

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIPS:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AN ELITE ROWING CLUB

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores how coach-athlete relationships are influenced within the organisational culture of a rowing club. Relational Cultural Theory and the work of Weber are used to examine how the concept of organisational culture informs understanding of coach and athlete relating. The study, covering a complete competitive season, involved an eleven month long ethnography of an elite rowing club in Great Britain. The findings demonstrate the visceral, enculturated and complex nature of coach-athlete relationships in elite sport. Relational disconnection occurred in the disenchanted organisational life, where intrinsic values were subordinated to a rational quest for efficiency, control and ultimately success, as well as traditional social ordering based on status and gender. Relationships were characterised by power over relating, distance and impersonal relations, caretaking rather than caring about, fragile trust by the athlete and trust through surveillance by the coach, where emotion was concealed and conflict avoided. However, enacting shared identities, the emotion involved in competing and the fact this was a voluntary organisation with competing values, provided an escape from simulacra of elite sport to allow for multi-value paradigm of interests. The opportunity for coaches and athletes to connect with each other based on their values and with emotion exposed their humanity and revealed the potential for relational mutuality and authenticity. The study challenges the valorised coaching and elite sport relationships and lifestyle. Implications for coaching include providing individuals with confidence to raise the issue of relationship, providing coaches and athletes with knowledge of connection and disconnection in relationship and the outcome on well-being. The need to develop a systemised approach to embedding growth-fostering relationships in the culture of high performance sport is highlighted.

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*The quest for certainty blocks the search for meaning. Uncertainty is the very condition to impel man to unfold his powers. (Fromm, 1999, p.45)*

Twenty years of being in relationships in organisations, in roles such as manager, employee and a human resource professional, and the multiple experiences and perspectives that these vantage points afforded, undergirded my desire to understand how relationships were enacted and known in everyday lives. Completing a part-time master's degree in sport coaching and working towards registration as a sports psychologist meant that the previous five years of my life had been spent simultaneously inhabiting both the commercial world of a multi-national organisation, and the habitat of top level sport. This dual life might have continued, had I not been given a rare opportunity to go behind the scenes of elite rowing, when a colleague invited me to a sport psychology session he was holding for developing rowers. There was nothing but professional interest in the session, until a young rower was asked to advise a fellow athlete on how to prepare herself for a water session in the cold February conditions. The rower stood up, raised himself to his full six foot five inches height, and stated simply and with a little disdain, "Oh, just man-up!" My introduction to rowing had me hooked. That one simple sentence was so far removed from my own competitive experience as a track athlete, my coaching encounters in netball, and the work I was doing in psychology in real tennis, that I wanted to understand more. So started the quest to meld my experience of organisational life, of relationships, of coaching and of sport psychology to better understand the complexity of being in relation as an elite coach or athlete in the organisational setting of a rowing club.

## 1.1 The importance of coaching

The relationship between a coach and an athlete is formed through the interactions inherent in the process of coaching and embedded within the sport context. This chapter will start with a discussion of the importance of coaching. A brief review of the impact of the coach athlete relationship and the relevance of organisational culture to coaching is then provided, before the need for further research is stressed. Finally, the aims of the current research are outlined.

Coaching is central to improving performance in sport and delivering social participation objectives. These objectives include the contribution that coaches make, through facilitating skill acquisition, to the personal and social development of sport participants, as well as the role of coaching in delivering world-leading sport performances, enabling the UK to create a legacy for sport and coaching (Sports Coach UK, 2008).

Coaches are in a position to have both a positive and a negative impact on an athlete's physical and psychological development. For example a coach's intervention has the potential to have a positive impact on an athlete's physical preparation (Dick, 2002) or their psychological profile (Smith & Smoll, 1990). Alternatively, coaching can be associated with a number of negative outcomes such as instilling a lack of confidence, dissatisfaction, poor performance, burnout, and withdrawal from sport (Jowett, 2003; Pelletier & Bower, 2002). In addition, ineffective coach-athlete relationships may be characterised by conflict, misunderstanding, resentment and even abuse (Brackenridge, 2001; Martens, 1987). As a result, coaching is now the focus of research for a growing number of psychologists, sociologists and pedagogists. In the UK, given Sports Coach UK's vision to become world number one in coaching by 2016, the success of the London 2012 Olympics and the associated financial investment, the interest in coaching research is likely to continue to expand.

There is increasing recognition that coaching is a complex process. Cushion, Armour and Jones (2006) suggest that coaching is "a complex, interrelated and inter-dependent process that is firmly embedded within specific social and cultural contexts" (p.83). There are tensions and contradictions in the process of coaching inherent in its complexity (Bowes & Jones, 2006) and its social and cultural multi-dimensionality (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2002). The field of coaching research has started to embrace these complexities. In order to better understand coaching practice, research has drawn on a range of social theorists such as Goffman (e.g. Purdy & Jones, 2011; Jones et al., 2002; Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002), Hochschild (e.g. Potrac, 2011), Bourdieu (e.g. Cushion, 2001; Cushion & Jones, 2006); Foucault (e.g. Denison, 2010; Purdy & Jones, 2011) and Giddens (e.g. Purdy & Jones, 2011; Purdy, Potrac & Jones 2008). The result is recognition by scholars that the study of coaching must take a holistic approach to inquiry.

## 1.2 The coach-athlete relationship

A holistic approach to coaching considers broader social factors, the coach-athlete interaction and the contextual elements of coaching. In positioning the coach-athlete interaction element of holistic coaching, Cushion et al. (2006) state that coaching is not delivered; rather is it a “dynamic social activity that vigorously engages athlete and coach” (p.90). Models for coaching have paid little attention to the fundamental social dimensions of coaching (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004; Maitland & Gervis, 2010; Potrac & Jones, 1999). Potrac et al. (2002) identified that coaching is making connections between other persons and life. Following this line of thinking, to be effective, coaches need social competencies (Purdy & Jones, 2011) to enable them to engage in social learning (Stephenson & Jowett, 2009), to behave appropriately in the context (Jones, 2011) and to attend to the quality of the interaction with the athlete (Borrie, 1996). Thus one element of coaching involves an ongoing interactive and dynamic process which creates knowledge of self and others through the action of relating between coach and athlete; Bowes and Jones (2006) suggest, humans are “wired in propensity for relatedness to others” (p.239). As part of coaching, relationships impact development, both as a performer and person (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003)

The relationship between coaches and athletes is also predicated on the context within which they interact. Sports have different cultural contexts which act differentially on the experience of coaches and athletes. As Ronglan (2011, p.164) states, “The field of sport can be understood as a complex mix of enabling and constraining discourses intervening in different ways within and across contexts.” Poczwardowski, Barott and Jowett (2006) argue for the need to maintain the sport specificity of theoretical models. This study is firmly situated in the context of elite rowing.

Some understanding of rowing can be gleaned from the classic rowing text, *A Textbook of Oarsmanship* by Gilbert Bourne (1925/1987). This details the scientific undergirding of the sport, laying out the tools used by athletes, the mechanics of movement, and the detailed workings of the human body. Bourne’s text adds to the flavour of rowing as a culture by explaining the strictures under which coach and athlete are expected to operate, “The art of rowing, like all other arts, is founded upon rules, the outcome of long experience...So this chapter is dogmatic. Its main purpose is to insist,

and to go on insisting, on the necessity of obeying the rules” (p.89). This flavour of rowing is supplemented by Pike’s (2005) examination of injury in rowing where she found that “Some rowers actually felt that pain and injury were a desirable part of the rowing experience – one senior rower noted that training ‘can never hurt enough”” (p.204). Pope (2010) provides a graphic description of life as a rower,

I would hear of his blistered hands, the countless mornings breaking the fog on the local river, the chilled waters that acted like anaesthetic to exposed skin upon contact, the countless trips up and down the river refining technique and testing the body’s reserves. I learned that this was a sport that demanded so much, taking athletes to their limits and often beyond. (p.133)

Purdy and colleagues’ (Purdy & Jones, 2011; Purdy, Jones & Cassidy, 2009; Purdy et al., 2008) ethnographic and auto-ethnographic work has revealed the power-ridden nature of the elite rowing environment, and the contestation between coaches, coxes, athletes and their social expectations and norms of behaviour at this level. Such contestation highlighted the ways that the athletes who embodied the most desired forms of physical capital could negotiate their own rowing programme and terms of engagement with the coaching staff (Purdy & Jones, 2011). Power relations were also evidenced in the distancing and disruptive behaviour of rowers where they felt their expectations of the coach were not met (Purdy et al., 2009) and the constantly changing compliance, co-operation and resistance between cox and coach (Purdy et al., 2008). Power relations within rowing were also identified by Chapman (1997). From interviews with women in a national level lightweight rowing team, she identified the oppressive nature of the environment, where the acts of rowing and dieting to make the weight required to compete as a lightweight, “almost completely dominated their lives” (Chapman, 1997, p.211). Finally, despite the fact that it is easy to measure a rower’s individual speed and power, the lack of meritocracy in selection for an elite rowing squad was revealed by Koukouris, Panagiotis and Nikos’ (2009) interviews with athletes at a training camp.

In the broader sport environment, the influence of the context was evidenced in Cushion’s (2001) ten month ethnography of a football club. He found that the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of the organisation impacted coaching practice and player experiences. A comparative study of football clubs by Skille (2007) identified the different experiences and educational opportunities for young people participating in a conventional club compared with an alternative non-competitive initiative. Jones,

Armour and Potrac (2003) warn that coaches can become socialised to enact their roles and to work within the constraints of the context. Cushion and Jones (2006) highlight the influence of the coaching environment on the coaching process, when stating that there are:

Interdependent constructed relationships between the coach, the athlete and the club environment as key in understanding the coaching process. This interdependency is an important point as neither element has the capacity to unilaterally determine action... there is a cultural dimension to the coaching process through this interaction. (pp.94-95)

Goffman (1974) has said that context frames our perceptions of the social world. The organisational culture of a sport club is one context which must be considered in broadening understanding of the coaching process. The relevance of the organisational culture to coaching and coach-athlete relationships is discussed in the next section.

### **1.3 The relevance of organisational culture**

Sport is a business (Burton & Webster, 2009). The Olympics, Paralympics, and the various sporting World Championships and World Cups are global events; National governing bodies have multi-million pound budgets as nations demand ever more capable athletes, organisation and media production to perform at these events. The amateur approach to the development of athletes and coaches is a thing of the past, replaced by a systematic approach to training, performance and coaching in elite sport (Girginov & Sandanski, 2004; Houlihan & Green, 2008). As Girginov (2006) comments:

Modern sports are highly organized, specialized, bureaucratic, competitive and record-oriented enterprises. There is no such thing as an independent, versatile all powerful athlete. The process of becoming an elite athlete involves skilful coordination of the work of various organizations including: clubs; sport governing bodies at national and international levels; multi-disciplinary research; and technical agencies. (p. 254)

The delivery of this systematic approach in and through sport organisations has required academics to look beyond the boundaries of sports science to other disciplines; these disciplines include organisational behaviour, human resource management and organisational culture. A growing body of literature (See for example Gilmore, 2009; Hanton, Fletcher & Coughlan, 2005; Wagstaff, Fletcher & Hanton, 2012) has examined the utility of these, and other disciplines, to the pivotal role that sport organisations play in preparing athletes for Olympic and world competition (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009).

Surprisingly, given the importance of a focussed approach to performance, there is limited work joining sport to organisational management theory and practice (Jones, 2002). Where there is, as Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) state, sport management researchers have focussed on the macro governance level factors (Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2005; Girginov, Papadimitriou & López De D'Amico, 2006; Kamberidou & Patsadaras, 2007) and sport psychology researchers on the micro individual level factors (Bar-Eli & Raab, 2006; Callow, Smith, Hardy, Arthur, & Hardy, 2009; Meyer & Fletcher, 2007). They highlight a gap or “twilight zone” in the literature, between macro sport policy and governance, and micro sport psychology research. Yet it is in this twilight zone that meso-factors exist, which link the individual to the organisation and its environment. These meso-factors of organisational life include the contested nature of organisational culture, education, knowledge, and the dynamics of human experience (Schempp, 1998).

This thesis selects one meso- organisational factor: organisational culture. Organisational culture, as a unit of analysis, sits at the intersection of the macro organisational aspects of economic, social and political events and the everyday micro experiences and actions of the individual organisational members. It provides a bridge between our understanding of organisational behaviour and strategic management (Smircich, 1983). Further, the study of culture is accepted by managers, because it describes organisational realities that are hard to define but very relevant to running an organisation. The concept of culture can help to provide an approach to understanding organisational life in all its richness and variation (Alvesson, 2002) and the micro organisational factor of coach and athlete relationships.

#### **1.4 The need for further research**

Cushion and Jones (2006) claim that there are gaps in our understanding of the social dynamics that construct the coach-athlete relationship and its relation to the sport club as a culture, despite the amount of time that both parties spend with each other in elite sport. There is an opportunity to investigate this gap by understanding both coach-athlete relationships and organisational cultures in sport. If social interactions and interpersonal relationships supply the vehicle by which cultural factors are understood by individuals (Reis, Collins & Berscheid, 2000), then developing an understanding of organisational culture would be helpful in better understanding coach-athlete relationships.

Further, the interest in studying coach-athlete relationships and organisational culture lie in their practical relevance (Jowett, 2007). Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) suggest that drawing from organisational theory, and reviewing and synthesising what is known about culture and sport, will stimulate reflection and facilitate future development. There is opportunity to broaden the perspective of coaching practice. Rhind (2008) posits that the quality of the coach-athlete relationship is related to a number of important outcomes such as training processes (e.g. Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002); an athlete's physical as well as their psychological development (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Miller & Kerr, 2002); and their performance accomplishments (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery & Peterson, 1999; Jowett, 2008; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Put back into the context of a sport organisation's culture, it is possible to explore the breadth of relational practices, incorporating dysfunctional, as well as "great", coaching relationships (Purdy et al., 2008), and once these relational practices are framed in an explanatory theoretical perspective, enables coaches and athletes to grow and develop through their improved relational connections.

Previous research on both organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships has often used structured questionnaires, instruments and interviews to collect data (Krane & Baird, 2005). There is an opportunity to broaden the method of collecting data by using an ethnographic approach in this study. Rock (2001) explains ethnography as a process using many layers and strands in an effort to reconstruct the participant's own view of everyday life. It is concerned with experience as it is lived, felt or undergone. Ethnography involves multiple methods such as participant observation and interviewing to record the meaning individuals attach to these everyday activities (Krane & Baird, 2005). The intention is to increase the depth and impact of information available in the research and practice of coach-athlete relationships and sport organisational culture.

## **1.5 Aims of the thesis**

This thesis is focused on making a contribution to the literature on coach-athlete relationships and organisational culture in sport organisations. The broad aim of this research is to understand how coach-athlete relationships are influenced within the organisational culture of an elite rowing club. In order to address this aim, two research questions have been developed:

1. How can the concept of organisational culture be used to understand a particular sport club?
2. How can organisational culture be used to understand coach-athlete relationships?

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is comprised of six further chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature with reference to the various approaches to the study of the coach-athlete relationship. Each approach is discussed, highlighting the opportunities and gaps in the study of coach-athlete relationships. The chapter concludes with a more detailed examination of one approach, Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) and provides examples of the utility of RCT to the study of coach-athlete relationships in a rowing club. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on organisational culture in sport. The key findings from the literature are presented, along with an analysis of the patterns and trends in how sport organisational culture has been researched. A rationale for the approach to studying culture taken in this thesis concludes the chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the rationale for the ethnographic methodology adopted to address the research questions. It outlines some of the methodological implications of adopting a social constructionist frame and is followed by a detailed exploration of the specific methods and analysis used in this study.

The results of the study are presented and discussed in chapter 5 and chapter 6. Chapter 5 addresses the first research question. The chosen rowing club is understood as an organisational culture through the examination of four organisational processes. The discussion focuses on those elements of organisational life that were significant and meaningful for both coach and athlete. Chapter 6 addresses the second research question. It uses the understanding of Bethany as an organisational culture developed in chapter 5 to analyse coach-athlete relationships at the club.

Chapter 7 discusses the overall findings of the thesis before considering the implications for theory, research and practice in terms of the coach-athlete relationship, organisational culture and coaching. The limitations of the study are outlined. The chapter concludes with suggestions for the future direction of research in this field.

## CHAPTER 2 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COACHES AND ATHLETES

*Human connection replaces separation as the fundamental reality.  
(Gergen, 2009, p.62)*

This chapter examines the extant literature on coach-athlete relationships in sport. It starts by identifying four broad approaches to studying coach-athlete relationships: the behavioural approach, the relationship approach, the sociological framing, and an approach using Relational Cultural Theory (RCT). Each approach is discussed, highlighting the opportunities and gaps in the study of coach-athlete relationships. The chapter concludes with a more detailed examination of RCT and provides examples of the utility of RCT to the study of coach-athlete relationships in an elite rowing club.

### **2.1 Approaches to studying coach-athlete relationships**

A body of literature examining the coach-athlete relationship has developed which has approached the subject using four overarching conceptualisations. The first concerns the study of coach-athlete behaviours (e.g. Chelladurai, 1990, 1993, 2001; Smoll & Smith, 1984, 1989). A second approach is the relational dyadic perspective which focuses on the psychological constructs of the relationship (e.g. Jowett, 2005; Poczwadowski, 1997; Poczwadowski, Barott & Henschen, 2002; Wylleman, 2000). A third approach has recognised that coaching is influenced by the social positions of both parties within the relationship in the context of institutionalised expectations and thus has examined the coach-athlete relationship within its social context (e.g. Cushion, 2001; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Denison, 2007; Potrac et al., 2007; Purdy et al., 2009). Most recently, a fourth approach has been considered which recognises that whilst relationships reflect the psychological patterning between two or more parties, they also do not exist as atomised units, distinct from the wider culture in which they are situated. This is examined by a small body of literature in sport (e.g. LaVoi, 2004, 2007b; E.Ward, 2010). Each of these approaches is discussed in the following sections.

## 2.2 Behavioural approach

Models using the behavioural approach to studying coach-athlete relationships view them as an influence system, where there is an interactive exchange in the process of leadership. The coach as leader, the athlete as subordinate and the situation have a reciprocal impact on each other, where the coach has potential for exerting influence based on their role as leader. The multidimensional model of leadership (MML) (Chelladurai, 1990, 1993, 2001) aimed to extend and apply management science into the sport context. The model's central hypothesis was that the athlete's satisfaction and the team or individual performance were a function of the extent to which the leader's behaviour was congruent with the preferred leadership behaviour of the athlete and the required behaviour of the coach, based on the situation. It construed leadership as a complex process in which multiple factors interact to determine effectiveness. Research on the MML has concentrated on using a single instrument, the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) to operationalise leadership preferences (Riemer, 2007). Use of this instrument indicates that the two most preferred forms of leadership behaviour are training and instruction and positive feedback. However, Riemer (2007) suggests that it is difficult to draw more specific conclusions as most of the research has focussed on a few segments of the model. He criticises the simplistic design and analysis of most research to date, and has called for more inquiry into the congruence hypothesis concerning the leader's behaviour.

Smoll and Smith (1984, 1989) then provided a mediational model of coach-athlete influences. They examined the effects of a coach's behaviours on the athlete's evaluative reactions to those behaviours, and the mediational impact of the recall and meaning attached to the behaviours by the athlete (Smith & Smoll, 2007). Based on a social-cognitive perspective within sport psychology (e.g. Bandura, 1986), the model considered how coach-athlete personal factors, the environment and behaviour influenced one another causally. The coach behaviours considered include reactive behaviours such as responses to desirable performance, mistakes and misbehaviour, along with spontaneous behaviours related to the game and general communication. The focus is on the behaviour of the coach and the reaction of the athlete, and negates any reciprocal impact of the athlete's behaviour in this exchange.

A motivational model of the coach-athlete relationship was developed by Mageau and Vallerand (2003). In this approach, the relationship was viewed as a

motivational sequence – the coaching behaviour was influenced by a coach's personal orientation towards coaching, the context in which they operated, and their perception of athlete behaviour and motivation. They posit that coach behaviour (in terms of autonomy supportive behaviours, provision of structure and involvement) has a positive impact on athletes' needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence. Satisfaction from these three needs impacts athlete intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation. The model is based on Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, which suggests that athletes who are intrinsically motivated and self-determined put more effort into their training, have higher concentration, are more persistent, and perform better. They argue that the coach's behaviours impact on the athletes' motivation. Like other models, they also recognise that athletes and coaches will have corresponding and reciprocal behaviours e.g. athletes may adjust their need for autonomy to satisfy their coach's desires and expectations. Finally, there is an appreciation that the coaching context can have an impact on the relationship e.g. when pressured towards a certain outcome and when highly stressed, people have a tendency to emit controlling behaviours.

This section considered the behavioural approach, which explores the interrelationship between the coach, athlete and the situation within which they enact their relationship. The focus of this approach is placed on the coach's behaviour and the athlete's response to that behaviour, which suggests a uni-dimensional view of the relationship. Rhind (2008) suggests this may not capture the dyadic nature of the coach-athlete relationship and de-emphasises the possible reciprocal aspect of these interactions. Further, although the situation or context of coaching is considered in these models, it is quite narrowly construed. For example, Smoll and Smith (1984) cite as situational factors the nature of the sport, the level of competition, record of performance and outcomes of games and practices. If coaching is considered a holistic enterprise enacted in the wider cultural and social world (Cushion, 2001), then this approach provides only a partial understanding of the complexity of the clubs and teams within which coach-athlete relationships are constructed. The behavioural approach focuses on what a coach does. The following section discusses an alternative, the dyadic approach, which goes beyond this to also consider thoughts and feelings, and hence the why of interactions

## **2.3 Relational dyadic approach**

A psychological approach, viewing the coach athlete relationship as a social interaction, has been taken by a number of researchers (e.g., Jowett, 2005; Wylleman, 2000). In comparison with the behavioural approach which focuses on what the coach does, the relational approach focuses on both parties. A number of models are discussed below. These have attempted to place the relationship at the centre of the research investigation using a dyadic view of the coach-athlete relationship.

### **2.3.1 Wylleman**

Wylleman (2000) regarded the coach-athlete relationship as the behaviours the coach and athlete demonstrate on the sports field. His conceptualisation used three dimensions on which to measure behaviours: acceptance-rejection, dominance-submission and social-emotional. The dyadic nature of the relationship was evidenced in these dimensions. The acceptance-rejection dimension examined whether the parties to the relationship had a positive or negative attitude towards the relationship. The strength or weakness of each person's position in the relationship was shown by the dimension of dominance-submission, recognising that there may be imbalances of power between individuals. Thirdly, the social-emotional dimension scrutinised whether each party took a social or personal role in the relationship. Based on Kiesler's (1983) work on interpersonal behaviours, Wylleman argued for both a reciprocity e.g. an athlete's submission attracts a coach's dominance and a coach's submission attracts an athlete's dominance, and a correspondence of behaviours e.g. an athlete's acceptance attracts a coach's acceptance. Jowett & Poczwardowski (2007) argue that this conceptualisation has an intuitive appeal as coaches and athletes can experience this reciprocity and correspondence in coaching life. Nonetheless, this model is less flexible in terms of who is dominant in the relationship, does not attempt to explain how, why and when these behaviours will occur, and does not situate them contextually.

### **2.3.2 Poczwardowski and colleagues**

Poczwardowski and colleagues (Poczwardowski 1997; Poczwardowski, Barott & Henschen, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott & Peregoy, 2002) used a qualitative approach, based on exchange theory (Homans, 1961) to examine the recurring patterns of mutual care between coach and athlete. They identified several interpersonal variables that influenced the relationship, such as the relationship role, interpersonal

interactions, how outcomes were rewarded, and the negotiation and sharing of meanings. Like Wylleman (2000) an interdependence between the coach-athlete interactions and the greater care they developed for each other was evidenced in a circular relationship, where the relative increase in interaction produced a relative increase in care and vice versa. However, the model does not consider the context within which the relationship is enacted.

### **2.3.3 Jowett and colleagues**

A substantial body of qualitative and quantitative research has been amassed by Jowett and colleagues (see for example, Adie & Jowett, 2010; Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Jowett & Nezek, 2011; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Jowett & Timson Katchis, 2005; Lorimer & Jowett, 2009; Olimpiou, Jowett & Duda, 2006; Rhind & Jowett, 2010, 2011, 2012). The theoretical basis for this research is Kelley & Thibaut's (1978) interdependence theory. The resulting 3+1C's model of the coach-athlete relationship also recognises the interdependent nature of the relationship. It is conceptualised using four constructs: closeness, which recognises the affective meanings that the athlete and coach ascribe to their relationship such as trust, liking or respect; commitment which signifies the athlete's and coach's intention to maintain the athletic relationship and therefore to maximise its outcomes; complementarity (similar to Wylleman's (2000) conceptualisation), recognises the athlete's and coach's corresponding behaviours of affiliation (e.g. if the athlete is friendly then the coach is likely to be friendly) and reciprocal behaviours of dominance and submission (e.g. the coach instructs and the athlete executes); and co-orientation which reflects the degree to which both parties have established a common ground in their relationship (Jowett, 2007). This work has been extended to examine familial (Jowett, 2008) and spousal (Jowett & Meek, 2000) coach-athlete relationships. Based on the 3+1C model, Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) developed the CART-Q as a self-report measure of the quality of the coach athlete relationship. The model has been used in several different sporting cultures including Belgium (Balduck & Jowett, 2010), USA, Spain, China (Yang & Jowett, 2012) and to understand coach-athlete relationships in Hungarian elite dyads (Trzaskoma-Bicsérdy, Bognár, Révész & Géczi, 2007).

Jowett and Poczwardowski (2007) argue that the three dyadic relational models above agree that interdependence, whether termed connectedness, closeness or care, is

important in the coach-athlete relationship, and emphasise both reciprocity and correspondence in the interpersonal behaviours of coaches and athletes. They put forward an integrated research model for the study of coach-athlete relationships. They conceptualise this model as a cake, with a top layer of antecedent variables (e.g. individual difference variables, the social-cultural context and relationship characteristics), a middle layer of the quality of the relationship (e.g. coach and athlete cognitive, affective and behavioural components), and a third layer of outcome variables (e.g. interpersonal, intrapersonal and group outcomes). Sandwiched between each layer is the interpersonal communication between both parties, where communication is viewed as the bridge between the relationship members. Jowett and Poczwardowski (2007) suggest that this model provides a basis from which to understand a number of elements of the coach athlete relationship and call for further research in key areas, including the examination of the link between culture and coach-athlete relationships.

