermans' (1993) work and the notion of *self-esteem* in developing one's *professional self-understanding* can be used to further understand how Ian experienced the effect that the increased scrutiny on his age group had on his evaluation of himself as a coach:

> I think that whenever you have results that aren't going your way you start to question yourself a little bit, don't you, regardless of whether results are supposed to matter or not at this age. For me, it was more about, was I letting these lads down? I felt horrible for them because I knew that they knew they were under pressure. Kids of that age shouldn't have to experience that in an academy. You want to shield them a little bit at times. But at the same time, you are mindful that it could be your head on the chopping board, and it was! I suppose I thought, 'I'm gonna do what I think is right and look after this group of players that I have got to do right by and b******s to the politics and all that stuff. If I think this is right, then this is what I'm gonna do.' I think it just got to the stage where I just thought, 'F**k it. I'm a coach, I'm confident in my own ability, I know myself pretty well and I know this group of players pretty well, and I'm more interested in their interests than about my own or about people trying to strengthen their own position within the football club.

4.1.5 'I've Got Rid of Ian'

Ian reported the fate that followed his final game, or his 'test' as he described it, after he had been subjected to unusual levels of scrutiny by the 1st Team Manager, the Academy Manager, and the other coaches during this period of organisational change. Ian related similar findings from his experience of leaving the football club:

> He [Richard] knew that he needed to do something with this group; he couldn't be seen to be having a group that was consistently getting beat. It was in his best interest to go back to the 1st Team

Manager and say 'I've got rid of Ian.' It wasn't in his best interests to say that I was unhappy with the pressure that the lads and I were being put under. So, I think he manipulated what was said in the conversation to strengthen his position a little and to suit his own agenda. Obviously, if the gaffer [1st Team Manager] isn't happy with an age group and the Academy Manager then goes and sacks the coach of that age group, it's a feather in the cap of the Academy Manager. I know I said 'I'm not happy.' That was one of the first things that I said. I think that I was seen to be made a bit of a scapegoat. Richard [Academy Manager] just said that the gaffer [1st Team Manager] has said that he's not happy with the way that your team played…. 'It's probably best for us to go our separate ways and we'll look after you in terms of wages and I'll tell the lads that you decided you wanted to leave.' For me, I'd gone from being asked by the club to be interviewed by the EPPP auditors one month and then six weeks later being questioned about this, that, and the other. So, you've gone from being one of the main sort of people and 'flavour of the month-ish' to 'this group is struggling and it's his [Ian's] fault'.

Ian describes the discussion he had with the Academy Manager regarding the negative performances of the age group that he was coaching and the perception that the team needed to be improved. Again, drawing on the concept of a *professional self-understanding* of his role at the football club, the findings highlight the importance of *job motivation* in achieving this understanding. Prior to the process of organisational change taking place, Ian understood himself to be held in high regard amongst the senior academy management staff. Specifically, Ian had been asked by the Academy Manager to be interviewed by the English Premier League's EPPP auditors on the implementation and delivery of EPPP requirements around coaching practices and the monitoring of player development, to then being forced out the club as an outcome of his age group not achieving positive results in the academy games programme.

Ian's perception of the strategy that the Academy Manager used to influence the situation for his own benefit was also significant given the fact that Ian previously highlighted his awareness of

opportunities for individuals to engage in micro-political activity (Ball, 1987) to 'strengthen their position' at the expense of other academy staff during periods of organisational change. Ian described his thoughts after other Academy Coaches made him aware that the Academy Manager saw Ian's unhappiness and objection to the change in working practices and overall direction of the academy, as an opportunity to improve his own status by telling Ian that he was no longer required at the club. As Ian stated:

> I think Richard thought that he could portray it as, 'Well, I've done something about this group, I'm prepared to take the bull by the horns, I've done you a favour, Gaffer [First Team Manager], so when it comes to dishing out contracts, remember me and what I've done.' This was a problem group, something had to change and probably I was the one to go from his [Richard] perspective so… that's what I mean about being the scapegoat. Richard had actually been involved [coaches] with that age group but it seemed as though it was easiest to lay it at my feet.

Political strategies and tactics such as this are not completely absent from the study of performance sport, as Poczwardowski, Henschen and Barott (2002) reported similar findings in their study of coach–athlete relationships. Previously, studies have utilized social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974) to explain the maintenance of a relationship between an athlete and a coach. Specifically, the notion of 'profit' as a concept of social exchange theory can aid the understanding of the Academy Manager's actions in doing the 'Gaffer' a favour in order to be remembered when it came to 'dishing out contracts'. Poczwardowski et al. (2002, p. 104) explained that 'profit from a social exchange can be important in maintaining a relationship' (e.g., between the Academy Manager and the 1st Team Manager). Indeed, if the relationship does not produce a perceived profit, and there is freedom to terminate the relationship, then it is unlikely to be continued. However, as Blau (1964) suggests, the social context of the organisation is key in defining the exchange. In this case, the uncertainty of organisational change within a professional football club can prompt opportunities for staff to become 'allies' and work together to achieve their own individual agendas (Gibson & Groom, 2018).

Furthermore, Ian provided an insight into the reasons why he was unhappy and the changes to his professional working relationships along with changes to the working environment within the academy at Alder FC following the appointment of new senior management staff. Such an insight was reflected in a conversation Ian had with Eric and the impact that this had on his overall *job motivation* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002):

> We were discussing how disappointed we were that Aaron (Previous Academy Manager) had gone to Cartfellow United and how things were sort of changing and it wasn't the same type of atmosphere. There seemed to be a lot more tension and there was a lot more manoeuvring of cultures. The main difference between the previous Academy Manager and this one [Richard]… it felt as if you couldn't… I felt that I could with Aaron, he was the boss don't forget, but I could go 'I don't quite know with that'. With the new Academy Manager, it was frowned upon to challenge.

Indeed, the findings of Cruickshank and Collins (2012a, 2012b) have highlighted the impact that organisational change and the turnover of senior management figures can have on the maintenance of culture within a professional sporting environment. Richard had recently been appointed to the role of Academy Manager, resulting in an increased level of responsibility in relation to overseeing and supporting the changes to the academy structure and staffing. Such a change in culture resulted in Ian's decreased level of *job motivation* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) and desire to remain a part of the organisational change process in the academy at Alder FC.

4.1.6 'You've Got to be Savvy Towards it'

Finally, Ian provided a reflective account on the micro-political nature within the academy during organisational change at a professional football and demonstrated an understanding of the importance of managing the contextual and political environments of a professional football club during such periods, as Ian explains:

I think if I was to go back in … it's important to be able to read situations and to read some of the underlying things that are going on around the club, whether you are full time or part time. That's the worst bit of the job. All the s**t that goes with it. The good bit is working with the players and developing relationships with them; the other bit is the political side of things, and if you're not a political animal, you get swallowed up. You've got to be savvy [politically shrewd] towards it. I should probably have been a bit savvier if I wanted to stay. But ultimately it wouldn't have sat right with me. It stands you in good stead for the future. People make decisions about you without watching your sessions, so sometimes judgments are nothing to do with your coaching. I don't feel as though they could have got rid of me because they hadn't watched me coach in any depth. They just took a snapshot of one game. In hindsight, you know that there was a lot of other coaches involved with that age group over the years and I was in possession of the group at the time and they were struggling when the new 1st Team Manager came in. So, it was quite easy for them [1st Team Manager and Academy Manager] to say, 'I don't think it's quite working out with you in charge'…. 'Right, well, I don't really like the way things are going either so shall we just call it a day?'.

Ian described his feelings after being let go and his slight desire to take up a new, similar position, stating that 'when it got to around July time, you start to miss doing a bit of training. Everyone was coming back in for pre-season.' Ian's feelings about leaving the club can be understood using Kelchtermans' (1993) notion of *future prospects.* Being a member of the Academy Coaching staff at a professional football club for a significant amount of time, and subsequently undergoing such negative experiences towards the end of that time, can affect an employee's perception of the likelihood of securing similar employment in the future (Kelchtermans, 1993). Indeed, as Ian stated on reflection, questions about his behaviour and actions during those times and how he could have acted differently are pertinent in understanding the impact that organisational change had on his own professional self-understanding. Moreover, a different repertoire of

micro-political tools may have resulted in a different experience of organisational change at Alder FC. For example, had Richard decided to comply with the new working practices being promoted as part of the organisational change process within the academy, there may have been a different outcome in relation to his future at the Alder FC. In light of this, and in describing the employment environment of professional football during organisational change, Ian explained that 'if you're not a political animal, you get swallowed up. You've got to be savvy towards it.

5. **Chapter Five – Results - James' Narrative Story**

5.1 Background

At the point of organisational change James was employed as a Head of Foundation Phase within the academy. However, during the early stages of the organisational change process he became aware that his employment within the above role was under threat.

The following section will present a narrative analysis of James' story, with a particular focus upon his actions, strategies and professional interests during the process of organisational change that ultimately resulted in James keeping his job and staying in his role as Head of Foundation Phase. Indeed, upon this realisation, James played a key role in supporting a successful period of organisational change. Each section will provide an insight into the highlighted themes, along with a discussion of the data in relation to previous literature. The data indicated that the change process prompted James to reflect upon his own professional interests in developing micro-political literacy to maintain full-time employment during a period of organisational change. The findings revealed the micro-political strategies employed by James to ensure the Academy Coaches within his department were "onside". Additionally, James highlighted the relief he felt when he realised he had "passed his test" and was accepted by the 1st Team Manager as part of his academy staff to move the club forward. During this period James also reflected on his experience of choosing sides and "backing the winning horse" when it came to working with other full-time staff that he thought might eventually be sacked by the 1st Team Manager. Upon retaining his employment, James discussed the importance of managing upwards and his relationship with the 1st Team Manager. Finally, the move to a new and improved training ground brought about a change in culture and day-to-day working practices as part of the change process.

5.1.1 New Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager

After a year of employment at Alder FC as Head of Foundation Phase, James experienced large-scale organisational change on both football and organisational levels. As James stated:

I remember coming back from a training session and getting out of my car and a Sky Sports presenter came over and asked me to do an interview on the situation at the club and I didn't know what he was talking about. He said, 'have you not heard? If you don't raise a £1,000,000 by the end of the week then you're going out of business'. I was like, 'Oh right… I better go and look for a new job then'. When the new Chairman and Board of Directors came in, there was a lot of change around the club; all of the press releases were about developing and evaluating the academy. When the 1st Team Manager came in initially, you got the impression that there were going to be big changes with the staff so that was a bit of a testing period. There was quite a bit of tension at the time. In terms of the way football is, and how cutthroat it can be, you are a little bit guarded in terms of what you spoke about.

Such periods of uncertainty brought about micro-political action and strategy from James in an attempt to negotiate an environment where colleagues became "guarded". Similar to the work of Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) who describe the importance of becoming micro-politically active to protect against vulnerability, James stated that you wanted "to show what you can do and keep your job, but on the other hand you don't want to be seen as if you're sucking up to him [1st Team Manager]". Furthermore, James elaborated on the rationale behind his actions:

I suppose I was trying to be a bit tactical and play it the right way. You wanted to side with the right people, but not get on the wrong side of people by sucking up or making others look bad to make yourself look better. A few times, the [1st Team] Manager would get you on your own and you're thinking, "this is my opportunity to show myself in a good light". He's trying to work out who he wants to get rid of or keep. You're also thinking, "what's everyone thinking whilst I'm with him on my own?", "what are they thinking I'm saying to him?" Obviously, when you go back, everyone is asking "what's he said?", "what did you discuss?" Everyone is a bit cagey … at the end of the day; you're trying to protect your job and your livelihood. You just got that feeling. The mood around

the place… there was always… someone would go and walk out the office and disappear for an hour and you'd go, 'where have you been?'… 'I've just been with the Gaffer'. In the back of your mind you're thinking, why's he been in there? It was horrible at the time really.

Indeed, such micro-political action has previously been reported as important to maintain employment in order to protect *professional self-interests* (i.e. employment and career progression) within the culture of football (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Potrac et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2015) James' decision to become "guarded" resonates with the suggestion that the continuum of both proactive and reactive micro-political action, strategies and tactics takes different forms in reality (Blasé, 1991).

5.1.2 Getting People Onside

As Head of the Foundation Phase within the academy, James was responsible for six part-time coaches who worked with the age groups within that phase. James discussed his continued approach to engaging with micro-political action, strategy and tactics in an attempt to "protect his job and livelihood" and stated:

> I suppose I was trying to be around their [the coaches] sessions more, be constructive and make them feel a part of the team. I was trying to build a little bit of team spirit and team ethic with all the coaches in my department. I've been there myself as a part time member of staff and you appreciate being given little bits of information. I wanted to keep them in the loop and make sure they knew what was going on and make sure they don't feel like a cog in the wheel who turns up a couple of nights a week. So, I tried to be a little bit more personable towards them.

James reflected upon his reasoning behind this approach:

> I was new to managing staff so I was learning as I went along. I found that involving people and making people feel a part of the change got them to buy into you a little and made them feel welcome and you wanted them to be there and be a part of it. And in turn, you were trying to get the coaches

onside so that if people ask questions about you, like "what's he like as a boss?", "what's James like?", "what's he like as a coach?", then they will probably be more inclined to say that you're alright and that they don't have any issues with you. Obviously, you're aware that you are being judged, so if someone asks questions about you, you don't want them [the Academy Coaches] to drop you in it.

As Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) explained, self-interests tend to be at the heart of micro-political action. The strategy of "getting coaches onside" meant that James engaged in "proactive" action aimed at changing the situation and changing the conditions. Blasé (1991) describes how such proactive actions can take the form of "pleading and flattering"; however, it must be noted that "any action can become micro-politically meaningful in a particular context" (p. 11).

5.1.3 Passing the Test

Subsequently, after the change in Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Management staff, James discussed moments where staff were "put on the spot and put under pressure and that was your test and you may or may not pass. I know exactly what mine was and I was lucky enough to pass it at the time." James recalled the moment he became aware of his test:

He [the Academy Manager] rang me up later that evening … "I've got some bad news for you" … "what?" … "1st Team Manager is going to take a team, he wants to play your team tomorrow night at training. He's rang me up now and said I need to arrange it. He wants to see you working with a team, how you set a team up, what you're like." So that night, I'm sat on the laptop looking for other jobs! My first thing was that if he wants to put me under this test then he must not be having me so I'm gonna be going.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) have highlighted how prolonged uncertainty regarding employment can lead to self-doubt regarding professional competency. As James states, the uncertainty brought about by his "test" had a negative influence on his professional competency and "social status and recognition" (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002, p. 114). Upon reflection, James gave this explanation:

I've probably never been in that situation before where you've been in employment but then put on the spot. You become a bit vulnerable in trying to prove your ability. The fact that you have to go through that process puts a bit of doubt in your mind. You start to think, "what has he seen to make him think this, to make him think that he needs to put me under this pressure?"

James went on to explain his feelings at that point and the day leading up to his "test":

I was pretty defensive really, I wanted to just be left to it. I was comfortable with what I was going to do. Richard [Academy Manager] went "right, alright, whatever". It was as if he was thinking "right, go and hang yourself". On the night [academy training session], if somebody from above [e.g. the 1st Team Manager or Academy Manager] comes to watch your team, if they stand away from you I think that is a visible thing that they want to detach themselves from you or they want to say something that they don't want you to hear, which was striking on that night with Richard standing away from me. The better we did, the more he drifted back towards me. I think he was being a little bit tactical and thought "these are going to get beat here so I'll stand away, but when they start doing well, I'll attach myself".

Physical space between social actors can also be seen to represent support through close proximity or a lack of closeness through both physical and social distance. Indeed, Blasé's (1991) emphasis on the importance of *coping with visibility* provided an interpretation of James' story, with professional activities reflecting "living in a fishbowl" (Blasé, 1988) Specifically, coaches become subjected to observations by colleagues, parents and other stakeholders within professional football clubs and at academy training sessions

(Kelchtermans, 1993). In an attempt to cope with such visibility, James developed a range of strategies, actions and tactics to proactively manipulate the situation in his favour and change his working conditions (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009) James further explained:

It was a case of "listen, we're here to win tonight. I need you to play well and work well and do the things you need to do to win for me". I said this to the kids and they were Under 11 at the time. I basically said, 'the new Gaffer is coming down to watch and to watch you so we're all being tested tonight, we're all under pressure'. I was a lot more vocal, more tense than usual because I had the 1st Team Manager just up the line from me. Like I said, more tense and more vocal in terms of directing the players around. But to be fair, the group I was working with, I had worked with for four years on and off so I knew the kids really well. I had never really done that before, but it probably opened my eyes up to that if you actually do a bit of that, then it maybe does get a bit more out of them on the pitch. I had quite a good relationship with them all and looking back now it probably wasn't the right thing do but it probably saved my job. So, if they would have gone out and got hammered, he would probably have turned around and gone, 'I'm not having James, he's not good enough'. Fortunately, it worked out well.

Indeed, James' team won the game, with his players producing a convincing performance. Subsequently, James found out that he had passed his "test". In his words:

It was the day after, I got called out and probably had a 45-minute chat with the 1st Team Manager and we went through everything and we started talking about the game and he was quite complimentary. He told me his plans and where he saw me within that. It became clear that he was having me and he said to me, 'you're the person I want to do this job'. That gave me a bit of confidence to then say "right, let's get on with my job and start doing what I'm supposed to be doing" rather than panicking about whether I'm going to be here or not. The pressure was off a little bit in terms of thinking, 'will I, or won't I stay?'

Following his discussion with the 1st Team Manager after his "test", James became less concerned about his job prospects and competence as a coach, leading to a sense of decreased vulnerability. This was highlighted as James described the "assurance and relief" he felt after the conversation with the 1st Team Manager. James went on to state that "it also proved that your initial thoughts about the reason behind the test being to see how good you were, were right".

5.1.4 Back the Winning Horse

Upon passing his "test", James witnessed the experiences of other staff within the academy that did not pass their own "tests". As he explained, "there were four of us [full-time academy staff] at the time and it was split two and two. There was me and Richard who ended up staying and Mike and Jim (pseudonyms) who ended up leaving." James highlighted the difficulties around the interpersonal relationships with his colleagues within the academy during this period of change:

> We [James and Richard] sort of passed the test and got some assurance that we were going to be part of the team and it became clear that they [Mike and Jim] weren't going to be. Obviously, we were in the same office so it was a bit tense. There was one afternoon where Richard and me got invited to go down and play 5-a-side with the 1st Team Manager and all the staff and the Chairman, but they didn't ask Mike and Jim. So there were alarm bells ringing for them. But you're thinking, "we have to go with the flow a little bit and look after ourselves in terms of keeping our job".

Again, the choice made by James to take part in the 5-a-side game represents the actions, strategies and tactics (Kelchtermans, 2009; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Potrac et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2015) he employed, with the rationale of doing what he had to do to keep his job. James went on to elaborate this point:

> It was horrible really; these are your work mates who you work with every day, you build relationships with them. It got to a point where you had to back the winning horse and go with that one. It became clear pretty quickly that he [1st Team Manager] wasn't having Eric and Michael.

Then George got offered Eric's job whilst Eric was still there. Richard went to meet the 1ˢᵗ Team

Manager and come back and told me where he had been and that he knew George was getting Eric's

job. So, we knew that George was coming in and Eric was sat across the office and you're thinking,

'this is horrible'. But that probably hardened me to the way football is. We had discussions about it

in the office at the time and Eric just said "that's football, that's the way it is. Just do what you have

to do. Don't feel sorry for me or anything".

James elaborated further to explain the impact such micro-political action had on the working environment

within the academy:

There was a split there then. There was a definite split. They were looking at us as if we had stitched

them up and sided with the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager for a little bit, and them being left out. I suppose they

might have been thinking that we had gone behind their back little bit which we hadn't. But they

were obviously worrying and thinking about losing their jobs so there was a lot of stress there I

think. There was already a bit of tension, then that split appeared and they became isolated and

defensive with us. It was a 'them and us' type attitude.

Similar actions and strategies have been highlighted elsewhere as micro-political actions that sports

coaches, have used in an attempt to maintain and advance their employment, particularly within the culture

of football (Potrac & Jones, 2009; Potrac et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2015) James further explained the

rationale behind his tactic of "backing the winning horse" in the following manner:

I think for Richard and me we probably realised each other's strengths and realised that we were

better together than apart, if that makes sense. He struggled with certain things and I'd help him

because it suited me better. For example, the EPPP audit was coming up and getting everything

sorted for that lent itself to my skills really. The other two [Jim and Mike] were like "these two are

teaming up together". It wasn't like that, but obviously you can see why.

In relation to the *professional interests* outlined by Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) James' decision to "back the winning horse" positively affected his *social-professional interests*. Specifically, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) found that "several respondents told how they silently endured negative situations because the risk of troubled relationships with colleagues was not outweighed by the potential gains of improved working conditions" (p. 115). In the context of James' story, his decision to sacrifice elements of his personal relationship with Mike and Jim was outweighed by his desire to maintain his position within the club. James' decision to take such action was vindicated, as he explained:

> Mike and Jim lost their jobs and then George [Jim's replacement as Youth Team Manager] came in. George had come in and he was chosen by the manager so you're thinking "I probably need to be in with this person and make sure I make a good impression on this person because he's got the manager's ear". So there was that period where you were trying to form a positive relationship with George. I've been lucky with George in that he's been bringing his lad down to train with the team that I've been mostly involved with in my department. So, he's seen me work first hand, and it seems to have made a good impression on him.

James' strategy of forming a positive working relationship with someone who "has the manager's ear" demonstrates the social nature of professional interests. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) state, "*social-professional interests* often appear to weigh more heavily in decisions than other interests" (p. 115). Indeed, a greater understanding of importance of *professional self-interests* has significantly improved our understanding of the motivations that underpin the actions and strategies of football coaches in dynamic and complex environments to secure and advance their employment (Potrac & Jones, 2009; Potrac et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2015). Indeed, James highlighted how such positive working relationships were developed in his day-to-day working practices in the academy. Specifically, this period allowed James to develop a strong professional relationship with George, who was perceived to 'have the 1st Team Manager's ear'; and in turn, improve his own professional self-interests:

It was good because we had the new playing philosophy and coaching programme to write. We all stayed in during the summer, we didn't have any time off, which again was good because myself, Richard and George were in. Nobody else was in, the 1st team staff were off for a few weeks so that was a decent little time without any pressure to get to know each other a bit better and form a bit of team which is what we have now really.

5.1.5 You Want to be a Part of it

After changes within the staff at the football club were made, changes to procedures and formal tasks began to take place, affecting James' *organisational interests* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Specifically, as James discussed:

The technical board meetings that happened prior to the change would just consist of the Academy Manager and U18 Head Coach going off with the 1st Team Manager and they would come back and you weren't told anything. Whereas now, everybody is involved. There are no secrets that I know of. So I suppose the environment that was set up and created with everybody being together and everybody in the academy supporting the Under 18's and everybody in the Under 18's supporting the 1st team in terms of helping out down at the stadium on match days. The corridor before the players walk out on to the pitch is absolutely rocking now with all the players from the academy turning up. You could see people from the away team turning up and thinking what's going on here? I haven't seen anything like this before. It's the first time I've seen everybody behind the 1st team and wanting them to do well. So now you're thinking, we can actually bring the academy players down to watch this [1st team games] and we can start to look and pick players in our 1st team that the academy players could model themselves on, on the pitch, which has never happened before.

James outlined the positive effect that the above changes to procedures and tasks had, not only on James' *organisational interests*, but also on the manner in which he now perceived his role:

Everybody has had to change and roll with the new change. 'This how you're expected to be and this is how you're expected to conduct yourself' was the message. So, you've got to evolve and roll with that. It's having that responsibility and being a part of something and that you're needed, I suppose. The feeling around the place at the time was that you wanted to be a part of it and a lot of the stuff needed doing required me to be at these meetings and that was good. You got more ownership, I suppose. You feel a part of something and you're about it a little bit more and you want to do a good job because it's a reflection on yourself in how well you're doing your job. You felt a part of something that was moving forward so to be able to contribute to it was really good. Whereas previously, Richard was always around trying to make sure everything was running smoothly which frustrated me a lot of the time because it was as if he was thinking, 'I don't really trust you to do it yourself'… I've got to be here [Academy training sessions and fixtures] to make sure that everything is going the way it should be going'. So, there have been times where I've said to Richard, 'what are you doing? Just let me get on with it. I know what I'm doing'.

Previous work has highlighted that value of discussing the interrelated nature of "professional interests" simultaneously as opposed to discussing each professional interest in isolation (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). This is evident as the changes to the *organisational interests* indicated above positively affected James' self-interests "and in particular their self-esteem and task perception" (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002, p. 110). Of interest here, was James' discussion of how his increased self-esteem became evident upon the new appointment of George:

> When George first came in, I went down to a lot of the Under 18 sessions whenever I could and George wanted you to as well. He asked us to go down and to be involved and take bits of the sessions here and there with the players. He got everybody together which was good and had never happened before so you thought and felt a part of it.

Furthermore, James highlighted the change in *cultural-ideological interests* and the "norms, values and ideals" (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002, p. 114) within the football club. James explained:

> The 1ˢᵗ Team Manager and the Chairman are very demanding of everybody so I don't think anybody would be allowed to become comfortable or complacent because you get found out straight away because there is that much scrutiny placed on the academy. When we go to the Football League meetings, people are amazed at how much attention we get from the Chairman, Board of Directors and the 1ˢᵗ Team that no one else seems to get. So, you can't afford to relax and get complacent. When you first come into it you have ideas about it all being about development. But going through that initial period of change and seeing what a football environment is like at that time, and you sort of go from being a player-centred coach to a coach-centred coach because I want my teams to do well because that reflects on me. So, people will then be going "who's the coach?" I'm not trying to come across as selfish or say that it is all about me, but you do realise and learn about the environment then you have got to be like that if you want to get on.

