Examining relationships in high performance sport

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Format for the presentation

Part 1
• Discussion of the ‘problem’ and the gap in the literature

Part 2
• The relevance to sports development practitioners and academics
Background

• Increasing scholarly attention to issues surrounding high performance sport environments

• To date, such inquiry has been largely ‘scientific’ in nature

• There has been scant consideration of the inherently social and relational nature of talent identification and development activities

• Potential for stakeholder collaboration, but lots of conflict also evident

• Very much our early thoughts on these real world complexities
Cassidy et al (2016)

Sports sociologists have, rather surprisingly, yet to make a sustained and robust contribution to ongoing debates on issues concerning talent identification and the development of talented young performers.
Mills et al (2014)

Whilst elite athlete development environments are of a good quality, key stakeholder relationships is seen as a deficient area.
Pankhurst et al (2013)

How each key stakeholder perceives the key constructs of talent development, and the coherence of each other’s understanding is not well understood.
It is evident that the many stakeholders involved in high performance sport are often doing their best to fully understand the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ qualities for success.
Narrow interests and conflicts?
Relational sociology and emotions: a theoretical framework?

• According to Crossley (2010, 2011), relational sociology is primarily concerned with understanding social life in terms of individuals' relationships with, as well as inter-connections to, one another.

• Actors collectively drive interactions and networks, and that how they act is shaped on various levels by the situations that they find themselves in (Crossley, 2010).

• Burkitt’s (2014) work could be used as a reference point to identify both the importance, and nature of personal relationships, and how these interactions can illuminate the social processes in high performance sport.

• Ethnographical approaches to research could be employed (detailed observation in situ, followed by in-depth interviews).
The relevance to practitioners & academics

• There is a need to understand the mechanisms within interactions, relations, and networks in high performance sport.

• The proposed area of study has the potential to break new ground in the existing literature base, both empirically and theoretically.

• This could provide opportunities for sports development practitioners to utilise some of their ‘typical’ skills regarding facilitation, support, and an appreciation for the UK’s wider sporting landscape, in order to positively influence the nature of relationships within these dynamic environments.

• In addition to being considered as a policy space, an occupation, and a ‘concept’; it can be argued that intervention lies at the heart of much sports development activity, taking place through strategic facilitation, organisation and administration, and delivery (Lyle, 2013).

• We contend that a significant proportion of this work is currently enacted within community sports settings, and that sports development practitioners could add real value to a range of high performance sporting environments.
A future model?
References