#### **2.3.4 Current research using this approach**

There is a growing body of research using the dyadic approach to study relationships. Given the link between the quality of relationships and key outcomes such as development and performance (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, & Medbery, 1999; Jowett, 2008; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Miller & Kerr, 2002), the focus of this body of scholarship has been on further understanding this element of the coach athlete relationship.

Particular attention has been paid to exploring the association between the quality of the relationship and a range of other variables including efficacy beliefs, satisfaction, closeness, passion for coaching, the motivational climate and relationship maintenance. For example, Jackson, Knapp & Beauchamp (2009) found that efficacy beliefs were related to relationship perceptions (e.g. intention to persist in the relationship), and task-related outcomes (e.g. performance, motivation). Jackson, Gucciardi and Dimmock (2011) further found efficacy beliefs were related to enhanced relationship commitment, closeness, and satisfaction perceptions, as well as high levels of effort and complementarity. Self-efficacy beliefs were also found to be related to feelings of closeness for some individuals, but not for others (Jackson, Grove, & Beauchamp, 2010).

A second focus within the scholarship on the quality of relationships has been on closeness between coach and athlete. Jowett and Cockerill (2003, p.315) suggest, “Closeness reflects the emotional tone that coaches and athletes experience and express in describing their athletic relationships.” Jowett (2003) found that closeness had both a positive and a negative dimension. The distance between coach and athlete and the setting of boundaries was also found to be related to closeness. Becker’s (2009) interviews with 18 athletes highlighted the boundaries and inequality between coach and athletes, with one athlete stating, “You could have fun with coach and he would let you pick at him, but there was never a sense that you would ever disrespect him or that you were on the same level. He was always the coach and you were always the player” (Becker, 2009, p.104).

Relationship quality was found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction in the relationship (Lorimer, 2009). Lorimer (2009, p.58) defines satisfaction as “a positive affective state based upon an athlete's evaluation, conscious or unconscious, of their sport experiences.” For example, Lorimer and Jowett (2009) found that empathic accuracy was associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Another study linked satisfaction (and interdependence) to level of competition and length of relationship, as well as finding a gender effect (Jowett & Nezlek, 2011).

A number of other influences on the quality of the relationship have been found to be coping with competitive and organisational stress (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010); parents (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005); the Big 5 personality traits (Jackson, Dimmock, Gucciardi & Grove, 2010); personal growth (Poczwardowski, Barott & Henschen, 2002); and conflict, disagreement and power struggles (Jowett, 2003). In addition, the motivational climate of the coaching environment has been shown to impact the quality of the coach-athlete relationship (Olympiou, Jowett & Duda, 2008; Sagar & Jowett, 2012). Adie and Jowett (2010) found that athletes’ meta-perceptions of each aspect of the coach-athlete relationship were positively correlated with mastery approach goals and negatively associated with performance avoidance goals. Further, higher closeness, complementarity and commitment were experienced in a task-involving coaching climate; in an ego-involving coach-created motivational climate, where athletes experienced punitive actions for mistakes, rivalry and competition, they reported lower satisfaction with the relationship with their coach. Finally, the quality of the coach-athlete relationship has been shown to be influenced by a coach’s passion for

coaching (Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, Donahue, & Lorimer, 2008). For example, Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand and Carbonneau (2011) found that a harmonious passion for coaching positively predicted autonomy-supportive behaviour towards the athlete. These in turn predicted a high quality coach-athlete relationship; obsessive passion positively predicted controlling behaviours.

A recent area of scholarship has examined the strategies used to maintain the quality of the coach-athlete relationship (Rhind & Jowett, 2010, 2011, 2012). This was based on the premise from Canary and Stafford (1994) that most people want long-term, stable and satisfying relationships. The COMPASS model of relationship maintenance was developed based on a number of studies (Rhind & Jowett, 2010, 2011, 2012). This identified seven key strategies for coaches and athletes to use: conflict management, openness, motivation, assurance, preventative strategies, support, and social networks. The key is the need for interpersonal skills as well as the dynamic nature of the relationship. They argued that this work reinforced the importance of interpersonal skills as a core component of coaching effectiveness and highlighted the dynamic nature of the coach-athlete relationship.

Coaches and athletes may vary in their preference for maintenance strategies (Rhind & Jowett, 2011). For example, athletes particularly valued open lines of communications in maintaining the emotional aspect of their relationship. The coaches who were committed to a relationship or who had co-operative athletes viewed openness as less important. Conflict management and assurance were found to be strategies more strongly associated with coaches' perceptions of relationship quality than for athletes, suggesting that providing these may be central to the role of the coach. However, other strategies such as preventative strategies were used by both coach and athlete only when they felt the relationship was not close. This suggests they are not used when either party feels there are mutual trust, respect and appreciation in the relationship. The work of Rhind and Jowett (2010, 2011, 2012) has added a recognition that relationships are not simply moment by moment interactions, but are maintained over time by coaches and athletes using a number of strategies. Rhind and Jowett (2012) identify that current research into relationship maintenance has relied on self-report data. They propose that the use of observational research methods may allow a more objective assessment of the use of maintenance strategies. Further, they suggest that rather than pooling responses from solely coaches or athletes, the dyad should be the

unit of analysis in coach-athlete relationship research. This demands approaches to research in this field, such as ethnography. Ethnography enables the longitudinal study of relationships and allows researchers to combine observations of what coaches and athletes do together in relationship, along with what they say about these interactions. Additionally, an ethnographic approach to studying relationships considers the influence of factors such as the type of sport, culture and level of competition.

This section has discussed the growing contribution of research using the relational dyadic approach to understanding the relationship between coach and athlete. This has predominantly focused on determining an ideal type of coach-athlete relationship such as the 3+1C's model of Jowett and colleagues (Jowett, 2007). There has been less investigation of relationships which are not satisfying, positive or of high quality, nor recognising that these relationships are enacted in diverse relational contexts and networks. Jowett and Poczwardowski (2007) provided a structured, integrated research model of causal and antecedent conditions for satisfying and high quality relationships. This suggests that future research should consider the context and norms of the particular sport environment under consideration. However, a third approach, a sociological approach, has also recognised the legitimacy of studying issues such as conflict, power, emotion and dependency alongside those of the relationship (Cushion, 2001; Denison 2007; Purdy et al., 2008). This approach is discussed in the next section.

## **2.4 Sociological approach**

Research utilising a sociological approach has expanded beyond the theoretical frameworks associated with psychology and drawn on key thinking in the field of sociology to inform understanding of the coach-athlete relationship (Cushion, 2001; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Denison, 2007; Potrac et al., 2007; Purdy et al., 2009). For example, Jones, Glintmeyer and McKenzie's (2005) study of an athlete with an eating disorder, used Foucault's (1977) concept of surveillance to examine the socio-philosophical aspects of the coach-athlete relationship and athlete development, recognising the hierarchical and asymmetrical nature of this relationship in elite sport. The sociological approach has led to a body of work which has questioned the legitimacy of a situation where one group is "privileged by knowledge and the other with a need to know and a desire to confirm" (Jones et al., 2005, p. 387). Rather than take the exchange interpretation of the coach-athlete relationship, used as the basis for

the dyadic relational approach discussed above, where relationships are typified by interdependence and regulated by norms such as fairness and reciprocity (e.g. Blau, 1964; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), the sociological approach highlights the potential that reciprocity has to be characterised by power differentials which become normative over time and through acceptance (Jones, 2011). The sociological approach to the coach-athlete relationship has thus considered the operation of inequality in the coaching context, both from a structural basis, in the unequal distribution of resources, and from an ideological basis, through the control of ideas and beliefs (Miell & Croghan, 1996).

#### **2.4.1 Imbalances in relationships**

One imbalance in the coach-athlete relationship has arisen from the expert power of the coach. Expert power has been seen as essential to gain and hold the respect of athletes, and potentially to marginalise and exclude them (Jones et al., 2002; Zevenbergen, Edwards & Skinner, 2002). Jones et al. (2002) observed that this power came from the special knowledge of the coach, which was maintained through a continuous process of demonstration, e.g. through questioning and behaviour. Athletes may, in fact, be drawn to coaches **because** of an imbalance in expertise and advantage, and thus both parties may experience dependence and social attraction, neither of which is conducive to equality and balance (Burke, 2001). The issue of dependence, where power is not a zero sum game was explored in a number of studies such as Jones and Wallace (2005) and Purdy and Jones (2011). Further, Jones et al. (2004) suggested that the coach-athlete relationship might be finite, as the athlete increasingly outgrows the knowledge and skill of the coach. On the other hand, Burke (2001) highlighted the danger of abuse when the charisma of the coach is used to dominate the position of the athlete. Denison (2007) used the work of Foucault to problematise dominant practices such as a coach trying to change an athlete, arguing that coaching practices were often used, not because they were necessarily correct, but because years of assuming their superiority has led us to be unquestioning of them; “social life and the meanings we make are never innocent” (Denison, 2007, p.380).

A further structural imbalance was investigated by Purdy and Jones (2011), who found that athletes attached a set of expectations to the role of the coach. Further, in this study of elite rowers, they recognised that when the athlete expectations were not met, this challenged the respect of the athlete for the coach; the result was a breakdown in the coach-athlete relationship. Jones et al. (2002) identified that coaches maintained these

expectations by using impression management (Goffman, 1959) to present the self in congruence with the expectation of their status and role as coach, e.g. the coach may present an image of the knowledgeable and caring expert (Jones, 2011; Potrac et al., 2002). The result is that a coach may use interactional strategies such as feedback, pretence, deception and withholding information from the athlete, to present an idealised version of the self to the athlete, in keeping with the expected norms of the sporting environment (Jones et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2004; Potrac et al., 2002). The consequence of this behaviour may be a loss of credibility for the coach where athletes perceive the coach to be “phoney” (Jones, 2011); or the coach may use proactive mechanisms to maintain face, such as distancing themselves from the athlete (Purdy et al., 2008). Both actions act to disconnect the coach-athlete relationship.

The intersection of ideology and structure on relationship was evidenced in Cushion and Jones’ (2006) study of a medium sized English premiership club, using the concepts of Bourdieu to interpret a ten month ethnography. They found that authoritarian, gendered, and hierarchic discourses structured how coaches behaved and supported their use of the role to maintain their position as the dominant group and to protect their interests. This study further positioned the athletes as ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault, 1977) as they were obedient to the coaches and accepted these more traditional power relationships. The coach domination had the consent of both parties; the players were deemed complicit to be dominated, by not resisting the coach domination (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Purdy et al., 2008).

However, athletes are never without power in the coach-athlete relationship as the athlete has some social value in an encounter (Jones et al., 2002; Jones and Wallace, 2005). For example, the coach studied by Potrac et al. (2002) recognised the existence of his athletes’ power. In one instance, he refrained from berating a player, recognising that to do so would damage the relationship with a player he would need the next day. Similarly, Purdy and Jones (2011), using Giddens’ (1981) view of power as relational, examined the contested hegemony between coach and athlete in a rowing context. The status of each rower in the situation empowered them to differentially push back about coach instructions. The athlete with the highest status had the most power in this regard. Purdy et al. (2008) viewed the rowing context in their study in light of Nyberg’s (1981) notion of “power over”. Rather than power being solely in the hands of the coach, it was in the hands of the person over whom power was wielded - in this case the athletes.

This mirrored d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier and Dubois (1998) who found that athletes regained a form of power in the coaching relationship by searching for other forms of feedback when the coaching was too authoritarian, resulting in the breakdown of the coach-athlete relationship.

Finally, Jones et al. (2003) identified that closeness may impact the coach-athlete relationship. Their case study of a top-level professional soccer coach observed that the coach needed to get to know the players, but also to keep one step away from them to maintain respect and authority. Potrac et al. (2002) examined how coaching behaviours impacted a coach's relationship with players and found that a high praise/scold ratio was surmised to represent coaches' desire to establish a social bond with his players. They concluded that the coach's perceived need to establish closeness with his players influenced his coaching practice. As Jones et al. (2002, p.42) state, "The level of power and control that the coach can exert over many aspects of the athletes' environment will affect the nature of the coach/player interaction on the field."

This section has examined the sociological approach to the study of coach-athlete relationships. Within this literature, the coach-athlete relationship is understood as being impacted by discursive and embodied normative notions of coaching. This can lead to an acceptance or expectation of traditional forms of power relations which subsequently shape experience and performance. Scholars claim that this approach is used, "not to unquestioningly criticise a hierarchical coaching structure, but to raise awareness of the social consequences of such manifest actions on human relationships" (Purdy et al., 2008, p.328). This has enabled the study of the broader social and cultural implications of the coach-athlete interaction and its inevitable power relationships. When taken with the research outlined in the prior sections on the behavioural approach and the relational dyadic approach, the sociological view of the coach-athlete relationship supplements the behavioural, affective and cognitive perspective of the other approaches. However, to date, none of these approaches have proved complex enough to simultaneously situate these affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of coaches and athletes relating in the flexible and fluid boundaries of social and cultural action and organisation (West, 2005).

Thus a broader theoretical basis is required, as neither relationships nor coaching are enacted in a vacuum or a sterile environment (Cushion, 2001; Fletcher, 1998), but instead in an organisational setting of a sports club, one which is not neutral or

ambivalent to the culture of the organisation, the sporting environment and its meaning to the participants. This theoretical basis is needed to acknowledge the influence of cultural norms on the process of relating, such as the societal positioning of one dominant group over the other e.g. men over women, or coaches over athletes. To support the existing research on coach-athlete relationships which has recognised the primacy of the interdependent connection between the two parties (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007), such a theory is also required to support the tenets of mutuality. The next section presents an outline of Relational Cultural Theory (RCT). RCT is based on a model of adult growth, rooted in connection, interdependence and collectivity (Fletcher, 1998). Its use in sport and business is discussed, along with an examination of its utility in explicating the findings of this study in understanding how coach-athlete relationships are influenced within the organisational culture of a rowing club.

## **2.5 Relational-Cultural Theory**

RCT does not claim there is one reality in relationships; rather it recognises the contextuality and richness of human life, in moving from the more traditional psychology of "the self" to one emphasizing relationships (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). A pre-eminence is placed on connection over individuation. Further, the context of relational development, across the life span, is inextricably linked to individuals' cultural and social identities. RCT acknowledges that relationships are made in contexts that have been "raced, engendered sexualized, and situated along dimensions of class, physical ability, religion or whatever constructions carry ontological significance in the culture" (Walker, 2002, p.2). A relationship is defined as "an experience of emotional and cognitive intersubjectivity: the on-going, intrinsic inner awareness and responsiveness to the continuous existence of the other or others and the expectation of mutuality in this regard" (Surrey, 1991a, p.61). Within RCT, several growth-fostering characteristics of relationships have been suggested (Jordan, 1986; Jordan, Kaplan et al., 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997) including (a) mutual engagement (i.e. perceived mutual involvement, commitment, and attunement to the relationship), (b) authenticity (i.e. the process of acquiring knowledge of self and the other and feeling free to be genuine in the context of the relationship), (c) empowerment/zest (i.e. the experience of feeling personally strengthened, encouraged, and inspired to take action), and (d) the ability to deal with difference or conflict (i.e. the process of expressing, working through, and accepting differences in background,

perspective, and feeling). Thus relationships are viewed as a dynamic process of increasing complexity. The temporal nature of increasing relational complexity is not considered in the other approaches to coach-athlete relationships. The use of RCT together with an ethnographic methodology in this study will enable its consideration.

West (2005) argues that the original feminist framing allows RCT to operate as a theoretical landscape holding many ideas and truths. Its questions allow ambiguity, entertain difference, invite reflection, and encourage investigations into new perspectives on relationships without being reductionist. It has maintained these principles and developed from its feminist roots. RCT has been subsequently applied to understand the relational experiences of men and boys in addition to women and girls (e.g. Dooley & Fedele, 2004; Liang, Tracy, Kenny, Brogan, 2008)) and to broader settings, including the workplace (e.g. Blustein, 2011; Fletcher, 2004; Hartling & Sparks, 2008) and sport (e.g. LaVoi, 2004, 2007a, 2007b; E. Ward, 2010). This makes it appropriate to consider in the inquiry of coaches and athletes in an organisational culture. The next section scrutinises the core beliefs that form RCT as an approach.

### **2.5.1 Key concepts of RCT**

The core belief in RCT is that connection rather than separation is the basis for organising social institutions (Jordan, Walker & Hartling, 2004). This section inspects the concepts underlying this belief and considers the relevance of this theory for the study of coach-athlete relationships in sport.

**Being in relation – The self.** RCT challenges the model of human development that posits we move from dependence to autonomy and questions the accuracy of the “separate self” paradigm for human development. The modern psychological view that “becoming one's own man” (Miller, 1991a) with a separate self who gets stronger and healthier by building firm boundaries, being more independent and feeling safe through power over others, is abandoned. Instead, Miller argues that in reality, at an early age, we start with a notion of our connection to others, of “self-other”. We have an internal representation of “being in relation” i.e. a sense of self that comes from what is happening *between* people, in a constant interaction with others. From this vantage point, “being in relation” means the centre of one's being is emotional and is being attended to and is attending to someone else (Jordan, 1997). Each person feels the

other's emotion and acts on this feeling, although Miller (1991a) is clear that “being in relation” is **not** about sacrifice or altruism.

The idea of “being in relation” is resonant with Buber’s (2010) I-Thou relationship, where “the primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being” (p.3). This suggests that the “other” in relationship is encountered without boundaries. Gergen (2009) draws on both RCT and Buber in arguing for a relational conception of the person. He suggests that “To approach human beings as separate or bounded units – whether individual selves, communities, political parties, nations or religions – is to threaten our well-being” (p.396). An identity of “being in relation” contrasts with the bounded presentation of the current coach-athlete scholarship, where the theoretical notion of exchange as the basis for relationships implies a separation between coach and athlete. RCT challenges the current thinking in sport about who is the coach and who is the athlete who meet in the relationship, by deconstructing the boundaries that define “coach” and “athlete” as discrete, separate entities.

**Mutuality.** The current conceptualisation of interdependence in the approaches to the study of coach-athlete relationships studies discussed earlier in the chapter, have reduced the notion of mutuality to one of simple exchange between two separate beings. Deriving from the separate self-view of modern psychology outlined above, the Western cultural notion of mutuality has been based on the concept of the “highly individualistic, agentic ethic of American culture” (Jordan, 1991b, p.87). As an alternative, Jordan (1991b) presents mutuality as openness to influence and emotional availability, using constantly changing patterns of responding to and affecting the other's state. A mutual relationship is thus one where both parties feel heard, seen, understood and known and may involve both cognitive and affective sensibilities (Sanftner, Ryan & Pierce, 2009). This may also include mutual trust, where a growth in trust leads to a growing confidence in one’s own voice and view of reality. Within this framing, the process of relating has intrinsic value. Inherent in maintaining mutual connections with others is connection to oneself (Surrey, 1991a). Connection to oneself means knowing and accepting one's thoughts, feelings and needs and having the basic ability to be attuned with one's body. Mutuality provides meaning in a relationship.

Interactions characterised by mutuality, to be connected, are thought to lead to five outcomes for both participants (Miller, 1986): increased feelings of vitality and energy; increased ability to engage in an activity directed towards helping oneself and

others; increased clarity regarding relationship with others, regarding one's own as well as the other person's thoughts, feelings and needs; increased feelings of self-worth; and increased desire to engage in mutual exchanges with others. However, the corollary of a lack of or imbalance in mutuality brings people out of connection. For example, if one person in the relationship erects a boundary by not self-disclosing, then the other in the dyad may be walled-off, inaccessible or disconnected; or an individual may use the other to shore themselves up, so the other ceases to exist as person about whom they feel concern; sometimes depression may impair mutuality, as the person withdraws to repair and heal, or because they feel helpless; or it may be that one of the dyad simply does most of the accommodating and giving (Jordan, 1991b). There is opportunity in a sports environment to explore the normative practices which may influence how and why mutuality, connection and disconnection may occur between a coach and athlete. In studying organisational culture and relationships together, this study provides the opportunity to add to understanding in this area.

**Empathy.** To be mutual in relation to others requires an understanding of what is happening between people. In RCT, empathy is both an affective and a cognitive function. In order to achieve empathy with another, a momentary overlap of self and other is demanded, which in turn “requires a well differentiated sense of self and sensitivity to the differentness and sameness of the other” (Jordan, 1991a, p.69). Jordan, Surrey and Kaplan (1991) suggest that empathy has been differentially constructed along gendered lines in society. Socially, women are encouraged to attend to others’ affective states; men are encouraged to pursue a mastery of tasks, to contain affect, particularly if it suggests attending to the need of another, and to fear the inability to act on one's own.

Mutual empathy is an essential component of authenticity in relationships (Miller, Jordan, Stiver, Walker, Surrey & Eldridge, 2004). It depends on both parties knowing that they have an impact on the other and understanding what that impact is. Although discussing a therapeutic relationship, Miller et al. (2004) suggest this involves helping each other to know and express their needs and feelings clearly, whilst stating the limits within which the relationship can be conducted. This extends the affective element of the current approaches to coach-athlete relationships. For example, Jowett and colleague’s (e.g. Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004) 3+1C’s conceptualisation uses closeness to characterise the affective element of the coach athlete relationship (Jowett,

2007). Closeness is limited to mutual feelings of trust, respect and liking based on coach and athlete appraisals of their relationship experiences. Using the RCT premise of mutual empathy expands the repertoire of emotion that both coach and athlete might feel whilst in relation, to recognise the breadth of the human condition.

This section has considered how using RCT to study coach-athlete relationships in a sport organisation provides the possibility to broaden scholarship and consider how connection and disconnection occur during the relationship. RCT provides an opportunity to question the process of constructing coach and athlete identities to identify how “being in relation” is enacted in the relationship. The centrality of mutual empathy in the theory provides a wider canvass within which to understand the affective component of coach-athlete relationships. The next section considers the relevance to sporting coach-athlete relationships, derived from the acknowledgement in RCT that relationships take place within an organisational and cultural landscape.

### **2.5.2 Cultural connections and disconnections**

Jordan et al. (2004) explain that through exploring connections and disconnections in relationships “we begin to understand how the political becomes psychological/personal and vice versa. Connections form or fail to form within a web of other social and cultural relationships” (p.4). Alongside connection, RCT places culture at the core of relationships.

By acknowledging the social and political values idealised in psychology, such as autonomy and separation, RCT does not claim to be value neutral nor ambivalent to cultural forces. Rather, there is recognition that culturally dominant discourses exist, which may privilege the perspectives of one group over another. To feign value-neutrality would “perpetuate the distortions of the stratified culture” (Jordan et al., 2004, p.4). Miller and Stiver (1997) posit that placing culture at the centre of RCT provides the opportunity to challenge existing discourses in order to unravel the multi-layered connections in relationships, including those arising from the culture of the sport or organisation in which they are enacted.

RCT provides the opportunity to further understand the complexity of some of the discourses raised by the current coach-athlete scholarship, particularly those raised by researchers using the sociological approach. RCT can be used to see an inter-relationship between gender, power and dependency in relationships. For example,

given its feminist starting point, RCT has sometimes compared the experience of women with that of men, to understand the cultural influence on relating. Unlike other relational ideologies (e.g. Gergen, 2009), RCT treats gender as a cultural rather than an individual characteristic (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). For example, Hartling and Sparks (2008) question Kobasa's (1979) formulation of the internal characteristic of individual hardiness as standard of stress resilience across diverse populations of men, women and children. They argue that this conceptualisation was based on white male middle- to upper-level business executives and neglected the cultural impact of working in the 1970s with the support of secretaries and non-working wives. They suggest that adding the relational experience of connection and collaboration in culturally diverse populations, such as Sparks' (1999) study of African American mothers on welfare, would enrich the view of resilience, not as an individual trait, but as a social/cultural practice. Secondly, dependency has a long standing identification with feminine characteristics in the literature (Jordan, Kaplan et al., 1991), even though both men and women need to depend on each other. In the 3+1C's model of coach-athlete relationships dependency has been viewed as a value laden element, with the potential to indicate developmental immaturity, vulnerability or "asymmetric authority" in the relationship (Jowett, 2007, p.21). RCT takes a more fluid approach, in that dependency may fluctuate with the needs of each party in the relationship. It allows for the self to be felt "as being enhanced and empowered through the very process of counting on others for help" (Stiver, 1991b, p.160). Thus dependency is defined as "A process of counting on other people to provide help in coping physically and emotionally with the experiences and tasks encountered in the world, when one has not sufficient skill, confidence, energy and/or time" (Stiver, 1991b, p.160). The very fact that, in RCT, dependency always has the potential to be growth promoting as individuals are understood, heard and validated and so feel more worthy, challenges the current scholarship's view of dependency in coach-athlete relationships as a bi-polar construct of control versus submission.

Thirdly, RCT recognises that authenticity and growth through mutual empathy and dependency may require different levels of participation from parties in a relationship (Miller et al., 2004). There are power differences and imbalances. A traditional view of power, like that of dependency, connects two dichotomies - "powerful-powerless" and "active -passive" (Surrey, 1991b). This view assumes an

active agent of control, where one person in the relationship chooses action that leads to connection and allows the other person to lead and control. However, this person's behaviour appears passive and subservient, and is seen as less healthy, mature and worthy. On the other hand, Miller (1991b, p.198) defines power as "the capacity to produce a change." It is about enacting change in relation to others in a mindful attempt to minimise power differentials, not to ignore them. RCT poses an alternative "power with", "power together" or "power emerging from interaction" as a model, which overrides the dichotomy of active/passive and powerful/powerless.

This section has presented the example of the inter-relationship between gender, power and dependency, to illustrate the relevance of using RCT to understand a complex cultural social environment such as a sport club. This suggests researching coach-athlete relationships as a non-hierarchical model of growth through mutually empowering relationships, where there is the capacity to act in relationship, "to consider ones' actions in light of other people's needs, feelings and perceptions" (Surrey, 1991b, p.167). So instead of asking, is this athlete too passive and can they be more active, or are they dependent and can they be more independent, the question becomes are the coach and athlete being responsibly interactive and mutually dependent? Are they in a context which allows and fosters these types of interactions?

The final two sections in this chapter now turn to a summary of the current research utilising RCT in an organisational and a sport setting.

### **2.5.3 RCT and organisational research**

In advocating RCT as an approach to organisational study, Blustein (2011) argues individuals are often presented in the literature on relationships at work as interacting in a relational vacuum. The prevailing discourse in the last few decades had been one of privileging the work lives of individuals who have a relative degree of choice in their work lives. However, for many, the reality of working is that self-determined choices about how, where and with whom one works are not possible. RCT has therefore been used as a framework for understanding the ways in which working is embedded in both external and internal relational contexts. The work of Collin and Young (2000), and Savickas et al. (2009) exemplify the contextual perspectives that consist of not simply individual agency, but are rooted in interactions with a range of

external influences (Blustein, 2011). Some of the research which has used RCT to frame a relational understanding of work environments is discussed below.