James provided further insight into the changes in the norms and values from the previous Chairman and Board of Directors following organisational change:

> I think there's two elements to it really. One is the direction from above… when I first started and the involvement of the senior people within the club in terms of the Directors and the Chairman was non-existent in the first four or five years when I was there. So, you were… you didn't have that pressure from above… where now that pressure is every day; you're seeing the Chairman quite heavily involved and interested in how the academy is doing and you are aware of that. Rightly or wrongly on a Sunday when you are playing your game, in the back of your mind you are thinking, "I'm gonna bump into all these people tomorrow and I want to be able to tell them that we have done well". So obviously, you are going to do whatever you can so you can go in on a Monday morning and talk positively about what your team did over the weekend.

Indeed, such a sense of organisational socialisation is increasingly apparent within the sports coaching literature (i.e. learning how to behave within the context). The micro-political frameworks utilised here, and elsewhere, have started to further explain the motivations, actions and strategies of sports coaches working politically to survive and thrive within highly competitive and complex coaching contexts (Potrac & Jones, 2009; Potrac et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2015). Specifically, James highlighted the need to comply with the value that the Chairman and Board of Directors place on playing results and the desire to consistently beat other clubs in competitive academy fixtures. The actions and strategies employed by James to respond to such scrutiny from senior management staff was highlighted:

> Because of where they [Chairman & Board of Directors] are trying to take the club, there's an expectation that we should do better than the other clubs around us and if we're not then why? Why are we not getting more players through? Before, there wasn't that outlook, it was… we're just the same as everybody else. There's that expectation now and there's accountability… 'that's my responsibility, I better do something about it. If there is a bad result in one of the age groups in your department and nothing changes and nothing happens then someone from above comes in and goes, 'they've had two or three losses now, what have you done about it?'. If you say, 'nothing', they'll ask why. You need to turn around and say 'yeah, I've taken a training session with them' or, 'I'm going to take them for the game next week'.

Indeed, as discussed above, the adopted task perception of working within a professional football academy to develop individual players may be sacrificed for compliance to align with *cultural-ideological interests* (i.e. winning football matches), in an attempt to cope with employment vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996). James evidenced how such task perception lead to the conflicting ideological interests:

> They [Chairman & Board of Directors] don't see the development… an example at the moment, if you look at the Under 10's, they've lost more games than they've won this season. But two of their best players are playing up with the Under 11's at the minute. So, for me, that is great because we've

got two players playing up who we've developed, but obviously, that has weakened the Under 10's. However, it also means that the players in the Under 10's are getting more game time. So, to me, that is just a by-product of developing individuals. I could quite easily keep them in the Under 10's and win games, but the right thing to do is to put them up [in the Under 11's] and give them that extra challenge. So, that's the challenge you're faced with a little bit. They're [Chairman & Board of Directors] just looking at how you got on. They're thinking, 'the Under 10's got beat again? They're struggling, aren't they?'. Well actually no, they're not. They're just a victim of their own success, we've got good players and we've made them better.

5.1.6 Managing the Gaffer

James explained that central to maintaining and further promoting his position within the academy was the relationship that he developed with the 1st Team Manager through a range of micro-political actions. James gave this example:

That has evolved for me. So, if the 1st Team Manager is coming down [to an academy training session now] then it's fine because I know what we're doing is right. We've got things in place that make sure everything is running properly. It's also probably reading what he is about, what he wants, what type of person he is. He wants your opinion on stuff. Initially you were a bit nervous and you just say what he wants to hear. But as you get to know what he's about, he wants your honest opinion. He has asked me questions and I've gone back with what I think rather than what he wants to hear, and he's gone "why don't you speak to me like this all the time?" I had a conversation with him a few months back now… we were at a training session, we were stood watching and he was asking me about something and he said to me, 'why do you never give me your opinion? Why are you telling me what I want to hear? Be honest with me and tell me what you think'. But again, you have got to put it in a way, where you're not going to p**s him off or be critical of him. So, you have to understand the politics of it.

The above example highlights the development of James' micro-political repertoire in reading the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager, and James' perceptions of the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager's behaviours and actions; a key influence in an individual's survival during organisational change (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Furthermore, James conveyed other instances that have aided the development of his micro-political literacy:

> There have also been occasions where I've been honest in meetings after he has criticised the academy and I've defended us. You can tell that others in the room are agreeing with you but not saying anything. There has been a time where I think I have been punished for what I've said. There was one particular time where I booked games against Milton [pseudonym] on the Saturday for my teams and everyone was well aware of it. But there was a daft event going on at the training ground and he made me stay to look after the event and lock up where there were loads of others he could have asked. It was one of them, but the way it was at the time after that meeting, it was a little bit like, "I'm the boss, don't question my authority or this is what happens". The fact that there was other people in the meeting … if it's one-to-one between the two of you it's like he'll be happy to take your opinion but if it's in front of people, he can't be seen to be shot down by someone like me. So, it's about understanding the hierarchy and what they want in certain situations.

James' discussions here demonstrate *the knowledge aspect* of micro-political literacy in that James began to interpret and understand the micro-political character of the situation and what the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager wanted in different circumstances (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1996). Subsequently, James developed an instrumental and operational repertoire of actions and strategies to proactively or reactively "tell the gaffer what he wants to hear" or give the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager his "honest opinion". Finally, James reflected on the experiential aspect of his micro-political repertoire and the "degree of satisfaction" he felt about his repertoire by stating that "I have developed the confidence over time, though I wouldn't have said it in those initial periods."

5.1.7 The New Training Ground

Finally, James discussed the improved *material interests* brought about by the managerial and organisational changes and subsequently the move to the new training ground. James stated:

> Being here has brought a higher level of professionalism I suppose. For one, I think Alder FC from the outside is an attractive place to work and people see Alder's academy as one that is improving all the time. It's attractive for people who want to be in football to come and work. Beforehand, everyone's opinion of Alder FC was that we're the lowest of the low, the teams aren't very good, and the facilities aren't the best. Now, I think we're held in quite high regard with people. When people visit, they expect a certain level of professionalism and we have to match that.

James outlined the impact that the process of organisational change and the new Chairman and Board of Directors in particular, have had in increasing the 'level of professionalism at Alder FC' and making it an 'attractive place to work':

> It's got to a point now when one of the board members would say… 'we're looking at doing this, or that' and you get to the point where you think, 'it's probably never going to happen'. So, with the new training ground… initially it would have been, 'we're looking for a new training ground' and you're thinking, 'we've heard it all before, when it happens, we'll believe it'. But now… we heard the Chairman was meeting someone about getting the new training and the day after, everybody got called in… 'we've got the new training ground, we're moving at the end of the week'.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) identified that it is important to understand material issues from their symbolic meaning in the organisational context. The move to the new training ground and the improvement of material aspects of the football club have influenced the change in *cultural-ideological interests* brought about by the "higher level of professionalism". The use of visibility as a political strategy to "advertise" professional competence ensured that James met the new levels of professionalism (Kelchtermans, 1996). Specifically, James highlighted that "it provided me with the opportunity to step up and take things on and

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contribute more than I had before. So, the more responsibility and people saying, 'James can you do this for us', or 'James any chance you could help me with this?' was good for me at that point."

James reflected on the improvement in material aspects of the organisation and how this affected his self-interests in terms of his self-esteem and identity, (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009; Kelchtermans, 1996) as a coach working within professional football and his "future prospects".

> It was always … probably before all the change, Alder FC was always a stepping-stone … do what you need to do, but you're always looking to move on and do something else. But then you suddenly started thinking, "well actually, this place is going somewhere, I wanna be a part of it". So, that was the main difference, you were thinking, "I'm really gonna apply myself here and do a good job and be a part of something moving upwards."

Interestingly, the data highlighted above suggests a change in culture at Alder FC with James outlining that 'this place [Alder FC] is going somewhere, I wanna be a part of it'. Whilst it is unclear as to whether a change in culture was seen to be an important element of the overall organisational change process by the new Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager, Ogbonna and Harris (2015) have indicated that culture change can be a key characteristic of successful organisational change within a professional football environment. Indeed, a positive change in culture at Alder FC being felt amongst staff may result in the organisational changes being made within the academy department becoming more successful.

6. Chapter Six – Results - Richard's Narrative Story

6.1 Background

Richard was employed at Alder FC in the role of Head of Youth Development Phase. As a part of the organisational change process and the restructuring of the academy, Richard was promoted into the role of Academy Manager.

Data from Richard's narrative story provided an insight into the impact that organisational change can have on individuals operating at a middle management level within a professional football club. Specifically, Richard highlighted the initial reaction to change and reported similar experiences of concern and ambiguity upon the change in Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager as in the narrative stories of other participants in this study. Indeed, the increased level of staff turnover was also outlined by Richard and the affect that this had on his day-to-day working practices. Upon being appointed to the role of Academy Manager, Richard began by changing the working practices within the academy and implementing a new playing philosophy. In doing so, Richard was tasked with managing resistance when implementing such change (Gibson & Groom, 2018). Important to the success of changes being implemented was Richard's ability to manage his relationship with the 1st Team Manager which brought about instances that challenged Richard's ability to be diplomatic (Ahearne et al., 2014). Indeed, as the changes being implemented began to bring about relative success to the academy, Richard highlighted the importance of understanding the impact that such success may have on the behaviour of individuals working at different levels within the football club. At such times, developing trust amongst key working relationships within the academy was seen as crucial to a positive working environment (Balogun, 2011).

6.1.1 Everybody Initially is Worried About Their Jobs

Richard began by discussing his initial feelings during the change process and the manner in which he found out he would be not only maintaining his employment within the football club, but also promoted to the role of Academy Manager after a review of the organisational structure. Richard explained:

I think when anybody new [1st Team Manager] comes into a football club everyone is initially worried about their job and whether it is going to have a negative or a positive effect on you. With ourselves, it was about a month after the 1st Team Manager got around to talking to me because he was very busy with the 1st Team. Then we had an initial conversation on the phone. He was really positive, really interested in the academy and the vision of how he saw the club. He then said, 'We would like to make you Academy Manager.' I was currently in the role of Head of Youth Development Phase.

Richard provided a further insight into his thoughts and feelings around the appointment and the realisation of what it would mean for the member of staff who was then in the role of Academy Manager:

It was horrible because I had known Eric [pseudonym] for a long time after he was Academy Manager at Barnock [pseudonym] and he could tell what was going to happen, the writing was on the wall. I knew he was going through a hard time with his missus too. At one point, he lashed out at me. The U18s had a match cancelled on the Saturday and he wanted me to cancel training for a number of the younger age groups so that they could train. So I said, 'Can I just book you another venue?' and he flipped because he knew the scrutiny he was under from the 1st Team Manager about the U18s doing so poorly. But that's football, it doesn't matter how good you are at your job, if the 1st Team Manager wants to bring in his own people that he trusts, he will.

The middle management sensemaking perspective enables the illustration of the types of interactions that are evident during the change process between groups and individuals, and in particular the unintended or second order consequences of the change of a newly appointed 1st Team Manager (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Ogbonna & Harris, 2015). Indeed, the employment vulnerability of staff during the process of organisational change is a key area for middle managers to deal with (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Kelchtermans, 1993; Ogbonna & Harris, 2015). Lack of certainty for staff during organisational change can lead to workplace environments that are emotionally charged, driven by employment vulnerability, and

subject to challenges to self and ontological security, and unwelcome changes in working practices (Giddens, 1991; Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Kelchtermans, 1993; Mantere, 2005; Pettigrew, 1992).

*6.1.2 Forget About the B****y Philosophy!*

Following his appointment and discussion regarding the club blueprint, Richard set about the sensemaking process (i.e. working out what needed to be done), and started to initiate organisational change by devising a new playing philosophy and coaching curriculum for the Academy Coaches to adhere to when coaching the academy players in each group in training:

> When I looked at the technical programme, I thought, to develop players we have to start again with this and create our own philosophy. The players need to learn the technique, then do it in a skill environment. So, John [Youth Development Phase Lead – U12–U16] and James [Foundation Phase Lead – U9–U11] had a massive input in terms of how they saw it. I oversaw both of their curriculums but I wanted them to have an input so they could police it and monitor it. I was giving them a licence … in terms of the environment, I wanted to create one where players want to try and get on the ball, express themselves and feel happy about doing it. I give the staff a lot of responsibility. I don't step on their toes, I let them manage their department and let them do what they want to do really. They're managing themselves.

Importantly the above data illustrates *how* Richard set about implementing organisational change in a way that could be 'policed' and 'monitored' by other staff. This demonstrates the importance of middle managers working with those around them to implement and support the change process. Heyden et al. (2017) explained that one of the roles of the middle manager during organisational change is to provide opportunities for proactive involvement in the strategy processes for employees. Specifically, the ability to *initiate* and *execute* change through outlining opportunities for change, initiating day-to-day adjustments, creating periodic milestones, and providing a sense of direction to the receivers of change are crucial roles

of a middle manager (Heyden et al., 2017). Indeed, Gibson and Groom (2018) highlighted, in their case study of a Premier League Academy Manager, that having senior coaches at hand who presented findings to support and monitor changes is a more effective strategy than simply delivering presentations to staff.

The change to the new coaching curriculum created the possibility of tension within Alder FC, where staff may have contrasting values and beliefs. This provided an environment for potential conflict and resistance to the change process. Subsequently, Richard highlighted how and why he dealt with coaches that resisted change:

> One coach in particular, a UEFA A Licence coach, never played out from the back [passed the ball from the goalkeeper in a controlled manner to maintain controlled possession] once so we sacked him. He was just going direct all the time [playing long passes]. At half time, he actually had the cheek to say 'Forget about the b****y philosophy' and that was just the final nail in his coffin. At the end of the day, it's all about the philosophy. We had a chat about it on the Monday and made our mind up that he was a little too long in the tooth for change. He had his way of playing, but we wanted it to be our way so we decided to let him leave. I rang him up; it was difficult because I knew him really well, I liked him and I knew his Dad had developed cancer and I think that that affected him, where he just lost his patience. It's horrible. But when it's justified … you have to think of the player and the Mum and Dad, the child that you as an academy are developing. The only player that is developing when you play long ball is the person who is kicking it; you're missing out on all that decision-making.

The previous data extract illustrates the importance for Richard of maintaining the club blueprint and reinforcing the change narrative within Alder FC. Indeed, those that exercised agency in actively resisting the club blueprint and shared the mental model that Richard and his coaches had designed were dismissed from the organisation (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) However, alternative courses of action are available to middle managers to address resistance to change. For example, education, communication,

facilitation, and support can all lead to supporting change in the desired direction without the need to terminate the employment of staff (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). However, these approaches can be time-consuming and may not always work due to the amount and type of resistance experienced (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

6.1.3 You've Got to be Really Diplomatic, Agree to Disagree

A significant component of organisational change when a manager is appointed to a new role is working with new members of staff. Richard discussed his experiences of managing the 1st Team Manager who had been appointed:

> It really stressed me out, because he was clueless. He didn't understand how an academy works. He wanted to bring in his own coaches [to work in the academy]. We were sat there with a whiteboard with the coaches' names on for each age group and he wanted to get rid of nearly all of them. So I said, "We can't do that" and he said, "Why?" … "Well, we'll not be able to operate". I just couldn't understand his thinking; he didn't understand how an academy works and the EPPP requirements from the Premier League and English Football League [the sport's governing bodies]. They were more advanced than our coaches really, in terms of understanding new ways of coaching young players. Trying to explain that to the Gaffer… it just fell on deaf ears. The coaches were using new methods, taken from modern courses. So, they would put a session on, get the outcome, and didn't need to coach in the traditional sense. But the 1st Team staff never understood that concept and it's difficult trying to explain it to them, it's like talking to that television. They looked at me blank.

As the above data extract illustrates, during the process of organisational change one of the key priorities in the sensemaking process of a middle manager is *managing up*. The above extract illustrates the culture of professional football and the desire for senior managers to be surrounded by 'their own people'. Given the short-term nature of employment within professional football, trusting those around you to

support your agenda is critical to maintaining your employment. However, as the above example illustrates it is critical to have relevant domain specific expertise and the appropriate professional qualifications required by the sport's governing bodies (e.g. the Premier League & the FA). The process of ensuring that this happens, from the Academy Managers perspective, may include selling issues to top management (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), managing perceptions and expectations of senior managers (Bourne, 2011), managing role expectations and strategic agency (Mantere, 2008), and championing alternatives (Ahearne et al., 2014; Floyd & Woolridge, 1992; Mantere, 2005, 2008; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). This was one of the first priorities that Richard had to address during the initial period of organisational change in the academy, in particular, winning battles with the senior management regarding potential staff and resourcing changes.

Furthermore, the data highlights the impact that the lack of knowledge that 1st Team Manager had around the day-to-day running of the academy in his desire to restructure the academy, had on Richard's feelings of stress. Richard continued to discuss his feelings and emotions in such situations when dealing with and attempting to negotiate with the new 1st Team Manager:

> You've got to be really diplomatic; agree to disagree. A lot of the time you just turn a blind eye. At first I'd go home, have a stressed neck, bad headache … I'd really let it affect me in the first two or three months. Then I read a book by Bob Jackson and I adopted it; now I might be pissed off for five minutes, but no longer than five minutes.

Within this situation Richard made a political decision not to exert his managerial agency against the wishes of the senior management, in an attempt to avoid conflict, and instead developed an emotional coping strategy to deal with disagreements to protect his own self-interests (Ball, 1987; Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Kelchtermans, 1993; Mantere, 2005; Pettigrew, 1992). Furthermore, Richard expanded on his political activity when managing the 1st Team Manager in certain situations:

I just constantly analysed his character and understood that he is extremely impulsive. So, if someone is impulsive then they are quite easy to manipulate … I always try and make out as if it is his idea and not mine. So, subliminally, I might mention something earlier on and then he'll come out with it and we'll do it.

When asked to expand on his strategic interactions with the 1st Team Manager, Richard elaborated with the following example:

With Michael [pseudonym], one of the U15 players, the 1st Team Manager wanted to release him. He was going through a growth spurt and was really uncoordinated. So, one day I was talking to other staff and I mentioned that there was a player that I had once coached that was going through a growth spurt and that you should just leave players at 14, 15. He wasn't in the conversation but he was in the room so I knew that he would hear what we were saying. Then, after lunch, he came to me later on and said, "I think Michael might be going through a growth spurt." I went [laughs], "Alright … OK … yeah … I get that, Gaffer, it's a really good point."

As the previous excerpt demonstrates, the ability of a middle manager to 'sell' ideas to top management and influence decision-making is paramount to success during organisational change. The work of Ahearne et al. (2014) has illustrated the importance of middle managers engaging in upward strategic influence to champion alternative strategies to senior management. Furthermore, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) explained that 'skilled managers are able to use their knowledge of their organisational context and their colleagues/subordinates/seniors to influence those around them to adopt their point of view' (p. 953). However, this study adds to our understanding of *how* middle managers may engage in micro-political strategies to influence others and achieve such goals. Whilst the manipulation of others during the change process can be a relatively 'quick' and 'inexpensive' tactic to overcome resistance, this can lead to problems in the future, if people feel that they have been manipulated (Kotter & Schlesinger,

2008). Alternatively, education, communication, and support can help persuade people of better alternative courses of action during change; however, they are often time-consuming and may not always work (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Indeed, the process of training and preparing Academy Managers for engaging in such activity during organisational change remains limited. At the time of writing, education provision for Academy (middle) managers is in a period of transition. Previously, the English Football Association delivered the Academy Managers Licence, which has now been disbanded with prospective Academy Managers directed towards the UEFA Professional Licence for training and education. However, at present, neither qualifications focus on implementing, managing and coping with organisational change as an Academy Manager within their course content.

6.1.4 I've Never Once Gone up Against Him

Richard also discussed his embedded socio-cultural understanding of working in professional football at Alder FC, and the necessary discursive practices that he engaged in to retain his employment and ability to manage the senior management:

> A lot of the time its … "Hiya, Gaffer, how are you? You OK?", licking arse and keeping him happy. It's hard though because you know what he's like. He can be nice to you then stab you in the back and you find out off someone else what he's said. For example, I know that at the back end of last season … so three years after he come in and decided to keep me on, I found out that he had asked George [Head of Professional Development Phase and U18s Head Coach] if he wanted to become Academy Manager. George laughed and said no, and joked about the workload. But I couldn't believe that he offered someone else in the club my role, and I had to find out off someone else.

Through the development of his own managerial micro-political literacy and social astuteness, Richard demonstrated that he understood the importance of 'keeping senior managers happy' to protect his own self-interest through the process of *vertical management* or 'managing up'. Indeed, an awareness of

vertically managing senior stakeholders within an organisation is a key factor in the success of a middle manager (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Kelchtermans, 1993; Mantere, 2005; Pettigrew, 1992). This is a novel area for further exploration within the sports management literature, which has important implications for Academy Management practice. Within mainstream management literature for example, the ability to engage in such impression management has been found to be a useful political skill for middle managers (Ferris et al., 2007). As in the work of Balogun and Johnson (2004, p. 54), social communication through the process of sharing 'stories about their experience with each other' is important for middle managers in a *horizontal management.* Interestingly, the above data extract further emphasises the distrust that can be apparent within a professional football club (Kelly & Harris, 2010). Specifically, Richard highlights that after George was recruited from another football club into the role of Head of Professional Development Phase & U18s Coach, George was also offered the role of Academy Manager to replace Richard. Whilst, the 1st Team Manager's rationale for offering George, Richard's role, is unclear, the secretive manner in which the incident occurred adds to the complex, political and ambiguous nature of working in professional football, and also impacted upon how Richard made sense of organisational life in professional football. Such empirical insights into the micro-political working of organisational life in professional football are scarce.

When prompted to discuss his experiences of disagreeing with or challenging the 1st Team Manager, Richard replied with:

> I've never once gone up against him. How football works is … if you fall out with him, he's really impulsive; there is no coming back from it. You've gone. You can't go to war with the 1st Team Manager, you won't win. I've seen it happen with the 1st Team players. I've observed it with first year pros who are really keen to learn and have asked him a question on the training ground and he's not involved with them anymore. So, you can't really cross him because you're going to lose. They [first year pros] just asked him a question, and then they've not been involved since. He [1st Team Manager] turned around and said "You're not good enough, we made a mistake signing you,

the senior pros aren't having you" … and all he did was ask him a question, and the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager never knew how to answer it.

Richard highlighted that his new role and limited social power within Alder FC reduced his direct and overt political influence with top management. Richard went on to explain that his political and strategic decisions were driven by a sense of employment vulnerability at Alder FC. The structural condition of employment vulnerability in professional football drove Richard to engage in subtle micro-political strategies and actions to achieve his goals. In his own words:

> I think that it's because of the position that I've been in … if I had been recruited from a different club and I wasn't here previously when this regime came in it would have been different. I would have had a lot more power. I've always been vulnerable because I was already here, whereas George got bought in from the outside. So, if I ever went to another club, I would be a little more confrontational. Where in this one… [pauses]… I think I am getting to the stage of being respected. You saw me with the Chairman before, he wants to negotiate my contract. So, we're getting there but it has taken a lot of time. But if I had gone to another club, I probably would have had more battles.

Bourne (2011) states that 'for successful outcomes, the manager must know how to work within the organisation's cultural and political environment to ensure the important relationships are managed' (p. 1003). Indeed, Richard's experience of witnessing players challenging the 1ˢᵗ Team Manager impacted his own behaviour towards that Manager. Moreover, Munyon et al. (2015) highlight the importance of *social astuteness* in middle managers, 'which involves incisive observation of others' (p. 145). Such political skill and the understanding of power and political dynamics appear to be crucial during periods of uncertainty throughout organisational change in professional football to reduce employment vulnerability. Interestingly, although Richard occupies a more senior position within the club's hierarchy (see Figure 1),

because George had been appointed directly by the Chairman to assist the change process and had a closer network tie (i.e. more frequent interactions) to the 1st Team Manager, Richard perceived that his own social power and social capital were less than George's. Indeed, whilst the influence of being an 'insider' change agent and an 'outsider' change agent has received attention within the business management literature (Zhang & Rajagopolan, 2010), studies investigating the impact of being recruited from *outside* a professional club versus the impact of being promoted from *inside* a professional football club to implement organisational change have yet to emerge.

6.1.5 I'm Thinking, You're Deluded

After being appointed to the role of Academy Manager, Richard was aware of the need to also manage his relationship with the Board of Directors. An aspect of this relationship was managing the expectation of the Directors regarding the academy. As Richard outlined:

> That's one of the biggest challenges we have is educating the Directors, and one in particular who is obsessed with results … "How did you get on?" … "Oh, we played well" … "What was the score?" … "I don't know, we had all the ball though" … "Yeah, but what was the score?" … "I don't know, I think we got beat 2–1." That's the first question they ask.

Gibson and Groom (2018) reported similar findings when investigating the experiences of an English Premier League Academy Manager in managing expectations during organisational change. Whilst education and support can be time-consuming, this is often one of the lowest risk strategies to adopt in supporting organisational change (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Within the context of elite professional football, Gibson and Groom (2018) highlighted the need for middle managers entrusted with the development of the youth academy to be able to balance short-term failures (i.e. losing youth matches) with a plan for long-term success (i.e. developing players for the 1st Team) when challenged by senior managers at the club.