Often, organisations do not have a language to talk about the process of relating at work. Fletcher (1998, 1999, 2004) conducted a study of an engineering firm and found four types of relational activity: *preserving* - related to the task, e.g. things that preserve the life and well-being of the project; *mutual empowering* - activities related to another, e.g. activities that empower others to contribute to the task, based on a fluid conception of power, not just over time but in the course of connection; *achieving* - activities related to the self, e.g. activities to empower oneself to achieve the task; and *creating team* - activities related to building a collective, e.g. creating an environment where the positive outcomes of relational interactions can be realised. She identified that there was no language in use within the organisation to describe relating as an organisational practice. Relating was associated with female traits such as being polite or nice, or with a sense of powerlessness as the women in the study were seen as self-effacing in their work practices (Fletcher, 1998).

Relating may not be seen as an organisational competence, and thus not valued or rewarded (Fletcher, 2004). Jordan (1991b) provided several case examples where employees were criticised for getting too involved in others' problems. For example a lawyer was reminded of her power base relative to the subordinate needs of a client, and discouraged from becoming too involved in client problems. Engaging in mutuality with a client was criticised by the organisation as threatening the power base of the role as a lawyer. Another example concerned a manager who placed a high value on relations with her team. She was criticised for squandering corporate resources, and advised to view team members as a means to her own professional advancement. In both cases the organisational value of relational practice was low, and such practice was discouraged.

RCT has been used to show how social/cultural discourses on identity are linked to specific organisational practices. Stiver (1991c) provided the example of "professional behaviour", which has been viewed as a polar construct, with masculine characteristics, such as being strong, confident and self-sufficient deemed appropriate at work on one end, and feminine characteristics, such as showing emotion and empathy, deemed inappropriate at the other. Schultheiss (2009) explored the relational discourse

related to careers in caring for others. She suggested that self-esteem and identity might be gained through building relationships and relational competence through work.

Fletcher and Ragins (2007) applied Miller and Stiver's (1997) theory of growth-fostering interactions to workplace mentoring. They identified that ignoring the mutuality and interdependence of a high quality mentoring relationship fails to recognise both its dynamic nature and the bi-directional nature of the relational process. Increased levels of relational competence for both members of the relationship also improved the quality of the relationship interaction, work performance and other positive career outcomes (Fletcher, 1999). Fletcher and Ragins (2007) observed that the activity of mentoring could take place, without both parties actually being in a growth fostering mentoring relationship.

Finally, Hartling and Sparks (2008) discussed the difficulties of bringing relational practices into a work environment that valorised normative values of disconnection, individualism, stratification and separation. They examined three ideal type work cultures that typified non-relational practice: Hierarchical cultures that depended on rigid stratification and power-over manoeuvres to manage and control individuals; pseudo-relational cultures that appeared to value relationships, while failing to establish essential practices that promoted authentic connection; and survival cultures that were consumed by chronic crises and distress. They recognised that each culture presented a challenge to the practice of relational working. For example, in a hierarchical culture, "subordinates may adopt various strategies of survival that allow them to sustain working relationships by keeping substantial parts of their experience out of relationship with those who hold power over them" (Hartling & Sparks, 2008, p.173). RCT terms this phenomenon the central relational paradox (Miller & Stiver, 1997). This relational paradox occurs when individuals feel the need to act inauthentically by withholding information or acting in a way that fits with their perception of the expectations of organisational culture, in order to keep those relationships that are available.

This section has used a relational lens to explicate how people understand work, themselves and the social world, to highlight that relational competence may be gendered, un-valued and not part of the language of work. This builds on the social constructivist perspective that interactions provide a means for understanding our experiences. Blustein (2011) argued that RCT deletes the artificial hyphen that exists

between the study of relationships and the study of work and that by bringing these discourses together reflects the lived experiences of people in the workplace. Given that athletes' and coaches' relational practice takes place in an organisation, the sport club, these findings may be used to build on and inform other theories of coach-athlete relationship and the sport experience of rowers in an elite rowing environment. The existing literature applying RCT in a sport context is examined in the final section of this chapter.

#### **2.5.4 RCT and the sport context**

Although the sum of scholarship literature is limited, there has been a recent interest in applying RCT to relationships in sport. For example, E. Ward (2010) examined the complex interactions involved in team sport participation to ascertain the association with the development of relational skills and self-esteem. She found the only statistically significant relationship occurred between sociability and participation in team sports, suggesting that sport participation was not perceived by the young women to develop their skills of empathy or interpersonal relating, nor their self-esteem. Kilty (2006) used a relational perspective to examine the development of coaches. She suggested that using relational skills creates conditions such as cooperation, collaboration, trust and mutual learning, but identified that the dominant culture in sport organisations does not value this as work (Fletcher, 1999, Jordan, 1999). The process of relating as a form of work has not been investigated in a sport context. This study provides an opportunity to explore this.

LaVoi, (2004, 2007a, 2007b) has produced the most scholarship combining RCT and the sports domain. She focussed specifically on athletes' perceptions of the dimensions of closeness and conflict. She identified nineteen dimensions of closeness, including the most frequently cited dimensions of trust, communication and mutuality (LaVoi, 2007a), arguing that elements such as empowerment and authenticity should be added to conceptualisation of coach-athlete relationships. The notion of positive support was also indicated by athletes as a part of the construct of closeness. The findings of Rhind and Jowett (2010, 2012) examining relationship maintenance strategies concur with this. LaVoi (2007a) also stressed that communication was identified by athletes as an important part of coach-athlete relationships, in particular the relational meaning of interactions with a coach. Most of the athletes in this study described the process of developing closeness as uni-directional, placing the responsibility with the coach.

LaVoi (2007a) suggested that a better understanding of how boundaries were negotiated between coach and athlete while they strive for performance and achievement could provide a window on the relational aspects of power and asymmetry in the relationship and the concept of closeness. A further finding was that coach-athlete closeness contained cognitive and behavioural, as well as affective dimensions; and that those dimensions were unlikely to be orthogonal, but intertwined, complex and dynamic.

Conflict research in the coach-athlete dyad is also relatively sparse (e.g. Jowett (2003, 2008; LaVoi, 2004; Poczwadowski, Barott & Henchen, 2002). Examining open-ended coach and athlete responses pertaining to athlete-coach conflict, LaVoi (2004) found that coaches and athletes appeared to attribute the origins of conflict to the other in the dyad. She argued that conflict management strategies remain under-explored and drew on RCT to suggest that building relational expertise (Jordan, 1995), requiring the capacity to observe patterns of connection and disconnection, might improve the communication and management of conflict within coach-athlete relationships (LaVoi, 2007b).

To date, research using RCT in sport has utilised questionnaires and self-report data to understanding of relationship. This has yielded findings on individuals' perceptions of particular concepts and variables associated with relational cultures. However, the roots of RCT are not in positivistic science, but in understanding the diversity and breadth of people's experiences and the connections they form within cultural and social relationships. RCT acknowledges that experiences are situated within a specific time, through their social positioning and the cultural context. There is thus opportunity to employ different methods such as ethnography when working with RCT in order to explore relationships in context over time. Previously discussed ethnographic research using sociological approaches has benefited from the ability to explore the complex workings of relationships within sport settings. The specific focus in this study which utilises the frame of organisational culture along with RCT will help to appreciate the complex nature of relationships and the ways that they may be impacted by institutional demands, traditions, and norms.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has identified a number of prospects for adding to the current body of knowledge on coach-athlete relationships. Firstly, the behavioural, the dyadic

relational and the sociological approaches to coach-athlete relationships do not satisfactorily enmesh the psychological, social and organisational aspects of this study. RCT is posited as an alternative approach as it is able to factor in cultural, value-laden and unspoken aspects of relating in diverse organisations and networks. Secondly, RCT offers the possibility to interpret and question normative practices that are actually imbued with power relations and fluctuations in dependency. The power relations are sometimes unquestioned as they are in keeping with expectations, traditions, and common sense. RCT subjects such norms to resistance and challenge. Thirdly, RCT lends itself to the study of relationships close up and in person, using ethnography. Krane and Baird (2005, p. 103) write, “Ethnography also could advance our knowledge of leadership and coach-athlete relationships.” Further, RCT supports the current scholarship in recognising that coach-athlete relationships are dynamic, whilst positing that they are increasingly complex as they develop. Ethnography is an appropriate means to gain a better understanding of these dynamics. Finally, RCT enables a reconceptualisation of the coach athlete relationship as one of connection and disconnection, which acknowledges the role of many emotions, empathy, mutuality and authenticity, and where each person is not a bounded entity, but a “being in relation”. Thus using RCT in this study provides the opportunity to build on and challenge previous work on coach-athlete relationships.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on organisational culture in sport. The key findings from the literature are presented, along with an analysis of the patterns and trends in how sport organisational culture has been researched. A rationale for the approach to studying culture taken in this thesis concludes the chapter.

## CHAPTER 3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN SPORT

*What is not culture? (Martin, 2002, p.5)*

This chapter reviews the body of literature on organisational culture in sport. It first examines the ways that organisational culture has been studied in the broader setting of business and other organisational fields. This framing of the study of organisational culture is then used to analyse the body of research on culture in sports organisations. Particular attention is paid to the research paradigms, methods, interests, and perspectives used by researchers, as well as the way that they define and operationalise organisational culture in sport. Key findings from sport organisations are presented, together with opportunities for developing organisational culture research. The next section selects several of these opportunities and details how they might be used to inform the research questions for this study: providing a clear definition and operationalisation of culture; examining cultural processes; extending the methods used; using an understanding of organisational culture to inform relationships; and deepening how organisational culture is theorised in sport organisations. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of one way of theorising culture, using the ideas of Max Weber.

### **3.1 Approaches to studying organisational culture**

Culture is a complex phenomenon; its study is not straightforward. Taylor, Irvin and Wieland (2006) describe the study of organisational culture as “the battleground of competing paradigms that influence how researchers conceptualise phenomena, use methods to collect and analyse data, and represent their findings” (p. 305). Martin (2002) contends that there are many ways that researchers may choose to study culture in organisations, from a single focus with an in depth understanding of one organisation, to inquiry into a range of organisations where less is known about each organisation. The choice of paradigmatic approach influences the ontology, epistemology, and hence method of data collection and definition and operationalisation of organisational culture within which and with which to construct research. This section presents a means to understand this “battleground” in order to understand the way that culture has been studied generally in organisations, so that the framing may be used to understand the

body of literature examining sport organisational culture in section 3.2. The choice of research paradigm, including methods of data collection, the perspective of study, how culture is defined, and the research interest for the study, are presented.

### **3.1.1 Research paradigm**

The popular view of culture developed in the 1980s sees it as a generic term, aimed at conceptualising humankind's diversity. The eagerness by which organisations adopted the notion of culture was based on the promise that organisations could develop a "strong" culture, becoming havens of harmony in which employees and leaders shared the same vision and values (Martin, 2002). Often, the promise to managers is extended further by suggesting that if an organisation could build a sufficiently strong culture, then improved productivity and profitability would result. Management thinkers such as Ouchi (1981), Pascale and Athos (1982) and Peters and Waterman (1982) shaped the common conception of organisational culture as "the way we do things round here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p.4).

Research has often adopted the view of culture presented in the popular management literature. Research from this premise assumes the "organisation has a culture" and that there is an objective reality to culture which can be measured and attributed to the organisation. Smircich (1983) argued that culture, when studied from this ontological and epistemological stance, could be viewed as a variable, which if understood and manipulated, could explain how the organisation operated. Culture was an object that was acquired by employees, rather than something that they were involved in constructing. This view of culture incorporates several assumptions. It presupposes research from a positivist paradigm where organisational culture is seen as objectively real, so that with careful scrutiny and objective data from techniques such as surveys, questionnaires and interviews, the general laws of social behaviour in the organisation can be deduced (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Krane & Baird, 2005). Further, there is the assumption that the study of the social world can be value-free, in that the researcher's values will not necessarily interfere with the disinterested search for reality. Culture is known through the physical manifestations and artefacts of the organisation (Martin, 2002). This has enabled researchers to treat culture as an unproblematic object of analysis, where to know means to be able to represent accurately what "organisational culture" is really like. The result is a body of knowledge which aims to enable managers to manipulate variables such as strength of culture, leadership or

satisfaction, for the sake of achieving certain organisational performance outcomes (Alvesson, 2002; Schein, 1985). Examples of research from this perspective include Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders's (1990) examination of organisational culture in ten organisations, where they identified six dimensions of culture, such as parochial versus professional, process oriented versus results oriented, and normative versus pragmatic aspects of culture.

However, a body of literature exists which takes alternative paradigmatic approaches to organisational culture such as a social constructivist, poststructuralist or critical realist framing (Guba, 1990). For example, taking an idealist approach to organisational life, culture may be conceptualised as symbolic, a social construction where cognitions are shared, acknowledging the subjective nature of reality, the centrality of processes and interactions, and a voluntarist approach to human agency. To access this subjective reality, methods such as ethnography or action research might be used to collect data of an organisation's symbolic relationships and meanings (Smircich, 1983). From this stance, as Geertz (1973) writes, "Culture is the creation of meaning in which human beings interpret their experiences and guide their actions" (p. 145). Unlike the first conceptualisation, where the organisational culture is deemed a variable for manipulation and regulation and where research gives priority to prediction, generalisability and control, the symbolic, social constructionist approach views culture as "the setting", in which behaviour, social events, institutions and processes become comprehensible and meaningful (Alvesson, 2002). An exemplar of research of this kind is Rosen's (1985) study of symbols and power in order to understand the relationship between cultural and social action in an advertising agency.

### **3.1.2 Perspective on, definition of and operationalisation of culture**

A second way that organisational culture researchers can conduct inquiry is through their choice of perspective or lens through which culture is viewed. Martin (2002) argues that organisational researchers answer the question, "What theoretical perspective to endorse?" by adopting one of three perspectives. Martin and Meyerson (Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Meyerson & Martin, 1987) developed the three-perspective framework to explicate and decipher what has, and has not, been learned from a specific study (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg & Martin, 1991). The three perspectives are termed integration, differentiation and fragmentation.

When using the integration perspective, Martin (2002) suggests that most definitions of culture include an explicit focus on what is shared (e.g. Sathe, 1985, p.8; Smircich, 1983, p.56). Davis, (1984) takes this perspective where culture is “the pattern of shared beliefs and values that give members of an institution meaning, and provide them with the rules for behaviour in their organisation” (p.1). This implies a singular notion of culture in organisations, whereby culture is that which is clear and uncontested.

In contrast, some definitions stress conflict between opposing points of view. For example Van Maanen and Barley (1985) define culture as:

Culture’s utility as a heuristic concept may be lost when the organizational level of analysis is employed. Work organizations are indeed marked by social practices which can be said to be “cultural”, but these practices may not span the organization as a whole. (p.32)

The notion of plural or different cultures or sub-cultures is introduced. Martin and Meyerson (1988) term this the differentiation perspective. Using a differentiation view of organisational culture, content themes and practices may be inconsistent. Further there may be no organisation-wide consensus; rather a consensus within sub-cultural boundaries exists, so that ambiguity in this domain is “relegated to the boundary” (Martin, 1992, p.83). It is worth noting here that the term sub-culture is not usually used in the context of organisational management to imply something lower in a hierarchy, or cultures in relation to the broader culture, or with the connotations of youth subcultures (Blackman, 2005; Donnelly, 2000). Rather, sub-culture is used when members of the same organisation face similar problems and enact the same form of behaviour and communication in response to actions such as ideological differentiation, technical innovation or organisational segmentation (Alvesson, 2002).

In the third perspective, fragmentation, even the word “shared” can be a source of disagreement between researchers. What is shared, for example, may be an agreement on the elements framing or bounding a culture, but there may not exist a shared understanding of the particulars of those issues. There is neither consistency nor inconsistency; rather, ambiguity and shades of grey characterise organisational functioning and culture is a reflection of uncertainty, contradiction and confusion – disorder rather than order. Martin and Meyerson (1988) use a metaphor to define culture from this lens:

Individuals are nodes in the web, connected by shared concerns to some but not all the surrounding nodes. When a particular issue becomes salient, one pattern of connections becomes relevant. That pattern would include a unique array of agreements, disagreements and domains of ignorance. A different issue would draw attention to a different pattern of connections – and different sources of confusion. Whenever a new issue becomes salient to cultural members or researchers, a new pattern of connections would become significant. (p.117)

Martin (1992) suggests that the fragmentation view of culture reveals a loosely connected web of individuals who may change positions on a variety of issues, so that “their involvement, their sub-cultural identities, and their individual self-definitions fluctuate, depending on which issues are activated at a given moment” (p.153).

These three perspectives are summarised in Table 3.1 showing the complementary nature of each perspective in relation to their orientation to consensus, relation among manifestations and treatment of ambiguity. Although the framework has been positioned as a meta theory (see for example Taylor et al., 2006), Martin (1992) is at pains to point out that the boundaries of these three perspectives are permeable and are to be used to describe the primary emphasis of a study rather than pigeonhole or oversimplify the characteristics of a piece of work.

Table 3.1

*Three perspectives on culture*

	<i>Perspective</i>		
	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Differentiation</i>	<i>Fragmentation</i>
<b>Orientation to consensus</b>	Organization-wide consensus	Sub-cultural consensus	Lack of consensus
<b>Relation among manifestations</b>	Consistency	Inconsistency	Not clearly consistent or inconsistent
<b>Orientation to ambiguity</b>	Exclude it	Channel it outside sub-cultures	Acknowledge it

Source: Martin, 2002, p.95

However, Martin (1992) further argues that no single perspective to studying organisational culture can capture the complexity of organisational life. To avoid the blind spots from taking a single perspective approach, all three might be considered by researchers. In this way, the perspectives act like lenses bringing some aspects of

culture into focus, whilst also blurring other aspects, so that the cultural context can be more fully understood.

Allied to the perspective used to study organisational culture and its definition, is how researchers choose to operationalise culture in their inquiry. Martin (1992) argues that an analysis of the cultural manifestation that researchers actually study reveals how a given inquiry defines culture. She suggests that three kinds of cultural manifestation are frequently studied: forms, practices and content themes. Cultural forms include rituals, jargon, stories and physical arrangements, and these can provide insight into what employees are thinking, believing and doing. Cultural practices include tasks, ways of communicating, decision making processes and management practice. Martin (1992) describes content themes as the common threads that weave through the forms and practices. These may include deeply held assumptions by the group, or more public espoused values of those in the organisation.

### **3.1.3 Research interests**

A third way that the literature on organisational culture might be understood is by examining the motive of the researcher in their search for knowledge. Girginov (2010) suggests that scholars should position themselves relative to the rationale for their research. Alvesson (2002) identified how studies can serve similar research interests. He applied Habermas' (1972) theory that knowledge is always sought with a purpose in mind to the study of organisational culture. According to Habermas, three non-reducible interests exhaust the domain of possible knowledge; each type of knowledge is associated with its own set of methods and validity claims (Alvesson, 2002; Deetz, 1985; Martin 2002). Motives for research may thus be in search of technical (i.e. to predict and control) practical (i.e. to improve mutual understanding) and emancipatory (i.e. to expose and remove domination) knowledge (Girginov, 2010).

The research on organisational culture may be examined considering the choice of paradigm (relating epistemology and method), the lens through which the study is viewed (integration, differentiation, fragmentation and the definition and conceptualisation of culture) and the motive for seeking knowledge through research (managerial, practical, emancipatory). The next section examines the current body of knowledge on organisational culture in sport, in the light of the choices made by sport scholars as they have conducted research.

## **3.2 Emergence and significance of research on culture in sport**

There is a small but growing body of research examining organisational culture and sport (Girginov, 2006; Kaiser, Engel & Keiner, 2009; Schroeder, 2010b), despite, since the late 1970s, a burgeoning academic and management interest in researching organisational culture in commercial organisations (see for example Harris & Ogbonna, 1999; Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Pettigrew, 1979; Trice & Beyer, 1984). Kaiser, Engel & Keiner (2009) point out that scientific discussion on the culture of sport organisations is “still in its infancy” (p. 298). They believe that research on the topic is rather fragmented and often restricted to illustrating general concepts of organisational culture with examples from the sports area. The lack of research is surprising as sport organisations seem to be promising objects for the study of organisational culture. Sport organisations are commonly associated with specific values and a great variety of symbols, stories, myths and rituals. These characteristics are viewed as some of the principle components of an organisation’s culture (Slack, 1997).

This section reviews the current body of academic peer reviewed published work on organisational culture in sport organisations; studies with a specific focus on fitness organisations, physical education or recreational sport are excluded. The core research decisions identified in the previous section are used to analyse the twenty-nine studies in the sport literature: research paradigm, methods, perspective on culture, definition and operationalisation of culture, and research interest.

### **3.2.1 Research paradigm**

The predominant paradigm used to examine culture in sport has been the positivist paradigm. In eleven studies, the organisation was viewed as something that could grow and develop, where culture could be measured objectively. Ten studies had as their basis the interpretation and understanding of human meaning and action, with a focus on symbolic interactionist or constructivist approaches. Scott (1997) used a third research approach, taking a critical stance to the examination of organisational culture, in particular the power relations within organisations. In the remaining studies, the research paradigm used was not stated or discernible from analysis of the study. The paradigmatic preference of sport research does not reflect the breadth of possibilities found in the broader organisational culture literature (Martin, 2002), but nor has there been a shared approach to examining organisational culture.

This research moves away from positivistic approaches that have used more static descriptions of culture and is more aligned with interpretive approaches that account for the creation of meaning. The study also adds to these approaches by making a clear statement of the ontological and epistemological assumptions used to frame this research practice (see chapter 4). Humans are considered agentic beings, who create and experience culture through their interactions. Thus organisational culture is conceptualised as dynamic and temporal in this study. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) contend that a benefit of clearly stating assumptions would be to raise the depth of high-impact theorising within the field, as culture is no longer such a taken for granted concept. The opportunity to develop the theorisation of organisational culture in a sport setting is further discussed in section 3.4.

### **3.2.2 Methods**

Although general organisational culture research has been dominated by qualitative methods, sport research has taken a more balanced approach. Thirteen of the reviewed studies used qualitative methods to examine culture (e.g. Smith, 2009), eight had a quantitative approach (e.g. Choi, Martin & Park, 2008) and four used both approaches (e.g. Kaiser, Engel & Keiner, 2009); four adopted a non-empirical line of enquiry (e.g. Girginov, 2006).

Analysis of the instrumentation used in the studies reveals a polarisation and lack of breadth in the current research. In the quantitative studies, only four different instruments were used, with a cluster of five studies using the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). For example, OCAI, based on Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) competing values framework, uses pre-defined core values that are believed to underlie organisational effectiveness to identify the organisational culture profile. This leaves no room to examine the corollary, ineffectiveness, thus limiting its utility. In the qualitative studies analysed, interviews were the dominant data collection method, being used as the sole method of data collection or in conjunction with other methods in fourteen studies. Culver, Gilbert and Trudel (2003) suggest these are often one-off structured interviews. The danger is that such rigidity in interviews might not provide as complete an examination of organisational culture as is possible to obtain. Seven studies used other means such as focus groups, questionnaires, document analysis, observation and ethnography. The fact that ethnography has been used sparsely indicates that sport has not yet accessed the

multiple interpretations of a wide range of cultural manifestations that can be gathered using this method. Alternatively, Martin (2002) suggests that a multi-method approach, such as used by Girginov et al. (2006) and to a lesser extent by Kaiser, Engel & Keiner (2009), has the advantage of attacking the problem under scrutiny from various viewpoints of method and theory, and may well yield new interests. The research questions in the current study, however, require an ability to operationalise and conceptualise culture as a complex and dynamic phenomenon incorporating ambiguity, consistency and inconsistency, as well as consensus and fragmentation. This supports the need for increased methodological diversity.

Additionally, to identify a clear, representational view of organisational culture, then all kinds of employees should be studied. All of the sport studies, except Frontiera (2010) who only questioned managers, endeavoured to take a broad sample of management, board and employee level participants. However, few studies have considered the views and experiences of coaches or athletes in their research. For example Cresswell and Eklund (2007) specifically targeted athletes. Henriksen, Stambulova and Roessler (2010a, 2010b, 2011), included both coaches and athletes in their studies, although do not explicitly define the details of the participants studied. There is an opportunity to re-couple the athlete and coach - the performers - with the organisation of performance when studying organisational culture, and given that over half of the studies use a North American or Australian organisation, potential to broaden the range of locations and national cultures from which to report on organisational culture.

### **3.2.3 Perspective on culture**

Although researchers have a decision about which perspective on culture to adopt for their study, a number make no explicit observation. The perspective on culture used in the 29 articles is summarised in Appendix A. The integration perspective dominates this review, with nineteen of the 29 studies viewing culture as something that is clear, not ambiguous, “like a solid monolith that is seen the same way by most people, no matter from which angle they view it” (Martin, 2002, p.94). An example is Weese (1996), examining leadership, satisfaction and culture, which sought to understand culture as a single variable which could be understood in terms of its strength relative to other organisations. Both Colyer (2000) and Choi and Scott (2008) adopted the differentiation perspective. This focused on cultural manifestations that

have inconsistent interpretations, and where consensus existed only at lower sub-cultural levels of the organisation. Martin (2002, p.94) provides an alternative definition of sub-culture, suggesting that sub-cultures are “like an island of clarity in a sea of ambiguity”, so that within a sub-culture, all is clear and ambiguity is banished. Colyer (2000), for example, adopted this understanding of sub-culture in identifying that different sub-cultures for volunteer and paid employees existed in Australian sport organisations, and that a tension existed between the traditional voluntary management, and the emerging professional management. Girginov et al. (2006) extended the envelope by taking both an integration and differentiation view of culture in their study of sport managers, as did Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) in their non-empirical essay on diversity.

None of the studies solely adopted the third of Martin’s perspectives, that of fragmentation. The fragmentation perspective conceptualises the relationship among cultural manifestations as neither clearly consistent nor clearly inconsistent. Instead, ambiguity rather than clarity is placed at the centre of culture. However Girginov (2006) used all three perspectives in his non-empirical examination of Bulgarian weightlifting and the implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code. He states:

While the World Anti-Doping Agency is interested in achieving harmonization of its policy across all sport governing bodies (SGBs) (that is, integrative perspective), SGBs would be concerned with the interpretation of the code in a particular cultural context (that is, differentiation perspective), and coaches and athletes would emphasize the importance of reality in dealing with doping on a daily basis (a fragmented perspective). (Girginov, 2006, p. 258)

As Girginov (2006) explains, the key point is that these three perspectives are not just an intellectual position. Rather, they have political implications because, for example, a concentration on the integration perspective means ignoring the ambiguities and complexity of real life as experienced by managers at lower levels of an organisational hierarchy (Girginov, 2006). This ambiguity and complexity is missing from the current body of research in sport.