Richard explained that through education and support the club Directors eventually became better able to understand the importance of long-term planning over short-term success in professional academy football:

I think the penny has dropped now and they are starting to understand that it's not about short-term results and that winning youth leagues doesn't necessarily mean success. So now they're seeing some income from the academy products, their biggest concern and their marker for success is how many players are in the shop window playing for the 1st Team and who could be sold on? Very rarely now do I need to tell people what the score was in certain games. It's irrelevant; I'm more concerned with how individuals have done. There has been a lot less interference now… I think it's because we are making the club money and they know they can spend that money on the 1st Team, but really it should be spent on the academy.

Another challenge that Richard faced was attempting to manage the expectations of the Board of Directors regarding the limited player recruitment budget allocated to the academy. Richard explained a specific situation with a number of senior staff members when reviewing the current U18 playing squad:

In one of the meetings we had, they [Chairman, Chief Executive, 1st Team Manager] were saying that the players we signed were not good enough. They got up all the U18s players at the Marriott Hotel and they were saying, "Who's signed him, who's signed him, he's shit, he's shit … next … he's shit". At the time, we were top of the Youth Alliance League, we won the Youth Alliance League the previous season and they said the players we were signing weren't good enough. You look at our recruitment budget and it's about £2,500. So, we were scratching our heads a little and I'm thinking, "Wow, what more can we do? You're deluded". If you look at the teams we were up against, one is now a Premier League club and the others were much bigger in terms of fan base and we still won the league, yet the players were deemed not good enough. The Chairman is sat there

with a big smile on his face. So again, you just had to grin and bear it. You just sit there thinking, 'b*****ds'.

In her work that investigated middle managers advising upwards, Bourne (2011) highlighted that, with a robust relationship and effective communication, over time experienced and politically astute middle managers are in a position to actively change the perceptions of those around them towards more realistic and achievable goals. Additionally, in their investigation of top and middle managers, Heyden et al. (2017) identified that middle managers are better equipped to address inconsistencies between 'ideal' and 'real' business and economic realities, with their knowledge of the context that the business operates within through relatable language. However, the above extract contrasts the previous literature discussed here. Specifically, Richard's feelings of being powerless to intervene during a meeting where the expectations of the academy were being debated may reflect the lack of robustness and effective communication (Bourne, 2011) when defining his relationship with the Chairman and 1st Team Management staff. This relationship and the quality of communication processes within that relationship may be something that needed to be developed over a period of time during the organisational change process.

6.1.6 Success Has Many Fathers but Failure is an Orphan

In addition to managing the expectations of the senior management above him, Richard also discussed the limited recognition given to both himself and the other academy staff in discussing the success of the academy. Since Richard was appointed as Academy Manager, following the process of organisational change the academy has had 'thirteen lads involved in the 1st Team squad, nine players have signed professional contracts' whilst also selling 'three players for a combined fee of about £750,000'. Richard went on to state that 'We recently just sold a player for £350,000 and the club haven't even said thank you or bought me a coffee out the coffee machine'. Following this, Richard highlighted the political nature of success within a professional football club:

Absolutely. We have a saying now, 'success has many fathers but failure is an orphan'. Everyone wants to be a part of it when you are winning. They're all standing on the touchline when you're winning. But when you're losing, they're all sat away from you. That's where we are at, at the minute with the academy. If someone came in here from another club they wouldn't last five minutes because he [points to Head of Football Operation's desk] wants to be Academy Manager. There's a lot of people … the Chief Executive, he's dying to get involved; Joe [pseudonym, Head of Football Operations], he's dying to get involved … because it helps to promote them, but they don't want to do all the paperwork that goes with the role. The Chief Executive had an interview with Sky Sports and he doesn't even know anything about the academy. But it was all about him and how he's changed the academy and all that b******s. So, when Jonny [pseudonym, Alder FC academy player] gets sold to Longbourne [English Premier League Club] Joe is all like, 'look what I've done'. So, he's promoting himself, but I don't blame him! He's been royally stitched. He used to be 1st Team Assistant Manager and now he's f**k all. He can't even watch the 1st Team play. He's been royally screwed.

Furthermore, Richard also discussed occasions where he felt that 1st Team staff were actively trying to sabotage the success of the academy as the performances of the 1st Team were poor. Richard provided an account of his experiences and his understanding of these experiences:

We were going for the league title, and this has happened on numerous occasions, last year and at the time 1st team were not doing particularly well. We won the league for the 1st time in about thirteen or fourteen years and 1st Team Manager was watching the game against Barnock. We were playing and we needed to win. The 1st Team Manager sent one of his staff over and told us to take our best player off because he might be playing with the 1st Team on Monday. So, the way I saw it was sabotage. There was no other explanation for it. It got worse then with more players going into the 1st Team who weren't going to play, but that also meant that they couldn't play for us. I'll give

you another example, Greg Moult. He was flying for us in the league last year, absolutely flying. With twelve games to go, Greg got took off us… 'you can't have him now, he's playing with the 1st team'. They only played him in one game and never played again. If we would have had him, we would have won the league again, but that stopped us from winning it. I think he [1st Team Manager] feels a threat. Last year, we had the annual presentation and it was all about the U18's because there were no success stories from the 1st Team. Everything was all about how well the U18's and academy was doing.

Interestingly, here is the meaning Richard attached to the actions of his senior manager [1st Team Manager]. Whilst Richard's perception that the 1st Team Manager was actively trying to sabotage the success of the academy remains interpretive, the work of Ogbonna and Harris (2015) highlighted tensions within football clubs brought about by cooperation versus competition and the 'frictions between individual needs and organisational requirements' (p. 226) that emerge within the culture of football. Ogbonna and Harris (2015) go on to explain the power play between subcultural relations during organisational change, in this case depicted as the 1st Team Manager exerting power over Richard due to being threatened by the success of Richard and the academy. Whilst the primary remit of the Academy at Alder FC was to develop players who are either capable of playing for the 1st Team or have the potential to be sold to another club for a significant fee, short term success for the Academy was also reflected in the results of Academy matches. Consequently, such results were of significant value to the Chairman and Board of Directors in their new vision for Alder FC, a notion that the 1st Team Manager may have been aware of, and also may have influenced his actions towards 'sabotaging' the academy.

Similar to the work of Rouleau and Balogun (2011), this demonstrates the importance of an interconnected understanding of the context in which middle managers operate, the sensemaking process, and the ability to act politically. Indeed, Richard's assertion that the 1st Team staff member 'said it with a smile on his face' when delivering bad news provides us with an insight into Richard's sensemaking of

such a situation, and how this process is interrelated with his contextual understanding of the culture of professional football. Indeed, Heyden et al. (2017, p. 7) further explain that middle managers may 'be prone to position bias and favouring their unit's goals [i.e. long-term academy success] over organisation-wide goals [short-term 1st Team success]'. In this situation, the meaning Richard attached to the actions of the 1st Team staff may have been 'muddied' by his desire for the academy's U18 team to succeed and achieve his own role related goals. The potential for internal conflict between departments in highly competitive and dynamic organisational settings remains an important and complex issue, and one that deserves to be investigated further.

6.1.7 He Knew That he Could Trust me and I Knew I Could Trust Him

Central to Richard maintaining his ability to perform and work in the pressured environment of a professional football club was the support network that he and his staff had created for each other when faced with challenging circumstances:

> There is a bond there that helps you cope. You know that if you are going to say something it doesn't go out in the open again. You need that … someone to bounce your ideas off. Some days, I'll have really up days and George will be quite low and I'll pick him up; the other days it's the other way around and I'll be really p****d off. If you're on your own, it's a lonely place.

Richard's assertion that 'if you're on your own, it's a lonely place' indicates the impact that a lack of trust (Kelly & Harris, 2010) can have on an individual's working practices in a professional football. Whilst our understanding of how trust manifests itself within relationships of those working in professional football (Kelly & Harris, 2010), Richard discussed how a level of trust developed between himself and George, who had been employed by the club as an outsider during the initial period of organisational change:

It's a mutual respect. Obviously, George played the game for a long time. There are times where you are stood at the side of the pitch at a game and you lose the momentum of the game and it starts to shift towards the opposition. You come together, both of you, and you come up with a solution to that. I remember once at East Holt [pseudonym] in the FA Youth Cup and George was under a lot of pressure at that time. We were away from home, we had already played East Holt in the league and beaten them and on this occasion we played at the stadium, it's one of the biggest pitches in the [English] Football League, it's huge and we couldn't get our distances right. They were playing through us, there were too many gaps between our lines and notoriously we are a pressing team. It was because of the pitch size, I'll never forget it. Just before half time and George is on the gels [laughs]… 'do you want a gel, Richard?'… 'No, I'm alright, mate' [laughs]. I had sort of seen what was happening. Then he's took me in the shower and gone, 'what the f**k has gone on out there?'. I said, 'it's our distances, we need to be a lot more compact all over park'. So, we changed and we won the game, we were more compact and we pressed the second ball instead of the first ball and we won comfortably. It was just stuff like that, that made us a lot stronger. He knew that he could trust me and I knew that I could trust him.

Richard highlighted the importance of trust in developing strong working relationships with colleagues that will withstand the pressures that come from working in professional football during a period of organisational change. Key to the development of trust was Richard's increased *reputational social capital* (Ahearne et al., 2014), that was enhanced after he demonstrated his knowledge and support for George during the half-time period of a competitive game. Reputational social capital is acquired through the 'prestige of being knowledgeable in the circles of peer middle managers' (Ahearne at al., 2014, p. 70). Rouleau and Balogun (2011) highlight the importance of understanding 'social and cultural systems' in determining with *who*, *how* and *where* middle managers should be having conversations. Importantly, the

trust between Richard and George developed through increased reputational social capital, thus ensuring

Richard had a strategic ally and a confidant during ambiguous periods of organisational change.

7. Chapter Seven – Results - George's Narrative Story

7.1 Background

George was employed as Head of Professional Development at Alder FC as an outsider from another professional football club during the organisational change process. George was tasked with both implementing change within U18-U21 age groups and supporting the change process within the academy U8-U16 age groups.

7.1.1 Getting the Job and Role Expectations

Georges' narrative story highlighted the benefits of being appointed to a leadership role when agreeing the conditions of his employment and understanding the remit of why he was employed. Being an outsider tasked with implementing change also meant that current staff became wary of the changes that may become apparent and the affect that such changes can have on their employment (Zhang & Rajagopolan, 2010). Understanding such concerns influenced George's behaviour and the manner in which he created a professional leadership identity to implement change. George then began to address the remit of developing football players who were capable of being sold to English Premier League clubs and in turn, bring in a financial return to Alder FC. This prompted changes in staff turnover and the creation of a working environment that would provide a platform for achieving the remit set to him. Finally, George discussed the issues around creating a leadership identity when coaching and managing a new group of players and how factors such as self-doubt and vulnerability influenced such an identity.

Following changes at the club, a new Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager reviewed the performance of the academy and relieved the Youth Team Manager (Ally, pseudonym) of his duties before appointing George as a replacement in this role. With the club undergoing such significant change, George sought assurances from the 1st Team Manager: 'I don't want to take this job knowing in six months'

time a new manager comes in and you're surplus to requirements.' George reported that the conversation continued with an explanation from the 1st Team Manager:

'That won't happen', he says. You can't have that written in your contract that you're never going to get sacked. But you have to take people on face value. I met the Chairman; his first words were 'We're bringing you in because we've not had a product in the first team for nearly seven years. Smithstown Football Club is just not producing. That's your job and your remit.' So, you make sure all your terms are met. Your strongest position is when you're in the first two or three weeks all prior to agreeing. Once you're in the system, you've agreed your wages and everything and you start asking for stuff and you're getting told, 'No'.

A similar rationale for employing staff from outside of existing organisations is reflected in previous literature, with outsiders recruited to bring new knowledge and skills into the organisation (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2010). Previous work has demonstrated the important role of the 1st Team Manager and the Academy Manager in the development of academy players for the 1st Team (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Gilmore & Gilson, 2007). Whilst the work of Gibson and Groom (2018) highlights the importance of a vision for change in academy settings, Gilmore and Gilson (2007) further highlight the importance of the long-term contractual security of the 1st Team Manager in supporting the development of a club's academy.

After meeting both the 1st Team Manager and Chairman, George reflected upon the offer: 'That's when you've got to make sure everything is right for yourself. I felt confident. You know, I thought "I've done it before, I've worked with pros [senior professional players] at Westfield [pseudonym], this should be a piece of cake."' However, George was also aware that his appointment meant that someone else (Ally) lost their job:

I sat down and thought about it and thought, 'Yes, I've got back in. It's a chance'. I felt pretty relaxed coming in. Obviously, somebody lost their job because I was coming in which I knew about and was a bit awkward. You have to deal with that. But you also have to get to work and analyse

how you can make a difference within the first two or three weeks. What needs doing? How can I affect this? Prioritise really. I had to go down to the academy and work out what was going on with the U16's. Then you've got a 1st Team Manager coming in and criticising what's currently going on in the academy and saying, 'that isn't right, that isn't right, he's not right, that coach isn't any good, the standard of training is rubbish'. You think, 'wow, there's a lot to change here in a small space of time'. So, you have to have a belief in yourself that you can improve the situation, you know what I mean? You can only add to it. It was like a challenge for me, more than anything.

Similar findings have been illustrated by Wagstaff et al. (2016) in their examination of organisational change in professional football. Specifically, participants from the study completed by Wagstaff et al. (2016) explained that managerial and organisational change is the nature of the sports industry and over time employees become accustomed to dealing with change.

7.1.2 Addressing the Remit and Developing the Business

Whilst initially the Chairman had described George's remit as being to develop players for the 1st Team, it soon became apparent that developing players to sell for a financial return was the primary purpose of George's remit:

The Chairman said to me 'I need to make it a business, George'. He's putting in money on top of the Football League funding we're getting. He's a successful businessman so he'll come at it from a business sense too. We've got a department that's going to have to pay for itself. So, with that, I'm going to have to make lads attractable to a certain clientele. Who is going to potentially buy these lads? Top Premier League clubs? Top Championship clubs? Who's got the most money? Premier League clubs. I'm going to have to make them [players] desirable. What are they looking for? Technically strong, athletic thinkers.

Providing an example of how he would develop players that were attractable to Premier League clubs, George outlined that:

> Some of my centre halves are good on a ball, we encourage them to play out from the back. Predominantly, most teams don't want to concede goals, but a ball playing centre half that's really comfortable on the ball becomes attractable. We've sold four of them now. There's a lot of money in doing that.

George's awareness of the need to make the academy a business prompted reorganisation of his managerial identity to achieve his remit of developing players who could become saleable assets to a specific market. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) found that employees create self-images and work orientations that are consistent with the objectives they are tasked with by superior leaders within organisations. In an attempt to create the desired work orientations, George continued to discuss questions he posed to both himself and his staff in doing so: 'How do we change the perception within the club? How do we go from "Well, we've only got two lads who got pro contracts this year, so that's a success as a youth [department], we finished sixth in the league…we're s**t but that's us, we can't do anymore, we're a s**t club, we haven't got any scouts." How do we go from that to getting a title winning team within six to twelve months of coming in? How do we get lads appearing in the first team? How's it done? It's changing a mind-set, it's having a focus and a vision of what you want, it's implementing it.'

During periods of organisational change in professional football, the work of Gilmore and Gilson (2007) has demonstrated the importance of a philosophy driven by innovation when competing against other clubs with limited resources, whilst Gibson and Groom (2018) have illustrated the importance of staff that are willing to buy into a vision of change or be 'moved on'. George continued to discuss an overview of the strategy that was implemented to help generate business and attract interest from the 'top Premier League' and 'top Championship' football clubs: 'The most lucrative market is Under 23 level. I have to attract the scouts initially, get the interest. If I can get that interest bubbling because they're technically

strong, they're athletic – interest. Then we play them in our first team, boost the profile even more.' By generating that initial interest from the scouts and then raising the profile of the player by playing him in the 1st Team, George highlighted the financial returns that his department had made since implementing this strategy:

> We've done close to £1.4 million just in down payments in just over 12 months. For a [English Football] League One club that's never had a player anywhere near…we've had 13 [1st Team] debuts, with an Under 16 that is currently playing in centre midfield that could probably be worth well over a million pound. There's probably three to four million worth of talent stockpiled at Under 16s.

George further elaborated on his assessment of the Under 16 age category and outlined the review process for players in each age group within the academy:

> You have three grades you might have 'saleable' – say they're in the Under 14s or Under 15s and there's interest [from Premier League or Championship clubs]. You might have 'potential for scholarship' [two-year contract given to players at Under 16 to continue training full time until Under 18] and you might have 'release' or 'bottom end' if you're not expecting much.

George highlighted that the recruitment process meant that 'all kids now have to have a selling point, they have to be outstanding at something then we can work with the rest'. Whilst relative success had been achieved in terms of his remit since his arrival, George was aware of the potential questions that may be asked if the production of players and the business did not keep up the same pace. He discussed this situation: 'What I find at the moment is people are coming in now and they think this is normal. It's not normal, it's not. Getting one [player] in your 1st Team every three or four years is normal.' Further discussions prompted George to outline his thoughts on questions around this issue:

What we are doing at the minute is a miracle and we just feel at the moment that is it expected. So, we have created a monster, but for the right reasons because we are being successful and I hope it carries on. But, there will be a time when it dries up and then what's the perception of people towards us? 'What's going on? Where's the next one [player]?'…'Well, we've made you all this?'…'No, but where's the next one? Why haven't we got another one?'…'Well, they don't grow on trees'. That would come. We are careful as a coaching staff. It's very easy at the moment to get pats on the back and take all the glory. We just have to say, 'Right, next year we might not be productive.' We've done brilliantly but we might have to have a couple of years where we are not as productive but we can still be competitive in the league and get organised as a team. We probably won't lose any players, but we might not sell any either. It's a balancing act.

The work of Kelchtermans (2009) illuminated similar sources of employment vulnerability for teachers as are reported within the present study. Kelchtermans (2009) highlights that employment vulnerability encompasses both emotions (feelings) and cognitive processes (perception, interpretation). Specifically, George highlighted concerns about the possibility of a negative perception of him and his staff if they did not continue to perform against the measurement of producing players who were saleable assets. Relatedly, in understanding the impact of perceived negative judgements of an individual's performance, Kelchtermans (2009) found that, within educational settings, negative student performance in test scores led to teachers sensing a negative perception of their identity as a good teacher and therefore to feeling vulnerable within the working environment. To understand George's assertion that players 'don't grow on trees', there are factors that influence the successfulness of his role that are out of his control, such as player recruitment and other issues that contribute to player development. Kelchtermans (2009) explained that such employment vulnerability stems from a lack of control of organisational working conditions, which in George's case, were defined as a lack of financial resource for improved player recruitment processes.

7.1.3 Staff Character Appraisals

In order to successfully address the remit given to him and develop the business, George was required to consider the current staff in his department and to determine which staff would best support him in fulfilling the remit. George recalled:

> You've got a Sport Scientist that's been employed by the previous guy, he's working with you every day. He's in the office with you every day. I've got a Physio I've never met in my life, I've never met Michael, I've never met Dave. They're our youth full-time set up. I've come in now and everybody is looking at me to say, 'Right, what are we doing?'

George's experience as a new leader coming into an already existing department was that it brought about an increased level of expectation and he had the perception of 'being judged' by his new staff. Similarly, the work of Denis, Langley and Cazale (1996) found that moving into leadership roles brings about increased visibility and multiple pressures. Within the context of professional football, Roderick (2006) highlighted the "heightened self-consciousness associated with increased levels of visibility inside a football club" (p. 259).

When considering this initial period, George provided an insight into the political behaviour he employed during the appraisal process of the Sport Scientist (Derek):

> He was a bit weird, Derek, a bit strange. This is the first game…I'm doing my warm up, I've set up. Everybody warms up doing the static stretching but I do the keep ball normally with just the players that are starting. The other subs just play with a ball. He [Derek] questioned me a little bit the first time. He says, 'Well, I don't agree with that.' I'm thinking 'What do I do? Do I tell this guy straight away, "Listen, pal, this is how we do it", or do I let him have his moment in the sun until I work him out?' I said, 'Alright, I'll put them [players] in.' Because to me, it doesn't really matter. It's just a warm up. Long term, would I want to replace him? I might do. But the Gaffer is already on

him, it's got nothing to do with what I've said but the Gaffer wants to make a move on him; he's not sure about him.

George continued to explain his political behaviour in appraising Derek: 'I thought, "Well, hang on a minute. I know I'm safe for bit." I have to figure out these guys in time. I let him have his moment in the sun: "there you go". I've let him have his little piece, but I'm sussing him out already. I'm sussing people out all the time. You think, "Can I work with him? Are they good at their job? Is he giving me what I need?".' George further explained his thinking when discussing the prospect of Derek losing his job within the academy:

> He was still doing the job; he was still making sure that the players were getting what they needed to a certain degree from a sports science perspective. But the problem of Derek going is that it leaves me a man down in a department that I'm not specialised in. One, you've got to find a replacement. Two, it puts a bit more on the Head of Medical because they are related areas. You have to look for a replacement, obviously one came in, we tried him out and he's been with us ever since really.

Such micro-political behaviour as exhibited by George can be evident during organisational change, as uncertainty and conflict generated during these periods "intensifies political activity around the processes and outcomes of the changes being introduced" (Buchanan, 1999, p. 573). Furthermore, Ferris et al. (2002) have suggested that the experienced political actor is one who can masquerade their self-serving intent.

Following this period of appraisals, George was asked to discuss his thoughts with the 1st Team Manager, where he felt he was 'becoming responsible for people's jobs'. George provided an insight into these discussions with the 1st Team Manager:

> Was he [Michael] very good at his job? From my experience of working in youth, yes. Did he have any complaints coming back about him? No. So, he worked quietly and efficiently. Was he the bee's

knees and the best coach in the world? Probably not. But when the Gaffer [1st Team Manager] saw him coaching [and wasn't sure] …I'm thinking 'Hang on a minute, he's very good at what he does, all of his staff turn up.' So, I might not agree with that and just say, 'No, he's alright.' So, I might be the one saving Michael. Then he might say 'What about Dave?' I'm thinking, 'Does he add value to me in my job?' Yes. So, I've got to fight for him. Before I know it, I'm becoming responsible for people's jobs. I think we've got to create the right environment. People have got to feel comfortable. You're a group of men in an office, you want to have a laugh. But when it comes to our work, we've got to be ultra-organised. So, you're working out personality traits. I like to have a good environment as well as camaraderie in the office. I like people to get on with one another and not just be there to work.

The decision by George to 'fight' for certain members of staff who 'add value' to his role is reflected in previous literature, where a degree of overlap between new and existing knowledge and practices is identified as a pre-requisite for the effectiveness of new knowledge and practices and the successful management of change (Ahuja & Katila, 2001). As described by Geppert and Dörrenbächer (2014) in the pursuit of self-interest, actors will participate in internal politics related to issues such as resource allocation decisions and authority delegation and appointments. George also highlighted instances where he had to discuss staff with Dave, the Academy Manager: 'I said "I can't work with him [Ally– Head of Youth Development Phase], he's doing my head in"… Dave would say "Oh yeah, I know"…"No, he's f**king s***ting on all of us, he's running back to the Gaffer, he's trying to get us all sacked, he needs to go."' George's experiences of conversations with the 1st Team Manager about George's staff and George 'becoming responsible for people's jobs' highlight the strategy he used to influence the 1st Team Manager to ensure that the staff he needed to fulfil his remit remained at the club. Indeed, Nissen (2016) has highlighted the importance of a coach being consistent 'with the culture and strategy of the club…to increase his trustworthiness and perhaps postpone a potential dismissal' (p. 146). Similar findings were

reported by Gibson and Groom (2018) when dealing with members of staff who were not working in a manner that was associated with positive organisational change, and who subsequently 'moved on'.

George reflected on this process of coming into the club and the academy as an outsider and having so much responsibility in the change process and on the impact this had on him personally and his understanding of how others perceived him:

I think it would have been easier if I had come in to a group of three or four and we were all close-knit. Come in, carte blanche, you're doing this. It's about the surrounding people having to fit in with what you do, whereas I felt I had to fit into them first, get their trust and then change it. Rather than isolate myself in my working day which didn't feel comfortable in an office where they're all going 'd***head' behind my back. You know, sometimes you probably question yourself a little bit and you're wondering what your staff are thinking. Are they thinking, 'it was better before, why's he here? He doesn't know what he's doing'. You might catch them having a chat and you can get paranoia sometimes. You're thinking, 'f*****g hell, they're talking about me'. You know? All that kind of stuff. There's no evidence that it happened, but that's how your mind works. Your coaching mind is amazing, and it depends whether you are strong. I might seem strong, but I'm insecure a lot about my coaching while I'm doing a session. I'm thinking, 'Is this going well? What's he thinking?'. But I couldn't go to war with everybody because it'll alienate you. You just have to bide your time really.

George's awareness of the need to 'fit into them first' and 'gain their trust' before implementing a change to working practices highlights the importance that such an awareness has for the careful consideration of the construction of an identity upon employment within a new role. Such an approach reflects previous findings that the construction of an identity that is congruent with the desired identity of an existing social group is crucial in having influence over that group's members (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Stavrakakis, 2008). Furthermore, the findings of Ogbonna and Harris (2015) suggest the importance of

creating camaraderie within the working environment of a professional football club to achieve desired goals. Indeed, George evidenced an awareness of the importance of developing strong working relationship amongst colleagues to allow for opportunities for a level of 'camaraderie' to develop, through aligning himself to the existing social group identity.

7.1.4 First Session with the Players and Challenges to Identity

Following his appraisals of the staff within the academy department, George had to meet the players within the U18 team: the squad that he would predominantly be working with. George discussed the first time he met the players and the effect this had on his sense of self and identity as a coach, and on his decisions on when and how to reveal his true self as a coach:

> I'm thinking about how they are all going to view me. All the players in there are pretty excited, they're going to expect something from me. A bit bubbly when I went in. I said, 'I'm looking forward to watching you play today. I can't really do anything yet; I don't know anything about you. I'm just looking forward to seeing you go out and perform, see what you are like. We'll go from there'. It's like being back at school for the first day, nerves are jangling. You're going to get judged, the lads are going to judge you straight away… 'Don't like him'… 'talks funny'. You know what it's like, a group of lads, they can rip you to bits. They're quite savage, even Under 18s. If you're weak with them, they can take you for a ride.

Prior to meeting the players for the first time, George discussed his thought processes around how he should approach the occasion:

> It's gone through my head a million times, when you meet the players for the first time. I've seen it a million times before, you can have a 'we need to do this and I'm looking to do that'. But before you know it, you'll have it rehearsed, you'll be standing in front of the players and it will come out all wrong. For me… when I've been in this situation with senior professionals, you keep it short

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and sweet. You can say, 'listen I've got standards in training' but the best place to do that is out on the training ground, when somebody is not doing something… 'whoa, whoa, whoa, this is what I want'. It's actually acting on it and putting it in place which is the key ingredient if you want to survive. It all becomes words and I'd rather it be action. Where they [players] judge you ultimately, is out on the training ground. I'd rather briefly say… 'pleased to be in, I've spoken with the Chairman, this is the mission, let's go out and train'.

George continued to discuss the first training session with the players and his thoughts on the impression he wanted to portray to his new players during this initial training session:

So, I set up, I'm thinking, 'This doesn't look right, it's not how I want it, they're messing about, those two there…do I rip them or do I just…?'. I said, 'Oi, pay attention when I'm talking.' Go in easy, go in a bit nice. Then, eventually, I'm getting in to exactly who I am.

The work of Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), in their exploration of identity, provides a frame to understand how managers develop and work with their identity in strengthening, maintaining and revising the construction of 'the self' to portray a sense of distinctiveness and coherence. However, this study further contributes to our understanding of identity construction by illustrating that identity work is entwined with micro-political literacy and micro-political action (Kelchtermans, 2009; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

Furthermore, George was also wary of the perception of himself by the 1st Team Manager in the early periods of change. Whilst he had been assured of his relative 'safety', he didn't want the 1st Team Manager to question whether or not the right decision had been made to hire George. Providing the reasoning behind why George felt wary of how the 1st Team Manager perceived him, George outlined that:

I had to provide him [1st Team Manager] with players for the 1st team. I had to find out how I wanted to play, set that out over pre-season, really nail it. I did that to a certain extent but it took a while. It took two or three months into the season to get the players exactly how I wanted them to play.

Results suffered early on and then before we knew it, we got into a rhythm, playing a certain formation. The players all knew their role in and out of possession. We played with an intensity and a passion that nobody could match at this level. We end up winning the league that year.

In light of this above, George provided an insight into his first experience of his first game with his new U18 team. The Under 18s were due to play their first game with George in charge and the match had been postponed due to a waterlogged pitch:

We get there, it's lashing down. Pitch is under a bit of surface water. I want to play, I want to play, the referee is on the pitch. I watch to play; I want to play. I need to see these lads; I want to play. 'Gentleman. It's off.' F**k, so what do I do? 1st Team Manager says they're not fit enough. If I give them the weekend off, I'll look weak. Tell you what we'll do, get your kit on. We'll run on the front at Belton.

Within the context of professional football, the work of Wagstaff et al. (2016) demonstrated how periods of organisational change can elicit similar negative emotional responses to those described in the data above. The desire to be seen to be performing well during the change process is driven by employment vulnerability, which is an inherent structural condition of professional football (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Wagstaff et al., 2016).

7.1.5 Vulnerability and Relationships with Staff

When discussing his feelings of vulnerability after being appointed, George reflected on the pressure he put on himself and the impact knowing that somebody had lost their job so he could be appointed had on him in the early stages of employment. Specifically, he stated: 'After the first week of training I wanted us to go out and smash [gain a big win] somebody but it's not realistic. There wasn't any pressure from the club,

but I think I created my own pressure because I needed to impress. I have been brought in and somebody lost their job.'

In addition, George was aware of the effect that these issues around vulnerability had on the other members of staff he had to work with on a daily basis:

I started with the Gaffer [1st Team Manager], Bertie [Assistant Manager] and Freddie [1st Team Coach] who are the new staff who appointed me. But directly during the day I was with Derek [Sport Scientist], Adam [Physiotherapist], Dave [Academy Manager] and Michael [Head of Foundation Phase] who were all part of the previous regime. I'm like the new guy in town and now they were thinking 'What's happening with my job? Will he like me? Will he not? He's probably safe because the Gaffer has brought him in so he'll be alright for 12 months. What's gonna happen with me? Do I need to impress him?' There is a lot of things in football that *are* political. You find out after a month or so that you've probably sussed out what most people are like.

George's awareness of the potential fears and concerns that existing staff had in relation to an outside member of staff coming into the academy to lead them highlights the political dichotomy of managing a new group of staff. Indeed, leaders must be perceived by others as representative of the social group they are attempting to lead (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012). Croft et al. (2015) elaborate further to state that "leaders must be able to construct and communicate to other group members a desirable leader identity *and* a desirable social group identity" (p. 114). As part of creating such an identity, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) identify the importance of leaders in providing reassurance to related staff members. As highlighted above, such reassurance is significant during periods of change in the environment of professional football and it demonstrates the micro-political nature of leadership identity formation.

7.1.6 Achieving Goals

George demonstrated the use of political action in knowing which members of staff within the club's hierarchy to approach with certain problems or to achieve certain goals:

> It's understanding what the powers that be are like, what potentially could they do with this problem. So, it's knowing the staff – knowing that if something needs some weight behind it, going to the Chairman or a money man might be the answer…Who might get in the way of that decision and prolong it? Miss them out. Does he need to know? He might do. If I'm writing an email I might CC him in so he knows, but he might not think it's to do with him, but he'll probably want to stick his nose in. It's just managing who can help you. There's no point giving the Chairman my problem with no answer. He's changing a football club; he wants to see solutions to your problems. That's what he's employed you for. Don't just bring a problem. You might give him a problem, but also an alternative to make it come across better. Then, when he is on board with it, he might want to help you.

George's need to understand the appropriate political action within his day-to-day-working practices highlights the importance of being "politically savvy" (Munyon, Summers, Thompson & Ferris, 2015, p. 145) when making decisions that may influence success within the working environment. Becoming politically savvy as a leader refers to the ability to understand the power and political dynamics of an organisation (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994).

7.1.7 Managing Academy Impressions

After settling in at the football club and achieving relative success in terms of the remit given to him, George was aware of the importance of managing the impressions of the academy within the football club. In particular, George wanted to ensure that each academy player who had made a first team debut was promoted around the training ground:

There's a lot you have to think about. Gaffer's got all these pictures now and made it a lot better. But I've been in to the Chairman today to say there's nothing on our debuts for the last three years, not one. Chairman said, 'Brilliant this'. So, we've got it. I wanted to sell ourselves better.

George's desire to have pictures of the academy players who had made first team debuts put up around the ground aimed to enhance the identity regulation of a successful academy. Regulating a positive identity within the working environment has been found to create a stronger culture and commitment amongst employees (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Zhang and Rajagopalan (2010) argued that a new leader "may also make changes to signify that his or her era differs from that of the predecessor" (p. 343).

In addition to ensuring that the academy was promoting its success, George also highlighted the importance of protecting good players from being judged incorrectly by the 1st Team Manager:

One of the lads isn't training well, his attitude has been off. I don't need to share that with everybody, he's a good kid, he's got a chance. I might let Barbara [Welfare Officer] know…'just go and have a chat with him, see if everything's alright'. That's it. That's as far as it goes. If it goes to the Gaffer…'F**k him off, bad attitude'. But he's not! It's not that severe, it's managing how we are perceived, managing how we are viewed in social media, and what goes out in the media about the academy.

7.1.8 Self-Doubt During Organisational Change

During those early stages of change and coming into his new role, George experienced instances of self-doubt in certain circumstances. George recalled one instance where this happened, when dealing with the players in his first team talk before his first competitive game with the Under 18s.

I still remember it to this day. We were playing Beresford [pseudonym]. A lot of the second years [players in the final year of their full-time scholarship] were there and I had invited some of the Under 16s in as subs and to plan for next year. So, in my head I'm planning for next year, playing

Beresford. So, I'm in the dressing room and I've got Dave [Academy Manager] with me. So, I'm doing the team talk before the game and there's some sniggering down the far end of the dressing room. What do you say…'What you laughing at? What's the joke?' In my head, I'm thinking, 'I've got the 16s in the room, these second years are laughing. The 16s can see them laughing.' So I go down there…'What's going on?' I was thinking 'F**king hell, Derek's here'…Is he thinking 'He can't control the group'…He's gonna go back to Michael [Head of Foundation] and the lads and say, 'Should have seen it!' So, I've nailed [berated] them before the game.

George continued his explanation:

In my head…Derek's thinking 'He doesn't know what he's doing', which he probably did. He never admitted it but he probably did. You're not looking forward to going in the next day…Are the lads going to take the p**s again, or do I have to jump on them? Do I have to just forget it, but if I do that they're going to corrupt the Under 16's.

Such encounters have the power to spark a process of critical reflection on 'turning points' or 'key experiences' for managers and leaders during identity work (Kelchtermans, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Alvesson and Willmott (2005) suggest that such reflective instances of self-doubt and self-openness can lead to a negative construction of self-identity brought about by "psychological-existential worry faced during encounters with others" (p. 626). The work of Croft et al. (2015), in the nursing profession, found that "managers reported the biggest source of their identity conflict was their perceived loss of group influence, and the feeling they were no longer able to construct a desired…identity" (p. 124).

Furthermore, George's experiences during organisational change illustrates that the process of developing a leadership identity can be significantly influenced by micro-political literacy (seeing) and micro-political action (doing) in the way that leaders view themselves and importantly how they want to be

viewed by others within organisations. Such action is structurally constrained by leaders' own perceptions of employment vulnerability (i.e. the consequences of actions upon employment tenure and effectiveness).

7.2 Summary of Vertical Narrative Analysis Findings

This chapter has illustrated the findings from the vertical analysis of the narrative data from each of the four participants, detailing their individual experiences of organisational change within the academy at Alder FC. Ian's narrative account has highlighted the impact of organisational change on his *professional self-understanding* as an Academy Coach, with James' narrative account portraying the *actions* and *strategies* that James' used in order to protect his own *professional interests* during organisational change. In his promotion to the role of Academy Manager, Richard outlined the *political skill* needed to 'manage-up' and 'manage-down' from a middle-management perspective during organisational change. Finally, George's narrative story evidenced his approach to creating a *professional leadership identity* as an 'outsider' employed to the role of Head of Professional Development Phase and his attempt to manage a level of 'vulnerability' in doing so.

8. Chapter Eight - Results and Discussion – Horizontal Thematic Analysis

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the results of a horizontal thematic analysis of the interview data from all four participants and the Primary Researcher [Luke Gibson] at Alder FC. The aim of this analysis is to examine how organisational change differentially impacted the four participants at different hierarchical levels of the academy at Alder FC. Following on from the previous chapters, which presented individual narratives from each of the participants that focus upon some of the idiosyncrasies that the participants experienced, the following analysis will demonstrate patterns and themes across the participants. This will further explore vulnerability, and micro-political actions and behaviours from key actors within the story of organisational change at Alder FC. The horizontal analysis resulted with seven key themes: (1) Changes to publicity, image and brand of the club; (2) Implementing change and changes to working practice; (3) Staff turnover during organisational change; (4) New appointments, job losses and a clean slate; (5) Understanding the 1st Team Manager's power and interference in the academy working practices; (6) Awareness of the 1st Team Manager's allies, and (7) The academy as a business and successful organisational change. Each of the seven themes are discussed below with data extracts to support, along with a discussion around the relationship of the findings with previous, related academic literature.

8.1.1   *Changes to Publicity, Image and Brand of the Club*

Following the takeover from the new Chairman and the appointment of a new Board of Directors, all four participants reported an increase in the publicity that surrounded the football club and a conscious effort from the new Chairman and Board of Directors to enhance the image and brand of the club during the initial stages of organisational change. James highlights the importance of the academy in improving the positive publicity of the club:

> They're mad on any publicity and good press that they can jump on and get out there to boost the profile of the club really. There's been loads of examples… there was an article in the Alder Times (local newspaper) last year that came from a conversation that myself and Richard had with one of

the Directors and… about how well the Under 9's were doing and the next minute there was an article in the Alder Times saying, 'Alder are like Barcelona'. There's been the Under 11's, who have had some really good results this season and they're putting that together to do a piece in the match day programme to show how well the academy is doing (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

James continued to outline the contrast between the previous Chairman and Directors and the new Chairman and Directors in understanding the staff within (e.g., purpose and working practices, and the impact that academy could have in a successful, overall business model for Alder FC and promoting the changes being implemented):

There was no real connect with the first team or club really. Nobody really knew who any of us were in the academy beforehand. Now that we have got a good academy and compete at every age group, there is an opportunity to get publicity from it and we've been pretty successful in the last year with the under 16's getting to the national final, which they jumped all over. There's also been the lads who have got first team contracts, the U18's winning their league. There has been a lot of stuff to shout about. So, there has been an expectation to deliver things that are positive for the club that strengthen the club's brand and image (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Furthermore, ethnographic data from the primary researcher, who held the role of Under 16 Coach at the club, provided an account from around the time that the Under 16's got to the national final discussed by James:

Richard came to myself [Luke Gibson] and Ally [pseudonym] before we were about to deliver our session with the Under 16's to tell us about the interview he had done for the media department to put on the club website about reaching the national final. He said, 'I've made sure that you two have received all the plaudits for getting them this far'. I read the article myself and noticed the sentence Richard was referring to, 'a lot of credit has to go to the coaches, Ally and Luke Gibson, who have

worked wonders with them this year'. Ally joked that we might be in for the 1st team job now. It felt like a feather in my cap when I saw the article (Ethnographic Data – Academy Training Session).

In addition, Ian also discussed a change in the club's approach to publicity, image and the media in general by providing the following account:

> I noticed from the day-to-day running of the football club when the takeover happened… they became very media savvy, and they were all about public relations. They were making a song and dance about everything. So… 'let's get the hallways in the stadium painted, let's get the Alder Times in, let's get everything on the website'. So, everything was blown up (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

Ian highlighted further changes that he felt provided opportunities for the Chairman and Directors to increase the positivity of the image of the changes being made that was portrayed to the media, and in turn, enhancing the overall perception of Alder FC:

> From my conversation with him (Chairman), he knows absolutely zero about football, but he claims to know quite a lot and just wants to be involved and around everything… it all just seems about PR (Public Relations). He was just trying to keep up appearances, I suppose (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

However, from a middle-management perspective, Richard provided an insight into his own experiences of the club's approach to increasing the positive publicity around improving the academy. Whilst the emphasis was placed on increasing the image of the club within the local media and community, there was increased attention from national media outlets:

> The Chief Exec had an interview with Sky Sports and he doesn't even know anything about the academy. Apparently, it (the sale of an academy player to an English Premier League club) was on

Sky Sports that it's (the fee from selling the player) just under £1,000,000 (Richard – Academy Manager).

As was highlighted in the previous chapters within this thesis, George was appointed as Under 18 Head Coach and, in addition to his Head Coach role, was tasked with supporting the implementation of a new playing philosophy within the academy. Interestingly, George highlighted the influence that a new playing philosophy throughout each age group would have on the overall image of the Alder FC academy and subsequently, a positive perception of the overall organisational change process at the club:

> I just like to think that if you are watching a team with no crest on and somebody came to watch; they would go, 'that's an Alder team'. We started to become a scalp… people started celebrating when they beat you whereas before it was a given. They didn't get excited. It was like, "we beat Alder and we should do." But now, you felt the respect after 12 months of opposing teams coming here knowing that they were in for a really tough game (George – Under 18 Head Coach & Head of Professional Development Phase).

Following the appointment of a new Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager, Alder FC sought to increase the level of media activity and 'PR' to promote the overall brand and image of the football club as one that will value the development of young players from the Alder FC academy, creating an organisational identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) that may appeal to the local community, yet promoting a sustainable business model for the club. As James highlighted, the positive local and national news stories evidencing the playing style of the Under 9's academy team helped to perpetuate the desired organisational identity during the change process. Furthermore, the use of media activity to promote the organisational identity may also be seen as a micro-political vehicle for organisational control amongst employees (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Whilst organisational change naturally results in uncertainty amongst employees, this is usually a result of limited communication regarding the direction of the change (Wagstaff et al., 2015). However, data revealed that participants were aware of the spotlight on the academy and role expectation of the academy staff (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In addition, the significant influence that a productive academy would have on the success of the overall organisational change process within Alder FC as well as a turnaround in organisational performance also became evident. The increased attention on the academy, brought about by the change process resulted in a higher 'visibility of professional activities' (Kelchtermans, 1996, p. 312) of staff members working within Alder FC. Such an increase in visibility also influenced the level of vulnerability felt by each of the participants. Specifically, the desire from the Chairman and Board of Directors to improve the image of the club, the 'Chief Executive taking part in an interview with Sky Sports', along with the Chairman, Board of Directors and other senior staff becoming 'media savvy' lead to increased expectation on the academy staff member to become more productive. Roderick (2006) suggests that the establishment of working relationships within professional football club can result from the adherence to the goals of the senior management figures. Within this case, the participants' understanding of the future direction of the club and the increased 'PR' provided an opportunity to ensure an alignment of their professional activities to such future direction. Moreover, such political activity can enhance the prospect of maintaining employment within a professional football environment (Wagstaff et al., 2015; Wagstaff et al., 2016).

However, it is interesting to note Ian's perception of the Chairman 'trying to keep up appearances' when creating an organisational identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) that centred around the development of young players in the academy. Indeed, Ian highlighted the Chairman's lack of knowledge around developing young players, which may suggest the importance of a thorough understanding of the *identities* that senior management figures [in this case, the Chairman] are attempting to garner support for, during the initial periods of organisational change. In this case, Ian's perception of the Chairman's lack of knowledge may have negatively influenced the congruence of Ian's actions and behaviours with the

organisational objectives. As Alvesson and Willmott (2002) have outlined, whilst the creation of an organisational identity may lead to organisational control amongst employees, it is not necessarily effective in 'increasing employee commitment, involvement or loyalty' (p. 622), with such identities being seen as 'b******t or hype' (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002, p. 622). At this point, 'buy-in' from employees cannot be taken for granted (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002) during the initial stages of organisational change.

The data also highlights the influence that an increase in the visibility of professional activities (Kelchtermans, 1996) can have on *decreasing* levels of vulnerability amongst staff. Kelchtermans (1996) outlines the impact that recognition from colleagues and significant others within an organisation can produce a 'highly valued, non-material, social workplace condition' (p. 318). This was reflected in George's assertion that the U18's team were starting to gain a level of respect from visiting teams coming to play them. Furthermore, the ethnographic data highlighted the impact that an article on Alder FC's website regarding the success of the U16's team had, on the primary researcher's decreasing levels of vulnerability. As Kelchtermans (1996) continues to state, such recognition is a necessary condition if individuals are to feel motivated and carry out their professional activities effectively.

8.1.2   *Implementing Change and Changes to Working Practices*

Once the new Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager had outlined the vision and new expectations for the Academy, George was tasked with implementing change within the academy with the view to meeting the new expectations that had been placed upon the academy. Specifically, changes to the playing philosophy within the academy, the coaching curriculum and day-to-day working practices were required to meet the new expectations. George provides an insight into his initial experiences of coaching the U18 team players in the early stages of implementing a change to the playing philosophy:

It was hard to go into games on a Saturday, early on especially, and just watch a team and they weren't playing how I wanted them to play. They weren't playing the style of football I wanted. They weren't working how I wanted them to off the ball [out of possession of the ball]. It was a

case of, "how am I going to change that?" I had to implement that in training, and the players were questioning me… "we've never done it like this" …. "Well, you will now. This is what I want, get it up and running." They [players] would all have had to believe in it. You have to have them all, you can't have two or three (George – U18 Head Coach & Head of Professional Development Phase).

George continued to discuss the challenges of coaching players who either did or didn't believe in the new playing philosophy:

I'd fall out with players on the training ground. I wanted to get something out of every training session. A lot of the time I came back feeling really frustrated with the quality of training, individuals not being able to do what we wanted them to do. But I didn't want to seem weak by letting them off either so I'd pin certain characters for not being fit enough… "that's not acceptable, this is how I want it done." (George – U18 Head Coach & Head of Professional Development Phase).

Eventually, George started to witness a progression from his players who were starting to carry out the new playing philosophy during official fixtures. George continued to explain his perspective as to why this was the case:

How do you get a team to win like that? It's done on the training ground, it's done as you coach, how you apply yourself, how you show how passionate you are about winning, competition in training, forfeit for the losers. The players start getting mad with each other then, they start falling out with each other and start policing themselves. Then before you know it, Saturday comes and we're freewheeling because the intensity you've had during the week becomes normal on the Saturday and they want to go out and win because they've been used to it during the week (George – U18 Head Coach & Head of Professional Development Phase).

Key to implementing the new playing philosophy, was ensuring that all academy staff were in agreement and were congruent with the new coaching curriculum. George outlined:

> You have to get your staff to believe in it. How are they going to believe in a new approach? If you start winning games, belief rockets (George – U18 Head Coach & Head of Professional Development Phase).

In supporting George in his role and his task of implementing a new playing philosophy and coaching curriculum, Richard outlined how he communicated and executed the changes being implemented amongst the other academy (U16 - U9 age groups) coaching staff:

> We had to go down through the academy… "This is how we want it. This is how we want our centre forward going into the arc to cut off one way [terminology for instructing player movements when out of possession of the ball] etc. So, it was setting something in stone that was very loose before. Before, some age group coaches were playing slightly different than others. We needed to unify it [playing philosophy] across the board so that we would be able to create a certain type of player at the end of four or five years in the academy. We needed players to come into the U18 team be able to play a certain type of role, knowing they have been playing it for a number of years (Richard – Academy Manager).

Richard continued to explain his approach to ensuring that the working practices of all coaches within the academy were aligned to the new coaching curriculum being implemented:

> We've come up with a coaching competency framework. So, this will be an evaluation and will help the coaches during training days and match days. Hopefully, it will start to improve their coaching practice, in terms of what we want in the new playing philosophy (Richard – Academy Manager).

In light of this, data taken from the ethnographic field notes within this study provided an insight into the methods employed by Richard and George and the 1st Team Assistant Manager to attempt to educate coaches around the new playing philosophy and coaching curriculum:

> All the Academy Coaches were brought in for in-house training and to meet the new U18 Coach, and the new 1st Team Assistant Manager. This is the first time I have experienced any kind of in-house training since I have been working within the academy. George introduces himself as the new U18 Coach and Head of the Professional Development Phase and tells us about the changes that are coming and the importance of getting players into the 1st Team and the role that the academy will play in doing so. The 1st Team Assistant Manager then talks about the changes and asks us [the coaches] how we feel. No one really says anything. We go out on to the pitch and George puts a coaching session on and talks us through what he is doing and why he is doing it. He then goes on to provide an insight into how his session could be tailored towards different age groups within the academy (Ethnographic Data – In-House Training Session).

As highlighted above, there was a need to ensure that all coaches within the academy were working towards the new playing philosophy and coaching curriculum. In his role as Head of Foundation Phase and U11 coach, James discussed the impact that the change in philosophy had on his approach to coaching and communicating with his players:

> You know for a fact on a Monday morning, everyone is going to be saying, "how did they do? What score was that game?" So, my practice has become more… I'll tailor my sessions on a weeknight to set us up for the game on Sunday, because I know how the opposition are going to play (James – Head of Foundation Phase & U11 Coach).

Justifying the changes, he made to his working practices, James stated:

I know that setting that up and doing that in a certain way will get results and reflect well on me. But in the grand scheme of things, it doesn't really matter whether the U11's win games or not (James – Head of Foundation Phase & U11 Coach).

In contrast to James' narrative, Ian provided an account of his experiences during the early stages of the new playing philosophy and coaching curriculum being implemented:

I suppose in hindsight, I knew that a new philosophy was being developed and redefined, but I was working to the old regime's philosophy (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

Indeed, the new playing philosophy and coaching curriculum being implemented was not congruent with Ian's own philosophy and curriculum. Ian continued to highlight his experiences of the changes to working practices being implemented:

It was just the way they [new senior academy staff] delivered sessions and the way they spoke to the players. It was a real shift from the previous way of doing things. When you are around somewhere long enough, you get a vibe I suppose. It was, "this is the way we are doing things now" (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

When asked to explain in more detail the changes to working practices that he was witnessing, Ian outlined:

He [coach] was talking to a player about receiving it on the back foot [terminology for receiving the ball]. The player wanted to take it on the outside of his back foot so he could get it out of his feet and get the cross in. The coach was going, "no, I told you to receive it on the inside of your back foot." Now this player has come through the previous regime where you were able to ask questions and question the coaches; so, he asked the coach, "why?". The coach just said "listen, I'm telling you… take it on the inside or go and sit over there" (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

Organisational change can influence what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) term, 'organisational socialisation' (p.106). In the case of Alder FC, the changes to the working practices led to the 'washing out' (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 106) of previous held beliefs and working practices that had been inherent within the professional life of staff members working within the academy. Specifically, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) found that 'the classroom [coaching practice] responsibilities facing the inductees had less to do with teaching [coaching] children and more to do with juggling the multiple demands of a functioning institution [professional football club] (p. 107). With reference to the context of Alder FC, the changes being implemented to improve the development of academy players, through modifying the practices of Academy Coaches were influenced by the micro-political elements of organisational change within the football club.