### **3.2.4 Definition and operationalisation of culture**

At present, there is little consensus in how organisational culture is defined and operationalised. This is perhaps not surprising given the range of ways that the concept can be studied. All the 29 studies use a definition drawn from previous non-sport

organisational culture research and often adopt multiple definitions. Only Scott (1997) and Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) reference a sport based definition. However, Schein's (1985, 1990, 1992) definition of organisational culture:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p.19)

is cited in ten papers, and all bar two studies explicitly claim that culture is something that is common or shared between organisational members. This implies that culture is something that an organisation "has", which is static enough to be manipulated and changed. Given the opportunity to broaden the approach, perspective and methods used in examining sport organisational culture, there is potential to consider definitions of culture which include ambiguity, difference and conflict in organisational settings, and recognise the temporal potential of this concept.

In collecting data in sport organisations, researchers have studied many types of cultural manifestation. For example, Smith (2009), through interviews, examined observable aspects of culture such as symbols, jargon, heroes, rites, rituals and ceremonies, where they reflect overt representations of cultural meaning, as well as the description and interpretation of respondents' behavioural patterns and thought systems which focus on the symbolic elements of belonging to a sport organisation. However, there is some polarisation in taking the values of employees as the main manifestation of culture and extrapolating this to explain the sport organisation's culture (see for example Choi, Martin & Park, 2008; Choi & Scott, 2009; Colyer, 2000; Doherty and Chelladurai, 1999). The danger is that this may only provide a partial picture of culture, as focusing on singular types of manifestation is more likely to confirm than contradict our theoretical presuppositions. Research in sport would benefit from using a wide range of cultural forms, such as rituals, jargon, humour, physical arrangements, formal practices (e.g. structures, tasks, technology, rules, procedures and controls), informal practices (e.g. organisational processes, social rules) and content themes (e.g. beliefs, assumptions, and values). This may lead to some inconsistency across various manifestations (Martin, 2002) and thus a more insightful understanding of sport organisations.

### 3.2.5 Research interests

Habermas' (1972) three categories of cognitive interest were introduced in section 3.1.3 as one means of framing the current sport literature. The following discussion examines the rationale, purpose or interest chosen by researchers in their inquiry into sport organisational culture to understand the trends and gaps in this work.

**Managerial interest.** Like the body of work in organisational behaviour, the prevailing thinking in sport management research has viewed the organisation as a rational instrument designed by top management, and culture as a tool used by practitioners to impact organisational effectiveness and performance (Westerbeek, 1999). This has developed from a desire to understand the degree to which sport organisational components may be manipulated to provide a more effective and productive enterprise.

Research from a managerial interest has been conducted around two themes. The first theme centres on the strength of an organisation's culture. A number of sport researchers based their work on the assumption that measuring the strength of an organisation's culture provided a window on the performance of an organisation (Choi, Martin & Park, 2008; Choi & Scott, 2008, 2009; Colyer, 2000; Kent & Weese, 2000; Scott, 1997). Wallace and Weese (1995) suggested one way that culture can be strengthened is through the organisation's leadership building the culture. They posit that transformational leaders promote a stronger culture and this culture fosters worker commitment, retention and productivity aligned to the organisation's strategic intent. However, Weese (1996), examining the campus recreation programmes of 19 US colleges and Kent and Weese (2000), examining Canadian sport organisations found no link between transformational leadership and organisational effectiveness, although there was a link between culture strength and organisational effectiveness. Aicher and Cunningham (2011) found that leaders who were considered prototypical of the organisational culture were rated as more effective.

A second line of enquiry is the facilitation of culture change within the organisation. Choi, Martin and Park (2008) used a values framework to understand the culture of seven Korean professional baseball league organisations. They identified a dominant rational market culture in the organisations, which emphasised and valued an external goal orientation and internal control of power. However, they also investigated

the link between organisational culture and job satisfaction. Compared with the dominant culture, they found that satisfaction was linked to a different set of cultural values: flexibility, participation, trust, cohesiveness and member satisfaction. Their suggestion to management was to shift from the traditional hierarchical approach to organisation, to a flexible structure emphasising speed, agility, and reward for creativity and innovation in teams and units. Several other studies pursued the line of enquiry that it is the leaders, rather than the general membership, who have the capacity to enact change within an organisation (Schroeder, 2010b; Wallace & Weese, 1995; Weese, 1996). For example, Schroeder (2010a) used the concept of organisational culture to examine the leadership behaviours required of ten top US college coaches to change team behaviour. Frontiera (2010) argued that leaders have the capacity to change culture through recruitment activity and socialisation and reward practices by embedding new values into an organisation. This qualitative study of six US professional sport organisations took the narrow view that manifestations of vision and values of the leader could be taken as a proxy for culture. An alternative perspective to change was adopted by Girginov (2006), interrogating a national weightlifting federation's implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code. He took the view that culture was rooted in the processes that produce systems of shared meanings, and was therefore much less available for management or coach manipulation. He underscored the concept that leaders had a role to play in changing values and beliefs relevant to doping, but also highlighted the complex interrelationship and role played by the coaches and athletes themselves.

**Practical interest.** If the goal of researchers working with a managerial interest is to control the environment and produce predicted effects, the practical researcher's aim is to develop deep, context-specific knowledge with a view to developing action-orientated understanding. Two studies sought to provide a better understanding of the role of cognition in the transmission of cultural information. Kaiser, Engel & Keiner (2009) accessed the cultural patterning constructed in the tacit knowledge of individuals' base assumptions and found that different mental representations of culture exist in for-profit compared with not-for-profit organisations. Similarly, Smith (2009) examined the role of organisational stories to communicate cultural meaning. From this he identified a number of counter-intuitive views held by members, including the perception of athletes and players as superhuman, such as the player who "never"

misses, or the boss who can read the mind of guilty employees. He argued that understanding the symbolism and content of such organisational stories provided an insight into the way an individual perceives important aspects of the organisational world within which they work.

Henriksen et al. (2010a, 2010b, 2011) used organisational culture to understand the central role of the environment in athlete development. They examined three sport organisations in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. For example in a track and field club, the strong organisational culture, demonstrated by values of open co-operation, a focus on performance process and a whole-person approach, supported the club's success in developing young athletes. They recommend that a wider ecological approach to talent development, including organisational culture, is used to extend how practitioners develop young athletes.

Whilst Schroeder and Scribner (2006) found that the organisational culture of a college athletic programme was consistent with that of the overall campus, several studies investigated the notion that sport organisations were different from other organisations (Southall & Nagel, 2003). For example, Colyer's (2000) examination of the organisational culture in three Western Australian sport organisations suggested a conflict between the values held by voluntary employees, who tended to want to retain existing control and order, compared with paid employees' drive for professionalism. Colyer (2000) observed that sport organisations differ from the majority of work organisations, as they have the additional rich sub-culture provided by a volunteer workforce. Further, Smith and Shilbury (2004) examined the theme that sport cultures might have unique characteristics. This was based on their hypothesis that sport organisations often emphasise the subservience of the individual for the collective good of the "team". They interviewed eight Australian National Sport Organisations, State Sport Organisations and clubs participating in national league competitions. Their findings suggested that sport organisations possess some unique sub-dimensions, such as rituals, size, tradition, symbols and history and tradition, compared with non-sport organisations. This implies that further research with a practical, descriptive interest is needed, particularly if existing tools for mapping culture, adopted from business, are to be employed in sport organisations.

**Emancipatory interest.** Research from this perspective questions assumptions about the current situation. As Martin (2002) contends, research with this interest

“escapes the inherent conservatism of most empirical research, which after all must by definition study the status quo” (p.171). The emancipatory interest is an interest in increasing the level of human autonomy and responsibility in the world. In sport, there has been scant regard to studying organisational culture with this goal.

The issue of organisational culture and diversity has attracted some attention. Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) proposed a theoretical framework for managing cultural diversity in sport organisations, based on the premise that improvement is primarily a function of managing that diversity. They posit that organisational culture provides the relevant context for aligning diverse personal cultures towards synergy. However, whilst proposing that there may be a potentially constructive impact of cultural diversity and a social responsibility to address this, they reflect that the benefit is one which is executed by management for the benefit of organisational performance. Doherty, Fink, Inglis and Pastore (2010) developed this in identifying the individual and group driving and restraining forces that acted on an organisational culture of diversity. They concluded that the long term impact of surface level initiatives (e.g. proactive hiring, diversity training) are impacted by deep-individual and group power. Thus it is at the deep level (e.g. personal meaning of diversity, advocacy, institutional commitment to diversity) where change needs to occur to enable organisational change.

The impact of organisational culture on sport experience is examined in Zevenbergen et al.'s (2002) work examining a junior golf club. They focused on the notions that specific practices and discourses form the logic that governs what is seen as legitimate and valued within golf, and predisposes people to act in a certain way, thus impacting on players' experiences of golf. For example, they found that young players who resisted the culture of the golf club quietly found themselves marginalised and excluded. This was achieved via rules and regulations covering behaviour and participation, and as a consequence they were excluded from the power and status enjoyed by those who assimilated into the culture of the club. The under-representation of women in the upper levels of the German sports system focussed the work of Pfister and Radtke (2009). Despite their similar levels of qualifications, women did not have the same positions and the same status as men on the executive boards of sports organisations. They found gender specific barriers such as negative reactions from male colleagues and the particular circumstances of women's lives. They also identified elements of the organisational culture embodied in the ideal leader, who is characterised

by “high socioeconomic status, a long commitment to sport and sports clubs, freedom from family duties, a high degree of self-confidence, and a ‘thick skin’ in disputes and conflicts” (p.241). They concluded that as, on average, women complied less with this “ideal” than men, the organisational culture impacted on women’s career opportunities.

From this discussion of the research perspectives in the studies reviewed, a considerable attention has been paid to a focus when studying culture on the management interest of culture change, leadership and productivity and employee satisfaction. This mirrors the prevalence of research from this interest in the wider organisation management literature. However, it is not surprising that sport organisational culture research has also been conducted from a practical interest; the area is still in its infancy, with 29 studies reviewed in this chapter. Further, whilst each organisational culture may not be unique (Martin, 1992), voluntary and sport organisations have been found to be different to other organisations (Southall & Nagel, 2003). This leads to a focus on research from the practical interest, as researchers aim to broaden understanding of organisational cultures within sport. Although little research has been completed which takes the emancipatory interest as a starting point, it may be possible to take findings from research with a practical interest, and use any findings where there is evidence of deep level inequality and power imbalances, to provide a vehicle for change.

### **3.2.6 Summary**

The review of the body of literature in sport settings reveals a number of opportunities for research to broaden and clarify how organisational culture is studied. There is potential to clarify the assumptions used in research. Similarly, the methods used to conduct studies can be extended from the current focus on interviews and culture assessment instruments, to include other methods such as case studies and ethnography. In addition, the inclusion of both coaches and athletes in the population under study, together with national cultures outside of North America and Australia, would help to expand understanding in this area. The widespread use of an integration perspective which conceptualises organisational cultures as clear and viewed the same by all members is open to be challenged in future research. Further there is opportunity to determine the utility of using the differentiation or fragmentation perspective, where ambiguity and conflict are considered. This may inform understanding of inequality, power and the contested meanings in how organisational culture is viewed. So too

would consider a less static definition of organisational culture than the reliance on Schein's (1985, 1990, 1992) framing. From this may come recognition that organisational culture may be temporal, dynamic and contested, opening the possibility of expanding and enlarging the body of knowledge in sport. Finally, the motive for examining sport organisational culture seems to have favoured the management interest. There is scope to pursue lines of inquiry with an alternative interest, which would reveal and raise awareness of inequality, difference and power in sport organisations.

Based on the research question, the next section discusses a number of opportunities to develop organisational culture research in sport. The areas discussed are: providing a clear definition and operationalisation of culture; examining cultural processes; extending the methods used; using an understanding of organisational culture to inform relationships; and deepening how organisational culture findings are theorised.

### **3.3 Opportunities for developing organisational culture research in sport**

Chapter 1 clarified that the broad aim of this research is to understand how coach-athlete relationships are influenced within the organisational culture of an elite rowing club. In order to address this aim, two research questions have been developed:

1. How can the concept of organisational culture be used to understand a particular sport club?
2. How can organisational culture be used to understand coach-athlete relationships?

This section discusses five opportunities to broaden and deepen sport organisational culture research, based on the analysis of the existing literature presented in section 3.2 above, and aim and research questions of this study.

#### **3.3.1 Providing a clear definition and operationalisation of culture**

When *what* is being researched, in studying organisational culture, is not specified distinctly, it is unclear exactly what the findings of a study represent. This requires a clarification of the concept of culture, including the definition and operationalisation in sport organisations, so that the meaning of culture is not 'assumed' or used in a 'common sense' way to mean normative practices. Further, Ryba and

Wright (2010) warn that the result of using methods that superimpose their implicit assumptions on the data collected, is the construction of epistemological blind spots – the method determines the way that the researcher thinks. It becomes hard to separate methodological issues from those of ontology of epistemology.

This study has approached the concept of culture recognising that there may be resistance, conflict and ambiguity as the culture of a rowing club is examined. The definition of culture used in this study is Geertz's (1973) definition, "Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal *suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun* [italics added], I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of the law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (p.5). The research takes a social constructionist approach to understanding the subjective relational nature of organisational culture, using ethnography as a methodology to access meaning through observing and listening to what is done and not done, from what is said and not said, in order to identify those clusters of events which form relatively stable patterns of relations (Chia, 2003).

### **3.3.2 Examining cultural processes**

Section 3.2 identified the sport research preference to view organisations as *having* a culture that can be identified, classified and boxed in order that it can be manipulated. Alternatively, this study identifies the organisation *as a* culture. This challenges inquiry to investigate the processes of cultural formation and enactment. Organisations are not entities, but social phenomena, formed through human expression in daily life. Thus organisational culture is processual, emerging from the everyday interactions of individuals (Bonder, Martin & Miracle, 2004). Then we might take organisational culture to be like a complex web of the key things that are important to the coaches and athletes as they experience daily life in their organisation (Geertz, 1973); these cultural webs are created by the interactions and relationships between coaches, athletes, sport managers and officials, inside and outside of the organisation. Both coach and athlete are caught up in these webs of importance and significance.

By viewing culture as emerging from interactions between individuals, not only will people's experience of culture differ from one to the other, but it will also vary over time. Thus research might take the *culture emergent* approach rather than a static view. Culture emergent takes into account interactions of individuals' cultural development,

as well as the process of change over time, based on new experiences and the influence of those experiences on perceptions (Bonder et al., 2004). Clifford (1986, p.19) puts this concisely, “Culture is contested, temporal and emergent.” Thus, to explain the organisational culture of the rowing club studied, a long term interpretive method, ethnography, is used to access the dynamic process by which culture is created and recreated.

### **3.3.3 Extending the methods used to examine culture**

Sport research has favoured the etic vantage point to inquiry in organisational culture, where the researcher imposes the cultural categories and frameworks. This brings a danger that critical elements are ignored or overlooked. The recent work of Henriksen et al. (2010a, 2010b, 2011) has raised the profile of more emic methods such as case studies and ethnography. Whilst these methods do not necessarily presuppose that the researcher can fully think, feel and perceive like a native, in order to “figure out what the devil they think they are up to” (Geertz, 1973, p.58) in the organisation, they do allow the researcher to access the subjective meanings of organisational members as they experience the culture in their daily lives. Neyland (2008) suggests that ethnography is used to access arenas in organisations that are not easy to gain access to. Its use in this study enables the research questions to be answered through observing and participating in the organisation.

Rock (2001) explains ethnography as a process using many layers and strands in an effort to reconstruct the participant’s own view of everyday life. It is concerned with experience as it is lived, felt or undergone. Ethnography involves multiple methods such as participant observation and interviewing to record the meaning individuals attach to these everyday activities (Krane & Baird, 2005).

### **3.3.4 Using an understanding of organisational culture to inform relationships**

Chapter 1 introduced the rationale for examining organisational culture as a means to better understand key relationships in sport, such as between coach and athlete. Relationships are one part of the complex and interdependent process of coaching (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006). However, neither coaching nor relationships are enacted in a vacuum. They are enacted in sport contexts and sport organisations. Thus coaches need to understand their organisation as a culture, to learn how their own coaching practices operate in the dynamics of the local situation, as well

as the impact this has on the sport experience of their athletes and their relationships. This study addresses a clear gap in knowledge in the current body of literature. The concept of organisational culture can be used to understand a sport organisation, and the knowledge gained from this used to deepen understanding of coach and athlete relationships.

A further opportunity to develop practice and research using organisational culture in sport is by deepening how organisational culture findings are theorised. The final section of this chapter presents the ideas of Max Weber and discusses how they might be used to better understand sport organisational cultures. Geertz (1973) has said that there is no singular theory of culture. Girginov (2010) is engaged in research which attempts to comprehend the underlying cultural processes that drive and facilitate people's and organisations' behaviours in sport. There is opportunity to extend research by moving away from simply classifying organisational culture and attaching labels to themes; and instead to understand the complexity of organisations as cultures, contextualising this in the wider body of sociological, organisational behaviour and social psychological theory.

### **3.4 Deepening how sport organisational culture findings are theorised**

Recent volumes linking social theory together with coaching (Jones, Potrac, Cushion, & Ronglan, 2011) or organisational change (Skinner, Steward & Edwards, 2004), have used an understanding of key social theorists such as Foucault, Goffman, Derrida or Bourdieu to illuminate how social interaction is culturally and organisationally situated. There is a utility to applying the work of these social theorists to the understanding of organisational culture. For example, Foucault's ideas on discourse might be used to understand how people make sense of their experience of organisational life, and thus what shapes actions and thoughts. His understanding of power as relational, together with his conception of disciplinary power over bodies, surveillance and the self-policing of individuals has been useful in understanding sport, athlete and coaching cultures (see for example Denison, 2007; Lang, 2010; Shogan, 1999). The elements of Goffman's writings, such as stigma, interaction, the dramaturgical perspective and impression management and front similarly illuminate organisational life. Pike and Maguire's (2003) study of injury in rowing used Goffman's

dramaturgical approach to understand the physical and structural settings in which the sport took place, along with the ways that the practice of being a rower was enacted.

Donnelly (2000) states that a great deal has been written about Weberian sociology and Weber's aim to "understand the subjectively meaningful human action which exposed the actors' motives, at one level 'the causes' of actions, to view" (p.79). Donnelly goes on to comment that whilst Weber has influenced the sociology of sport, very little of this work has been directly Weberian, aside the work of Guttmann (1978) and Ingham (1979). Frisby (1982) specifically applied the ideas of Max Weber to better understand sport organisations. For example, Frisby (1982) identified the opportunity to apply Weber's theory of bureaucracy to the study of voluntary sport organisations in Canada. She concluded that this theory provided a framework for investigating the structure and meaning of modern amateur sport. The rowing governing body has only recently changed its name from The Amateur Rowing Association to British Rowing. The sport's historical and current amateur roots mean that elite performance is still delivered from traditional sporting clubs, established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This may make the sport and its establishments an ideal site in which to apply the analytical power of Weber's ideas.

Thus Max Weber's writings have provided a rich foundation to the discipline of sociological thought. Although there is no one place in his writings where he has systematically laid out his methodological or theoretical perspective, it is possible to reconstruct the underlying unity in Weber's thought (Schroeder, 1992). Through the constancy of a number of themes in his work, Weber has provided a framework for analysing social structures and organisational cultures (Turner, 1996) which is relevant today. Not only that, but, as Schroeder (1992) argues, Weber's work aims to address the relationship between culture and social life. His thesis examines how beliefs and values translate into social reality and examines how organisational culture takes place and can be understood. As this study focuses on the ways that understandings of organisational culture may influence coach athlete relationships, a theoretical framework that can allow for both the workings of social life and the potential for actors to be part of the creation of culture is necessary. While Weber is not the only choice, many aspects of his theories would appear to have particular relevance to the everyday life of a sporting organisation.

Weber's work spans areas such as economics, religion, music, politics, the family, science and power structures. Weber's (1968/1978) biggest tome, *Economy and Society* spans two volumes and 1469 pages. Thus follows a relatively brief explication of some of his key ideas that are crucial to understanding culture in organisations.

### 3.4.1 Max Weber and culture

Weber defines culture as “the endowment of a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of events in the world with meaning and significance from the standpoint of human beings” (1982, p.180, translated by Schroeder, 1992, p.6). He conceives of “culture” as consisting of ideas. Together with “ideas”, these two terms provide the largest most abstracted level in his writings. Weber takes the view that culture changes over time, because we hold certain values or “world views” so that certain things are more important to us than others. As a result, life may either remain fixed in an everyday existence or radically changed (Schroeder, 1992).

Weber's understanding of culture takes place in the interplay between culture and social life, providing a dynamic view of culture. In this, two interconnected processes work to account for modern Western culture: the rise of instrumental rationalism (the process of rationalisation) and the disenchantment of social life. Both disenchantment and rationalisation arise from the shift from a social order where charismatic and traditional forms of authority exist, to one where life is ordered by instrumental reason and new forms of bureaucracy. The dynamic of cultural rationalisation is one where values rationalise and devalue themselves, and are replaced by a striving to achieve materialistic mundane ends. As Gane (2004) explains, “This process of devaluation or disenchantment, gives rise to a condition of cultural nihilism in which the intrinsic value or meaning of values or actions is subordinated increasingly to a ‘rational’ quest for efficiency and control” (p.15). Rationalisation and disenchantment take place as people live and act in social life. Weber uses the term “social life”, because he believes that there is no single whole which embraces all of social phenomena. The social world consists of beliefs or values.

Central to understanding culture is Weber's notion of the relationship between ideas and social-life. This is given in his metaphor of a railway switchman or pointsman, “Not ideas, but material and ideal interests directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the ‘world images’ that have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like

switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic interest” (1948/1991, p. 280). This metaphor indicates a relationship between ideas and interests and introduces the notion that culture may play a role in this relationship (Schroeder, 1992). Weber’s view is that beliefs and values are just as real as material forces but cannot be directly linked to their tangible consequences. This is due to the fact that the beliefs of an individual may result in behaviour that is unintended. Further, Weber argues that beliefs, and in the case of charismatic leaders, the beliefs of others, can alter the social world. Schroeder (1992) concludes that “in Weber’s ‘social ontology’, beliefs must be separate from and prior to other social forces or facets of social reality” (Schroeder, 1992, p.8). The social world consists of the values and beliefs of persons, as well as of material interests and other social forces which are separate from these.

Three Weberian processes which help to examine organisational culture are discussed in the following sections: the inner logic of world views and beliefs; the process of rationalisation and routinisation of charisma; and the differentiation between spheres of life.

### **3.4.2 Inner logic of world views**

World views were perceived by Weber as an important facet in the understanding of organisations and of social life (Kalberg, 2004). Kalberg (2004) explains that, “World views always imply a set of values ... they assume a great comprehensiveness: they offer answers to ultimate questions. What is the meaning of life? What purpose does our existence serve?” (p.140). In Weber’s (1968/1978) words, world views provide “a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated meaningful attitude toward life” (p.450).

For Weber, world views have assumed different forms in different civilisations. For example in Confucianism, the world view was presented as an “impersonal, providential force that guarantees the regularity and felicitous order of world history” (Weber, 1968/1978, p.431). In ancient Greece the world view took the form of irrational fate. However, Weber also looked beyond civilisations and their religions to determine the broader reach of this concept. He posited that the bureaucratic ethos of civil servants and administrators in respect to their values (of duty, security, reliability, impartiality, discipline, punctuality and orderly work habits) lacked the comprehensiveness to

address ultimate questions and thus provide direction to the lives of its adherents (Kalberg, 2004). On the other hand, Kalberg (2004) argues that,

owing to a wider ranging constellation of values, the status ethics of warriors – bravery, courage, loyalty, honor, friendship with fellow warriors, the meaningfulness of death in battle, and the scorn of all immersion in emotional needs – may attain the level of a world view. (p.141)

Thus social, intellectual and political life may provide a world view from the “worldly” realm, in addition to the “other worldly” world view of religions. Further, there is no need for a world view to be correct or superior to another view; its legitimacy and meaning comes simply from the belief given to it by its adherents.

World views have a certain logic or dynamic, which have a direct impact on the behaviour or way of life of their followers, although this creates only a global influence upon action (Schroeder, 1992). However, Kalberg (2004) points out that the ideational impulse set into motion by a group of adherents by their meaningful action, does not on its own set about to create a methodical and rationalised approach to daily life. Instead, the world view constitutes a necessary precondition for rationalisation of action rather than an absolute determinant.

### **3.4.3 Rationalisation and the dynamic of charisma versus routinisation**

Weber uses the term rationality and rationalisation in several ways (Collins, 1986). One meaning for rationality comes from Weber’s (1968/1878) theory of action, where rationality is the calculated action to get from point A to point B. A second meaning for rationality comes from Weber’s discussion of the predictability and regularity of institutions and other forms of life, such as bureaucracy, science, market systems and technology. Weber also argued that rationalisation is a long-term historical process that has transformed the modern world.

Weber uses this dynamic to explain how new ideas are formulated and routinised into everyday life. New ideas come to life through charismatic breakthroughs. Weber defines charisma as the “specifically creative revolutionary force in history” (1968/1978, p.1117) and argues that the tension between charisma and routinisation is essential for social change. Weber states that “in its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures” (1968/1978, p. 246). Where social life is determined by charisma, social relationships

are personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. Thus charisma is an inherently unstable form. It takes on the character of a permanent relationship through the development of a community of followers or organisation. It becomes either traditionalised or rationalised or both; this process of traditionalising or rationalising charisma is called routinisation.

Routinisation relates to the transformation of belief-systems by reference to social circumstances (i.e. the predispositions of social groups, which are linked to the ways of life of these groups, and so may be independent of those groups). Routinisation of charisma into everyday life takes place in two ways. Firstly, a systemisation of the belief system occurs as a group of people take the belief system and apply it to aspects of their everyday lives. Secondly, there is an accommodation of the belief system into the interest of different carrier groups (strata) of believers, whose interests are shaped by their way of life. As Schroeder explains (1992) “as a result its content corresponds more and more closely with what these strata, on the basis of their social position, had already been predisposed to believe or with their everyday conduct” (p.10). The world becomes more and more rational until life is stripped of ultimate meanings (Gane, 2004).