Changes to the working practices of the academy staff brought about by the overall organisational change process also highlighted a nature of vulnerability amongst the participants in this study. In particular, Kelchtermans' (1996) work around micro-political vulnerability discussed the potential for individuals to experience 'limits of their professional efficacy' (p. 313). As detailed in the extracts above, such experiences are reflected in the experiences of George who evidenced his frustration at not seeing immediate success following the changes he implemented in the early stages of change. Furthermore, James provided an insight into the realisation that he would be judged against his team's results; an outcome that he cannot necessarily control. In these instances, Kelchtermans (1996) outlines that:

> 'Teachers [coaches] are confronted not only with the limits of their impact, but also with the limits of their professional knowledge and skills. In other words, they realise that their professional competences (knowledge, skills), although they can certainly always be improved and developed, never provide a technical guarantee for success' (p. 314).

However, Richard outlined the importance of educating the academy staff around the changes to the playing philosophy being implemented throughout all the academy age groups with the introduction of a 'coaching

competency framework'. Interestingly, the ethnographic data highlighted that the in-house training workshop around the coaching competency framework was the first to be experienced by the primary researcher during his employment at Alder FC. The introduction of the coaching competency framework may also provide a potential opportunity for academy staff to develop their own 'subjective educational theory' which, as Kelchterman (1996) describes, is a 'personally organised set of knowledge and beliefs that guide teachers' [coaches] professional behaviour' (p. 314). Indeed, Kelchtermans (1996) advocates the benefits of such a 'set' in guarding against periods of vulnerability within the working environment.

Changes to the working practices also presented sources of vulnerability brought about by moral conflicts (Kelchtermans, 1996) amongst academy staff. Ian's experiences of witnessing a change in the manner in which coaches were coaching and speaking to the academy players presents the 'conflict between two competing ideas (values, norms) about the nature of 'good teaching [coaching]' (p. 317). As periods of organisational change result in significant 'upheaval', the prominence of staff members developing strategies to manage such instances become key when faced with conflicting traditions and workplace goals (Thompson et al., 2015; Wagstaff et al., 2016). In light of this, Ian outlined his desire to continue his working practices that were consistent with the previous academy management staff prior to the changes being implemented; highlighting the issue of making decisions 'with moral consequences in their dealing with the multiple, diffuse and even contradictory demands' (Kelchtermans, 1996, p. 317) during organisational change. Furthermore, the manner in which all participants made sense of the emotional nature of their experiences of vulnerability is reflected in Kelchtermans (2005) work outlining that meaning-making is influenced by the complexity of change and the level of impact that such changes have on working practices. Specifically, the process of meaning-making is 'emotionally laden as teachers [coaches] sought through feelings of anxiety of the unknown, frustration of the ambiguous, joy and recognition of shared ideologies and guilt in constructing modifications despite possible professional repercussions' (p. 996).

George, Richard, James and the primary researcher experienced predominantly positive emotional reactions to the changes to working practices within the academy. Specifically, George highlighted the success of getting staff to 'believe' in the changes, James revealed his understanding of how new working practices would 'reflect well' on him and the ethnographic data highlighted an unprecedented approach to in-house training. Interestingly, Richard outlined the successful approach he took of 'unifying' working practices so that the Academy Coaches were all practicing in the same manner. However, Ian, in his role as a part-time Academy Coach, reported emotions of a more negative manner which inevitably guided his micro-political action, maintaining previous working practices prior to the changes being implemented by Richard and George. Such findings contrast the work of Roderick (2014) who, investigating the working lives of professional football *players*, suggested that feelings of resentment towards management figures may become supressed within the working environment of a professional football club.

Similarly, the work of Huggan et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of staff 'selling themselves' to key decision-makers within professional football clubs and the impact that a change in key decision-makers can have on the 'protective blanket' some staff may have experienced under previous key decision-makers. Within the context of this study, George, Richard and James all understood the need to be perceived in a positive light amongst the Chairman and 1st Team Manager (key decision-makers during the organisational change process), whilst Ian reported experiences of the contrasting opinions of himself, by the previous and current 1st Team Manager.

Indeed, changes that challenge deeply held beliefs and working conditions can trigger 'emotions of doubt, anxiety, guilt and shame'. Such responses may be a result of a lack of emotional support (Darby, 2008) or related to the participant's 'age, career stage and generational identity and attachment' (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 1002). In light of this, as senior management figures and agents of change within the academy, both George and Richard may have considered such issues and in turn, provided a greater or more diverse level of support to Ian in an attempt to counteract such emotional responses and alter Ian's micro-political action and coaching practice.

8.1.3 *Staff Turnover During Organisational Change*

As part of the organisational change process, there were increased levels of staff turnover throughout the initial periods of change. Upon the appointment of the new 1st Team Manager and Under 18 Coach (George), the evaluation process of the staff who were currently employed and working in the academy began. Richard provided an account of how such staff turnover was initiated by the 1st Team Manager:

> One day, in here [room where the interview was taking place], they [1st Team Staff] got a notepad and a flipchart and they put all the coaches down in the academy against each age group that they were working with who they wanted to get rid of. By the time they had finished, we had about three coaches left [laughs] (Richard – Academy Manager).

James highlighted similar experiences in his role as a line manager for the Academy Coaches who were under scrutiny from the 1st Team Manager:

> He'd [1st Team Manager] obviously been given licence to go around the staff and say, 'I want him, I don't want him etc.' and build his own staff. He's brought people in, in other positions. There's been a massive turnover of staff since he's been in charge (James – Head of Foundation phase).

Richard continued to discuss how such scrutiny, and desire from the 1st Team Manager to increase the level of staff turnover had materialised into the day-to-day working environment within an academy:

> He [1st Team Manager] would go down and watch a session and berate the Academy Coaches to me afterwards saying, 'he's crap, he's crap, get rid of him'. So, from that point I was trying to do a juggling act. Because, you have to look at reliability, so… who [part time Academy Coaches] is going to be here every week? Who is going to do the weekly player evaluations on PMA [Premier League Performance Management Application]? Who is going to know our playing philosophy? Who's been to every coaches meeting? The 1st Team Manager doesn't realise how much has gone into staffing an academy. It had a massive affect because it's not easy finding lads who are reliable,

who you have built up a relationship with over time and who know how we work and the coaching vocabulary. There is a lot of training that has gone into it. So, for the 1st Team Manager to then come in and say, 'get rid of him' after watching two coaching sessions is just unfair and unrealistic (Richard – Academy Manager).

Findings from the ethnographic data provided an insight into the experiences of the primary researcher [Luke Gibson] who, at the point of data collection, was an Academy Coach coaching the U11 age group at the start of the change period:

The Gaffer [1st Team Manager] turned up again tonight. You can see him walking around and watching all the other coaches working. I tried not to pay attention, but I wanted to see what he was looking at and how he was interacting with the other coaches, was it positive or negative? He came over to my session to watch for a bit and didn't say anything then walked off. It gave me a bad feeling, I wanted to know why he never spoke to me. I couldn't concentrate for the rest of the session; I was too busy trying to work out the Gaffer's actions and what he might be going back and saying to the Academy Manager (Richard) (Ethnographic Data – Academy Training Session).

Following the above event, subsequent ethnographic data highlighted the outcome of the event:

I had a phone call off James [Head of Foundation Phase & Line Manager to Primary Researcher] today. He said, 'I've got a bit of news for you… the Gaffer wants you to go with the U16's'. I asked why, but James said he wasn't sure. He said that he just got told to let me know. I'm not sure what to make of the situation… I don't know whether this is a positive or a negative. Does he [1st Team Manager] not think I am good enough to work with the U11's? Does he think I'm better suited to the U16's? Have the U16's been written off as an age group, and they just need a coach to keep them ticking over until they are all released at the end of the season? But if he didn't rate me as a

coach, I would have just been sacked? I'm not sure, I've been trying to work it out all day (Ethnographic Data – Morning of Academy Training Session).

8.1.4   New Appointments, Job Losses & A Clean Slate

One of the most pertinent changes in staffing in the academy was the appointment of George to the role of Head of Professional Phase and U18 Head Coach. This meant that Eric [the previous holder of this role] had his employment terminated so that George could be appointed. Ian outlined his experience of the period leading up to Eric being sacked:

> He was in the position of Head of Professional Development Phase… his face wasn't really fitting. But it was his full-time job, he needed it. I found that he became a little less exuberant, he appeared to become more mindful and more watchful. He'd been in the game for 30 years and had experienced managerial change before. He knew what was happening (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

Similarly, James highlighted the impact that the uncertainty around Eric's role had on his behaviour and the academy working environment:

> There was once where he just lost his head with Richard that afternoon and I can't remember what it was. But the Gaffer was over the corridor and he just came over and asked what was going on. There were little bits like that all the time and you just felt sorry for him because everyone knew what was coming. It wasn't a nice environment to be in or around (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Interestingly, James was aware of the uncertainty around Eric's role and the unfavourable regard that Eric was held in amongst the 1st Team staff. James continued to explain his understanding of the situation and how he strategically positioned himself within the organisation of the academy:

I suppose that's the politics of it really. I don't know whether it was right or wrong, you would probably have had to… if you would have gone with Eric and allied yourself with him, the Gaffer would have probably got rid of you too (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Following the termination of Eric's employment, George was appointed to fill his role and predominantly oversee the implementation of organisational change in an academy. George provided an outline of his experience during this period of change:

I felt quite relaxed, I thought… "yes. I've got back in. It's a chance.' The other thing is that you feel that sometimes when you come in new, someone's [Eric] lost a job. You feel a bit awkward about that. Do you know what I mean? You have to get your conscience over the fact of someone's losing a job. It's not nice, but I've been in it for 25 years now as a player and coach and its part and parcel of the trade unfortunately. It's pretty cutthroat (George – Head of Professional Development Phase & U18 Coach).

It became clear that George was appointed to implement change within the academy and improve the production of players for the 1st team, or the production of players who could be sold for a financial fee. In light of this, James was acutely aware of the power that George had, having been brought in to replace as Eric as part of the change process. James stated:

Everybody knew they were under pressure and being looked at. Everybody was a little bit defensive because George had a bit of influence [with the 1st Team Manager] (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Richard also reflected upon his own vulnerability at this stage. At this point, Richard was the Academy Manager, a role that would be important in supporting George's strategic plan for implementing change. Richard provided an insight into his feelings during this period:

If I had been recruited from a different club and I wasn't here previously when this regime [Chairman, Board of Directors, 1st Team Manager, Assistant Manager] came in, it would have been different. I would have had a lot more power. But because I was already here, I've always felt I have been slightly vulnerable, whereas George got brought in from the outside (Richard – Academy Manager).

Interestingly, and relating to the data discussed above from Richard and James, George was aware of the feelings amongst the staff who would be the recipients of the changes he would implement following his appointment. In discussing this, George outlined:

I was a bit lucky I think, coming in. I knew I had the backing of the Gaffer because he had brought me in. Then you meet the Chairman, and the Chairman thinks you are great because the Gaffer has brought you in. I already knew the 1st Team Assistant Manager who he had appointed as well, so he's gonna have my back and help me. So, that maybe meant that the staff [Richard, James, Ian] are a bit wary of you when you first come in (George – Head of Professional Development Phase & U18 Head Coach).

Furthermore, findings taken from George's narrative indicate that the wariness felt amongst Richard, James and the other academy staff was justified. Specifically, George evidenced conversations he had had with the 1st Team Manager about the current academy staff after being in the role for a number of weeks:

Gaffer came to me and said, 'what do you think of the Physio? What do you think? Should we keep him?'… 'Yeah, I think we should keep him'. Then he said, 'what about the Fitness Coach? What do you think?'… 'well he's…'. Before I finished, he said, 'we'll get someone else in'. 'What about Richard? What do you think?'… 'I like him, he's a good bloke, I get on with him well and he's good football wise.' 'What about James? What do you think?'… 'Yeah, I get on with him'. Sometimes you have to make a change. It's part of life. So, for me it's about, does he help me? Is

he responsive to me? If I asked him to do me a favour and he didn't really want to do it, but he does it… then bingo, he's a worker (George – Head of Professional Development Phase & U18 Head Coach).

Whilst James and Richard remained in their role as part of the change process, Ian was one of the Academy Coaches, along with the Fitness Coach who were no longer employed by the club. Ian reflected on his interpretation as to why he was let go from the club:

I think that was one of the main reasons… under the previous regime [previous 1st Team Management and Senior Academy Management staff], my face fitted. Under the new regime, your face doesn't quite fit as much…. I got, 'we're having a clean slate… I think it's probably best that you should go.' (Ian – Part Time Academy Coach).

Indeed, James outlined the positivity that was felt following a period of staff turnover during the organisational change process and the impact that the changes had on the atmosphere and environment of working life at the club:

When George came in, and then the new Fitness Coach got appointed, it was as if the Gaffer got his team. All of a sudden it was, 'we're all in it together now, this is what we're gonna do and this is how we're gonna get better'. Because he [1st Team Manager] came in midway through the season, it was a clearing out process from the point of his arrival, to the end of the season. Then over the summer we came back for the new season and it was… 'we start afresh from here; this is the new Alder'. That period was brilliant; everyone was behind the 1st team and everyone was together. George created a different way of working, the sort of fire and atmosphere that he started to create with everything really was good (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Periods of organisational change highlight the micro-political struggle for, and conflicting nature of building successful coalitions and collaborative working relationships amongst staff members (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Moreover, Wagstaff et al. (2016) reported negative emotional responses to change brought about by the challenge of developing new personal and professional working relationships. In analysing the participants' experiences of staff turnover during the change process, issues of vulnerability became evident. Upon George's appointment by the new Chairman and 1st Team Manager, James highlighted the 'pressure' experienced within his working practices due to George's perceived influence with both the Chairman and the 1st Team Manager. The vulnerable nature of such pressure has been explained by Kelchtermans (1996) in his assertion that individuals tend to 'do more' due to being 'vulnerable to the decisional power' of senior management (p. 309).

This notion was also supported by the data from both George and Richard. Both participants held senior management roles within the academy however, George was appointed from outside as part of the change process, whilst Richard was already employed within the academy prior to the change and promoted into his new role. In light of this, George's recognition that he 'had the backing of the Gaffer' suggested that there was a level of trust between the Chairman, 1st Team Manager and George resulting in decreased senses of vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996). However, Richard's discussion highlighted that he was not externally appointed alongside George and instead as an existing staff member prior to the takeover from the Chairman, meant that he felt lower levels of trust from influential figures and in turn, higher levels of vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996).

Similarly, during this particular period, data from Ian and the ethnographic data from the primary researcher highlighted issues of 'insecurity' (Kelchtermans, 1996) and the impact this had on both individuals' sense of vulnerability. Specifically, Ian' realisation that his face, along with the faces of the other staff who were sacked, did not seem 'to fit' and the ethnographic data revealing the confusion around being told to work with the U16's, without any explanation as to why, represented fears around job security. Kelchtermans (1996) work portrays these instances of vulnerability as periods where individuals start

'doubting their own professional qualities' along with wondering 'what they are doing wrong or in what respect they are not meeting the never-explicitly-stated expectations of the school board [in this case, 1st Team Manager]' (p. 310). Moreover, Darby (2008) evidences the impact that increased scrutiny can have on individuals' sense of professional inadequacy and a decrease in positive emotions and values. Furthermore, such fears and a sense of intimidation can negatively influence the manner in which teachers [coaches] perceive themselves in a professional light (Darby, 2008).

However, in her work investigating teacher's professional self-understanding during educational change, Darby (2008) found that collaboration between senior, more experienced leaders and teachers resulted in an improved and stronger self-image. In light of this, such a collaborative approach taken by the 1st Team Manager may have been beneficial when evaluating the Academy Coaches and their working practices. Moreover, Pajak and Blasé (1989) indicate that 'what seems to be most important in the personal lives of teachers [coaches], in terms of the effect on professional life, is a well-developed individual identity and a sense of connectedness to others beyond the self' (p. 306). In the case of Alder FC, organisational change brought about a new 1st Team Manager with considerable power and influence over all departments of the professional football club, therefore, the desire from academy staff to feel a sense of 'connectedness' with such an influential figure becomes pertinent to the micro-political understanding of oneself during vulnerable and ambiguous periods of change (Gibson & Groom, 2018). As Roderick (2014) discusses, congruence with the cultural expectations of a professional football club, often dictated by a managerial figure, is required if employment within that environment is to be sustained.

8.1.5   *Understanding the 1st Team Manager's Power and Interference in the Academy Working Practices*

Whilst the academy was in a process of organisational change through the implementation of a new playing philosophy and a turnover of staff, the data highlighted, at times, interference came from the 1st Team Manager or other 1st Team staff. The participants provided an insight into such instances, along with their

understanding of the relationship between the level of interference and the 1st Team Manager's power within the overall organisation. Richard outlined that:

> What amazes me is how much power a club gives to a 1st Team Manager, that's where it breaks down. The power should always be with the Chairman and the Board of Directors and they should decide on the philosophy of the club. He [1st Team Manager] should be brought in to work under that (Richard – Academy Manager).

James elaborated further to explain his understanding of why the 1st Team Manager is afforded such power:

> I think he's [1st Team Manager] on a pedestal because they're getting success and they are looking dead certs to get promoted. From what I can gather, the Chairman has given him power over the academy and to change it and shape it as he sees fit. What you find is, if they win on a Saturday, they gain more power. So, we get scrutiny and pressure and questions asked of the academy on a regular basis, but if they've had a couple of bad results, we don't really hear anything (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Similarly, Ian highlighted the influence that such scrutiny had on the day-to-day working practices of the Academy Coaches:

> It was a little bit… the case of 'well we're [1st Team Management Staff] really interested in the academy until the 1st Team start performing badly, then we'll focus on the 1st Team. At training, you are aware of the atmosphere amongst your players when the 1st Team Manager is about, or his assistant. You're aware that there is a little change in atmosphere in terms of the parents who are watching on the side… they're a little bit more attentive when the 1st Team Manager is there (Ian – Part-Time Academy Coach).

Furthermore, ethnographic data reported similar experiences around the atmosphere described by Ian when the 1st Team Manager was present. Specifically, the data highlighted how the presence of the 1st Team Manager at an academy fixture had been perceived to interfere with, and influence a change, in the behaviour of Richard when interacting with the primary researcher:

> We played Narrabow Rovers away this morning. They are a Championship [2nd Tier of the English Football] club with a Category 1 [Highest EPPP academy status awarded] academy so we knew it was going to be a hard test for our lads. The 1st Team Manager turned up to watch and, as usual, I was on edge the whole morning hoping that the lads [my age group team] gave a good account of themselves in front of him. Richard [Academy Manager] came over during the game and we were struggling. I could sense that he wanted all our teams to do well that day with the 1st Team Manager being present. He said, 'what's going on? What have you been doing with them?', insinuating that I hadn't been coaching the players properly during training. Whilst the game was going on, he kept looking over his shoulder to see if the 1st Team Manager was watching whilst he tried to deliver instructions to the players during the game to improve them (Ethnographic Data – Academy Fixture).

Moreover, whilst such interference from the 1st Team Management and his staff was taking place within the academy, James provided an insight into a conversation that took place with one of the Directors at Alder FC regarding such interference:

> We had a conversation with one of the Directors who has the same opinion as us on the matter. I was thinking, 'you know all this is going on and the way that the academy is manipulated and managed by the 1st Team Manager and you're not doing anything about it. Surely you should be telling him?! You're above him [in the organisational structure], why don't you just tell him? But I think their scared because he's ultimately bringing success to the 1st Team which is what it's about. I don't think they're confident in… and the club isn't stable enough yet for them to say, 'listen,

leave them alone and go and concentrate on your own job'. But I feel for Richard really, the Academy Manager, because he doesn't really get to manage anything. He's just someone who's there in a job (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

In light of James' account of the impact that the 1st Team Manager's interference was having on Richard; Richard provided a further insight into his own experiences of such instances and the manner in which he managed the situation:

A lot of the time I turn a blind eye to him [1st Team Manager]. I know he will come down one night then you won't see him again for another month. I just brush it off my shoulder and carry on. You have to develop thick skin for this role. The reality is that he has been a hindrance more than help. He has ruined two age groups [in the academy] which I am trying to fix and he has made us weaker by doing that. It's totally different to what he has told the Chairman, but he has the Chairman's ear you see (Richard – Academy Manager).

Richard continued to elaborate on the above account:

What you find is… if they [the 1st Team] are doing well, that's when the emails start coming through. That's when he's got power. If they are not doing well, it goes very, very quiet (Richard – Academy Manager).

Interestingly, whilst the academy staff (Richard, James & Ian) who were already employed at the club prior to the initiation of the change process all reported similar experiences of interference from, and responses to, the 1st Team Manager's power, the data taken from George's narrative highlighted a contrast to these experiences. George stated that:

The Gaffer [1st Team Manager] never come to me and said, 'what happened on Saturday?'. He wasn't really asking about the U18's all the time. He came down to one or two games, but there was

no real pressure. The Gaffer was fine… 'don't worry, George, just wait until you get up and

running'. So, I was alright (George – U18 Head Coach & Head of Professional Development Phase).

During periods of organisational change, professional relationships become pertinent to the success of the

changes being implemented (Buchanan & Badman, 2008). Kelchtermans (1996) expands to highlight the

often, differing opinions of the direction of change from outside audiences. Specifically, Hoyle (1982)

states that employees may become part of a micro-political organisational reality in which individuals 'seek

to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests' (p. 88). Indeed, such micro-political

behaviour, influenced by the conflicting personal interests of different stakeholders within an organisation

are 'natural and thus unavoidable characteristics of organisations' (Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016, p. 635).

Furthermore, such conflicting interests also arise due to the nature of different sub-cultures that may exist

within organisations (Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016). In this case, all participants referred to a differing culture

between the 1st Team department and staff and the academy department and staff within Alder FC, and the

aggressive and manipulative tactics employed by the 1st Team Manager (Thompson et al., 2015) in utilising

cultural power and domineering managerial methods (Roderick, 2014).

With reference to the above data, participants reported similar experiences of interference from the

1st Team with regards to the working practices of the academy environment and the staff working within it.

Specifically, Richard spoke of the 1st Team Manager having 'too much power' and being a 'hindrance more

than a help'; Ian highlighted the negative change to the 'atmosphere at training' when the 1st Team Manager

was around. In addition, the ethnographic data evidenced the impact that the presence of the 1st Team

Manager had on Richard's actions as an Academy Manager when communicating with the primary

researcher in his role as an Academy Coach. Moreover, both Richard and James understood the 1st Team

Manager's interference within the academy to increase following an increase in perceived power, brought

about by positive 1st Team results and performances. Indeed, senses of vulnerability are increased when

individuals feel politically ineffective in the contested, micro-political nature of workplace conditions

(Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1996). In particular, negative emotions associated with powerlessness, frustration and anger becoming apparent (Kelchtermans, 2005). However, the competence to *understand* issues of power in an organisation has been outlined as a key component of an individual's micro-political literacy (Kelchtermans, 2005). Interestingly, Thompson et al. (2015) depict the consequences of a newly appointed coach not understanding the 'implicit, taken for granted forms of knowledge that give order to everyday interactions' (p. 14). Such a lack of understanding resulted in the coach experiencing a sense of social isolation amongst peers within the professional football club.

In contrast, George never reported experiences of the 1st Team Manager exerting power through interfering in his working practices in the early stages of change stating that 'there was no real pressure'. This may have been due to the level of 'trust' (Kelchtermans, 1996) within their professional working relationship brought about by being employed as part of the change process, rather than being an already existing staff member, as previously discussed.

8.1.6 *Awareness of the 1st Team Manager's Allies*

Whilst the previous section highlighted the importance of understanding the 1st Team Manager's power in successfully negotiating a period of change in a professional football club, understanding the influence of fellow academy staff as internal threats to a positive working environment became evident within the participant interview data. Specifically, one member of staff was depicted as being an outlier amongst the rest of the full-time academy staff and an ally of the 1st Team Manager. Ian began by outlining how this particular, at the time, part-time member of staff (John) saw an opportunity to become a full-time member of staff during the early stages of change:

> One of the guys came in as a new coach at the back end of the previous season and was just a part-time coach, volunteered to do more hours, was a bit busy in terms of sending things through to management [Richard & George] … 'have a look at this, what do you think?'… 'I'm doing this, I'm doing that'. Talking the talk. He positioned himself to be Richard's best mate within the

academy and now he's full-time Head of Youth Development Phase – f*****g brown nose. Big time brown nose. He was cuddling up to people for a number of months. So, I would say he positioned himself quite effectively (Ian – Academy Coach).

Prompting Ian to expand on his observations and discuss how such 'cuddling up to people' manifests itself on a day-to-day basis within a professional football club, he explained:

> You just had to look at the body language. It was really evident for me on a Saturday morning and it was a little team of people [part-time Academy Coaches] vying for this position [Head of Youth Development Phase]. There were people getting in the slipstream of people going for the top job. Almost like a presidential race and buddying up with the top person and getting in their cabinet. They would raise a point in meetings, and others would support them (Ian – Academy Coach).

Following John's appointment to the full-time role of Head of Youth Development, the rest of the full-time academy staff (Richard, George & Dean) began to become wary of the actions and behaviours of John within the day-to-day working environment. Specifically, Richard stated:

> Yeah, there were certain people in the office you could trust and others you couldn't… like John for instance (Richard – Academy Manager).

Similarly, George elaborated to highlight why the other full-time academy staff were concerned about whether or not they could trust John:

> He used to be in our office, but he would spend all his time in the Gaffer's office. So, things that might have got said in our office were going back to the Gaffer. You know… he was supposed to be a part of us [academy staff] and in any organisation where some things need to be kept private like making a mistake, or something confidential; you don't want that getting out. You know… we're not all dumb, we knew where it came from. So, sometimes if somebody's not playing ball

and he's not like everyone moving forward, he's like a little ball and chain all the time, he's dragging you behind. So, sometimes, you have to make a change (George – Head of Professional Development Phase & U18 Head Coach).

In providing a deeper understanding of the perception of John's professional capacity, ethnographic data revealed the primary researcher's experiences of John as a Line Manager in his role of Head of Youth Development Phase. Upon becoming U16 Coach [Youth Development Phase age group], the primary researcher's direct Line Manager was now John instead of James. Taken from his first experiences of working in the Youth Development Phase, the primary researcher's ethnographic data highlighted the following:

> First session with the U16's tonight. They seem a really good group, you can tell their all anxious about whether or not they are going to get offered a full-time playing contract. I told them that my aim between now and the end of the season was to try and help as many players as possible gain a contract. On another note, I've realised how organised James was in running the Foundation Phase. It seems all over the place in this phase! I'm not sure if John is getting the support needed from the other full-time staff, or it's just he isn't any good at his job and managing this phase. The other coaches within this phase seem to be a lot less enthusiastic than in the Foundation Phase as well, they don't seem to apply themselves in the same manner – is this a reflection on John? (Ethnographic Data – Academy Training Session).

Interestingly, further analysis of the ethnographic data collected highlighted another instance that revealed the issues between the working relationships of John and the rest of the full-time academy staff:

> We were on our way to the Football League U16 National Final today to play Referonian. They've got a really strong group with a couple of players who have been called up to the England Under 16 national squad and numerous players already given full-time contracts. The club is taking a lot of

staff on the coach to the game consisting of one of the Directors, George, Richard, the U18 Goalkeeping Coach, U18 Physiotherapist and U18 Fitness Coach to support the equivalent U16 staff along with myself and the other U16 Coach. John hasn't travelled as one of the Youth Development Phase age groups has a game at the same time, that he needs to be present at. There is an issue with the equipment for the game, with some of the key equipment to be taken on the coach missing. You can feel the tension amongst the full-time academy staff who were supposed to organise the equipment for the day. Richard adds, 'It's John's fault, it was his job. He was supposed do it. Don't worry, it's John… it's John'. I'm not sure whose fault it was, and being a part-time member of staff, I don't think I'll find out (Ethnographic Data – Football League Under 16 National Final).

Around this particular point during the period of change, the breakdown in the relationship between John and the rest of the full-time academy staff was becoming evident. Further analysis of the ethnographic data highlighted:

I arrived at training early tonight and John was there, so I decided to have a chat with him on the way to walking on to the pitch. I asked him, 'how's it been around the club? How's it been in the office?'… 'it's savage mate, absolutely savage' he replied (Ethnographic Data – Academy Training Session).

Following on from this period and at the end of this particular season, John left his role as Head of Youth Development Phase and was no longer a member of the full-time academy staff. From this point onwards, analysis of the interview data taken from George, Richard and James highlighted the improvement in the day-to-day working environment within the academy. Furthermore, each participant developed an understanding of the role that John played as an ally to the 1st Team Manager; almost as a 'mole' for the 1st

Team Manager who could keep him up-to-date with key instances within the academy. Richard indicated that:

> This season [the season following John's resignation] has probably been the best because the Gaffer had allies in John, but now that he's left he hasn't really got any allies within the academy office. So, the Assistant Manager, I don't really speak to him… the 1st Team Coach, I don't really speak to him… because they're all aligned to the Gaffer, so they'll go back and tell him everything (Richard – Academy Manager).

Additionally, James provided further insight into the improvement of the working environment in the academy office:

> We're a strong group of staff now who look after each other and nobody ever really tries to drop anyone in it; even when you're put on the spot by the Gaffer and there are opportunities to do it. There's always things that go wrong and you could turn around and go, 'it's his fault'. We don't have that anymore, we look after each other. We're a close-knit group (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

The data here evidences the impact that emotionally laden relationships amongst staff can have on interfering with teacher's interpretations of and reactions to change (Kelchtermans, 2005). Kelchtermans (2005) explains that 'teachers have a more or less clear, more or less shared idea of what are to them valuable and necessary working conditions to do a proper job in that particular school' (p. 1004). Such an assertion highlights the negative perspective that all participants had of John during the organisational change process. Indeed, Ian referred to John as a 'brown nose', the ethnographic data revealed John's incompetence in preparing correctly for a 'national final' with Richard stating that John was an 'ally' for the 1st Team Manager, leading to George referring to John as 'a little ball and chain'. Indeed, in such instances Kelchtermans (2005) outlines the possibility of individuals engaging in micro-political action to 'establish,

safeguard or restore' (p. 1004) the necessary working conditions to maintain the quality of interpersonal, working relationships. As highlighted in the data above, James discussed the impact that John not being a part of the academy staff had on such working conditions and relationship; 'we're a strong group of staff now who look after each other and nobody tries to drop any one in it [with the 1st Team Manager]'. Furthermore, Piot and Kelchtermans (2016) have highlighted the value of being able to share emotional experiences amongst peers and have outlined the importance of trust in developing collaborative working practices. Specifically, 'trust or confidence in the integrity and abilities of another which serves as a basis for discretionary individual or collective action' (Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016, p. 643). Such findings support the work of Potrac and Jones (2009a) who suggest the importance of alliances with key contextual individuals to be successful in carrying out day-to-day tasks that are significant to the working practice. Furthermore, Huggan et al. (2015) evidenced the bond that can be generated amongst staff during periods of managerial change in professional football clubs due to understanding what each staff member can 'offer each other' (p. 511), subsequently creating a level of respect from colleagues upon becoming part of the 'inner circle'.

Interestingly, the work of Thompson et al. (2015) evidenced the 'shame' felt by a novice coach who had recently undertaken a role within a professional football club. Indeed, the findings highlighted the stigmatization experienced by the coach and how he 'literally wanted the floor to open up beneath' him (Thompson et al., 2015, p. 15). Such findings resonate with the perception of John amongst all of the participants within this study brought about by a degrading, lack of respect for John. Moreover, as highlighted by the ethnographic data, John's experiences of his working environment at this point were 'savage'. Specifically, Thompson et al. (2013, p. 13) state that such degradation focuses on a 'shared point of view' of those who degrade. Had John been able to read the social situations that influence action, his own actions and behaviours may have been altered, resulting in a more positive experience of negotiating the change process, and therefore not being perceived as an outlier and an 'ally' for the 1st Team Manager.

Similarly, the work of Huggan et al. (2015) highlighted the scepticism that can be attributed to one's actions amongst colleagues when perceived as being a 'spy' for a senior management figure.

Alternatively, another argument may suggest that John was simply trying to protect his own professional self-interests (Kelchtermans, 1993) during the early stages of change by developing his relationship with the 1st Team Manager who was a contextual, influential figure during the organisational change process. Indeed, the professional football environment has been depicted as one that may promote 'individualistic workplace attitudes', generating direct rivalries amongst colleagues' (Roderick, 2017, p. 167). Goffman (1963) highlights the importance of enhancing desirability amongst key stakeholders within social environments with Ball (1987) arguing for the importance of recognising critical reality makers within the workplace during complex, micro-political instances. Indeed, John may have perceived the 1st Team Manager to be a 'critical reality maker' within Alder FC during the organisational change process.

8.1.7   *The Academy as a Business and Successful Organisational Change*

Finally, following a period of organisational change, the academy began to achieve an element of success in terms of generating financial income for the football club from the sale of players who had been developed within the academy. At this point, Richard provided an insight into the new direction of the academy:

> We're not producing players for our 1st Team, we're producing players for the Premier League. We've sold two to [English] Premier League clubs and one to a Championship club and we probably have another four who are Premier League players. There's probably £1.5 million worth of talent there (Richard – Academy Manager).

George provided a further insight into the approach taken when recruiting potential players to be developed in the academy in order to help the academy maintain on course in the new direction:

The fact that a lad can come in here [Alder FC Academy], having been released from another club and then to be sold to an [English] Premier League club six months later after having also played in our 1st Team is amazing. We did £600,000 last year… then £350,000, £250,000, £300,000, £50,000, £75,000 all in player sales this year. So, it gives you that satisfaction, but it also ignites the fire a bit more and the hardest thing is to keep it going. I think we know what we are looking for now though. Three years down the line we know what our centre halves [defenders] look like, we know what our midfielders look like, we know what our forward player looks like. We know what we are looking for and now they have become attractive to the big boys [English Premier League clubs] (George – Head of Professional Development Phase & U18 Head Coach).

However, James highlighted the challenges that the academy staff still face in trying to maintain the success of the academy following the period of organisational change:

We're using the same facilities. There's been no extra money ploughed into the academy. Although from the outside looking in, it may look as though it has done. The Chairman always calls it [academy] a business… it's there to make money for the football club and all the players are assets. That's what he refers to it as. So hopefully, now we are generating money he might go, 'right, the business is generating money, let's put the money back in'. That's the key for me, if Joe Smith [pseudonym] goes for £200,000 and that money goes into the 1st Team, then there is an issue for me (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

James continued to elaborate further to explain the impact that limited financial support from the Chairman or Board of Directors had on the academy staff in ensuring that organisational change within the academy was successful:

That's why we've struggled because we're working to our maximum really to get the best we possibly can out of the academy, because of the expectation and pressure they [Chairman, Board of

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Directors & 1st Team Manager] put on us. But really, they're not putting anything into it. If we were different and didn't work as hard as we do, they wouldn't get the results they're getting (James – Head of Foundation Phase).

Kelchtermans (1996) outlines the importance of creating desired workplace conditions within an organisation. Key to such conditions is the 'definition of the organisation, i.e. the processes of social construction determining what norms and goals get acknowledged as legitimate' (p. 311). Indeed, all participants recognised that the success of the academy and the changes being implemented within the academy would be judged against whether or not the academy was contributing to the financial income of the club through the sale of academy players to other, wealthier football clubs. Specifically, James highlighted that 'the Chairman always calls it a business', George outlined that 'three years down the line, we now know what we are looking for [when recruiting players with the potential to be sold]' with Richard providing an insight into the '£1.5 million' worth of talented players that were currently playing within the academy.

Indeed, once the overall performance of the academy began to improve against the targets set, George and Richard both highlighted the satisfaction at the heightened level of performance through the increased sales of players from the academy, following organisational change. Similarly, Darby (2008) suggests that such an improvement in task performance can enhance individual's perceptions of their professional self through increased self-esteem and self-image. James however, outlined the caution needed at this point to ensure that such a level of performance can be maintained. Specifically, James highlighted that in order to do this, the financial income generated by the performance of the academy would need to be invested back into the academy resources. This reinvestment would provide the academy staff with the opportunity to employ more scouts, better coaches, sport science support staff and enhance the training facilities used by each age group within the academy. As Darby (2008) states, understanding the caution

needed when celebrating success is key to also ensuring that positive perceptions of self-image and self-esteem are maintained.

Furthermore, following the relative success within the overall performance of the academy, data alluding to the financial context of the academy performance was evident from the interviews with George, Richard and James. Interestingly, all participants were aware of the significant financial contribution that the academy was making to the overall income generation of the football club, along with the limited financial resource afforded to the academy staff in making such a contribution. The recognition given to the academy staff at this point appeared to foster the framing of a social group identity (Croft et al., 2015), defining themselves as a 'hardworking' department that is able to over-perform against the performance targets set to the department without the financial resource or support that is necessary to achieve such targets. Indeed, the formation of a social group identity prompts questions such as 'what are we?' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 625). The creation of such a social group identity and the congruence of individual identities with the group identity helps to guide action, behaviours and decision-making whilst limiting conflicting identities (Croft et al., 2015) during periods of organisational change in professional football clubs. The reinforcement of the social group identity also appears to be enhanced following recognition from key stakeholders or senior management figures within the organisation. Creating a successful social group identity may also increase coherence 'and may act as a buffer against a threateningly diverse and ambiguous world' (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1187).

Moreover, maintaining a strong social group identity may help to influence the construction of an individual identity amongst staff members that may be employed towards the latter stages of organisational change. In the context of Alder FC, this may be the recruitment of new Academy Coaches, head coaches, sport science and medical support staff who will be responsible for ensuring that the academy continues to produce players that can be sold for a financial fee and subsequently, contribute to the business model of the football club. As Croft et al. (2015) states, 'emotional detachment from a social group will not be beneficial, as it will undermine the ability of professionals to influence others in the group' (p. 125).

8.2 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the findings from the horizontal analysis of the narrative data from each of the four participants, along with data from the ethnographic field observations. The findings highlighted the micro-political nature of the changes being made to the image and branding of Alder FC following a change in Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Manager. The creation of a new vision and direction for the club also evidenced the different levels of vulnerability inherent in implementing and coping with changes to working practices and staff turnover. During this process, the academy staff became aware of the need to develop a micro-political understanding of the *power* being exerted by the 1st Team Manager in his attempt to interfere with the working practices of the academy. Additionally, in order to create a successful *social group identity*, the academy staff understood the importance of having an awareness of the 1st Team Manager's 'allies' within the academy, and the strategies in which to limit the capacity of such allies. Finally, the data illustrates the nature of collective, perceived 'success' amongst the academy staff as a result of the process of organisational change.

9. Chapter Nine – Conclusion

9.1 Summary of the Findings

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the social complexities and micro-political realities of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club (Alder FC). Attention was given to understanding the effects of organisational change on the micro-political nature of professional working practices and the relationships of each participant during such a period of change. To achieve this aim, the thesis was sectioned into four interrelated studies with specific key research questions developed to guide each study and the investigation of each participant's individual narrative story of organisational change at Alder FC. A discussion of the key findings from each study will be discussed below.

The purpose of study one was to examine the experiences of Ian, an Academy Coach, working within Alder FC during a period of organisational change addressing research question one: what are the experiences of the stakeholders who were removed from the change process within a professional football environment? What are their perceptions as to why they were removed and how did they cope with such change both during and after this process?

Specifically, the findings revealed that the new 1st Team Manager's scrutiny of the academy affected Ian's working practices, leading to a 'tense and nervous atmosphere'. Such a shift in atmosphere reflected the abandonment of the core value of developing the players in favour of winning games in the academy at Alder FC. Ian came to recognise that during the process of organisational change 'it could be your head on the chopping board' with no legitimate or informed justification.

Ian indicated that following the scrutiny of his age group, other coaches disassociated themselves from him. Such experiences evidence how periods of organisational change can reveal the true nature of professional working relationships between peers. Ian explained how communications within the club were politicised during his departure from Alder FC (e.g. 'I've got rid of Ian. It wasn't in his best interests to say that I was unhappy… I think he manipulated what was said in the conversation to strengthen his position a little and to suit his own agenda').

Ian's conversations and interactions with others such as Eric focused upon coaches seeing change as an opportunity to 'stitch' each other up and 'stab each other in the back' to promote themselves, acting in a Machiavellian manner (e.g. 'he's a snake').

Organisational change also affected Ian's sense of self as a coach. Following his experiences of organisational change, Ian concluded that 'you've got to be savvy towards it' and 'read some of the underlying things that are going on around the club, whether you are full time or part time'. Ian also recognised a lack of micro-political literacy and micro-political action on his part to retain his employment within Alder FC.

The purpose of study two was to investigate the experiences of the Head of Foundation Phase, James, and addressed research question two: what can be learnt from the experiences of coaches and other stakeholders who remain during the change process in a professional football environment? How do such stakeholders manage to maintain their role within this environment during the change process and why?

James highlighted the transformation to his working environment during the change process. Specifically, following the initial changes being made to senior management within Alder FC, James indicated his awareness of 'being seen in a good light', but at the same time not getting on the 'wrong side of people by sucking up or making others look bad'. Indeed, James outlined how the organisational change process brought about the priority of protecting 'your job and your livelihood'.

James also developed an understanding of how others acted towards him and how he acted towards others at Alder FC during the change process. The findings here revealed the actions undertaken by James to ensure that coaches he was responsible for in his department were 'onside'. Furthermore, the findings evidenced how significant others within Alder FC, such as the Academy Manager, distanced themselves from James when it appeared that he was 'under threat' from senior management figures. However, when the perceived threat appeared to diminish, and James was seen in a more positive, professional light, such significant others would begin to attach themselves to James again.

Within the academy department, there were staff members that kept their job and staff members that did not. James provided an insight into instances where such realities influenced the micro-political action taken when he described how both he and another staff member who was keeping their job were invited to take part in a five-a-side football game, and the other two members of staff were not. Such a situation prompted James to agree to taking part under the notion of 'we have to look after ourselves in terms of keeping our job'. Furthermore, James highlighted the importance of understanding the 1st Team Manager and the 'power' he had to act within the club. As the organisational change process progressed, James developed an understanding of how to 'manage' the 1st Team Manager as well as increasing his confidence in conveying his own honest opinion, rather than telling him 'what he wants to hear' when in conversation with the 1st Team Manager.

When he received the confirmation that he would be keeping his job and staying in his role as Head of Foundation Phase, James highlighted that he felt an increased level of ownership and responsibility for his department. Indeed, job satisfaction was enhanced through the notion of feeling 'a part of something' and wanting to 'do a good job because it is a reflection on yourself in how well you're doing'.

The purpose of study three was to explore the experiences of the Academy Manager, Richard and addressed research question three: how do coaches and academy managers manage 'upwards' in a professional football environment? How do they construct the knowledge to do so? What methods and strategies are utilised and why are they successful or unsuccessful?

Here Richard discussed the worry amongst himself and other staff regarding job security. Indeed, at this point, and prior to his official promotion, Richard was aware of the threat that the [at the time] Academy Manager Eric was under and that Richard was likely to be promoted to Eric's role following his sacking.

The findings also evidenced Richard's interpretation of the micro-political realities of organisational change. Richard was aware of the power that the 1st Team Manager held within the football club upon the Manager's appointment. Such an understanding of the micro-political nature of this power influenced the

manner in which Richard interacted with the 1st Team Manager: 'I've never once gone up against him. You can't go to war with the 1st Team Manager, you won't win.' Furthermore, Richard also identified instances where he felt that the 1st Team Management staff were actively trying to sabotage the working practices of the academy staff due to the recognition that the academy was receiving for their success, in contrast to the 1st Team performances. Indeed, when presented with such situations, Richard highlighted the importance of having allies and other professional working relationships that he could trust in coping with such situations. However, as the organisational change process progressed, Richard outlined how he got to understand the 1st Team Manager's character and provided examples of how he was then able to manipulate him: 'I always try to make out as if it is his idea and not mine. So, subliminally, I might mention something earlier on and then he'll come out with it and we'll do it.'

Upon his promotion to the role of Academy Manager, Richard was responsible for ensuring that Academy Coaching staff were working towards the changes that he had made to the coaching curriculum and playing philosophy. Richard provided an example of how he eventually sacked one of the Academy Coaches after witnessing him coaching in a manner that was averse to the coaching curriculum implemented by Richard. Finally, in reflecting upon his future employment opportunities,

Finally, study four aimed to understand the experiences of George, the Head of Professional Development Phase/Under 18 Coach and addressed research question four: how do 'new' coaches who have been brought into the professional football environment during a period of organisational change integrate into that environment and socialise with current staff. What strategies do 'new' coaches use to implement a new playing philosophy to a squad of football players?

Upon taking up his employment, it became clear that developing players for Alder FC to sell was part of the desired successful business model, with the Chairman emphasising the need to 'make the academy a business'. Indeed, there was no particularly formal application and interviewing process; George was suggested for the role through his personal relationship with the 1st Team Manager.

In discussing his remit and responsibilities upon his appointment, George identified that he had to 'prioritise' early and assess what needed to be changed within the academy at Alder FC. As part of the prioritisation process, George evidenced the strategy he put in place for evaluating the players that were currently in the academy that could potentially be sold for a financial fee and the size and standard of the potential buying club. Key to George's strategy during this period, particularly when players began to be sold for substantial financial fees, was ensuring that he could manage the perceptions and expectation of the Chairman and Board of Directors. In order to work towards the targets that he had been tasked with, George began to engage in a process of appraising whether the current staff within his new department would be 'useful' in supporting him in addressing the business remit, or not.

In addition to the above, George was aware of the importance of not coming across as 'weak' to his new colleagues and academy players, in an attempt to 'win their trust' and avoid becoming 'isolated' within the organisation when interacting with such colleagues. Moreover, George outlined the approach he took when appraising the staff that he would be responsible for, for their 'value' to him in achieving the remit he had been set. Indeed, at this point, George began to decide to assess not only their professional capacities but also the individual characters and personalities of the staff in order to decide 'who to fight for' when decisions would be made about who would and would not keep their job during the change process.

Furthermore, George discussed the political process of continuously working out the organisational structure of the club and which member of staff to approach for support with each unique problem. The manner in which George understood and empathised with the feelings of the colleagues he would be responsible for within the academy was also key in managing the political nature of the change process. Interestingly, as the success rate of the U18 academy team began to improve and the sale of individual players began to increase, the recognition George and the rest of the academy staff was receiving at times overshadowed the recognition that the 1st Team staff were receiving. Here, George understood the political undercurrents of such a situation and the importance of managing the impression of the academy, its staff and the players.

9.2 The Micro-political Nature of Organisational Change at Alder FC

The findings of this research have evidenced both the social complexities and the micro-political realities that were experienced during a period of organisational change in a professional football academy. As previously discussed, much attention has been given to the study of micro-politics in the context of sport coaching, and football coaching in particular (Huggan et al., 2015; Potrac & Jones, 2009a; Thompson et al., 2015). However, this thesis is the first to investigate coaches' experiences of the micro-political nature of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club. Indeed, with all four participants holding positions at different hierarchical levels of the organisational structure, the findings have allowed for a nuanced overview of the process of organisational change within the academy at Alder FC.

From a theoretical perspective, and in an attempt to understand such micro-political realities within the organisational change process, a variety of theoretical and conceptual frameworks were drawn upon. Kelchtermans' (1993, 2005) work around the *professional self* provided a lens to understand Ian's experiences of the change process and how he came to conceptualise the rationale behind his dismissal and his relationships with other professional colleagues during the change process. Specifically, the findings highlighted the complex interaction between the five sub-constructs of the *professional self*. Such sub-constructs consisted: *self-image* (i.e. what I am doing), *self-esteem* (i.e. how good am I at my job?), *job motivation* (i.e. the drive I have in my employment role), *task perception* (i.e. what I ought to be doing), and *future prospects* (i.e. what I see myself doing in the future and what opportunities exist for me). Similarly, this work builds upon the work of Roderick and colleagues (Roderick, 2006; Roderick, 2014; Roderick & Schumacker, 2017) and provides further support to the contention that those working within professional clubs quickly gain an appreciation of the labour market, limited employment tenure and surplus of potential labour (Roderick, 2006a). Indeed, within this study, Kelchtermans' (1993) articulation of *professional self-understanding*, derived from working with teachers, provided a novel and useful theoretical lens with which to better understand Ian's experiences of working in professional football.

In making sense of James' experiences of organisational change at Alder FC, James' central concern was his *professional self-interests* (Kelchtermans, 1993; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) (i.e. to maintain his employment and enhance his professional progression). Such interests drove his motivations, actions and strategies within the workplace. Specifically, Kelchtermans' (1993) and Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002) work around *professional self-interests* was used as a theoretical lens to provide insights into how James' negotiated the relational social complexities of the change process. Furthermore, an understanding of how others acted towards James and how he then acted towards others during the change process was outlined. Indeed, whilst it is not suggested that these strategies were the only courses of action available to James, or the best courses of action, the findings of this work highlight how James used these approaches to successfully manoeuvre himself in a way that protected his *professional self-interests*.

An analysis of George's experience of being appointed to the role of Head of Professional Development and U18 Coach, highlighted his development of *professional leadership identity* in order to protect himself against sources of *vulnerability* (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2009) that may arise due to his employment into a senior position within the academy as an outsider. Subsequently, in an attempt to manage such vulnerability, George engaged in 'identity work', which was intertwined with micro-political literacy (seeing) and micro-political action (doing) to improve his working conditions for effective role performance (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2009; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). An unintended consequence of this micro-political action, for George, was becoming responsible for other peoples' jobs, that is, those that he fought to protect (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Heyden et al., 2017). The analysis of George's narrative illustrates how the development of a managerial identity through identity work is a complex, political, emotional and contested endeavour, fraught with vulnerability, periods of self-doubt and critical instances that often require critical reflection during managerial identity formation (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

In addition to the various micro-political concepts provided by Kelchtermans (1993, 2006, 2009) and Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002), wider political theories were used in an attempt to understand the

experiences of Richard (Academy Manager) and how he made sense of the 'political skill' (Ferris et al., 2017) he utilised to successfully negotiate the change process whilst in a 'middle management' (Balogun & Johnson, 2004) position. In his role as Academy Manager, Richard had to deal with employment vulnerability, complexity, and ambiguity whilst strategically negotiating the actions and behaviours of 1st Team Management during organisational change. Taking a *middle management* perspective, the findings demonstrate the active process that Richard took in initiating and supporting organisational change on a day-to-day basis at Alder FC. Similar to the findings of Gibson and Groom (2018), one strategy that Richard developed to implement and support the change process was to share some of the day-to-day decisions and ownership with subordinate line managers. This enabled Richard to maintain a narrative control during the period of organisational change, where the club's new blueprint was reinforced by the narratives of co-workers (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). By winning the trust and respect of his subordinates, Richard was able to increase his own social capital (Ahearne et al., 2014).