#### **3.4.4 Differentiation of spheres of life**

An important aspect of rationalisation and disenchantment of social life is the differentiation of modern culture (Gane, 2004). Weber argues that modern life is separated into a number of autonomous life-orders, each with their own value spheres, such as the political or scientific spheres. With the decline of spiritual authority, the value spheres have separated out and come into conflict with each other. Through history, spheres may overlap so that beliefs in one sphere overlap or reinforce beliefs in another sphere. However, Weber posits that in modern life, beliefs in different spheres become increasingly differentiated so that they become in conflict.

This sets up a paradox where there is a stable world of calculation and rational means for controlling and systemising social life, but at the same time an unstable world of endless struggle between opposing value spheres (Gane, 2004). Weber is clear that there is no answer to this paradox, not even from science as “‘Scientific’ pleading is meaningless in principle because the various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other” (Weber, 1948/1991, p.147). Gane (2004) suggest that the claims of the value spheres remain mutually irreconcilable and the

rationalisation process restricts the number of values in each sphere. The result is a more homogenised culture and a dominance of forms of organisation such as bureaucracy. For individuals, this constrains their scope for individual action, because although they have agency to choose a particular value, the stricture of instrumental reason restricts this freedom due to the demand of the bureaucratic world for efficiency and calculability.

Weber gives some examples of how spheres of life become differentiated. For example in the scientific sphere, Weber argues that the scientist will increasingly keep their personal values out of their work in looking to apply objective knowledge. In the political sphere, the leaders find there is no objective truth to their ideals and so these two demands come into conflict with each other.

There are a number of additional framings of aspects of social life, such as Weber's multidimensional theory of stratification that incorporated class, status, and party and his study of obedience and ideal types of legitimate domination or authority, that may further help to explain the findings of this study. These, along with Weber's examination of the process of rationalisation and routinisation of charisma, the differentiation between spheres of life and the inner logic of world views and beliefs discussed in this section, have been used to interpret the findings from this study.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the ways that organisational culture has been studied in the broader setting of business and other organisational fields. This highlighted the variety of ways that organisational culture might be researched, leaving researchers with a choice of research paradigms, methods, interests, and perspectives, and a variety of ways to define and operationalise organisational culture.

These considerations were used to analyse the body of research on culture in sports organisations. This analysis revealed a number of opportunities for research to broaden and clarify how organisational culture is studied, including to widen the stance from which research is conducted, to broaden the methods used to conduct studies, to include both coaches and athletes in the population under study, and to use the differentiation or fragmentation perspective, where ambiguity, and conflict are considered. This may inform understanding of inequality, power and the contested meanings in how organisational culture is viewed.

This analysis was used to interrogate the research question in order to identify specific gaps in the organisational culture literature that might be filled with this study. These gaps included a clear definition and operationalisation of culture and using organisational cultural processes to better understand the culture, and an understanding of how organisational culture informs relationships. It was suggested that ethnography should be employed to extend the methods used, allow admittance to otherwise inaccessible places, and access the participants' subjective meanings about life at the rowing club being studied. The chapter concluded by introducing the ideas of Max Weber as a way of theorising organisational culture in an elite traditional sporting establishment.

The next chapter examines the rationale for and methodology of the study.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

*There are no easy answers to methodological problems, and if I ever thought that I had learned everything there was to know, then I would have become either arrogant, conceited or blinkered. (May, 1993, p.69)*

The previous chapters examined the literature on organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships in sport. This chapter starts by explaining the rationale for the social constructionist based methodology adopted by this research to address the research question. The next section outlines some of the methodological implications of adopting a social constructionist frame and an ethnographic methodology. This discussion is followed by a more detailed exploration of the specific methods and analysis used in this study.

### 4.1 Rationale for methodology

The purpose of this research was to understand how the organisational culture of a specific sports club impacted upon coach-athlete relationships. Whilst every form of scientific inquiry involves some form of “problematism”, the starting point for this specific inquiry was not simply to critique the literature with the aim of identifying the gaps (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). Instead, problematisation was used to question the assumptions of current research in this area of sport, as “an endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of what is already known” (Foucault, 1985, p.9) about the topic of study, in order to formulate a more informed research question and approach.

Previous research on both organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships in sport has been conducted using a predominantly positivist view of the social world (Krane & Baird, 2005; Ryba & Wright, 2010). From this vantage point, culture and relationships are seen as objectively real, so that with careful scrutiny and techniques such as social surveys, questionnaires and interviews, the general laws of social behaviour can be deduced. Verified hypotheses are established as facts or laws and add together to form the body of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The assumption is that the study of the social world can be value-free, in that the researcher’s values will not necessarily interfere with the disinterested search for laws governing the behaviour of social systems. The aim is to produce a valid, detached and generalisable output, with an epistemological belief that *only* objective quantifiable data can provide the

foundation of knowledge (Krane & Baird, 2005). The result is a body of knowledge in sport which is aimed at developing understanding of the causal relationships in both spheres, in order to manipulate variables such as strength of culture (Choi, Martin & Park, 2008; Colyer, 2000; Scott, 1997), leadership (Frontiera, 2009; Wallace and Weese, 1995; Weese, 1996) or motivation (Adie & Jowett, 2010) for the sake of achieving certain organisational and individual performance outcomes (Alvesson, 2002).

Building on this positivist science focus and the assumptions underlying the current body of knowledge in this area, researchers can determine “how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently” to expose the potential for new insights and theoretical possibilities. Firstly, in contrast to previous research using a realist ontology in these fields in sport, this inquiry commenced from an idealist philosophy, a belief that mind or consciousness is more real than matter; a belief that this provides a better clue to the nature of reality as a whole than materialism or other critical realist views of the world. Human knowledge is not a mirrored reflection of reality, neither the reality of surface chaos, nor that of, if they exist, universal structures; rather, "Human knowledge is a construction built from the cognitive processes (which mainly operate out of awareness) and embodied interactions with the world of material objects, others and the self." (Polkinghorne, 1992, p.150).

An idealist philosophy contests the positivist view of organisations and relationships as concrete social entities with fixed locations and describable attributes. Idealism was formulated by philosophers such as Kant and Hegel and was the dominant model of philosophy in Britain in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (K. Ward, 2010). Kant’s view that reality-in-itself is unknowable has been most influential. He argued, rather, it is human thought which constructs reality as appearance (i.e. as we see it) and human reason compels us to think of people as moral agents (i.e. not determined by the material world). Reality is founded on some form of purposive consciousness. Human action is not based on chance or unconscious necessity; there is agency in human action. Humans themselves can be thought of as chains of experiences – perceptions, feelings, thoughts and actions. Thus, there is nothing impersonal, sterile or detached about human experience. At its heart lies the human capacity to experience and engage in feelings, for as K. Ward (2010) explains, “Feelings are not just, as Ryle seems to say, tickles, urges and tinglings. They are the deepest forms of response to the world in which we

find ourselves” (p.155). K. Ward (2010) goes on to suggest that humans, therefore, are “experientially unique, morally free, and fully embodied subjects of experience and action, living in a world of similar beings – a community of social and self-realizing conscious agents” (K. Ward, 2010, p.182). Seen in the round, idealism offers a view there is a value and significance to human life, such that it has a purpose of enduring worth. The impact of holding this view on the research process, on the social constructionist approach, and the methodology is discussed below.

This research is congruent with an idealist style of thinking which attempts to broaden inquiry and adequately comprehend the increasing complexity of science and modern society. For example, both the theory of relativity and quantum physics not only offer a new way to approach physics but also challenge a narrow thinking about our ontological and epistemological approach to the social world. Chia (2003) suggests that these theories contest our impulse to name, classify and represent the world in an attempt to create distinct and legitimate objects of knowledge. When we do resist efforts to fix and represent objects in space and time, this gives us the opportunity, instead, to focus on process, flux and interconnection. Chia (2003) argues that such a processual orientation should not be equated with the common sense idea of the process that a system is deemed to undergo in transition. Rather it emphasises the “ontological primacy of the becoming of things” (p.128); “things”, social entities and generative mechanisms are already momentary outcomes or effects of historical processes. With a process ontology the basic unit of reality is not an atom or a thing but an event cluster forming a relatively stable pattern of relations. Coaches, athletes, organisations and cultures are not separate concrete entities to be measured and classified but inextricably linked and relationally defined organisms that are historically shaped in the process of becoming. This requires the temporal study of the relationship between coaches and athletes and the environment within which they conduct those relationships.

Secondly, from this stance, humans are not just bundles of matter and molecules. Their moral importance lies with their mental lives and acts, as humans can be free agents in their actions (K. Ward, 2010). Minds can have thoughts and experiences and humans have agency. Mind is known by its actions, not by representations of an object. K. Ward (2010) states:

The self is not an object that can be perceived like a tree. The self is an unobservable agent that makes all experience of the sensory world possible and is the source of all responsible actions in the world.” (p.57)

It is these mental lives and acts that are of interest to the researcher. Further, it is only because our minds can interpret the sense-perceptions in negotiating a world of objects and agents, that we can know there are others to find intriguing. People meet through the mutual interpretive mediation of their thoughts and through language, by which sounds are taken by them, as giving meaning, beyond their sensory appearances. (Ward, K., 2010). Kierkegaard (1980) makes a link between our own self and other selves when he says, “A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation” (p.13). Gergen (2011) develops this in stating that

It is not individuals who come together to form relationships; rather, it is out of collaborative action (or co-action) that the very conception of the individual mind comes into existence (or not). On this view, psychological processes such as thinking and feeling do not precede (or cause) our actions. Rather, all intelligible actions are relational in origin and performance. (p.281)

Thus, if the activity of the self gives access to reality and the self is a relational being, this leads us to contest research in sport where the individual self is the atom of society and frames culture and relationships as instrumental tools of management. The alternative is to do research in the field that seeks to understand the meaning of those relational actions and make sense of the mental lives of coaches and athletes.

The third assumption to be problematised lies in the exclusion of values from the existing research. If the activity of the self gives access to reality, then, in conducting inquiry, the researcher as self cannot be excluded. This understanding of spirit-as-self-in-relation introduces a researcher’s values and concerns for personal fulfilment, dialogue and community in our research (Poulos, 2010). Poulos (2010) suggests that to engage spirit in academic inquiry is to engage the self in relation—with the world, with others, with the very frames and possibilities of our being. This research engaged my “self-in-relation” to others and reflexively informed the study’s ontology, epistemology, methodology, method and ultimately the research question, which, in its broadest sense, examines selves in relation with each other in the social setting of one rowing organisation.

Fourthly, existing scholarship in this area posits that knowledge of coach-athlete relationships and organisational cultures is generalisable across cases. That knowledge of the particular gives rise to the wider predicate can also be problematised. This study has an ideographic, rather than nomothetic, orientation, seeking understanding and interpretation rather than generalisation. Testing theory is the goal of the previous empirical research, for example in treating cultures as variables to be manipulated or to predict performance (Smircich, 1983); the goal of this research is to understand the context of one sports club deeply and provide an interpretive frame for its understanding. Geertz (1973) summarises this, “The essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description, not to generalise across cases but to generalise within them” (p.26). This requires an extended time in the field and informs the mode of inquiry, ethnography, chosen for this study.

Krane and Baird (2005) identify a fifth problematic area. Even within non-positivist paradigms, diverse belief systems exist to underpin the methods used. As discussed, this research commences from an idealist belief. Krane & Baird (2005) state that qualitative sport psychology researchers have described the methods used in their research but rarely have researchers explained the underlying basis for the choice of methods and analytical strategies. This results in epistemological ‘blind spots’ (Ryba & Wright, 2010). For example, researchers may use the same method, such as ethnography, but from a very different epistemological perspective. Van Maanen (1988) challenges the different epistemological assumptions in using ethnography to tell a realist tale reifying culture, compared with an impressionist tale which requires retelling to “know more of what we know” (p.120). The former results in research where culture is treated as “out there”, with an existence that could not be challenged because of the weight of empirical evidence that supports its existence (Martin, 2002); the latter challenges the concepts that come to be created as categories, knowing that we are never free of doubt and ambiguity. In this study, culture is viewed as a relational process rather than a causal entity, as fragmented rather than holistic, and as negotiated rather than given (Ryba & Wright, 2010).

Challenging the assumptions which underlie existing inquiry in organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships in sport disrupts the current institutionalised approach to research in this domain. It opens up the possibility of framing the inquiry using an alternative paradigm, that of social constructionism.

#### 4.1.1 Social constructionism

In trying to situate this approach, Guba and Lincoln (2005) talk of the blurring of genres where inquiry methodology can no longer be treated as a set of universal rules. This research, within the broad interpretive approach, is loosely social constructivist where there are many interpretations to an inquiry. Social constructionism looks at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalised, and made into tradition by humans. The research process used for this study aimed at identifying the variety of constructions that existed to bring them into as much consensus as possible (Guba, 1990).

Social constructionists aim to understand the mental lives of selves in relation, recognising the complex processual nature of how reality is continually constructed and reconstructed but explained using the subjective categories that each person brings to bear from history and experience. We place mental forms on everything we see or think about and perceive the world through the screen of our subjective categories (Collins, 1986). If we turn around quickly to try and see how the things really look behind our backs, other than through our perceptions, we bring our categories with us (Kant, cited in Collins, 1986, pp.33-34). Thus one never knows anything apart from the categories that we bring to it, trying to see how things look. Knowing ceases to be absolute.

If knowing is not absolute, we can only provide partial or one-sided explanations of certain aspects of reality (Ingham, 1979). We select those aspects based on their value significance. The outcome is a relativist position, where realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them. The focus is not to determine whose reality is correct, but to understand the social environment through the perspectives of the participants (Krane & Baird, 2005). There is no objective reality waiting to be discovered (Weick, 1979). The criteria for judging reality or validity is not absolutist but derived from community consensus regarding what is real, useful and has meaning (Guba, 1990).

Meaning refers to how an object, action, feeling or utterance is interpreted (Alvesson, 2002). Meaning has a subjective referent, a way of relating to things. Sensory or affective activity becomes meaning when some appropriate relation is added. Upton (as cited in Weick, 1995, p.110) uses metaphor to explain how information from our senses and our emotions come together to provide meaning:

Are not the water's edge and the land's end one and the same? Is the shoreline a part of the land and the sea, or is it a line in its own right? It is easy to see you cannot have a shoreline without the sea, a little harder to see that you cannot have a sea without a shore, and downright difficult for most of us to see that you can't have either without a shoreline

Blumer (1969) emphasises the circular nature of meaning making, such that we know things by their meaning and these meanings are created through social interaction. Further, meanings change through interaction. This justifies studying organisations up close, to observe how actors make sense of their social actions in organisations (Morrill & Fine, 1997).

This thinking challenges our conception of organisations, for they can no longer be construed as a fixed entity or, as Weick (1979) contends, “clocks to be counted, read and measured” (p.25). Weick (1979) views organisations as “inventions of people, inventions superimposed on flows of experience and momentarily imposing some order on those streams” (p.12). This research takes the view that the relational nature of organisations, their culture and the relationships formed within them, do not exist independently of the efforts which construct them. Constructions occur between the participant, the reader and the researcher, and are formed by their action to make sense and make meaning in this world.

The challenge for research becomes how to make sense. A starting point to understanding meaning assumes that words are adequate for expressing thought and that all proper knowing entails conscious thought that can be suitably expressed through language. Entities develop and are maintained only through continuous communication activity-exchanges amongst its participants. If the communication activity ceases, the organisation disappears (Weick, 1995). Language is a constitutive force in creating and understanding meaning. Language cannot simply transport meaning from one person to another. When combined with the notion of individual intentionality, research must focus on observing and listening to individual meanings and intentions, before interpreting, to throw fresh light on the reality of organisational life (Chia, 2003).

Secondly, if there are continuous flows of experience associated with organisations, then research must focus on the process of organising, in order to understand culture and relationships. Processes continually need to be re-accomplished and are formed from the interests and activities of those meshed (Weick, 1979).

Lofland et al. (2006) suggest several ways to focus on processes: through observing the

cycles or recurrent sequences of events which occur in a way that the last event preceded the recurrence of the first in a new series, such as training or competition cycles; relatively less stable processes like spirals of events which are continuously spreading, accelerating or decelerating, such as understanding how coaches and athletes end up not talking with each other; and sequences of time ordered steps, such as a coach deciding to view a co-worker as unorganised after several missed meetings. These lead us to ask the question “What is going on here that might create the very displays that are seen?” The power of using process as a means of knowing, resides in the details that are noted and connected as individuals move through their daily life (Lofland, et al., 2006). Again, this demands research of the particular of coaches, athletes and organisations up close and over time.

Finally, meaning is not only understood through research, but also created in the research process. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) state that, “Producing ‘things’ always involves value – what to produce, what to name in the productions, and what the relationships between the producers and the named things will be” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p.960). I am not seeking a deep truth that remains hidden until I reveal it to the world. I take on the burden of meaning making, assuming “this is no longer a neutral activity of expressions that simply matches word to world” (p.969). The advantage of this rather sceptical approach to the construction of meaning is that nothing is taken for granted or assumed. Everything, including the product of research, is a point for consideration; further, in place of assuming that readers will make the same sense of the text that ethnographers have when writing the text, reading becomes an active process of sense-making, which can loosen the imagination of readers and writers in a variety of ways. This leads to wanting to know answers to such questions as “by what means are organisational relationships produced and maintained” and “through what processes are organisational facts constructed and talked about”?

In summary, for this study of coaches and athletes, the construction of meaning is accessed through observing and listening to what is done and not done, from what is said and not said, in order to identify those clusters of events which form relatively stable patterns of relations (Chia, 2003). To paraphrase Weick’s (1995) suggestions for addressing making sense of social organisations, knowing is an on-going process of locating identities, being relationally involved in enacting reality, socialising and being socialised, whilst understanding that what we single out and embellish as the content of

thought or actions, is only a small proportion of the utterance, because of the context and personal dispositions. The implication and application of this are discussed in the following section on methodology.

## **4.2 Methodology**

A methodology refers to “a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed” (Harding, 1987, p. 2). The foregoing section explained the rationale for the social constructionist methodology adopted by this research to address the research question. This section outlines some of the methodological implications of adopting a social constructionist frame. The chapter concludes with a detailed exploration of the techniques used to gather and analyse the data collected.

### **4.2.1 Ethnography**

Wolcott (1990) describes ethnography as both a process and a product. It is a process of conducting research that results in a textual product. Ethnography refers to those varieties of inquiry that aim to describe or interpret the place of culture in human affairs. As Weick (1985, p.568) states, ethnography is a “sustained, explicit, methodological observation and paraphrasing of social situations in relation to their naturally occurring contexts.” Rock (2001) positions it as a process using many layers and strands in an effort to reconstruct the participant’s own view of everyday life. It is concerned with experience as it is lived, felt or undergone. Using ethnography, the fieldworker remains in the field for months or even years. This enables the researcher to become “saturated with firsthand knowledge of the setting” (Morrill & Fine, 1997, p.435). Time spent in the field using ethnography provides the researcher with the opportunity to see, hear and feel the everyday life of participants in their setting. It lends itself to understanding nuance and uniqueness, as well as normally frequent behaviour, where the goal is to interpret the experience of organisational members. Ethnographers employ multiple methods such as participant observation and interviewing to record the meaning individuals attach to these everyday activities (Krane & Baird, 2005). This not only increases the depth of information gained but also acts in part to provide a range of data on which to base claims of validity.

I have chosen ethnography as the most appropriate means of researching my questions in the light of my previously stated assumptions and preferences. There are several reasons why ethnography is the best fit methodology for this study. Firstly,

ethnography allows researchers to work within a wide array of what Lincoln and Guba (2005) called “new paradigm inquiry”, such as the interpretive perspectives, in order to examine the complexities of social life. Fundamentally, ethnography is non-positivist. It is inductive, does not engage assumptions of value-free or neutral observations, is historically and situationally bound (i.e. it may not be replicable or generalisable), and realizes the influence of the researcher on the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This allows research to consider values, power, social structures, and human agency.

Secondly, ethnography can be used to achieve a systematic interpretation of the processes operating for those the ethnographer chooses to observe. As discussed, interpretation is key, because, in the social constructionist paradigm, meaning is derived from interpretation, and knowledge is only significant in so far as it is meaningful. For example Goffman’s (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* is seen as a classic in the social psychology of interpersonal relations and interactions (Morrill & Fine, 1997). He uses ethnography to show some of the unintended consequences of intended managerial decisions as well as the divergences between back stage and front stage organisational behaviours and relationships (Goffman, 1959). Goffman’s work is used by Pike and Maguire (2003) in their ethnography of rowing and injury.

Thirdly, ethnography allows the researcher to get close to the setting. As Malinowski (1922/2002) proposes, one needs to get close to the action, to immerse oneself in the setting, in an attempt to take into consideration multiple “things” that might be going on. This supports Wittgenstein’s (1953) metaphorical idea that we cannot learn a language and understand any sentences unless we take part in the form of life in which the language is used. And not only does the researcher need to learn the words and rules to be able to communicate with and understand the participants and their culture but also to access all the unconscious interaction - looks, glances, emotions, values, history, and previous conversations.

Morrill & Fine (1997) remind us that the resurgence of ethnography in organisational research is a return to tradition in which organisational life, and culture specifically, had been predominantly qualitatively analysed from the 1920’s onwards. It is less accepted as a methodology in sport psychology and sport management. In sport psychology, the acceptance of qualitative research has grown steadily but most often interviewing is the method of choice (Culver, Gilbert & Trudel, 2003). According to Krane and Baird (2005) in order to provide sensitivity to and understand individual and

cultural differences, ethnography is an "area of research sorely needed in applied sport psychology" (p.104). Ethnography offers a means for enhancing our understanding of the psychology of athletes' sport experiences and, in the case of this study, of coach-athlete relationships and the organisational culture in which they are enacted. This methodology provides an opportunity to illuminate the social dynamics of organisational culture and the cultural beliefs and values of participants (Thorpe, 2009).

However, choosing ethnography as the salient methodology to obtain a rich and contextualised understanding of the situation is not unproblematic. The methodological implications of conducting ethnographic research from a social constructionist standpoint are discussed below. Key areas of concern highlighted include reflexivity, impartiality, representation, and validity.

#### **4.2.2 Reflexivity**

Given my ontological and epistemological view of the world, it would be inappropriate for me to have conducted a realist ethnography, where the world is seen to exist as a knowable entity from which an ethnography can extract observable information and be judged on how accurately it represents the world (Neyland, 2008). Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). An alternative reflexive device to a realist ethnography assumes that the world does not straightforwardly exist independently of efforts to make sense of the world. Ethnographers are as caught up in this sense making, as are those being studied through the ethnography; both are part of the social world under study. Researchers do not go presuppositionless into the setting each time with no basis of expectation or knowledge (Rock, 2001). Reflexive ethnographies therefore make available a description of participants' and researchers' ways of making sense of the world, and make these available for readers to make their sense of the ethnography. Neyland (2008) summarises the circular nature of reflexivity,

Reflexive ethnography engages in a thorough and detailed analysis of the ethnographer's attempts to make sense of the world while those being studied are making sense of the world. (Neyland, 2008, p.56)

There is no "one-way street" between the researcher and the object of study; rather, the two affect each other mutually and continually in the course of the research process. A positivistic conception of research, according to which the object is

uninfluenced by the researcher, and the researcher is unaffected by the object, is thus untenable (May, 1993).

Reinharz (1997) argues that the vast majority of the literature talks about the researcher's role rather than the researcher's self, despite the self being the "key fieldwork tool" (p.3). Macphail's (2004) ethnographic study in a sport club highlighted the issue of self as an instrument of research. She asserts that ethnographic research is a person-based project and who you are matters to your informants. Researchers and participants are influenced by preconceptions, emotions and previous experience. It is an existential fact that we are part of the social world that we study, so it is almost impossible for social scientists to remain totally objective and not allow their hopes and fears to colour their beliefs (May 1993). Further we not only bring our self to the field, but we create a self in the field, through our interactions with the norms of the social setting.

In my study, I recognised that I brought a number of 'selves' to the field; a research based self that presented as someone who did research, asked questions, listened and gave feedback; a brought self who was a woman, a non-rower, mother of a rower, a qualified rowing coach, British, in my forties, a sport psychologist, a human resource professional, a student and a Christian; and a situationally created self who got cold, a novice, a person who helped out around the place, made tea, and was a temporary person in the setting. I tried to evaluate how these identities were positioned in the research process. My research diary and fieldnotes contained reflections on my thoughts and emotions as I was in the field, and continued throughout the process of writing. For example, at the beginning of the data collection process, I recorded my discomfort with who I might appear to the participants to be:

*22 September*

*I have come in Dave's Range Rover. I hope no one sees me as I don't want them to think I am a swanky sort of with loads of money. I can't imagine many could afford to buy this type of car. I think I am uncomfortable because I want to fit in, and driving this car doesn't seem to fit it. Yet I am conscious of the comparison with my previous working life in business, when having this type of car would be seen as some sort of symbol of status and I would be afforded some respect, as it would infer seniority and being highly paid.*

Similarly, I recognised the impact of being a temporary position at the club. At the outset, I was clear that I would be around for a year, and confirmed this in

conversation, in writing and my initial request to study at the club. Being temporary impacted how the club invested in me and I in them, as both parties were aware that I had limited value beyond the end of the year (Reinharz, 1997). For example, on several occasions I arrived at the club to find other people, such as the physiologist, coxes, a photographer or volunteer coaches ahead of me in the queue for a seat in the coach launch. I recognised that my social value at Bethany Boat Club was limited to listening and my capability as a sport psychologist, and on these occasions, neither was privileged.

May (1993) further contends that there can be no intimacy without reciprocity, stating “this also means that people within the study have a right to claim your participation” (p.90). My participation was challenged within a month of arriving at the club. I was approached by an athlete to provide some sport psychology support to him. I was conscious of the impact this would have: on my relationship with the coaches; on my research findings; on the athlete. For example, the coaches acted as gatekeepers to the setting and I wondered if working with an athlete would break their trust and be seen as interfering. Whilst I was comfortable that one can be a participant in the setting and that by being in the setting one already co-constructs the situation and the meaning, working one on one with an athlete at this stage might bias my subjectivity. For example, I would have privileged information on one person, and this might skew my view of all other situations. There might be an ethical conflict between my role as researcher and as sport psychologist. For example, could I use in my research information gained from consulting with the athlete on a one on one basis?

I discussed this with my supervisors and reflected that working with athletes in this way could provide a detailed understanding of some of the meanings attached to being in the boat club environment, as well as bring a personal benefit to the athletes. As a result, we agreed a strategy to continue to be a researcher who is a sport psychologist. At some date in the future, when my data was getting to saturation, I might then do some group work or potentially some individual work with athletes. The following day I talked with the coaches to gain their agreement and explained this to the athlete, referring them on to a chartered sports psychologist. My diary echoed my relief that both coaches and athlete supported this approach.

*23 September*

*I am relieved that the coaches are supportive of sport psychology, and think it was the right decision to refer George to another sport psychologist. I must remember that I am here primarily as a researcher – it's just that I love to get stuck in with athletes, and want to help! Maybe it's also because I want to feel needed?*

The need to be reflexive extended to all components of the methodological issues and techniques used in the research process. As discussed later in the chapter, this reflexivity extended more particularly to considerations of my influence on the emerging data and my interpretations of the findings.

### **4.2.3 Partial impartiality - insider or outsider**

Issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimacy and accountability often get subsumed into the question of who should conduct research in a particular setting with a specific group of actors (Bishop, 2005). Might insiders provide a more sensitive and balanced view than outsiders, or are they too close to a culture to be critical? Where does the power lie in what is studied and later presented as scholarship? Naples (1997) argues that the traditional bi-polar view of insider and outsider are not helpful, as both are socially constructed. She suggests that there are shifting and renegotiated power relations in any social setting; researchers are never fully inside or outside of the community under study.

I presented as an “outsider” being neither an elite rowing coach or rower, nor a member of the club. Although I went with crews to several major races and was able to remain at close quarters during their preparations, I was conscious of being allowed a veiled glimpse into their experiences. On one occasion I noted in my diary, “I was pleased to be allowed a glimpse into the men’s rowing world – but don’t feel so much a part of things compared with the women. Is this my reticence – perhaps, or their desire to keep me out?” Naples (1997) suggests using different standpoints as a mode of inquiry to challenge the concept of “outsiderness”. For example, a chance opportunity to see the coaches and rowers from the river bank instead of from the coaches launch one day, revealed a new dimension to the experience of elite rowing.

*1 February*

*Today gives me a whole new perspective on things. I walk by the river instead of going out in the launch. I notice how the rower’s experience is often one of quiet and possibly solitude. I had only seen things from the coach launch where there is always the noise of the engine.*

*I wonder what the people walking by think of these people in singles and launches? Is it like living by a railway that eventually you don't notice the trains - do they not even notice the boats going up and down the river each morning?*

Yet throughout the study, I flowed between insider and outsider. Nielsen (2010) contends that when interacting, with coach and athlete, researchers have access to information that temporarily positions them as an insider. Further, she argues that researchers constantly move between different positions that make them partially engaged.

Although you claim impartiality as a researcher, in practice you constantly move between different positions that temporarily make you partially engaged. It is from such changing positions that a researcher, as an individual, evolves with the social in a subtle interplay in which the researcher must make an effort to address the mutuality of the whole and the part in whatever way these are defined. (Nielsen, 2010, p. 313)

I learned very quickly how to present myself as an insider through dress, the language of rowing, and the social chat of the crew room. I became an insider when given access to privileged information, for example when an athlete confided their issues with eating and managing body weight to me (see section 4.3.5 for a discussion of the ethical issues); yet this also demonstrated the “outsiderness” of their experience as they were unable to discuss these issues with their coach.

Emotionally, I became an insider when I came to empathise with the aspirations of the coaches and athletes as elite performers. At one race, I noted:

*Juliet and I shout for Bethany as they go past. Bethany loses to Kings I by a few seconds. And a couple of minutes later we shout for Kings III (which is the boat Juliet's rowing coach is in). And I turn, in the hope that no-one from Bethany is nearby. This feels like I am a big fraud for cheering for the "enemy".*

This emotional engagement as an insider was confirmed in my final diary entry:

*13 July*

*There are only a couple of cars in the lane. It feels funny that this is my last visit to the club. I feel a bit nervous walking into the boatyard, as if suddenly I don't belong. It's almost as if I have been part of this world, and suddenly I am not. Like I am again having to look into something curious and strange – I hadn't realised that I had become so attached to it.*

*However, part of me is relieved to be leaving. Now I don't have to be concerned for the athletes and coaches e.g. will Luke reach his potential, what will happen to Adam and Damian? Will Dan stay here in his job? Will Gaby make it into the GB squad?*

Lofland et al. (2006) draw out the benefit of this constant movement between insider and outsider, between balance and distance. They suggest that to ask questions of, to make problematic and to bracket social life requires the outsider perspective of distance; and to acquire intimate familiarity with social life from the vantage point of those studied requires the closeness afforded by an insider position. Thus, the aim was to be neither discouraged nor over confident about my relationship to the setting.

#### **4.2.4 Validity**

Ethnographers are directed into the world of experience, where the social world is a place where little can be taken for granted, a place of process (Rock, 2001). Data from such research, then, is a social product assembled based on meanings and assumptions of both researcher and participant, incorporating patterns of activity of things that were seen and not seen by the person who compiled them (Rock, 2001). Ethnography involves considering the partiality of research as ethnographers are partial (not impartial) and ethnographies are partial (not complete) (Neyland, 2008). This presents a dilemma – how to demonstrate and ensure the validity of the account presented?

A traditional method of presenting validity, borrowed from positivism, resides in demonstrating rigour of method (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Lofland et al. (2006) suggest that empirical accuracy is produced through systematic data collection strategies such as prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, and meticulous note taking and fieldnotes. My enactment of these strategies to ensure validity through rigorous methods is discussed in the following section on Research Methods.

Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (2001) argue alternatively that validity in qualitative research becomes largely a quality of the knower in relation to her data and enhanced by different vantage points and forms of knowing. Validity is personal, relational and contextual. They suggest a first often over looked step is to expose the creativity cycle in research. Kelly (1955) explains that the creativity cycle frames the constant process of subjective decision making and adjustment throughout the research process. The first phase was circumspection; entering the field with a complete openness to a host of possibilities. The openness to a host of possibilities was focussed on being able to answer the research questions of understanding Bethany as an organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships. The research questions were

broken down into a number of theory questions to make the process of data collection manageable: how is culture manifested, interpreted, enacted and symbolised; how do the coach and athlete connect in their relationship (see section 4.3.3 for a detailed explanation)? Thus in this phase I observed and recorded thoughts, feelings, talk, and action relevant to these questions, ensuring that nothing was classified, analysed or rejected relating to the theory. All observations led to possibility and further questions. The second phase is termed pre-emption. After about six weeks in the field, I noticed a range of issues and patterns starting to emerge, such as lack of resources, groupings of athletes, or the influence of the governing body. These were explored and linked into the theory topics which focussed my reading. I continued to note these themes in my fieldnotes. The final stage is what Kelly calls control, where work is brought into focus and checked to ensure it is grounded in the participants' experiences. For example, until the end of the field work, I failed to recognise the hierarchical nature of the club, how "gender was done" or the extent that emotion was disappeared from everyday life. I also grappled with, for example, reconciling the tension between the rationalised processes demanded of the coaches by the national team with the patriarchalism of the club. Holloway (1989) describes this movement from field to theory and back to field as evolving the theoretical framework through feedback to inform analysis of data and interaction with participants.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) believe that the use of triangulation reveals an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Triangulation is essentially the use of different vantage points to illuminate inquiry, reflecting a commitment to thoroughness, flexibility and differences of experience (Banister et al., 2001). Triangulation makes use of combinations of methods and perspectives to facilitate richer and potentially more valid interpretations of cases selected to research.

Triangulation of the data perspectives was sought by the use of purposeful sampling. Patton (1990) contends that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which we can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the study. Whilst my chosen methodology of ethnography rendered everything interesting, as a researcher, once I had chosen the sport club in which to research, I also had choice in what and to whom I paid attention. To reduce potential attentional bias, a sampling

strategy was used. Lofland et al. (2006) call this strategic selection of informants. As the research developed, I ensured that the variety of participants observed were positioned differently in the rowing club, and the wider rowing environment, to provide access to different types of information. Varied aspects of organisational life were accessed through ensuring informants included coaches, athletes, club members, international coaches and athletes, club and governing body officials, physiologists and psychologists, and other informants in the setting. Participants were selected for interview based on these considerations. Table 4.2 in section 4.3.1 of Research Methods summarises the range of individuals observed (and in some cases interviewed) and their role as participant/informant. In addition, observations and interviews took place in the full range of settings associated with coaches and athletes at the club. These included the gym, crew room, coach office, kitchen, boatyard, club function room, local café, river bank, coaching launch, river, rowing lake, national training centre, national and local competition venues and national trials. Data was collected at training, competitions (head races and regattas), selection trials, and social situations.

A traditional approach also uses a variety of methods to triangulate and validate the findings. Within this ethnography, observation, informal and formal interviewing and secondary documents have been used to additionally triangulate methods. Using multiple methods allows the researcher to gain information in a number of ways and gives confidence that the material is more than just a product of the method (Banister et al., 2001). It may add to the depth and validity of the research findings. This view of validity, however, carries the assumption that there is a fixed point or object that can be triangulated. Instead of viewing triangulation as a two dimensional rigid shape, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) suggest that central imagery for validity is a crystalline shape,

which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality and angles of approach. ... what we see depends on our angles of repose – not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p.963)

From this perspective, using different methods does not provide a clear path to a singular view of what is the case. Instead of looking for the convergence of evidence, there are three outcomes that might result from a triangulation strategy... convergence, inconsistency, and contradiction (Mathison, 1988). One example of triangulation delivering contradiction was during a set of rowing trials at the national centre. One

athlete described this experience as uncomfortable, being continually observed, as if in a goldfish bowl; a coach saw the experience as unproblematic, his job and just another day at the office.

This crystalline image of validity forces us to satisfy the reader that this research delivers the claims upon which the work is founded. For this study, I can only claim to have knowledge of others' knowledge, interpretations of others' interpretations and models of others' models. The aim is to unravel the breadth and complexity of organisational culture in one sports club and examine coaches and athlete relationships in that setting, asking questions not asked by the participants (Rock, 2001). Lofland et al. (2006) contend that the reader's faith in the accuracy of the empirical materials presented here, lies in the explanation of how I selected amongst the vast numbers of facts available to me to present and the analysis that organises those facts in interpretation. Can our co-created constructions of human phenomenon be trusted for us to act on (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Neyland, 2008)? Such faith was created by ensuring balance in presenting a range of stakeholder views, perspectives, claims and concerns in the text, for to withhold such presentation opens the account to bias of marginalisation and unfairness. (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). The analytical process used in this study is discussed in the Research Methods section below.

This research claims to offer understanding and interpretation of one sport organisation's culture and the relationship between coaches and athletes within it. As previously discussed, the ideographic orientation of this research, in seeking understanding and interpretation, makes clear there are no claims to generalise the findings. Previous research has focussed on measuring organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships in sporting contexts. The goal of this research is to provide a detailed understanding of the context of one sports club and thus an interpretive frame for its understanding. This adds to its validity.

Continuing with the crystalline metaphor of validity, a final facet is to ask whether this piece succeeds aesthetically exposing the patterning of processes, opening up the text and inviting interpretive responses (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Rock, 2001). Writing ethnography is an important part of ethnographic analysis. Textual and other devices are not neutral implements in constructing ethnography. Atkinson and Delamont (2005) suggest that ethnography needs to remain faithful to the intrinsic aesthetic of the phenomena under study. The researcher must be careful of imposing

their own performative criteria on the representation of the culture and participants. Rock (2001) argues that “each social world seems to have its own distinctive logic-in-use, aesthetic or pulse” (p.37). Thus the researcher must demonstrate their “ear for the pulse” (Rock, 2001, p.37), to link together the people, behaviours and process enabling the reader to sense the coherence and intelligibility of the study. Further, there is a choice of representational style to convey to the reader the world as experienced by the participants. Influenced by Geertz’ (1973) seminal presentation of the Balinese cockfight as a cultural form of Balinese life, this study broadly uses Van Maanen’s (1988) impressionist genre to highlight the complexity of life at Bethany Boat Club. Rock (2001) states that, whilst not necessarily a defensible criterion to assess validity, it is intuitively convincing that each ethnography must convey the “musicality of the social world” (p.37) to others less knowing.

In this section, the advantages of ethnography as a methodology were presented, including the ability to use it to research complex situations, its utility in systematically interpreting processes, and its function in allowing researchers in to the setting. Key areas of concern in choosing ethnography as a methodology were highlighted: reflexivity, partial impartiality and validity. The next section focuses more closely on the specific methods used in this study, and includes a discussion of multi-method research, as well as issues related to conducting fieldwork such as the sport, club and participants, access and establishing trust, generating data, ethics and the role of the researcher, and data analysis.

### **4.3 Research methods**

The research design followed Neyland’s (2008) suggestion that a research question is narrowly prescribed. The aim of this research was to understand how the culture and organisational climate of a sports club impacted upon coach-athlete relationships. In order to address the aim, a number of research questions were developed: How can the concept of organisational culture be used to understand a particular sport club? How can organisational culture be used to understand coach-athlete relationships?

### 4.3.1 The sport and club

Lofland, et al. (2006) write that what we are interested in is grounded in the past or current biographies of our creators. My fascination with the sport of rowing was derived from several chance circumstances. My daughter had recently started to compete as a junior rower at a local club. The club was short of coaches, and although I had not rowed before, in order to help the Club Coach, I volunteered to take a governing body rowing coach qualification. This experience enabled me to contrast the approach to coaching used in rowing with that of netball, which I both play and coach. I was also invited by a sport psychology colleague to attend his training sessions at a rowing governing body talent training camp. These two experiences intrigued me – a sport where small inherently unstable boats move backwards quickly on water means that coaches are taught that safety is paramount, contrasted with a frequently voiced discourse that athletes should “man-up” to endure harsh training regimes and potentially hazardous conditions (Pike, 2005). The academic literature also provides a rationale for investigating organisational culture and relationships in this sport. Pike and Maguire (2003) identify rowing as one of the most physically demanding of sporting activities. Men have historically dominated access to national and international rowing competitions; even in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many were concerned about the masculinisation of elite female athletes, especially those governing the Olympic Games (Schweinbenz, 2009). The institutional training environment requires athletes to forgo education and professional development in order to secure a place in a national rowing squad (Koukouris et al., 2009). In exploring this, the study was not about analysing my own experiences, or relying on the existing literature on elite rowing but rather to use these sources as a point of departure from which to examine a specific rowing club’s culture and the relationships within it, and thus avoid being fixated on where one has started the inquiry (Lofland et al., 2006).

In determining the appropriate sample size, generalisability is a perennial worry of qualitative researchers, if their research does not follow a purely statistical logic (Silverman, 2000). However, Geertz (1973) argues that the theory of culture (and by extrapolation, organisational culture) is somewhat different from other theoretical approaches. The aim is not to generalise across cases. Rather than following a rising curve of cultural findings, studies in cultural analysis build by making subsequent work more informed and better conceptualised. Wacquant’s (1992) three year ethnography of

boxing at the Stoneland Boys Club provides such an example of the paradox between the generalised knowledge of boxing as one of the world's most popular sports, and the embedded social logic and meaning of boxing held by members of a specific ghetto Chicago gym. Thorpe (2009) examines a significant life experience of a snowboarder to provide an in depth knowledge of the impact on behaviour on the specific sporting culture of snowboarding. Like other single case study ethnographies (see for example Macphail's (2004) examination of an athletic club), convenience sampling was used to identify the organisation to be studied. A single governing body high performance rowing club was approached, providing the characteristics of elite participation. The pseudonym Bethany Boat Club was assigned to the club. An elite environment was selected as the coach-athlete interaction was anticipated to have more importance for the participant and organisation, and is potentially more influenced by organisational culture than at the recreational levels (Yannick & Brewer, 2007) An elite athlete was considered "one who is either a full-time professional, or an amateur who trains for 20 hours of more and is probably competing at national or international level" (Cockerill, 2002, p.82-83). The term high performance (HP) was used synonymously with elite in the language of the club, and this convention is adopted throughout the thesis.

A number of terms and phrases from the vernacular of rowing are used throughout the discussion. These reflect the ways in which coaches, athletes and officials talk about the sport. A short glossary of key rowing terms is provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Glossary of key rowing terms*

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Blade	The spoon or hatchet/cleaver shaped end of the oar. Also used to refer to the entire oar
Composite	A crew boat with rowers from two or more clubs
Crew boat	A shell with four or more rowers
Eight	A shell with eight rowers
Ergo	An indoor rowing machine. Also called an ergometer
Four	A shell with four rowers
Head races	A time trial competition

*continued*

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Heavyweight	A rower who weighs more than the restrictions for lightweight rowing.
Ladies Plate	An event for eight oared crew at Henley Royal Regatta, the second most senior event for men's eights at the Regatta
Launch	A motorboat used by rowing instructors, coaches or umpires
Learn to row	Used to describe a group of rowers learning to row, often adults beginners
Novice	Rowers who are rowing for the first season, or (in the UK) a rower who has not won a qualifying regatta
Pair	A shell with two rowers
Piece	A race simulation used in training, whereby the rowers row a typical racing distance as fast as possible
Quad	A shell having 4 rowers with two oars each
Rigging	How the boat is outfitted, including all of the apparatuses (oars, outriggers, oarlocks, sliding seats, etcetera) attached to a boat that allow the rower to propel the boat through the water
Sculler	A rower who rows with two oars, one in each hand
Shell	The term for a rowing boat
Single	A shell designed for an individual sculler

**Participants – the coaches, athletes and officials.** The club had three full-time coaches working there, each working with different groups of elite athletes, and with different funding and employment relationships. The sport governing body funded and employed one coach, Mary. Her role was to coach the athletes on the governing body talent identification programme based at the club, and she voluntarily coached the club's other high performance women. She reported to a governing body employee who had national responsibility for the talent development programme. The two other coaches, Dan, the head coach working with the club's high performance heavyweight men's group, and Bob, managing the club's junior programme, were employed and partially funded by Bethany; the balance of the funding for these two coaches was paid by the national governing body. They both reported to the Director of Rowing at the club, although Dan also had an informal reporting relationship with a coach at the national governing body.

It was initially less straightforward to identify the athletes, club officials and other individuals participating in the study. The pool of elite athletes was dynamic

throughout the research as rowers joined the club, developed their ability to be included in the elite groups, or left due to injury, performance or lifestyle choices. By the end of the research, I had talked with and purposely observed three coaches (2 male and one female), 27 athletes (17 male and 10 female), three coxes (two male and one female), six club officials (four male and two female), three volunteer coaches and five governing body employees (all male). The detail of the contact, their role as participant, and whether they were formally interviewed is detailed in Table 4.2. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant.

Table 4.2

*Participants*

<b>Participant Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role at Bethany Boat Club</b>	<b>Formal interview conducted</b>	<b>Role as participant/informant</b>
<b>Coaches</b>			
Mary	Coach (Talent and HP women)	Yes	Coach, key informant, gatekeeper to competition/trial settings
Dan	Coach (HP heavyweight men)	Yes	Coach, key informant, gatekeeper to competition/trial settings
Bob	Coach (HP Juniors)	Yes	Coach, key informant
3 volunteers	Volunteer Coach	No	n/a
<b>Athletes</b>			
Gaby	HP and Talent group female athlete	Yes	HP, new to club
Esther	HP female athlete	Yes	HP, 2+ years in club
Adam	HP male athlete	Yes	HP, new to club
Harry	HP male athlete	Yes	HP, new to club
Nathan	HP male athlete	Yes	HP 2+ years in club
Luke	HP male athlete	No	Gatekeeper to experience and athletes
Cox	Cox	Yes	Link between athletes and coach
13 other male athletes	HP male athlete	No	n/a
8 other female athletes	HP female athlete	No	n/a
2 other coxes	Cox	No	n/a

*Continued*

<b>Participant Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role at Bethany Boat Club</b>	<b>Formal interview conducted</b>	<b>Role as participant/informant</b>
<b>Officials</b>			
Mikey	Rowing sub-committee	Yes	Gatekeeper between coaches, previous club captain, ex-international rower
Peter	Deputy Club Captain & Director of Rowing	No	Gatekeeper between coaches and wider club
Simon	Club Captain	Yes	International rower, club captain, “leader” of club
Theo	Club official and parent junior rower	Yes	Parent and committee view of club
Michael	Governing body official	Yes	Senior coach, Mary’s line manager, gatekeeper to competition/trial settings
Reece	Governing body official	Yes	Outside/inside perspective, 10 years’ experience
2 other club officials	Club official	No	n/a
3 other governing body officials	Governing body official	No	n/a

#### **4.3.2 Access**

The initial contact with the club was made through a relationship between a Professor at my University Research Centre and a governing body senior official. This led to a very informal meeting in a local café with the new Head Coach at Bethany, Dan. I was introduced as a sport psychologist interested in spending time at the club to complete my research into coaches, athletes and organisational culture. Dan was very keen to have me come along to the club to learn how things were done. The meeting lasted 20 minutes, during which I listened more than I spoke. At this point, like Rock (2001) and other researchers before me, I felt transparent, purporting to do research about something, but actually knowing little about it, “an authority without expertise” (p.33).

I requested a further meeting with Dan and the other two paid coaches, Mary and Bob. We met in the crew room of the club after training. I asked questions about the club, how it fitted into the governing body structure, and who might be participants and broached the subject of formal consent, both from the club to conduct the study and

from participants. Formal consent from the club to the research was gained at a subsequent short meeting in the Bethany boatyard and concluded with a handshake with the Director of Rowing, Peter Brown.

Entering the field for the first time, I was conscious that, as a research student, I was not an important person in the setting. I had no situated identity and little in the way of a moral, practical or social claim on the people there (Rock, 2001). My first ethnographic diary entry records my awareness of this.

*1 September*

*Started with a feeling of excitement and anticipation. Finally starting the data collection. Park for the first time on the lane leading to the club – is this the right place to park, yet it feels like I am suddenly part of the club, and not a visitor – the first visit I parked in the yard in front of the club, then after that in the car park for dog walkers round the corner. Now I park with the rowers?*

I was grateful that Dan, Bob and Mary easily acted as gatekeepers for my study, allowing me full access to the setting. Unlike Whyte's (1955) experience of Doc as the gatekeeper through which Whyte was brought into the street corner and where being introduced by Doc was like being introduced by the chief of a tribe, I was only introduced formally to athletes by Mary – a welcome; the other coaches simply assumed I would tag along, believing everyone knew why I suddenly appeared in the coaching launch or hung around the boatyard and crew room. I was immediately given access to the clubhouse with its kitchen, crew room and coaches' office, the boatyard and coaches' launch giving access to the river, invitations to trials and races giving access to competition, and the entry code to the gym.

Access, however, requires more than simply getting into the setting. Armstrong (1993) argues that researchers need to have the cultural competence to participate in the setting. During the first month of the research I went to the boat club nine times, to, as Rock (2001) says,

look and see what can be seen, to try and get some sense of the regularities that are before one. It would be foolish to plunge in with naïve questions. Such a step might only expose the sociologist's lack of understanding and exhaust whatever goodwill there may be. (p.34)

I did not assume the role of expert, but rather as someone who wanted to understand the "everyday work" within the organisation (May, 1993). I listened, remaining on the margins, just about visible but not too demanding. I showed interest,

seeing who was there and whom they dealt with. I was available. I carried on listening and it was rewarded with acceptance into the boat club as just another member of what goes on here (Rock, 2001). This acceptance is discussed in the following section.

### 4.3.3 Negotiating the space between coach and athlete – trust and cups of tea

Trust is commonly treated as part of the researcher-researched relationship (Ybema, Yanow, Wels & Kamsteeg, 2009). I was constantly aware of the continual circle of building trust and being trusted in the setting. Trust was built through being interested in their daily lives and selectively using my expertise in sport psychology; there was an expectation that I would understand issues with relationships and people. This relational competence was balanced with a level of acceptable incompetence of the sport and the organisation. Lofland et al. (2006) suggest that a naturalistic investigator is, by definition, one who does not understand. In being viewed as relatively incompetent in my knowledge of rowing and Bethany, although otherwise cordial and easy to get along with, I was trusted and able to keep the flow of information coming smoothly. For one of the coaches, this process of gaining trust took some time, as evidenced by a diary entry five months into the research.

*9 February*

*To date I have felt that I am a nuisance to Bob. Today comes a breakthrough. When he asked to talk with me, I thought he was going to tell me off or say I have stepped out of line, but he is actually asking for some advice from me as an “expert” to help him to motivate his older juniors. It feels again a point of acceptance with Bob that I am now part of what goes on here.*

The athletes were less interested in my presence at the club. They were used to national coaches, physiologists and other observers being at the club. For some of the athletes, it was several months into my research that they asked me “tell me again, what exactly are you doing here?” The open invitation to the coach launch gave me access to a coach nearly every time that I made a field visit; the access to athletes was generally in the boatyard or the crew room, or later in the study, when I interviewed individuals. My own shyness made building relationships with the athletes a slower process. For example, a month into the research, when the coaches left the club, I too left the setting.

*28 September*

*So I stupidly got my head in a fix thinking I couldn’t mix with the athletes. Also, when I went through the crew room to the kitchen, there were already lots of athletes there. So hung around making myself a cup*

*of tea, chatted with Esther and Gaby, but then washed up my cup and didn't stay – I just walked out through the crew room. Even when I got to my car I knew I should have asked someone to budge up on the sofa so I could join in, but didn't. Part of that was my own shyness and reserve ... but I wonder also if I feel I am intruding in their space; for example, they stretch out along the sofas, or some of them sleep on the two sofas behind the curtain. I guess the only way to experience this space is to be in it with them!*

Thus the coach launch provided access to a relationship with coaches, the crew room to athletes, and from this, the opportunity to build trust. The kitchen, to my surprise, enabled a relationship with almost everyone passing through the club. Coach, athlete, official and researcher mingled with the sole aim of sustenance and replenishing energy. The purchase of my own tea bags at the end of the first week legitimised my presence in this space. Hills (2003) used holding the tray children put their valuables into during PE as an opportunity for discourse; I used cups of tea. During the study, I noted 51 occasions where the offer of making, receiving, sitting or standing with a cup of tea facilitated the opportunity to observe or engage in conversation with someone. Thus, building trust happened in a number of locations and over a period of time. The excerpts from selected fieldnotes on one athlete, Gaby, show the general deepening of the issues discussed as trust developed.