In addition to managing subordinate staff, Richard also had to *manage up*, which included selling issues to 1st Team Management (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), whilst also managing the perceptions and expectations of the Chairman, Board of Directors and 1st Team Management (Bourne, 2011; Mantere, 2008), and championing alternative courses of action (Ahearne et al., 2014; Floyd & Woolridge, 1992; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). At times, to protect his own self-interest and ontological security, Richard took political decisions not to exert his managerial agency against the wishes of the top management, and instead developed an emotional coping strategy to deal with disagreements (Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Mantere, 2005). Such political decisions were guided by Richard's sense-making process, and in particular, the meaning he attached to the actions of senior management based upon his socio-cultural understanding of his working context.

9.2.1 Interrelated and Micro-political Change at Alder FC

To further an understanding of the micro-political nature of change at Alder FC, a second process of data analysis took place from a horizontal (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) perspective to identify themes and patterns across all four of the participants' narrative stories. Such an analysis evidenced the interrelated nature of organisational change within the academy at Alder FC and aided the task of addressing the key research questions (highlighted above) that guided the thesis. Specifically, the analysis detailed the impact that the interrelatedness of organisational change had on the working practices, working environment and professional working relationships of the key stakeholders employed within the academy during the organisational change process.

Upon taking over Alder FC, the new Chairman and Board of Directors began to create an organisational identity that portrayed the football club as one that aimed to focus on developing young players through the academy. Such a message was conveyed in both the local and national media. However, from a micro-political perspective, the creation of an organisational identity may also be seen as a form of organisational control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Consequently, once such an identity had been created, participants indicated a sense of vulnerability based upon increased levels of scrutiny of the professional activities (Kelchtermans, 1996) of academy staff. Indeed, participants all highlighted an awareness of the significant role that the academy would have in supporting the new organisational identity of Alder FC. However, the creation of an organisational identity also provided opportunities for decreased levels of vulnerability. In this sense, participants also highlighted that professional activities and behaviours that were congruent with the organisational identity were rewarded with recognition (Kelchtermans, 1996) from senior management figures and positive news stories on Alder FC media outlets.

Notions of vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 2009) were consistent throughout the themes generated within the data analysis, with different sources of vulnerability experienced by all four participants upon the initial changes. However, it is interesting to note the different levels of each participant within the academy's organisational hierarchy and how that reflected the sources of vulnerability experienced. As

previously discussed, the levels of vulnerability felt by George were significantly less than other participants, potentially a result of being appointed as an outsider. In light of this, the vulnerability experienced by George was self-induced due to his desire to achieve immediate success upon his appointment. Such a desire led to threats to his own professional self-efficacy (Kelchtermans, 1996). In addition, vulnerability was also experienced as a result of the moral conflicts (Kelchtermans, 1996) within the working practices of staff and the conflicting ideas of good coaching and player development processes between coaches following the introduction of changes to the academy philosophy and coaching curriculum. Indeed, high levels of staff turnover, as part of the change process, led to academy staff members taking on additional tasks in an attempt to avoid the vulnerability of 'decisional power' (Kelchtermans, 1996, p. 309). One final source of vulnerability that became apparent was the ambiguous nature of change within the academy. In this case, certain staff members were unclear about their individual performance indicators in relation to their coaching practice and what was expected of both them as coaches and the players within their academy age group team. Subsequently, such a lack of communication left unanswered questions, such as 'what am I doing right/wrong?', that in turn resulted in coaches doubting their own professional qualities.

With such an intense level of scrutiny on the academy and the increased role that the academy would play in the future business model of the club, 1st Team Management staff became aware of the Chairman's recognition of the success and value of the academy through the increased financial sales of academy players to English Premier League clubs. At this point all participants experienced a level of interference from the 1st Team Manager in the academy working practices. Whilst it is not conclusive about the reasons behind the actions and level of interference from the 1st Team Manager, it is interesting to note that the 1st team were experiencing a decrease in their level of on-field performances at the same point in time. Such a level of interference and power (Hoyle, 1982) exerted by the 1st Team Manager promoted a competitive relationship between the academy and 1st team departments at Alder FC, leading to a negative culture being developed within the organisation (Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016). Indeed, as the organisational change

process progressed, all participants highlighted the importance of striving to understand the micro-political nature of the 1st Team Manager's level of interference in an attempt to cope with such instances and potentially guard against the onset of vulnerability amongst staff members.

In discussing the development of professional working relationships between academy staff during organisational change, the micro-political nature of such an endeavour became apparent. All participants detailed the improved working environment within the academy department once 'threats' to the necessary working conditions had been removed (Kelchtermans, 2005). In this case, the 'threat' was in the form of another member of academy staff (John) who appeared to lose the trust (Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016) of his colleagues because of his close relationship with the 1st Team Manager. Such a relationship provided additional opportunities for the 1st Team Manager to exert his own power over the academy and, again, instigate a level of interference in the academy working practices. However, as previously discussed, organisational change can influence someone's actions in an attempt to protect their professional self-interests (Kelchtermans, 1993). In light of this, a scholarly investigation of John's narrative experiences of organisational change at Alder FC may have provided us with an explanation behind the development of John's relationship with the 1st Team Manager. Such an investigation may evidence whether or not John was trying to protect his own professional self-interests during a vulnerable period of organisational change, regardless of the notion that these behaviours may not be congruent with the social group identity created amongst his professional colleagues.

Alongside the development of professional working relationships at Alder FC, participants also highlighted the need to create a positive working environment within the academy department and the micro-political underpinnings that supported these efforts. The recognition of successes received by the academy staff from the Chairman and Board of Directors allowed for the creation of a social group identity (Croft et al., 2015) that promoted and reinforced the 'hardworking' and 'over-performing' description of the academy department as a social group. The creation of such an identity was key in guiding the subsequent actions and behaviours of academy staff within the working environment and ensuring that such

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actions and behaviours were congruent with the above social group identity. However, one participant highlighted the need to remain cautious when celebrating success (Darby, 2008), given the continued and increased resources (financial, human, physical) needed to ensure that the level of success (the sale of academy players for substantial financial return) remained consistent each season. In this sense, the creation of a social group identity that is characterised as 'hardworking' and 'over-performing' may also be one that is exploited by the Chairman and Board Directors who may not see the justification for the provision of increased resources within the academy department.

9.3 Theoretical Implications

Predominantly, micro-political theory used to understand teaching and teacher education provided a useful theoretical lens throughout the research process. Kelchtermans' (1993) articulation of teachers' *professional self-understanding* provided a novel and useful theoretical lens to better understand coaches' experiences of working in professional youth football during a period of organisational change, further highlighting the impact that organisational change has on a coach's personal interpretive framework (Kelchtermans, 2005). Indeed, this study is the first to enhance our theoretical conceptualisation of *professional self-understanding* and the use of such theory in making sense of how a coach comes to view his sense of self as a coach, his job role, job motivations and future prospects in developing a career in professional youth football. Of particular interest is the use of *professional self-understanding* as a theoretical framework in highlighting how Ian reflected on his perceived *self-esteem* and *self-image* and the influence this had on his feelings of stigmatisation. Apart from the work of Jones (2006), our understanding of how individuals experience stigmatisation has yet to be explored. Here, the work of Goffman (1963) may provide a fruitful avenue for future work regarding loss of employment and stigma.

Whilst *professional self-understanding* was a useful theoretical lens in understanding Ian's narrative experiences, additional theoretical underpinnings were required to comprehend how Ian understood the actions of Richard. At this point, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974) was used to explain

how Richard terminated Ian's employment to further his own relationship with the 1st Team Manager. In light of these findings, the use of social exchange theory to understand how management figures behave towards subordinates may enhance our understanding of the micro-political nature of such a concept.

Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002) work surrounding the role that *professional self-interests* play in instigating a teacher's actions during their professional life was also used as a guiding theoretical framework to understand how such *professional self-interests* influence and guide the *actions and strategies* of coaches when trying to protect themselves from the vulnerable nature of organisational change in professional youth football. Importantly, for the first time, this research programme has provided rich empirical and theoretically informed insights and furthered our understanding of *professional self-interests*. Specifically, the findings highlighted the *actions, strategies and tactics* used by a Head of Foundation Phase Coach to influence the coaches he was responsible for to protect his own *professional self-interests* and in turn, maintain his role as part of the organisational change process.

This research programme is also the first to provide novel empirical and theoretical insights into the role that micro-political literacy, micro-political action and employment vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2009; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) play during periods of organisational change. However, the guiding theoretical underpinnings highlighted above were limited in supporting the understanding of the impact that a coach's place in the organisational structure has on a coach's role during organisational change. For example, the findings from Richard's narrative story provide us with new insights into the *political* behaviours of a coach promoted to a *middle management* (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) position as Academy Manager during organisational change. Such findings have added additional rich and complex narrative dimensions to the *middle management* literature that highlights the role that middle managers play in significantly influencing strategy during organisational change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Heyden et al., 2017; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Woolridge et al., 2008) in professional youth football. Furthermore, Kelly and Harris (2010) have highlighted the significance of 'trust' amongst individuals employed within professional football clubs. However, the findings from Richard's narrative account have provided us with

a theoretical understanding of the micro-political development of 'trust' between both Richard and George during organisational change.

Furthermore, in attempting to understand the micro-political experiences of a coach appointed into a management role to implement and support organisational change within an academy, previous theoretical work that has examined the impact of 'outsiders' as agents of change on organisational performance (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2010) was drawn on. In addition, theoretical frameworks surrounding *professional leadership identity* (Croft et al., 2015; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a; 2003b; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) were used in an attempt to understand how an 'outsider' both implemented and supported organisational change. Subsequently, this research project is the first to further our empirical understanding of the social complexities at play during the micro-political nature of constructing a *professional leadership identity* of a coach appointed as an 'outsider' to a new professional football academy to implement organisational change. Furthermore, whilst high levels of staff turnover have previously been evidenced (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Wagstaff et al., 2016) the use of *social group identity* theory has provided us with an understanding of 'how' and 'why' such levels of staff turnover may occur during organisational change. Similarly, social network theory and relational sociology may also be considered in the future as a fertile ground to further understand the acquisition of staff into sporting organisations (Parnell, Widdop, Groom & Bond, 2019).

Whilst the theoretical insights and the benefits of adopting the chosen theoretical frameworks have been discussed, it is important to reflect on the potential limitations that are inherent when providing such theoretical understandings. The use of a theoretical framework helps us to 'see through the untidiness of practice' (Lyle & Cushion, 2017, p. 32); however, 'we need to do more than uncritically accept and apply theories from other disciplines' (Lyle & Cushion, 2017, p. 36). Furthermore, Jones et al. (2011) suggest caution against the selection of convenient theoretical concepts, 'which only results in a loose patchwork of assumed related notions on a particular topic' (p. 179). Within the context of this study, awareness must be given to the potential for a strict focus on the micropolitical nature of organisational change to avoid

other possible theoretical readings of the data. Specifically, I had engaged in a variety of literature that had highlighted the micro-political nature of coaching which lead me to the conclusion that micropolitical theory was 'the way' to study organisational change in professional youth football. However, in doing so, I had almost disregarded other theoretical frameworks that might have enhanced or provided an alternative understanding of the processes of organisational change in a professional football academy, along with how change was experienced by each individual participant. As Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne, Allanson, Gale and Marshall (2013) allude to, it is easy to be influenced by 'respective disciplinary knowledge, our epistemological and theoretical beliefs, and the reading of theoretical texts' (p. 474) that occur prior to, and during the research process. Moreover, the theoretical readings provided within this project may differ from others. Indeed, a variety of other sociological readings of the data were available, and whilst it is unreasonable to utilise all such readings within a single research project, some of the theoretical frameworks may contribute to our understanding of organisational change in professional (youth) football. A more detailed discussion around the use of such frameworks in future research endeavours will be discussed in 'Future Recommendations' section of this thesis.

9.4 Practical Implications

In addition to the theoretical developments that have been produced from the investigations within this study, numerous practical implications are also evident. Such suggestions may prove to be useful for those working in professional youth football, but also for those that are tasked with coping with, implementing and supporting organisational change in similar environments. First, discussions detailing the realities of employment within the insecure nature of professional football should become an important component in the education of coaches working in this domain. That is, coaches should seek to develop *micro-political literacy* as part of their professional coaching repertoire. The importance of understanding how others within the coaching environment may impact upon a coach's *self-image*, *self-esteem*, *job motivation*, *task perception* and future prospects should be acknowledged. In addition, understanding how to work with

others with, at times, contradictory goals, forms an important part of organisational life (Potrac & Jones, 2009a). From a club perspective, the newly formed role of Head of Coaching under the Premier League's Elite Player Performance Plan (The Premier League, 2011), with a remit to support, develop and educate coaches to work within professional environments, may be a fruitful avenue to further explore coach education *in situ*. Specifically, focussing on how a Head of Coaching educates neophyte coaches about the realities of working within such a competitive, dynamic and insecure workplace.

Moreover, the ability to develop a repertoire of micro-political *actions, strategies and tactics* would benefit coaches working within professional football during such periods of instability and change. Specifically, coaches should consider, and be able to answer, the following four interrelated questions: (1) Who are the key individuals and groups that influence your practice, environment, resources, employment, reward, retention and progression? (2) How do these individuals and groups view your competence, capability and role performance? (3) What are the best ways of positively influencing these key individuals and groups to align with your *professional self-interests* to reduce vulnerability and increase progression in the coaching workplace? (4) From an ethical perspective, what are the consequences of the actions, strategies and tactics that you have chosen to employ within your context? Once coaches are better able to clearly analyse, understand and articulate the coaching workplace (i.e. the development of micro-political literacy), their own actions, strategies and tactics may be developed to align with their career goals. Furthermore, in an attempt to develop micro-political literacy, such findings could be incorporated into a problem-based learning approach to support the education of practitioners and assist them in dealing with the complexity of organisational change and organisational life in sport.

From a middle management perspective, coaches promoted to Academy Manager positions should become aware of the influence they can have in the strategic direction of not only their department, but also the overall organisation. In doing so, Academy Managers should become acutely aware of the political nature of negotiating the actions and behaviours of senior management figures such as Board Directors and 1st Team Management staff. Indeed, such actions and behaviours can have a significant impact on the

organisational change process and the development of a new departmental strategy such as the implementation of a new playing philosophy or coaching curriculum within an academy. Contrastingly, Academy Managers should also develop their ability to 'sell' suggestions to senior management (Directors, 1st Team Manager, etc.) in an attempt to 'manage up' within an organisation. When attempting to 'manage up' and 'sell' potential suggestions to senior management, micro-political questions such as 'How am I going to be perceived in suggesting this course of action?', 'What are the expectations of me in this organisation?', 'How might this suggestion be received?' and 'How will this suggestion influence my working relationship with, for example, the 1st Team Manager?' should be considered. In addressing such questions, Academy Managers may be able to better negotiate the micro-political nature of 'managing up' and, in turn, protect their own self-interests and enhance their social-cultural understanding of the context of the professional football club.

Academy Managers are also required to 'manage down'. That is, they are responsible for numerous Academy Coaches, fitness coaches and other sport science support staff, video analysts and physiotherapists. During periods of implementing change, such as a new coaching curriculum, current Academy Coaches may become resistant to such changes. At these points, Academy Managers must attempt to understand the reasoning behind such resistance and ascertain whether or not, through educational endeavours, the resistance can be resolved. Furthermore, garnering the support of subordinate line managers such as the Head of Foundation Phase, Head of Youth Development Phase and Head of Professional Development Phase may also increase an Academy Manager's social capital and aid the management of resistance to change.

Academy Managers should also understand the increased level of vulnerability brought about by the visibility of professional activities (i.e. Academy Coaches' coaching practices) (Kelchtermans, 1993). In observing Academy Coaches coaching, Academy Managers should look to provide support and feedback frequently to decrease feelings of vulnerability amongst Academy Coaches during organisational change. Consequently, Academy Coaches may feel a sense of connectedness (Pajak & Blasé, 1989) to senior

academy staff. Indeed, such feedback and support may also reduce a rise in resistance to change from Academy Coaches.

In addition, outsiders appointed to competitive, dynamic professional football environments should endeavour to seek reassurances regarding tenure, senior managerial (Chairman, Board of Directors) support and how they will be appraised (i.e. what does success/failure look like), whilst also clearly identifying areas of priority that offer potential quick wins and significant change. Practically, quickly changing the day-to-day working practices of different departments within the organisation (i.e. recruitment and coaching) should be addressed by outsider change agents to align working processes to organisational goals as a priority. For example, if success is going to be assessed against the amount of 1st team debutants from the academy or the level of financial income from academy player sales, then outsider change agents may look to change academy player recruitment criteria and, the coaching curriculum to develop academy players that can either be sold or play in the 1st team.

Moreover, in order to achieve the change that is required, appraising existing staff and making decisions based on a simple set of criteria (e.g. 'Can I work with him/her? Are they good at their job? Is he/she giving me what I need?') may be a useful starting point. Devising such criteria is recommended for outsiders when appraising staff who will be responsible for implementing and delivering the organisational goals outlined by the outsider. The remit, organisational goals and personal values of the outsider should be the key influencers in devising such criteria. In the case of this research, George considered the above criteria when appraising the ability of his staff to contribute to development of academy players who could be sold or play in the 1st team, along with the value he placed on staff members who could create a level of 'camaraderie' and willingness to help each other with additional day-to-day tasks.

In addition, leaders that are appointed as outsiders to enact organisational change within professional football clubs may be faced with situations where they are required to make important and confrontational decisions. In such cases, staff members may also see such decisions as opportunities to judge outsiders as either strong or weak leaders. Furthermore, the manner in which staff talk 'and express

sentiments about leaders' (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, p. 365) requires consideration when implementing organisational change. Consequently, from a practical perspective, it is important to have not only a clear vision for change but also the ability to enact the desired changes under internal scrutiny from subordinate members of staff. Practically then, senior leaders appointed to initiate, and support change need to be aware of how their decisions to act (or not) will be interpreted by existing employees as strong or weak leadership. Therefore, to be effective, senior leaders need to quickly identify who needs to be involved within the decision-making process and who needs to be informed of decisions once they have been taken. Such an approach would go some way to lessening the ambiguity that can arise during communication processes within professional football environments.

Leaders tasked with implementing organisational change should also consider the role that 'identity' plays from an *organisational* (identity of the football club) and a *group* (identity of the department i.e. 1st team or academy) perspective. As demonstrated within the data, the creation of an organisational and a group identity was seen to increase employee engagement with the vision of change. However, when attempting to garner support from employees during the creation of an organisational identity, leaders must ensure that such an identity is not perceived as fabricated and insincere. Therefore, the alignment of the behaviours and actions of leaders to the organisational identity becomes paramount. For example, leaders may wish to communicate a culture of, or a strategy for change, through numerous outlets (i.e. PowerPoint presentations and in-house coach education and development sessions; Gibson & Groom, 2018); however, the actions and behaviours of leaders must be seen to reflect and embody such communications amongst staff members to gain their support throughout the change process. Consequently, leaders must consistently reflect on their actions and behaviours towards staff members to understand how such actions and behaviours are being received and whether or not they are congruent with messages they have previously communicated.

From a departmental perspective, the construction of a social group identity can enhance collaboration, inform decision-making and decrease the potential for conflict amongst employees. Here,

leaders must be aware that the development of a social group identity may be organic in nature, and not one that is forced upon employees. Indeed, rather than imposing a social group identity upon employees within a department, it may be more fruitful to guide an evolving social group identity over a period of time during organisational change. Specifically, and within the case at Alder FC, a social group identity that was shared and valued amongst the academy staff was only developed upon recognition from the Chairman and Board of Directors in relation to their departmental performance. That is, such senior figures understood the achievements of the academy to be aligned to the organisational identity of the football club. However, it must be noted that *individual* identities of employees must also be congruent with the social group identity of the department. Again, as the data highlighted, individuals who portrayed identities that were not congruent, were replaced with newly appointed staff members. Eventually, the introduction of new staff members at Alder FC significantly contributed to the creation of a strong social group identity and a successful period of organisational change within the academy.

9.5 Reflections on the Research Process

Whilst this project has furthered our understanding of the micro-political realities of organisational change in professional youth football, both the strengths and limitations of the methodological approach need to be considered.

It is important to note the methodological limitations highlighted before, during and after the research process. First, once Alder FC had been selected as the setting for the case study, the sampling process for participants to take part in the semi-structured interviews began. Criteria were designed to support a purposeful sampling process; however, with numerous employees in the academy meeting the criteria outlined, the selection of participants was based on 'local knowledge' of each participant, or further criteria such as 'who do I have a strong relationship with?', 'who would be more willing to take part, commit to the research process and potential follow-up interviews?' and 'whose experiences may be the most beneficial in generating data around the key research questions?'. Whilst such a criterion-based

approach to sampling has been advocated (Sparkes & Smith, 2014), further considerations became evident as the research process progressed. In particular, as the interviews with the selected participants developed, it became apparent that conducting interviews with the key actors in each of the participant's narrative stories may have contributed to an improved understanding of the micro-political nature of organisational change at Alder FC. Indeed, including the Chairman, 1st Team Manager and other key actors at Alder FC within the sample size may have helped to address the key research questions guiding this study.

As an already existing employee coach at Alder FC, access, rapport and trust were already established to a substantial level, although it must be noted that levels of rapport and trust were more prominent with certain participants than others. That is, personal as well as professional relationships existed with both Ian and James.

However, that is not to say that establishing familiarity and rapport resulted in a clean, straight forward data collection process. Interestingly, Sparkes (2002) indicates, reflections on the research process should discuss the dilemmas, uncertainties and issues faced in this process in an honest and critical appraisal of one's own work. Sparkes (2002) continues to elaborate,

> All too often, the political, personal, ethical, and messy realities of qualitative research are not formally documented. Rather, by the time the research is presented or written up, all the perils and pitfalls of the research have been omitted or smoothed out in a tidy report outlining what went right rather than what went wrong in a research endeavour (p. 70).

In light of the point made by Sparkes (2002), whilst such a rapport with the participants was evident, it would be foolish to assume that participants appeared at complete ease throughout the entirety of the interview process. As per the suggestion by Sparkes and Smith (2014), a venue of convenience to the participant was sought to commence the interviews. However, at times, convenience for the participants meant that interviews had to take place at the training ground of Alder FC. Interestingly, Kelly and Harris (2010) reported anxieties felt by interviewees when conducting research in professional football. Similarly,

my own experiences reflected those stated above. Whilst the training ground was deemed to be a place of convenience for one of the participants, at times the participant was still wary of someone overhearing our conversations, even though efforts were made for the interviews to take place in a room rarely used, in a location rarely visited in the training ground. The slightest of noises outside the room prompted caution from the participant to make sure none of their colleagues were listening in. Observing the behaviours of this participant brought instant personal reflections on the ethical principles of the study and whether or not the interview should be finished in order to protect the perceived anxieties of the participant. However, such principles were compromised 'in order to get the job done' (Sparkes, 2002, p. 60).

In order to address the research questions guiding the study, I also choose to interview the Academy Manager (my line manager) and the Head of Professional Development Phase, who were both above me in the hierarchy of the football club. Indeed, the benefits of familiarity and being an 'insider' (Kelly and Harris, 2010) when conducting research in professional football have been extensively discussed in this thesis. However, due to the sensitivity of topics that would be discussed in the interview with both the Academy Manager and Head of Professional Development Phase, along with their seniority to me, I took the decision to leave my role at the club prior to the interviews commencing. In taking this decision, it was hoped that the information disclosed during the interview would be more authentic in nature, rather than certain aspects being withheld as a result of myself still being an employee of the and their subordinate. Consequently, it was hoped that this decision would allow for a richer discussion of their experiences of organisational change at Alder FC.

Upon further reflection of the data collection process, it was felt that there were additional, potential limitations to researching in 'my own backyard' (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 74). I was constantly questioning whether or not participants were withholding information that may lead me to perceive them, as my colleagues, negatively. Indeed, the sensitivity of the interview topics prompted the data being generated to be of a personal nature. This brought about the notion of how an interviewer who was not

already a member of the group and organisation would be received, and whether or not the data generated throughout the interview process may have been richer in nature.

Moreover, my role at Alder FC, and as a 'research instrument' (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 73.) in the data collection process, meant that adopting a neutral role during interactions, interviews and observations became difficult. Upon reflecting on the notion of neutrality throughout the data collection process, I began to question my level of both conscious and unconscious bias as data were being generated. The process of data collection with certain participants occurred simultaneously. Subsequently, the topics discussed and the conversations that occurred within the semi-structured interviews with each participant may have, knowingly or unknowingly, been influenced by prior interviews with other participants or other ethnographic observations. In addition, it also became difficult to refrain from discussing the details of key events from the perspective of each participant, with each participant. Whilst this may have helped to stimulate a richer data set within the interview process, looking at it from an ethical perspective, I took the decision to refrain from doing so.

The duality of my role in the research process, as an Alder FC employee and a researcher, presented me with moral dilemmas, particularly when it came to writing up the findings of the study. From an ethical perspective, all participants provided informed consent and were aware of how the findings may be disseminated to a wider audience; however, as the analysis of the data progressed, I felt a sense of unease when thoughts of publishing the findings emerged, given the professional and personal relationships I had developed during my six years of employment at Alder FC. That is, attempting to understand the micro-politics of organisational change in a professional football club lends itself to generating data of a sensitive nature to the individual participant. Indeed, as Sparkes and Smith (2014) indicate, 'you have to live with your colleagues and friends after the study has been completed and the results published!' (p. 74). Moreover, throughout the data analysis process, and as the story of the data began to be developed, I felt myself reflecting on the early stages of data collection. Such reflections tended to consist of feelings of guilt, posed by contemplative questions such as, 'did the participants *really* understand the purpose of the

study?', 'How well did I explain the rationale and aim of the study in the Participant Information Sheet?', 'Do they *really* understand the nature of academic research and the use of findings through publication?'. Again, as previously discussed, addressing and coping with such moral dilemmas are an inherent component of conducting interpretive studies, aimed at understanding the rich experiences of participants (Sparkes, 2002), particularly in the environment of professional football.