*28 September*

*Gaby asks about psychology. She has a first degree in psych. She has thought about doing a masters degree but thinks the time commitment is too much. Her sister is an assistant clinical psych so she has also thought about that or even forensic. I say that there are more job opportunities in that area compared with sports psych. I ask if she is a member of BPS as the magazine is good and they advertise a number of courses and taster sessions. She thinks she will try and get some work experience this year.*

*13 October*

*Gaby tells me she is a lot happier now down here. Home is Belmontshire and she went to uni in Kuldare. She wasn't enjoying training and thought it was because it was training, but now she is settled, she is enjoying training. She realises her lack of enjoyment of training was to do with not being settled.*

*4 November*

*Gaby is injured at the moment. Something in her hip flexor went earlier in the week. She has spoken with the physio and will see her at camp at the weekend. She asks about a stretch for this. I do not think she really wants me to provide this – more she is just looking for some sympathy and someone to listen to her woes.*

*4 January*

*I go upstairs and see Gaby filling in her journal. I ask about her holiday. She looks brown. She says she had a nice time.*

*1 February*

*Gaby is upstairs and looks pale. The antibiotics have made her poorly and she is feeling a bit nauseous and tired. I make tea and Gaby and I sit and chat with Mary, Michael and the three girls.*

*10 May*

*I go in to chat with Gaby. I find her on the settee. She has just broken up with her boyfriend last week – he dumped her. She is devastated and I think, wallowing a little. I reiterated what I knew Mary had already said – it is a cycle of grieving.*

Once built, trust was maintained in several ways. One way was my attempt to adopt an unconditional positive regard towards each person, so that I tried to note rather than judge what was said or done. However, in writing about what participants said or did, I also captured my feelings about the tone, context, content and patterns of observations. In choosing to record these I recognise that my own values were laid over these observations through describing them in writing. Geertz (1973) tells the story of how protecting confidences of locals from the police after attending an illegal cockfight in Bali, provided the gateway to acceptance in the community. I too honoured the privilege of confidences from coaches about athletes, other coaches and personal matters. I continued to be interested in their daily lives. This was balanced by exercising the same discretion with the athlete, for example, not passing on an athlete's fear about managing their weight to their coach. Any feeling of insufficiency in terms of trust, possibly reflected my temporary position being between coach and athlete, being party to confidential information which crossed borders of symbolically charged locations such as the crew room and coaches' office, or conversations in the coach launch (Nielsen, 2010). For example, I was never totally sure of the meaning athletes ascribed to my behaviour such as laughing with the coach as we got out of the launch, or talking during a training session? Did they think I was talking about them and judging them? I was aware that trust was not something I could promise, rather something that had to be continually demonstrated and earned (Norris, 1993). Perhaps an indication of the trust I had built over the season came from an email from one of the athletes, received once I had left the setting, saying "Helloooo, How Are you? Alison I really am going to miss having you around this winter".

**Language and dress.** In addition, I adopted Norris' (1993) advice to find ways to lessen the distance between the participants and me. I used the dress of a rowing club, tracksuit, sweatshirt and flip-flops or trainers in the spring and summer; the winter required more robust clothing, a fact I only learned through getting cold or wet. In the coach launch, for example,

*13 December*

*I have not yet learned how to stay warm and dry in this environment - that's not in the ethnography handbook. I have a tight rain-jacket on as a top layer and it is keeping the air out of my down coat. Note to self not to do that again. I put my hat on as soon as we move and then later my balaclava.*

The coaches wore club or national emblazoned clothing from well known sailing brands. I chose to be more understated, sometimes wearing clothing from Brunel to assert and separate my role as a researcher from that of coach, but ensuring I adopted the same standards in terms of garment performance – fleece, Gore-Tex, silk and wool – layered until I resembled the proverbial “Michelin Man”.

Spending time with people builds up a rapport that allows the researcher to be party to conversations that they perhaps would not have shared had they been only interested in a ‘snap-shot’ approach. Regular in-depth contact encourages an understanding of the language commonly used in a specific context and the sharing of experiences (Macphail, 2004). I worked at lessening the distance by learning the language of rowing such as “doing a piece” to describe a training session where a specific element of competition was simulated in the water, “the bow” to talk about the end of the boat that is coming first towards you or describes the person sitting at the front of the boat when it is moving, or “sculling” which is rowing with two blades (oars) compared with “sweep” where each person only has one blade.

#### **4.3.4 Generating data**

Ethnography as means to see, hear and feel the everyday life of participants in their setting was discussed in section 4.2.1., the aim was to use ethnography as a methodology to understand and interpret the nuance, uniqueness, normally frequent behaviour and experience of organisational members. This section explains how the multiple methods of participant observation, note taking and interviewing were used in this study to generate data and to record the meaning individuals attach to these everyday activities.

**Observation.** The aim was to capture data covering one full season of the rowing calendar. Thus I spent 11 months from September to July in the field. In total, I visited the field on 69 occasions, spending over 350 hours observing. Table 4.3 details the frequency of the observations. Access to the field and the number of visits was influenced by the rowing calendar, competitions, training camps and testing schedules.

Table 4.3

*Frequency of field visits*

Month	Number of field visits	Month	Number of field visits
September	9	March	8
October	8	April	8
November	11	May	3
December	3	June	5
January	8	July	2
February	4	Total	69

In the first month, my observations of daily life focussed on immersing myself in the setting. This enabled me to have a broad understanding of the club, how it worked, who was who and to become comfortable negotiating the setting. As I became more confident in the setting, my field visits became longer as I spent time with different coaches and athletes, and became more easy in moving from river to land and from the social environment of the crew room to the business-like setting of the boatyard. In the second month, as I became more accepted by the coaches and athletes, visits were for a longer period. A typical field visit was five hours long. Of this, two periods of one and a half hour's duration were on the water, where my only access to the setting was in the coach launch; all the athletes and coaches were on the water at the same time, so there was little benefit from being at the club and not being on the water. I was conscious that my constant presence sitting behind the coach in the launch was intrusive for the coach and so purposefully avoided being in the setting on concurrent days. Later in the research, I took an outsider view and also observed, where possible, the training or competition situations as an outsider on the riverbank.

Aside from getting along in the setting, the basic concrete task of the observer is to take fieldnotes (Lofland et al., 2006). I followed the general advice from text books

that the logging record is the data of observation. Everything should be noted, both the mundane and the routine. Armstrong's practical advice is to look beyond the mere appearances, to always position yourself so you keep the whole scene in view and "when in doubt, collect facts" (Armstrong, 1993, p.12). But what facts to collect?

Observation was focussed using three premises. Firstly, the broad aim of this research, to understand how coach-athlete relationships were influenced within the organisational culture of Bethany as a rowing club was held in mind. Together with a review of the literature and the framing of the interview guide (see section Interviews below), these generated targeted observations based on key question such as "How do participants describe the organisation – 'how it is'?", or "How are values and beliefs maintained or changed through contact with organisational artefacts such as stories, dress codes, greetings etc.?" or "What are the points of connection between coach and athlete?" Secondly, I followed Lofland et al.'s (2006) suggestion to log four sources of data: personal experience of the rowing club (both of the researcher and participants), observation of social action at the club (both verbal and non-verbal), talk between athletes and coaches and others (gained from talk in action and formal and informal interviewing) and information from supplementary sources such as the club website, documents, physical traces and artefacts (such as the rowers 'clothing or the pictures on the club walls). This was consistent with Martin's (2002) suggestions discussed in chapter 3. Thirdly, my fieldnotes also noted any further questions that the observations raised, and some reflective thoughts on the issues, the time spent in the field, noted any key relationships and highlighted any elements that might shed light on my research question. These questions were used to focus observation on subsequent visits.

**Note taking.** Lofland et al. (2006) contend that if you do not take fieldnotes then you might as well not be in the setting! I followed a rigorous process of note taking, starting with mental notes in the setting, then jotted notes to full fieldnotes. In taking mental notes, the first aim was to evoke a journalistic sense of what is going on here: Who is here? Who said what and to whom? Who moved about and in what way? In particular, each visit was characterised by the feelings associated with the weather and setting; sometimes I also took a picture. For example on a trip to a major regatta I noted "Full ski jacket and over trousers – it is June and cold and wet!!" On another occasion, I can still picture the field visit where I noted, "Going out with women's eight who will race at Women's HERR in 2 weeks' time. Very cold as is minus 3 degrees Celsius. But

the most brilliant blue sky that there ever was. Fabulous!” As I became more experienced in the setting, I started to note the quality of the river flow – was it calm, a fast stream, choppy in places – as this was a more important consideration to the athletes than the weather in determining the quality and experience of their day.

In order to preserve the observations, the mental notes were jotted down as soon as possible. Lofland et al. (2006) suggest jotting down details of what you think is important components of observed scenes, concrete sensory details about action and talk, paying special attention to those you could easily forget and using jottings to signal general impressions and feelings you have, even if you are unsure of the significance. It was not usually practical to write whilst in the coach launch. The movement of the boat, the weather, my gloved hands and the fact that my A5 notebook was often submerged under three or more layers of clothing meant that I rarely wrote anything whilst on the river. I also felt it was best not to write detailed notes in view of the participants, as this may have made them feel uncomfortable. Jottings were mostly completed as I sat in my car out of sight, before leaving the setting. However, when sitting in the crew room with my cup of tea between training sessions and a lull in conversations or action, I made notes in my notebook. I was reminded of their uncomfortableness with this, when Gaby told me of the practical joke she played on the male rowers, after they had teased some of the women for being prudish about their crew room banter. She told them that I recorded all the conversations in the crew room on my phone and enjoyed ten minutes of quiet from them as a result.

I planned time during each field based day to write full fieldnotes of my visit, or when this was in the evening, the next day. Full fieldnotes were “a running description of settings, events, people, things heard and overheard, and interactions among and with people, including conversations” (Lofland et al., 2006, p.112). I used behaviours and concrete terms, and stayed at the lowest level of inference, using as much detail as possible. I recorded any participants’ views as their own beliefs, noting the meaning they ascribed to events or actions. Sometimes I recalled something that I did not think important or remember at the time, and so included this in the day’s fieldnotes as a recollection. Lofland et al. (2006) also counsel researchers to avoid any urge to impose order on the fieldnotes. Initially my analytic ideas were only a series of more questions to frame my observations for the next field visit. However, as the days extended into months in the field, within my fieldnotes I increasingly recorded how things were

patterned in the setting and where occurrences were examples of some concept. This provided a foundation for the analysis, and made the final analytic work much easier.

Additionally, I recorded my personal impressions and feelings each time I completed a field note. This diary of my opinions of people, emotional responses to being an observer and the setting itself, served three functions: detecting if my private emotional response to a situation was more widespread amongst participants, and thus leading to an analytic insight; discerning whether I was simply uncomfortable in the setting or whether these emotions stemmed from something more fundamental in the field; and, finally, by reviewing the fieldnotes concurrently with the diary, once analysis commenced, allowed me to see if and where I brought biases into my field work.

**Interviews.** Both formal and informal conversations took place throughout the 11 months of the study. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 participants to better understand the subjective meanings they attached to experiences and events, and to explore issues that had arisen through my observations. Interviews took place five to eleven months into the research. I had already spent a considerable amount of time listening, observing and participating in the rowing club. They provided a means of getting to know the participants and enabled me to have a referent from which to ask further informal questions when observing. The interviews also allowed me to reveal a little of myself to the participants and were helpful as part of the process of building trust with the participants. The interviews took place in a setting chosen by the interviewee, and at a time convenient to them. In one case this was a noisy café as the coach needed to eat breakfast after a 6am coaching session; another was sitting in the sunshine outside the national training centre; most were conducted at the rowing club in the crew room or function room.

A semi-structured interview was used. The interview guide is in Appendix B. During the time in the field, I had continued my reading on organisational culture and was drawn to Hatch's (1993) cultural dynamics perspective as a framework for conceptualising culture. This had a number of advantages: it provided me with a language to consistently use to ask questions; it enabled me to sort my observations into cultural elements (i.e. assumptions, values, artefacts and symbols); it provided a dynamic conception of culture to enable me to ask questions about the processes that linked these cultural elements and thus constructed them. Hatch's (1993) framework suggests a dynamic of four cultural processes – how culture is manifested, realised and

enacted, symbolised and interpreted. Hatch (1993) suggests the process of manifestation occurs where individuals hold assumptions and values that create expectation about social life in the organisation that guide action e.g. Bethany is a high performance club. Realisation, as a process, occurs where assumptions and values are given tangible form e.g. the value that athletes have to rest and recover is realised in the provision of a kitchen and settees. Symbolisation is the process where symbols are fashioned by artefacts e.g. the women have a white Janosek make boat which is seen as inferior to the men's yellow Empacher make boat. The process of interpretation occurs where assumptions are symbolically challenged e.g. the assumption that club is an underdog is challenged by the memorabilia on the wall.

This framing was used to expand the theory questions relevant to these processes. The theory questions are shown in Table 4.4. This was also used as the basis for observation discussed above.

In designing the questions to ask participants, the language of academia of the theory questions was changed to more accessible everyday language. For example, in trying to learn how organisational culture is manifested at the club, participants were asked "What was your first day at the club like?" and "What's it like, how do you feel about, what are the daily activities being a rower at Bethany Boat Club?" Further, knowing that participants were likely to tell me their espoused beliefs, cognitions and behaviours, the questions were constructed around practical examples to enable them to provide concrete examples of their beliefs, cognitions and behaviours in their answers.

Every participant approached agreed to talk with me. The conversations ranged from 50 minutes to over an hour and a half. I piloted the interview guide with the athlete I felt I had the greatest rapport. This helped me to clarify the wording of the question "...Pick a couple that best summarise how it is to be a rower at Bethany and tell me what they mean to you?" by adding a supplementary question "What is important about them?" The interview opened by thanking them for participating and a simple explanation of the purpose of the research, followed by an opportunity for them to tell me how they got involved in rowing. For some this enabled them to give me a narrative of their life and a better insight into who they were and where they had come from. Written informed consent was obtained from each interviewee. The consent form is in Appendix C. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Table 4.4

*Theory questions asked during observation and interviews*

Broad cultural process	Theory question
How is culture manifested?	How do participants describe the organisation -“how it is”? How did participants perceive the organisation before they joined it - “how it should be”? What processes act to enable participants to know “how it is/should be” in the organisation? What do participants value about rowing and the organisation? What processes do participants use to align “how it is” with their values about rowing and the organisation? What perceptions, cognitions and emotions are generated when combined with these questions?
How is culture realised or enacted?	How do values get translated into or perpetrate artefacts through behaviours and daily activities? How are values and beliefs maintained or changed through contact with organisational artefacts such as stories, dress codes, greetings etc.?
How is culture symbolised?	Which artefacts are most meaningful or best provide a metaphor for “how it is” and what is important? What do symbols mean to participants and how do they know this? How do participants come to know artefacts as symbols?
How is culture interpreted?	How does symbolic meaning challenge basic assumptions? How do symbols construct and reconstruct assumptions about life at the club?
How do coaches and athletes connect in relationship?	How do coaches and athletes think, feel, behave and communicate within the relationship? How authentic, engaged, empowered and able to deal with conflict are the coach and athlete? How is the coach-athlete relationship symbolised?

I have over 20 years of experience of conducting interviews as a human resources professional and sport psychologist. I used that experience to establish rapport with each interviewee, be comfortable with pauses and silences and to probe more deeply into situations that I felt warranted this.

#### **4.3.5 Ethics**

The issue of ethics is usually presented as a necessity, solely to prevent harm or distress to the participant, and occasionally to the researcher. However, there is an additional benefit to giving the reader a deep understanding of the ethical issues and their resolution in an inquiry – to provide the reader with some measure of the reliability

of the findings. For, unless one knows the constraints under which the researcher was operating, and the degree of penetration gained in the organisation, it is difficult to assess the reliability of the findings, or to judge to what degree the findings have been self-censored (Norris, 1993). Both are discussed.

Prior to entering the field, I obtained the approval to commence research from the university ethics committee. I produced a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form and discussed this with the three coaches and the Director of Rowing, to ensure that they were comfortable with the basis on which I was conducting the research. This required that the research subjects were aware of and understood the purpose of the research, so that, from a position of knowledge, they could give their informed consent. They were free to opt out of the study, at any point, and any data collected disregarded. It was agreed it was impractical to obtain written informed consent from everyone observed during the course of the ethnography and this would be specifically sought from the three coaches and from participants formally interviewed.

I did not overtly introduce myself as a researcher, however when asked what I was doing, I always stated that I was researching as part of a PhD project at Brunel University. The coaches introduced me to new participants as a researcher. I was also purposeful about gaining informants' trust, by finding ways to fit into the environment. Given that these were not covert strategies, they were not problematic to me as they were enacted with positive intent.

Researching ethically demands due regard to issues of confidentiality and anonymity. I was party to personal information about individuals that I did not record, but did inform my work. The general supposition of my ethical approach submission was that each situation could be different and that I needed to enter the field with a set of ethical maxims relevant to the rowing community and my research. My supervisors were available for me to test situations against these maxims. I acknowledged that the research encouraged coaches and athletes to reflect on their experiences of the coach-athlete relationship including thoughts, emotions and feelings. For some coaches or athletes this may have prompted unpleasant memories of their sport experience or their wider life experiences and may have resulted in a disclosure of abuse. Norris (1993) suggests there are three choices: to report, lodge a complaint or publish damningly; abandon the research or at least not include the material; treat like any other data and publish normally. The first choice was rejected, except where there could be a physical

danger to a participant's life, as it not only breaks the participants' confidentiality and anonymity, but also may spoil the field for future inquiry. The second coerces the researcher to commit the cardinal sin of manipulating data and may force the researcher to leave the field of inquiry. The third approach allows the researcher to keep the promises of the research bargain and maintains the integrity of the data, whilst continuing in the field. Macphail (2004) took this approach in her ethnographic study of a sports club. She was concerned with the long-term implications of focusing on and disclosing what she considered opportunities for improvement and change; as such, she wished to have a long term relationship in the field. This third way was also my preference. I decided I would follow guidelines laid out by the sport governing body and the specific sport club, with regards to health and safety, risk assessment and child protection through a participant self-report mechanism. Following Norris (1993):

But I had decided that the most important thing was to be seen, to be part of the process, to be in view, to be one of them, to be normal and to go to work and carry on as if nothing happened. If such a play was successful then, hopefully, it would facilitate an even greater depth to my access. I would have demonstrated that I could be trusted. (p.141)

As it happened, no such issue arose. Several personal issues were discussed by athletes, such as non-disclosure to a coach of a health or weight management issue. These were considered against the ethical principles discussed above and the governing body guidelines concerning health and safety; no further action was taken.

Confidentiality was assured for all participants as no real names were included and no information that may significantly describe the participant or group as a whole has been used. I recognised that at times there may be a bi-directional imbalance of power between the researcher and participant. I aimed to avoid the misuse of this through adhering to the thorough British Association of Sport and Exercise Scientists code of ethics, by keeping a research diary, and regular conversations with my supervisors.

#### **4.3.6 Data analysis**

Analysis has been described as a transformative process in which findings are drawn from the raw data (Emerson, 2001; Lofland et al., 2006; Wolcott, 1994). Emerson describes analysis as “moving beyond more or less descriptive characteristics of those ...studied to offer explanations of observed phenomena, or to propose even more elaborate conceptual framings of these matters” (p. 282). It is a process conducted

by an agent, the researcher, through immersion in the data. However, whilst there are some step by step accounts for doing analysis (e.g. Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994), there is still a presumption that qualitative analysis is conducted in a slack and non-rigorous way (Lofland, et al., 2006).

To counter this presumption, Atkinson and Delamont (2005) suggest that “We need...principled, systematic and disciplined ways of accounting *for* the social world and *to* the social world” (p.823). Thus, analysis has been approached, using the suggestion of Lofland et al. (2006) to flex between the strategies of framing the data, using coding and memoing, diagramming and thinking flexibly, in order to analyse the data. Before discussing the application of these strategies to this study, it should be noted that the aim of the analysis is to understand social action and the “subjectively meaningful reasons for choosing to act” in the context of my research question (Collins, 1986, p.42). In doing so, like Weber, I have had to try and curtail my own values, whilst recognising that Bethany and the participants of the study are value driven. Weber says: “We have the capacity and the will to adopt a stance toward the world and to endow it with meaning” (Weber, 1982, p.180 cited and translated Schroeder, 1992, p.131). Thus in conducting analysis, the searchlight is focussed on those elements of life that have become significant and meaningful to the participants because of this value relevance. Attention is given to those values that are truly important in the setting and given cultural period. Secondly, there is an acknowledgement that this analysis favours induction, rather than deduction (Lofland et al., 2006). However, although the analysis was “grounded”, in that it emerges from the data, this term is used metaphorically. Instead, there is recognition that any body of work is always an extension of other bodies of work; what is novel is the link to my own empirical observations and the melding of those findings with previous work. Finally, Atkinson and Delamont (2005) caution researchers to ensure that the form of analysis mirrors the diversity of cultural forms studied. The aim is to preserve those cultural forms that are indigenous to the culture under study, “rather than collapse them into an undifferentiated plenum” (p.824). At Bethany, these forms included, discourse and spoken action, stories, symbols and artefacts, the physical embodiment of cultural values and the spaces in which action was enacted to provide a multi-layered account of relationships and organisational culture at Bethany.

In order to determine the appropriate analytic strategy, the ethnographer needs to consider the implicit orderings through which the social world under study is produced (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). The broad analytic device used to understand Bethany as an organisation was narrative analysis. This was chosen to understand the ordering of the everyday experiences of the participants formed by the temporal account of Bethany as an organisational culture and of the process of relating. Chase (2005) describes narrative analysis, in this sense, as “the identity work that people engage in as they construct selves within specific institutional discursive and local cultural contexts” (p.658) and how this is known. This was accessed through the narratives of discourse and of action.

The initial strategy used in the analysis was to bring forward the previous framing of the topic during the data gathering phase in terms of the topic’s processes. Lofland et al. (2006) suggest a process is hard to define, but conveys the sense of “development, emergence, progression, or evolution, thus suggesting a ‘series of actions, changes, or functions’ that result in a particular outcome” (p.152). Although processes may display a degree of stability with steps and stages following the other, the analysis was open to a more spiral patterning of organisational or relational processes, recognising that there may be conflict between the social units under study.

A second strategy commenced with the activity of coding and writing memos. Coding was used to initially sort the data into categories that were meaningful in relation to the research question. The initial categorising process formed the initial codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which were obtained by inspecting the fieldnotes and transcripts using open-ended questions such as “What is this?”, “What is this an example of?” or simply, “What is going on?” (Lofland et al., 2006). Nvivo 7 software was used to facilitate the execution of the coding and data storage. This generated 287 codes. From this, more focused coding was developed by expanding, questioning and bringing together the most interesting initial codes. For example, the category, “Rowers and what they do rowing” was formed from 42 codes including “Adjusting equipment”, “Avoiding other river users”, “Being on their own on the water” and “Compliance”. In addition, given that social settings are constituted of one or more actors, 43 participants were each coded as a separate case, and a set of files for the spaces in which actions were compiled. The coding was supplemented with memos of ideas and experiences and longer analytic passages which linked initial thoughts to possible theory (Cresswell,

1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical memos were used to “write-up” ideas about the codes and their relationships. For example, an initial theoretical explication of organisational cultural processes conceived by Hatch (1993) was used to explore the data. This somewhat helped to understand how Bethany operated as a culture, but the circular processes suggested by Hatch proved too one-dimensional to represent the complexity of the data. Notwithstanding, the resulting coding of artefacts and symbols from this theory resulted in the production of a graphic and vivid description of typical day vignette, which provided contextualisation to the research. This vignette is presented in chapter 5.

The next step was to step back from the data (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006), and to deconstruct the initial grouping of codes e.g. artefacts, symbols, what rowers do, in order to understand the organisational and relational processes. A visual representation of the relationship between the themes and codes was used, in the form of a mindmap (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An example of this is shown in Appendix D. The initial processes included Professionalisation, Achievement, Ordinary People, Work Ethic. Each process formed a narrative, in that it was a way of understanding action, events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing consequences over time (Chase, 2005).

Richardson and St Pierre (2005) argue that writing may also be used as an analytic strategy. Writing about data can enable the researcher to see the interrelationships between and amongst the elements under scrutiny. They comment, “I wrote my way into spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction” (p.970), so that thinking becomes part of the writing. Each organisational cultural process was developed through writing about it, enabling ideas to develop about how theory might inform this and other processes. Within the cultural processes, specific interactive performances were highlighted e.g. the performance of having lactate taken. The inclusion of these performances, as narrative devices, was used to understand how the participants made sense of their lives. This was supplemented by writing a report for Bethany coaches and key officials outlining some of the observations around these themes. This facilitated further interaction with the data, so that new ideas and framings emerged. For example, as an output, based on this, gender was added to the cultural process of “Doing what we have always done”. These organisational cultural processes were further refined through writing about them,

and as a result the processes were developed and combined into data four organisational cultural processes.

Similarly, writing identified “ the way in which relational practice was brought into the dominant discourse, subjected to the truth rules of that discourse, and ultimately ‘got disappeared’ as work and constructed as something else” (Fletcher, 1998, p.169). This illuminated relational practices as a key element of Bethany as a culture. However, I noted the difficulty of using writing as part of the analytic process in my reflexive diary, “*I just want to get this discussion stuff out of my head so that I can piece it all together. Yet I have a real fear it won’t piece together. I have a sense of quicksand or at least being stuck with my feet in treacle. Think I need to stop thinking and just get it all down*” (Reflexive diary 28 March).

The final analytic strategy was to think flexibly (Lofland et al., 2006). This entailed being open to different analytical models, rephrasing phrases and words, changing diagrams and constantly comparing items under analysis. For example, a diagramming strategy was used to chart the flow of each process so that data could be ordered as a dynamic rather than a static entity (Kirby et al., 2006; Lofland et al., 2006). An example of a diagram used is shown in Appendix E. These final phases of analysis involved a circular process of diagramming and writing to produce the final manuscript and, to paraphrase Kirby et al. (2006), to be objective about my subjectivity.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has explained the rationale for the social constructionist based methodology adopted by this research to address the research question. The methodology of ethnography was examined, and the issues of reflexivity, partial impartiality and validity discussed. The research methods were outlined, including details of the sport and club, the participants, access to the participants, collection of data and the ethical considerations of the research. The chapter concluded with an explanation of the data analysis used.

The next two chapters, 5 and 6, present and discuss the findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5 BETHANY AS AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

The broad aim of this research is to understand how coach-athlete relationships are influenced within the organisational culture of an elite rowing club. In order to address the aim, two research questions have been developed:

1. How can the concept of organisational culture be used to understand a particular sport club?
2. How can organisational culture be used to understand coach-athlete relationships?

Several considerations are helpful in understanding how I have approached answering the research questions. Firstly, the analysis of the findings has resulted in the identification of four key organisational processes which aid the understanding of Bethany Boat club as an organisational culture and of coach-athlete relationships: running a voluntary organisation; professionalisation; living the club identity; and maintaining the traditional gender order. Each of these processes was created through the everyday lives of organisational members and formed Bethany Boat Club as an organisational culture.