The temporal nature of organisational change and the different points of data collection during the change process also need to be recognised when appraising the research process. As previously stated, the fluid nature of organisational change influences the study of such a phenomenon (Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). Furthermore, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) indicate that 'data recorded at different times need to be examined in light of their place within the temporal patterns, short and long term, that structure the lives of the people being studied' (p. 191). In light of this, the temporal nature of organisational change at Alder FC, coupled with the different points of data collection, influenced the research process. As change was on-going, the field notes collected through the ethnographic observations allowed for additional interview topics that led to the generation of a richer data set in relation to addressing the research aim and key research questions. Moreover, the use of follow-up interviews (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) offered an opportunity to revisit and check data that was generated from prior interviews, leading to a level of 'respondent validation' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 193) from each participant.

In addition to the above, further issues regarding the collection of ethnographic observational data need to be discussed. As previously highlighted, Alder FC was chosen as the case study setting due to the convenience, unique access and time spent in the research environment (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). However, it must be noted that my Academy Coaching role at the club was on a part-time basis. In light of this, the collection of ethnographic field notes was limited to the events that fell within the scope of my employment. Upon reflecting on this factor, I may have missed key events, interactions and conversations that may have otherwise been observed were I employed at Alder FC on a full-time basis. Indeed, such instances may have generated data of a richer nature in relation to addressing some of key research questions.

From a practical perspective, there were also limitations to the note-taking process when collecting ethnographic observational data. Live note-taking was avoided; as Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) argue, 'such activity would prove disruptive, either preventing "natural" participation or generating distraction and distrust' (p. 154). As a result, it was necessary to develop my 'capacity to recall events' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 155). Whilst extensive ethnographic field notes were collected, it would be unrealistic to assume that key events, social interactions and conversations were not missed, and they may have increased the study's efficacy in addressing the research aim. Furthermore, the questions of 'what to write down' and 'how to write it down' were also of concern. Indeed, what is recorded is based on the researcher's understanding of what is relevant to the research aim, and to the social organisation of the case study setting, as well as how what is observed relates to background expectations (Wolfinger, 2002). Here, it is important to recognise that my role as a research 'instrument', the manner in which I was socialised into organisational life at Alder FC, my previous research experience, and my interpretation of the research aim and key research questions may have influenced what events I recorded, and how, during the ethnographic observations. Subsequently, and in consideration of the above factors, field notes collected by another researcher may significantly contrast with the field notes collected within this study. Finally, the length of the research process may also have affected the ethnographic fields notes collected. Specifically, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) suggest:

> During the early days of a research project, the scope of the notes will usually be fairly wide, and one will probably be reluctant to concentrate on particular aspects. Indeed, at this stage, it would be difficult to know how to decide which to focus on. As the research progresses, and emergent issues are identified, the notes become more carefully directed at the key topics. (p. 157)

In the case of this study, ethnographic observational data collection took place over a period of one year. Upon considering the above quote, and reflecting on the field notes collected, the field notes that emerged in the early stages of observational data collection may have missed key events, interactions and

conversations that may have enhanced the data set and developed the scope of answering the key research questions.

Furthermore, the processes of vertical narrative analysis and horizontal narrative analysis that were utilised within this study also deserve critical attention. Whilst the benefits of utilising both approaches have been widely discussed within the Methodology chapter, it is important to note the limitations of analysing the data generated through such approaches. As Gubrium and Holstein (2009) have indicated, the process of analysing narrative data is time consuming and can be problematic in ensuring that the participant's 'story' has been captured. Furthermore, a prescribed step process to be followed when analysing narrative data has yet to be distinguished (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In addition, when employing a horizontal thematic analysis approach, the search for themes can, at times, eradicate the richness (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the data set and the nuances of the story of the data. Moreover, there is also the risk of the researcher writing up findings that do not necessarily reflect the analysis of the data. Sparkes and Smith (2014) have suggested that at this point the researcher's 'interpretations are not supported by the data' (p. 126). Whilst it was unrealistic to attempt to address each of these limitations prior to the study commencing, such limitations were recognised and negotiated through reflexive discussions throughout the research process with the supervisory team (Nelson, Groom & Potrac, 2014).

With the above limitations recognised, it is also important to distinguish the significant strengths of this programme of research. A strength of the study was the access and familiarity that the primary researcher had with the organisational setting of the nested case study. Indeed, as an employee within Alder FC, the primary researcher had a prior understanding of organisational life at Alder FC and a professional working relationship with several of the key actors within this study, resulting in the nested case study also becoming a *local knowledge case* (Thomas, 2016). Such a strength is supported by Sparkes and Smith (2014) who advocate the importance of accessibility when selecting a case to study to ensure that the case is one where it is possible to learn the most about a phenomenon and to spend the most time with it.

Addressing such criteria allowed for a more nuanced and informed approach during the interview and ethnographic observational process.

It is also important to note the point at which the interview process began with both the Academy Manager (Richard) and Head of Professional Development (George) in enhancing the strength of the research. Both participants were essentially senior management figures within the academy's organisational hierarchy, with Richard being my 'manager' in my role as an Academy Coach along with unofficially being responsible to George due to working with the Under 16 group, and George working with the Under 18 group. In light of this, I decided to start data collection with both participants after I left my role as Academy Coach at Alder FC. The rationale behind such a decision was based on the premise that the duality of my role as a subordinate to both participants and a research 'instrument' could cause a level of reactivity (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) during the interview process and potentially influence the data being generated because of my presence around the club during the data collection process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) go on to state that 'it is now a central tenet of the sociological literature that people seek to manage impressions of themselves and of settings and groups with which they are associated' (p. 189). Consequently, I was aware of the notion that Richard or George may seek to portray a different, less authentic, impression of themselves during the interview process were I still one of their employees. Interestingly, I felt that both participants were more comfortable and relaxed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019) throughout the interview process knowing that I was no longer an employee at Alder FC, resulting in a more authentic data collection process. The methodological novelty of the study lies in the 'nested' nature of the case study (Thomas, 2016). Specifically, a strength of taking a nested approach to conducting case study research is that the researcher is able to understand the interrelated nature of different single cases within one nested case. In light of this, this study is the first to develop an understanding of the interrelated and micro-political nature of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club.

9.6 Future Recommendations

In order to further the field of scholarly investigation into organisational change in professional football, there are numerous recommendations that have arisen from this research. Indeed, whilst this programme of research and previous investigations (Gibson & Groom, 2018) have collected data with participants in professional football academies, there is a lack of research activity that has investigated organisational change within 1st team professional football settings. Interestingly, previous studies (Huggan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2015) have used micro-political theory to understand practitioners' experiences at 1st team level in a professional football club; however, the use of micro-political theory to understand such experiences during organisational change within a 1st team professional football setting is missing.

Whilst this study has taken a case study approach in focussing on one professional football club, future studies may wish to increase the sample size to multiple cases (football clubs) in attempt to further our understanding of the contextual differences of organisational change within numerous football club settings. Such case studies may consist of a sample of participants that includes the 1st Team Manager, Assistant Manager, 1st Team Coach, Goalkeeper Coach and various sports science and medical staff within a professional club that has recently undergone a period of organisational change.

Furthermore, and in building on the work of Roderick (2014, 2017), understanding the manner in which vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 2009) manifests itself amongst 1st team professional football players during organisational change and how such players attempt to negotiate and protect their own professional self-interests (Kelchtermans, 1993) during periods of change may also be beneficial. Specifically, such findings may help better prepare future 1st Team Managers in achieving 'buy-in' from the above contextual stakeholders (Huggan et al., 2015). Moreover, the work of Cummins, O'Boyle and Cassidy (2018) provides a rationale for sampling professional football players in an attempt to better understand leadership within the professional football environment. Specifically, Cummins et al. (2018) state that, 'athletes are the ones impacted by coaches on a daily basis' and that 'leadership is only as effective as the uptake of its followership' (p. 120).

In an attempt to develop our understanding of the social nature of organisational change in professional football, the use of *emotions* (Hochschild, 2000) as a theoretical framework may aid such an endeavour. Indeed, Cassidy et al. (2016) discuss the emotional nature of coaching and the tensions and dilemmas that arise within professional working life.

As has been highlighted within this study and underpinned by the work of Potrac and Marshall (as cited in Jones et al., 2011), coaching and leadership during organisational change may prompt individuals to engage in intense, personal interactions and make decisions that are emotionally driven. Specifically, Hochschild's (2000) work addresses the interrelated, emotional nature of interaction in a social environment. Upon reflecting on the findings of this study, Hochschild's (2000) theoretical notions surrounding *emotions* prompt numerous areas of exploration if we are to further our understanding of organisational change in professional football. In particular, it would be useful to investigate how individuals may engage in both 'deep acting' and 'surface acting' when interacting with significant others in an attempt to guard against vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 2006) and protect one's own professional self-interests (Kelchtermans, 1993) during organisational change. Subsequently, how do these individuals make sense of the contextual 'feeling rules' during such interactions?

Moreover, as highlighted within this study, organisational change in professional football tends to result in a process of staff turnover. With this in mind, individuals may engage in the emotionally laborious task of managing their actions and behaviours in an attempt to keep their job, secure a promotion or secure new employment. Again, Hochschild's (2000) theorising of 'emotional labour' may help us to understand such a task and the impact this may have on the 'inauthenticity of self'. Indeed, as Potrac and Marshall (as cited in Jones et al., 2000) state, 'when employees are required to engage in emotional labour, they may experience a subversion of their true selves' (p. 60).

Another theoretical focus may be fruitful in comprehending social interaction amongst individuals during organisational change is the notion of 'trust'. Indeed, Blau (1986) outlines the need for mutual trust within optimal social relations. As has been evidenced within this study, organisational change in

professional football is characterised by complexity, contradictory goals or agendas, and uncertainty. Furthermore, the findings have highlighted the manner in which relationships both form and break down during such periods. With this in mind, the use of 'trust' as a theoretical framework may further our understanding of how such relationships are formed or broken through the nuances of social interaction. For example, what role did *trust* play in helping academy staff to recognise their 'allies' within the football club during change and how did this influence the creation of a group identity amongst staff in the academy department? Finally, Ronglan (as cited in Jones et al., 2011) has emphasised the need to understand trust within coach-player interactions; however, understanding trust within coach-coach interactions is of equal importance if we are to better conceptualise the social nature of change.

Expanding on previous studies that have investigated the notion of *capital* in professional football environments (Cushion & Jones, 2006), such a theoretical concept may also further the field of organisational change in such environments. Indeed, in building on Bourdieu's assertion that capital may be defined as an individual's capacity to exercise control over their future and the future of others (Bourdieu, 1986), Ocasio, Pozner and Milner (2020) provide us with the notion of *political capital*, that encompasses a variety of different forms of capital. Specifically, the framework suggested by Ocasio et al. (2020) may, for example, help us to understand how a form of 'cultural' or 'knowledge' capital influences an Academy Manager's ability to vertically manage up and down, and horizontally manage across in the organisational hierarchy of the football club. Additionally, notions of 'social' or 'reputational' capital may influence the actions and behaviours of an outsider [newly appointed 1st Team Manager or Academy Manager] employed to implement change within a football club, and how such actions and behaviours are interpreted by recipients of change [existing 1st Team staff or Academy staff]. Indeed, such concepts have yet to be explored during organisational change in professional football contexts.

The work of Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a), Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003b), Alvesson and Willmott (2002), Croft et al. (2015), and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) on professional leadership identity, may be a useful theoretical lens with which to understand a newly appointed 1st Team Manager's

experiences of managerial change and how they may construct a professional leadership identity in order to implement change at 1st team level within a professional football club. This study has gone some way to furthering our theoretical understanding of professional leadership identity and the impact of organisational change on developing such an identity in professional youth football. However, developing our understanding of the contextual influences specific to a 1st team environment in a professional football club on the development of a professional leadership identity is warranted to help support future 1st Team Managers who are tasked with the challenge of implementing change. Indeed, Cummins et al. (2018) have suggested that understanding social identity is key to establishing a general team environment and coaching system.

Furthermore, whilst the findings of this research have provided insights into the experiences of an 'outsider' (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2010) who was newly appointed to Alder FC and tasked with supporting and implementing change, further work is required to enhance our understanding of the efficacy of 'insiders' versus 'outsiders' in undertaking such an endeavour. Indeed, Zhang and Rajagopalan (2010) have investigated this phenomenon within other business settings; however, investigating the comparative experiences of a 1st Team Manager promoted from within a football club into the role and the experiences of a 1st Team Manager appointed from outside a professional club would further our conceptual understanding of organisational change in professional football. Subsequently, longitudinal, ethnographic methods (Gibson & Groom, 2018) may be a good starting point in embarking upon such an investigation. However, temporal issues (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) exist that may need to be become overcome if an ethnographic approach is to be taken. Specifically, professional football is characterised as an industry with high levels of staff turnover (Gilmore & Gilson, 2007); therefore, the appointment of a new 1st Team Manager may occur at a time that is inconvenient for the researcher and the research process. Such an inconvenience becomes particularly problematic in studying organisational change from its earliest incarnation (i.e. a 1st Team Manager's first day in the job), where key events may take place that shape the organisational change process.

The formation of *group* identities is also a notion that requires further investigation. As highlighted previously, this study has evidenced the development of a *social* group identity (Croft et al., 2015) amongst the academy staff at Alder FC. However, information about the impact that organisational change has on the development of a social group identity amongst 1st team staff and 1st team players in a professional football club is lacking. Moreover, the formation of a *professional* group identity (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012) during organisational change is also a notion that is yet to receive attention. As detailed within this study, numerous factors may contribute to how a group identity is characterised within its development. Indeed, the academy staff at Alder FC created a social group identity as one that was hardworking and over-performing against a lack of resources, along with a togetherness that thwarted negative outside influences. At 1st team level, significant contextual factors may also exist when defining and constructing a social or professional group identity amongst stakeholders. Such contextual factors may consist of the influence of local and national media, supporter fanbases, local community, the geographical location of the football club, club history and economic capital. Moreover, how do those tasked with implementing change promote a *professional* group identity amongst their subordinates? How do they ensure that subordinates are aligned to the beliefs, behaviours, rules and group norms? What are the challenges in doing so and how do leaders overcome these challenges?

Similarly, the process of creating a social or professional group identity is one that may also be subject to micro-political tensions. In the case of this study, the formation of a social group identity at Alder FC resulted in certain staff members losing their jobs. In light of this, the study of group identity formation within a 1st team environment at a professional football club should also endeavour to investigate the micro-political tensions evident in such a process and what the contextual, contributing factors are to these tensions. In addition, whilst this study has provided some insight into the micro-political nature of organisational life at a professional football club, future studies may wish to better understand the formation and maintenance of both organisational and social *networks* amongst coaches, specialist practitioners and other key stakeholders (Potrac, 2019) during organisational change in a professional football club.

Moreover, the strengths and limitations of a single-study design have previously been expressed (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2003); however, studies with a wider sample that includes a range of participants within an organisational setting would further our understanding of the formation of social groups within professional groups and the tensions that may or may not exist throughout this process during a period of organisational change (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012).

Finally, as highlighted within this research, the creation of a social group identity that was congruent with the individual identities of staff members within the academy department at Alder FC was a significant factor that contributed to the overall success at the club during a period of organisational change. In light of this, furthering the field of group identity formation during organisational change in professional football clubs may improve our ability to educate 1st Team Managers, and other staff members, to successfully form a social or group identity that supports and guides behaviours in the pursuit of a successful organisational change process.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

This programme of research is the first to explore the micro-political nature of organisational change in the academy of a professional football club. The methodological novelty of the study rests in the use of a nested case study approach in selecting the research setting. Ethnographic observational data and semi-structured interview data collected by the primary researcher, as an embedded Academy Coach at the research site, provided rich insight into a phenomenon yet to be investigated in such a manner. Both the vertical narrative analysis and horizontal thematic analysis of the data highlighted the interrelated, micropolitical nature of coping with, supporting and implementing organisational change amongst participants employed in different positions within the organisational hierarchy. Whilst the narrative experiences of participants were contrasting, the micro-political actions, strategies and behaviours of individuals employed at Alder FC lead to a successful organisational change process in the academy department. Within the context of professional youth football, such insights have furthered our theoretical understanding of key micro-political frameworks

and have provided numerous practical implications for supporting those tasked with implementing, supporting and coping with organisational change in professional football academy settings.

10. <u>References</u>

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11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet

By taking part in this study you will have agreed to take part in 4 interviews lasting between 60 – 90 minutes. The interview questions will be around your experiences of working in professional football during a period of organisational and managerial change. Specifically, questions will focus on your relationship with other employees, how the change process affected your coaching practice, and how the change process affected your day-to-day role as a coach.

Study title

The title of the study is: 'Understanding the behaviours and actions of coaches during a process of organisational and managerial change in professional football'.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in novel research that will aim investigate what exactly happens in a professional football club when a new manager or chairman comes into power. Specifcally, the research will aim to identify how this change in manager and chairman affects the relationships between staff within the professional footbal club. The value of the research lies in informing and improving coach education processes for new coaches to better prepare them for the environment they will inevitably coach in.

Why have I been selected? Am I eligible to take part?

You have been selected to take part in this study as you have relevant experience of organisational and managerial change in a professional football club. Therefore, it is thought that you will be able to provide a detailed insight that will allow the primary researcher to answer aspects of the research question.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation along with the right to withdraw consent to participate at any time without jeopardy. You may also chose to withdraw at a later date should you change your mind. Should you wish to withdraw from the study, please do so by informing the primary researcher – Luke Gibson via email (l.gibson@derby.ac.uk) or via telephone (01298330368).

What will taking part in the study involve?

You will be required to take part in 4 interviews that will last between approximately 60 – 90 minutes. You will be asked questions relating to your experiences of organisational and managerial change within the professional football club in which you worked during the interview (please note, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions should you not wish to). The interview will be recorded using a dictatophone to allow the interview to be transcribed word for word afterwards. After each interview the data generated from the interview will analysed to highlight points interest relating to overall research

question. Upon completion of the final interview, and the subsequent process of data analysis, relevant quotes and data from the interview will be used to write-up the findings in the research paper. The interviews can take place at a time and place of your convenience.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

The only potential risk that you may encounter will be if a questions is asked that you feel uncomfortable about answering. At this point, you can refuse to answer the question and the interview will move on to the next question. It may also be worth noting that you will remain anonymous in the write-up of the findings and you have the right to withdraw any answers from the final write-up before publication.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Taking part in this study may allow an opportunity for reflection upon your own coaching practice and experiences of organisational change that may inform your actions and strategies in relative situations within future working environments.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Records and information identifying the participant will be kept confidential and, to the extent perimitted by the applicable laws and/or regulations, will not be made publicly available. You will remain anonymous thoughour the write-up and production of the data with a limited amount of information about yourself given that may provide the reader with any clue in finding out your identity. The primary researcher, the Director of Studies and Secondary Researcher wil have access to this information and data with the data being stored in a secure location away from the consent forms. The data will be kept for a period of no longer than 6 years. If you chose to withdraw from the study then the data will be destroyed. Please note, if the data is trial published, your identity and the identity of anyone else discussed in the interviews will remain anonymous. Potential places for publication may include peer reviewed journals, book chapters or academic conference presentations.

Who is conducting and funding the research?

The research will be conducted by Luke Gibson (Primary Resarcher) from the University of Derby, Prof. Nick Draper (Director of Studies) from the University of Derby and Dr. Ryan Groom from Manchester Metropolitan University. The research will be internally funded by the University of Derby.

What if I have any questions?

You are encouraged to consider information given and ask any questions that you may have relating to this information by contacting the primary researcher at any opportunity. Please see the contact details below in relation to this.

Contact details

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Consent Form

Study title

'Understanding the behaviours and actions of coaches during a process of organisational and managerial change in professional football'.

Participant ID: _____ (please use the last two letters of your postcode and the last two digits of your phone number; i.e. DG15. Your data will be stored under this ID to ensure confidentiality. You will be asked to recall this ID if you wish to withdraw your data)

Please initial box

I _____ (insert name) confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study. ☐

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have received satisfactory answers. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, up until 2 weeks after participation. ☐

I understand that I can choose not to answer any questions if I would prefer not to do so, without giving a reason or explanation. ☐

I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of researcher   Date   Signature

11.2 Appendix 2: Academy Coach Interview Guide

Coaching Background

- How did you get into coaching?
- Why do you coach?
- What does coaching mean to you?
- Coaching Journey
  - Examples

Coaching Philosophy

- How would you describe yourself as a coach – qualities etc.
- How do you think your values and beliefs (philosophy) have evolved over time and with experience:
  - In training and competition
  - Relationship with players
  - Relationship with staff
  - Dealing with dilemmas/conflict – do you prioritize?
  - Examples

- Outside influences upon philosophy and practice:
  - Other coaches/managers/mentors
  - Different clubs/settings/cultures
    - What was done well/not so well?
    - Examples

Experiences of Organisational Change

- What were your initial thoughts around the organisational and managerial change?
  - Relationship with Academy staff
  - Relationship with other coaches
  - Level of support
  - Level of communication
  - Any other examples?

- What was the process of your sacking?
  - Perception of the process
  - Hidden agendas
  - Support from other staff
  - Formal process
  - Relationships with other coaches
  - Did you see it coming? Were there any signs?
  - Examples?

- What was your perception of the rationale behind your sacking?
  - Was this in line with the reason given to you?
  - Was this clearly communicated to you
  - Examples?

- Did you feel prepared for the experience you were presented with?
  - Did you feel supported prior to the sacking?
  - Examples?

- How did you react to the sacking?
  - Did you accept the decision or did you challenge it?
  - Examples?

Coping with Being Removed from the Change Process

- Having had time to reflect on the sacking, how have you coped with the experience?
  - Emotions?
  - Impact on your own coach development?
  - Lessons learned for future employment?
  - Examples?

11.3 Appendix 3: Head of Foundation Phase Interview Guide

Coaching Background

- How did you get into coaching?
- Why do you coach?
- What does coaching mean to you?
- Coaching Journey
    o Examples

Coaching Philosophy

- How would you describe yourself as a coach – qualities etc.
- How do you think your values and beliefs (philosophy) have evolved over time and with experience:
    o In training and competition
    o Relationship with players
    o Relationship with staff
    o Dealing with dilemmas/conflict – do you prioritize?
    o Examples

- Outside influences upon philosophy and practice:
    o Other coaches/managers/mentors
    o Different clubs/settings/cultures
        ▪ What was done well/not so well?
        ▪ Examples

Experiences of Organisational Change

- What were your initial thoughts around the organisational and managerial change?
    o Relationship with Academy staff
    o Relationship with other coaches
    o Level of support
    o Level of communication
    o Any other examples?

Maintaining your Role

- What was your perception of why you managed to maintain your role within the club during the initial period of change?
- What were the challenges you faced during this period?
- Did your professional conduct alter at any point during this period?
- Did you notice the professional conduct of others changing and did this alter your conduct?
- Were there any changes in relationships with other staff? Did this alter your conduct?

11.4 Appendix 4: Academy Manager Interview Guide

Coaching Background & Role

- Coaching Journey
- How did you get to where you are now?

That First Phone Call

- Was 1st Team Manager who called you?
- How did the phone conversation go?

Changes for the Youth Team

- Discussions with the 1st Team Manager about directions for the Youth Team
- What was their view of the Youth Team/Academy?
- What was your remit?
- What did they want to change?
- What were you tasked with doing?
- Was there a change in playing philosophy?
- How did you feel about the changes you were being asked to make? Agree Disagree?
- How did you implement change?
- How did you judge how the changes to the Academy were going? What did success look like?

Getting to Know New Staff

- What were your thoughts around going into the first day in the office with the full-time staff?
- Was there anything your wanted to change culture wise?
- How did you find getting to know the full-time staff and establishing good working relationships?

Managing Relationships

- How did you manage your relationship with the 1st Team Manager/Directors and Chairman during the process of implementing change within the Youth Team/Academy
- What impact did relationships with staff have on the successfulness of implementing change?

11.5 Appendix 5: Head of Professional Development Phase & U18's Coach Interview Guide

Coaching Background

- How did you get into coaching?
- Why do you coach?
- What does coaching mean to you?
- Coaching Journey
  - Examples

Coaching Philosophy

- How would you describe yourself as a coach – qualities etc.
- How do you think your values and beliefs (philosophy) have evolved over time and with experience:
  - In training and competition
  - Relationship with players
  - Relationship with staff
  - Dealing with dilemmas/conflict – do you prioritize?
  - Examples

- Outside influences upon philosophy and practice:
  - Other coaches/managers/mentors
  - Different clubs/settings/cultures
    - What was done well/not so well?
    - Examples

Experiences of Organisational Change

- How were you approached to come into the club?
- How did you come to decision?
  - Influences on this process?
  - Examples of conversations?
- How did you prioritize what to change?
  - Influences on assessing the change process
- How did you develop relationships with staff to implement change?
  - Did you form first impressions?
  - How did staff behave towards you?
  - Examples?
  - Was there any conflict that needed to be overcome?

Delivering Organisational Change

- What did you characterise as successful change?
- How did you want to get there?
- What challenges did you face along the way?
  - Examples?