Secondly the study adopts Geertz' (1975) definition of culture:

Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of the law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p.5)

The web-like metaphor for culture used in this definition indicates that each process should be considered as part of one whole. I have used this metaphor to inform how the chapters, and sections within chapters, have been presented. Additionally, Weber's (1982, p.180, cited in and translated by Schroeder, 1992, p.6) definition of culture as "the endowment of a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of events in the world with meaning and significance from the standpoint of human beings" has focussed the discussion on those elements of organisational life that were significant and meaningful for both coach and athlete. Thus the reading of each section is intended to inform subsequent sections, and subsequent sections to re-inform the reading of prior sections.

The two discussion chapters present the interaction, interdependence and dynamic nature of the processes forming Bethany as an organisational culture and of the process of coach-athlete relating.

Finally, no single process fully informed or shaped understanding of the organisational culture or the coach-athlete relationships at the club. Therefore, two explanatory frameworks have been used to examine the web-like nature of relationships and culture in order to make sense of the findings. Organisational culture has been understood using elements of Weber's sociology: the internalisation of belief systems (inner logic of world views), the pattern by which belief systems influence and eventually become integrated into everyday life (the struggle between charisma and routinisation), the differentiation and conflict between different spheres of life, and the nature of the social ordering at the rowing club. The coach-athlete relationship has been examined within the cultural context of the club using key elements of Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), including authenticity, mutuality and trust, power differences and empathy to demonstrate points of connection and disconnection in the relationship.

The discussion is organised into two chapters. The first research question is addressed in chapter 5. This chapter presents Bethany as an organisational culture. It starts with a short vignette, an impressionist tale of daily life at Bethany. The second section, *Running a Voluntary Organisation*, highlights three elements of Bethany as a culture: the world view held at the club of the value of being an Olympian, differentiation of culture through the competing interests and values of the three main member groups, and the authority given to a charismatic figure by virtue of their special qualities as an Olympian. This is followed by a section, *Professionalisation*, describing the routinisation of charisma within the high performance (HP) group. The section contrasts the rationalisation of organisational life through the process of professionalisation of the coaching activity, with the more fluid management of careers by both coach and athlete. The fourth section is *Living the Club Identity*. Here, Bethany as a culture is seen to have a hierarchy of identity based on rowing status and honour. The final section in this chapter, *Maintaining the Traditional Gender Order*, focuses on the traditional authority in the club based on preserving its historic focus as a men's club, to understand the dominant and subordinate position of men and women. The chapter concludes with a summary of Bethany as an organisational culture.

Chapter 6 addresses the second research question. It uses the understanding developed in chapter 5, of Bethany as an organisational culture, together with the key tenets of RCT, to analyse coach-athlete relationships at the club. Points of connection and disconnection between the athlete and coach are highlighted. The second section of the chapter examines Bethany as a voluntary club organisation with value rational ideals. The examples of the kitchen closure, the enactment of the underdog identity and the opportunity to express feelings and emotion are presented. The chapter concludes with a short re-evaluation of the connection and disconnection in the coach-athlete relational process at Bethany, in light of these findings.

### 5.1 Daily life at Bethany Boat Club

*Yesterday was cold, about two or three degrees Celsius with a bitter north wind sweeping down the river. The little white water peaks and standing waves reminded both coach and athlete of the conditions at the World Championships. Today is colder, just below zero. Yet they are blessed with a bright, calm, blue sky and dark, still water. Turning the corner and along the road to the club, there is mist gently rising off the river. The weir looks like something from a film; might the Lady of the Lake rise from the depths out of the mist? Resting languidly on the horizon, the sun bathes the boatyard in an early morning aura. It is 7 am.*

*The boathouse is empty with the huge doors flung wide in two of the boat bays. They seem like two arms spread open inviting you into the club. How is it that no burglar thinks to steal from here, as there are hundreds of thousands of pounds of value – boats, blades (oars), launches, lifejackets, tools - in that shed.*

*And in the boatyard, two pairs of large scruffy trainers are upside down on the slip, co-mingling, protecting themselves from the elements. Someone is already out on the water. Dan arrives, in jeans and warm wool sweater, his feet encased in solid thick-soled boots, standard coaching gear. Bob is certainly already at the club and completed his 6am session with the juniors; this is confirmed when later, a gaggle of six junior girls walk across the boatyard in grey skirts, school bags in tow. Some catch buses and trains and any parents providing transport are not encouraged by Bob and remain out of sight – or perhaps it is just too cold to be standing in the boatyard waiting?*

*The gym is newly painted. Dan says this caused a bit of a furore between the high performance (HP) squad and the management of the club. The white paint on the*

walls covered up some “nice old red bricks”. Dan does not understand the issue. The gym is where the HP athletes train for several hours a day and so, as their workplace, it should be “nice and bright” and a place they want to go into. There are 12 ergos lined up against a long wall, each facing a mirror so that the athlete can check their posture and technique. On the other side are miscellanies of free weights, mats, bands and bikes. Five assorted coloured gym balls are strung from a net over the far blocked off door. On the back wall hangs a large British flag, with Bethany Boat Club (BBC) stuck on and signed by someone no longer rowing. There is a strange mix of industrial size fans on the wall and carpet on the floor. One expects a sweaty, musty, dank smell, but there is nothing.

Mary is in the gym with a mug of tea, wanting to know how each athlete is feeling this morning. Long limbs in lycra are being stretched by 19 men and women as they chat. Both Mary and Dan brief their athletes on the morning’s sessions. The heavyweight men are going out in singles and doubles, and Dan asks Mary if she wants Oliver to join them. The notices on the wall offer wares – bikes for sales, room to rent, massage support. On the other wall are the Squad and Junior notices. They are lists of ergo and piece-timed trials. For the seniors, they show times as a percentage of gold medal score for their category, which allows the men, women, heavyweights and lightweights to be ranked together. Their absolute time is also shown. Dan has mentally classified five of his athletes together, based on their governing body funding and competitive pedigree. On some of the sheets, these five athletes are shown in a group together in order of time, with a line under their names. Below the line are all the other athletes. George and Heinrich’s names are printed below this line, although they show some faster times than the selected five.

Today it is just coaches and athletes. No physiotherapist manipulating limbs, no cox wiring boat sound, no national coach probing technique, no physiologist extracting blood. Athletes are dispersed to get out blades and boats. They are all experienced enough to know the routine: blades laid out first by the edge of the water, boats carried gingerly out of the boathouse half-turned to protect other boats from their outstretched riggers, placed carefully on two trestles in the boatyard, to allow for feet positions to be moved, fixings checked and a space on the slip from which to boat. All three coaches go out to get two long wooden coach launches off their metal trailers and onto the water, before Bob leaves to get some breakfast from the van in the lay-by.

*It is quiet, as each gets on with a job. This is such a contrast to a Saturday training session. Then, there is a sense of carnage. Seniors and older juniors join together, some seat racing for a place in a boat, others just doing timed pieces, mayhem as 50 sets of oars are laid in rows by the water, pointing towards the boathouse. The juniors go on the water first. As a space comes available another boat is put on the river, so that boats line up bow to stern on the concrete landing stage. Anyone in the boatyard needs eyes in the back of their head, as singles carried high on one shoulder swing round to manoeuvre through the boats resting on the slings. Once there are fewer athletes left in the yard, the three coaches synchronise their stopwatches and gather up the four helpers. Bob suddenly takes control getting coaches in launches, knowing that the juniors have rowed up to the lock with no safety launches in sight.*

*However, today is quiet backstage work. Dan gets into the launch, leaving Harry on the landing stage procrastinating over a tiny adjustment to his boat. Dan slowly follows his athletes to the bottom of the island and then goes up the “down channel” to avoid washing the rowers out. Dan works the river giving some coaching to Nathan at the lock, then picks up the double and 70% of the outing is working with them, finally following Adam. Adam is very focussed on his training session.*

*Back in the clubhouse, Mary speaks to Leyla about her programme. Then Gaby says can she have a word and goes into the coaches’ office. The door is open. Soon they emerge, and Mary asks Beth if she can come in and have a word. Mary’s arm comes round and shuts the door. Meanwhile, the crew room chat carries on, athletes sprawled on settees watching fatuous daytime TV, fruit-bowl sized dishes of porridge, toast and beans variously consumed.*

*The athletes go down to the gym for the second hard session, although Luke stays upstairs resting. He tells Dan that he was the last one off the water, so needs more time to recover. Once the session ends, they drift off home to recover, some to college, some to a professional role squeezed into part-time hours, others to more casual work such as school coaching, bar work or baby-sitting.*

*The club goes quiet. During the afternoon, schools, colleges, coaches and retired members drift in and out until early evening. Committee business is then enacted. The membership secretary dressed in club colours interrupts Dan, asking why one of his athletes has not paid his club subscription. She becomes agitated, telling Dan*

*that if the athlete doesn't pay, Dan will need to tell him that he can't row at Henley Regatta. Dan quietly explains that this athlete is a net contributor to the club, bringing in £1500 from the governing body as a result of winning a medal at a major U23 championship. The membership secretary is dismissive, exclaiming that she did not understand this and declaring that rowing is not her first sport, starting only when she turned 60. She leaves. Dan comments that this is typical of Bethany; the club is run by people who don't understand rowing.*

*The gym lights are on. There are a mixture of abilities, sizes and musculature in the eight men and one woman doing circuit exercises. The woman seems to be leading the session, although they are all on a blue mat each in a circle facing each other. Some of the group seem to be finding the press-ups hard. Two more are stretching, having completed their session, and one older man and one woman are on the ergo. Only George is part of the elite morning group.*

*Spied through the open double doors of the gym, a four is just pushing off into the river. It is 7.45pm and quite dark. It is a very calm evening with a full moon. The water is glistening in the dark as the moonlight reflects off the water, and it is silent except for the heavy breathing of a runner who passes on the tow path. At first, the four is totally in the dark, but then there is a dim glow about their boat. There is also an eight waiting to go out; the cox is just fixing a white light on his head, and calls to the crew to number off, before he gets, with some difficulty, into the boat – these are ordinary club members. They push off and all that can be heard is the splash of the blades on the water, with the dim white glow unhurriedly disappearing into the distance. The day's performance ends as it began.*

## **5.2 Running a voluntary club – meeting member interests**

*Organisations which exist primarily for their members, and consume their own product, are as much to do with just being there as with doing anything. (Handy, 1988, p.13)*

This section examines the process of running a voluntary club as a starting point to understand Bethany as a sports organisation. It introduces two elements of Bethany as a culture. Firstly the over-arching world view held at Bethany, of the value of Olympianism, is presented and discussed. Secondly, the section outlines the differentiation of culture at the club, based on divergent and competing interests held by

various groups of members about the nature and purpose of the club, from high performance to grassroots participation. This introduces the notion of the plurality of Bethany as an organisational culture. The section concludes by exploring the sub-culture of the volunteer management.

### 5.2.1 The world view of Olympianism

A document on the wall outlining the club's Olympic ideals stated that, "Bethany Boat Club now has in place one of the premier racing programs ... that encompasses all varieties of rowing and sculling, for male and female, from junior to veteran and from novice to Olympian" (Club document). A local newspaper reported a club official, saying, "We want to do all we can to encourage new talent into the sport of rowing ... who may become Olympic rowers of the future is a key part of that. If we can help make someone reach the top, that will mean another rower the country can rightly be proud of" (Club document). The club website acclaimed "The thread of Olympic gold runs right through the heart of Bethany Boat Club... If they are successful, they will help to inspire the future generation of Olympians currently training at the club: ready to take on the torch for future generations."

Across the club, there was a consistency in the value afforded to the importance of being an Olympian. Weber (1968/1978) terms this type of belief a "world view" (p.450). He argues that world views imply a set of coherent values which serve to provide meaning and coherence in our lives. Further, Kalberg (2004) posits that world views

Possess an active capacity; they place into motion a certain causal impulse, according to Weber. This occurs in two ways: as "sustaining" and "dynamic" thrusts. Both endow world views with a certain autonomy (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) vis-a-vis the major worldly realms of social action and group formation. (p.142)

The ideational impulses of world views act as a precondition, rather than an absolute determinant, for the rationalisation of action (Weber, 1968/1978). Schroeder and Scribner (2006) identified that a Christian world view impacted the organisational culture of a religious college athletic department. At Bethany, the Olympic world view was expressed, in part, in how identities were constructed and lived at the club, in the traditional ways of doing things, as a driver for the disciplined and obedient way that coaches and athletes worked together, in the increasing professionalisation of coaching and rowing, how relationships were enacted and in the running of the club.

### 5.2.2 Differentiation of culture - different spheres and different interests

The breadth of membership at Bethany – adult learn to row, men, women, juniors, elite and the associated schools and universities that used the club – meant that the club did not have a single homogenous group of members with a consistent interest in being a member. There was a narrative that this was a club open to all, unlike its elitist neighbour, Kings. Some of the committee valued the opportunity for all levels of members to “rub shoulders” with each other.

Because at the end of the day Bethany Boat Club is about having a lot of people who row at different levels, with the same idea of just how to be better. It doesn't matter if you started rowing at forty, started rowing at fourteen, if you're trying to win the Ladies Plate at Henley, row in the national team at the Olympics, it's the same idea of how can I get better each day? And that's what I want the club's ethos to be at the actual foundation. (Interview, Simon, Club Captain)

This basic assumption demanded that the club catered for all aspirational levels of rowing. From this, tensions arose when members from the various groupings placed different demands on the committee, based on their interest in being a member of Bethany. The interest groupings broadly simplified into three silos - the elite coaches and athletes, including the older junior athletes (HP group), for whom rowing at Bethany was their career or profession; the general membership for whom rowing, whether recreational or competitive, was a pastime (membership); and the volunteers who managed the club, some of whom were also rowing members.

The HP group were usually at the club six or seven days a week, from 7am to early afternoon. They required good quality boats, a well-equipped gym, daily access to professional coaches, launches, and somewhere warm and dry to eat and recover. In comparison, the membership used the club more intermittently, often in the evening after work, requiring access to the boats and equipment, a social space, some volunteer coaching, and a social pleasant environment. The committee decision to lay a carpet in the gym was a simple example of the differing values in each of these two silos. Providing a carpet made the stark gym environment more appealing to general members. The carpet was also a potential health risk to elite athletes; they had daily compromised immune systems from their heavy training loads and would have benefited from an easily cleaned high tech floor, rather than a carpet that might harbour dirt and pathogens.

Other conflicts between these three broad silos of members included:

(HP versus volunteer management) Bob also raises the fact that a volunteer young coach has left Bethany because she is now paid to do a real job and is paid on Saturdays to coach. He has calculated it would cost an extra £91 for the rest of the term to fund a paid coach. The Junior Co-ordinator, Mikey again says “Our members shouldn’t be paying for a junior coach” as if the adult members are different from the junior members. (Fieldnotes, Rowing Sub-committee, 19 January)

(HP versus membership versus voluntary management) Getting the sponsorship money will make a difference. And Mikey has said, I said that I want control of that, I said that, I kept my mouth shut about big political issues, but I said that I want that money and it's coming to me to delegate as I see fit. And I don't want it disappearing into the treasurer's pocket to pay for some new dustbin or something or some oars for a bunch of people who never go rowing. It's my money and I'm using that. (Interview, Dan)

(Voluntary management versus membership versus HP) Bob tells me about the committee plans for developing the club... This would allow the gym to be used for its intended purpose of boat storage. However, some members don't want to do this and would rather use the space for covered boat storage. He thinks having the boats at the front makes most sense as it is easier to take boats straight out of the boatsheds from there. (Fieldnotes, 25 September)

(HP versus membership) In some way the problem with this club is we'll always have this participation versus elite, because we're the only club to try and do both. Kings just have elite, so they don't have anyone working against it. A lot of other clubs just have participation. You know like all the university clubs, they don't really run participation arms, or if they do, its participation well behind elite. Yeah and all the local clubs are just participation. If they have an elite side, it's one guy off his own back taking some of the athletes with self-driven motivation to try and achieve something better, but it's not part of the system, it's not part of the budget, it's not part of anything tangible. (Interview, Simon)

Research identifies tensions between different interest groups in other sport organisations. Colyer's (2000) examination of the organisational culture in three Western Australian sport organisations identified a conflict between the values held by voluntary employees, who wanted to retain existing control and order, compared with paid employees' drive for professionalism. Choi, Martin and Park's (2008) study of the culture of professional baseball league organisations highlighted the competitive management need for a rational market culture, which emphasized and valued an external goal orientation and internal control of power. However the culture which employees felt gave them most satisfaction was one based on values such as flexibility,

participation, trust, and cohesiveness. At Bethany, a cox summed up the different values of the interest groups:

They now have a kind of high performance unit as such, that some of the guys on board, who have been top rowers in their time, said right, the way that this will work is you literally have to have, you walk in a door and there's one door that says 'high performance' and there's one door that says 'club' and you turn right to go in that one, and that's it. But the general members' want, no, no, we want it to be just general club, everyone shares all the equipment and all the rest of it, which means that you then have a top guy who can pull like 5:51 on the ergo, blasting away trying to do serious training; and then you've got, with the greatest respect meant to whoever it was, a fifty five woman who doesn't really care, just flapping up and down, hands up and over knees, doesn't really care, just is doing, it's kind of like you know, gym rowing badly and she doesn't even know really why she's there, it's kind of social. And there's no reason why she shouldn't be in this club now, because it is an open kind of community club as such, but the point is there should be another side, if you go through that door to this and you go through that door to do that. So that causes obvious problems because you have those people in there, and it causes a needle between the two groups. And then you get one group saying well they're getting prioritised, why don't we get brand new boats? (Interview, HP cox)

However, the club members felt that they were marginalised compared with the elite rowers. At one of the Saturday morning sessions, one parent of a junior said, "I don't get much coaching" pointing to Dan and the high performance rowers, "these guys are not interested in me. So if I can go out, I get coaching from other members, who may have 30 or so years' rowing experience" (Fieldnotes, 25 September). Another time, a new veteran member of the club cornered the club Chairman and the Director of Rowing, asking, "How can the adults who are in the 'learn to row group' get coaching and access to boats?" The Chairman explained that rowers had to be competent to go out, and it was easier for such novice rowers to go out in a crew boat, rather than in singles; the veteran replied that, "If the club is just buying expensive competition boats, then they are catering for the elites, and not people like me" (Fieldnotes, 9 October). Thus although the club members clearly valued elite capital, they also wanted to ensure that the club was managed to meet their very different demands.

The divergence in the interests of the different groups at Bethany resulted in conflict and differentiation in organisational culture. In looking at the social world, Weber (1948/1991) suggests that the only way that humans, as cultural beings, can understand that world, is by taking a position from their standpoint and ascribing

meaning to it (Oakes, 2003). Weber uses this to distinguish between several spheres of life, both at the level of social relations in groups and at the individual level. Weber contends that there are different parts of social life and shows that beliefs in one sphere may reinforce or come into contention with those in another. The overlap between two or more spheres reinforces social stability; conflict between spheres increases the opportunity for social change (Schroeder, 1992). For example, Weber compared the conflict between the scientific domination of the intellectual sphere and the sphere of politics in modern times, where a focus on ethical values might prevail. He viewed these two spheres as increasingly differentiated in terms of values. At the individual level, Weber argues that each sphere of life makes demands on the individual's practical and ethical conduct, which in turn may reinforce or conflict with the demands from another sphere. This is supported by Kaiser, Engel and Keiner's (2009) study, which found group specific culture representations in sport managers from the for-profit and the non-profit sectors.

At Bethany, the three broad silos at the club, the HP group, the general members and the volunteers running the club, had conflicting needs and interests. There was an abutting and separation of views and values from each group. Weber (1949) explains that, "the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us" (p.57). This occasioned a differentiation in the organisational culture between the "sport for all" values of the general members, the value-laden charismatic organisational culture of management of the club by the volunteers (discussed in 5.2.3 below), and the elitist rational perspective of the HP group (discussed in section 5.3). This supported Martin's (2002) view that organisations can be understood through different lenses. Bethany could be understood using the differentiation perspective on organisational culture (Martin & Meyerson, 1988), highlighting conflict between opposing points of view. Thus this section has introduced the understanding of Bethany as plural or different (sub-) cultures. Weber suggests that such autonomous realms develop internal logics, arguing that this leads to a proliferation of beliefs and values (Gane, 2004). The result is that members at Bethany might increasingly find it more difficult to understand or legitimate actions in other parts of the club, and hence come into conflict.

### 5.2.3 Understanding the sphere of volunteer management

The organisation was a voluntary non-profit sport organisation (Heinemann, 1984; Schlagenhauf & Timm, 1976; Thiel & Mayer, 2009). Research suggests that sport organisations are different from other organisations (Southall & Nagel, 2003). Heinemann (1984) identifies that members join sports clubs for the range of services and facilities offered, and they will remain a member and contribute resources as long as these meet their interests. Further, voluntary sports clubs have democratic decision making structures, which imply open social relations within the organisation so that members are equally entitled to determine what happens at the club. With the exception of the paid coaches, the club was managed solely by volunteers. The various committees and club roles were staffed by people who volunteered to work in their spare time. As one committee member explained, “The older guys still think that, ‘oh we’re all volunteers we should, we need time to do things’ which just isn’t there. You have to... if you’re on the committee you have to commit to it.” (Interview, Committee Member). Girginov et al. (2006) argue that, in Britain, volunteerism is seen as an essential characteristic of 21st century citizenship.

Unlike the HP coaches and athletes, the volunteers running the club placed an importance on a value-rational approach to management and the authority of charisma bestowed by Olympic success. An understanding of value rational management comes from Weber’s examination of the different types of organisation. He applied his conception of ideal types to form a model of how humans act (Collins, 1986). For Weber (1968/1978), the most important form of action, termed means-end or instrumental rationality, was the rational action of getting from A to B. Instrumental action predominated in Weber’s archetypal modern form, the bureaucracy. This action consisted of decision makers calculating choices of how to operate efficiently to make a profit. However, at Bethany, managing the organisation appeared not to be instrumentally applied, as, for example, there was little long-term planning and making a profit was not prioritised and seemed to have little urgency:

Well in terms of the grand plan, the issue with the club is there isn’t a grand plan that’s written on a piece of paper. (Interview, Club Official)

(Main committee meeting): The treasurer says they will need to budget for making a loss this year. Theo challenges him and asks should we rectify this by raising money now. There is no conclusion to the discussion and the agenda moves on. (Fieldnotes, 6 April)

This lack of an instrumentally rational focus on profit is borne out in both non-sport (Paton & Cornforth, 1991; Yoshioka, 1989) and sport (Klausen, 1995; Schlagenhauf & Timm, 1976) voluntary organisations, where generating revenue is of secondary importance to other interests.

Instead, decisions could be made based, not on instrumental reasons, but on what the committee felt “was the right thing to do”. Working as a volunteer, without remuneration, meant managing Bethany constituted honorary work. Honorary workers are “in a position to live *for* their club without having to live *from* it” (Heinemann, 1984, p.202). Weber terms this form of action, value-rationality, where the action may be taken independently of its prospects of success (Weber, 1968/1978). Thiel and Mayer (2009) explain, “those holding honorary posts represent the membership only and must therefore present the illusions of being the executive agency of the general meeting, since every member has a voice in central decision-making matters” (p.91). The vacuum in the decision making process stifled the provision of a clear goal for the organisation, allowing the personal attitudes, values and likings of the various decision making functionaries to take precedence (Schlagenhauf & Timm, 1976).

Aside from a value rational approach to management, the volunteers running the club also placed an importance on the authority and decision making capability of charisma bestowed by Olympic success. The impact of leadership on organisational culture and effectiveness has been examined in several sport organisations, although the findings were equivocal (Kent & Weese, 2000; Wallace & Weese, 1995; Weese, 1996). However, leaders who were considered prototypical of the organisational culture were rated by members as more effective (Aicher & Cunningham, 2011). A key role in making decisions was the Club Captain, as “The Captain then was sort of the person which everybody looked to run the club. The Club Captain decides rowing policy” (Interview, Club Official). At Bethany, the current Club Captain, Simon, was an elite athlete. This role is used as an *example*, to illustrate the explication of charismatic authority at Bethany.

Several members at Bethany had decided that “the club needed a figurehead and Simon was that person” (Fieldnotes, 9 October). One official explained:

I’d been making a lot of changes on the junior system, trying to make that more sort of professional in some ways and Simon felt that he could keep everybody happy. He was liked as a person because of his success,

and they knew him through his rowing, and at the time my vision was that he was the best person to represent the club externally. (Interview, Club Official)

Thus the club's reliance on Simon's competence as Captain was tied to skills he acquired outside of the running of the club and his connections and contacts as an Olympic oarsman (Heinemann, 1984). Simon's Olympic success led to a perception of his advantage over other members of the club for the role (Slack, 1996; Thiel & Mayer, 2009) and the members' confidence that he could help them to achieve their goals. Weber (1968/1978, p.241) applied the term "charisma" to

a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These as such are not accessible to the ordinary person.

Simon was ascribed these qualities of charisma based on his prowess in rowing at Olympic level.

Charismatic authority is one of three types of authority in Weber's general treatise on domination, alongside traditional and legal-rational authority (Parkin, 2002). Weber accepts that not all forms of power or influence are domination and defines domination as "the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (1968/1978, p.212). Weber argues that what is important is how the individual is regarded by those subject to this charismatic authority, as they have an interest or motive in obedience. One example of the member's obedience to Simon's charismatic authority came when the Director of Rowing position became vacant. A relatively inexperienced rower from the committee came forward for the role. The Captain told him "Well as much as I, you know, respect you as a person, you've only been rowing for six years ... look I'm sorry but I can't support you as rowing, as the Director of Rowing ..." (Interview, Simon). The members backed Simon's charismatic authority and the inexperienced rower was not elected as Director of Rowing. The power of the Captain's charismatic authority was also evidenced in a confrontation with some members who didn't like the changes he had made to the junior rowing programme:

When I was captain, there then ensued a year, no it was more of a seven, eight month attack from these old guys who fought tooth and nail to the end, trying to effectively oust the rowing committee from the club. When they realised, or when they accepted that because of the work I'd done in rowing and the sort of name I had behind me, they couldn't get

anyone to stand against me as Captain, anyway, it's the Captain who runs the rowing at the club. It's in the rules, the Captain's responsible for all rowing at the club. So if they wanted to change rowing directly they'd have to replace me, but they couldn't do that. (Interview Captain)

Simon's opinion was also given deference at main committee and rowing sub-committee meetings, even in his absence. At one meeting, a committee member reported that Simon was leading the negotiations on a potential sponsorship deal, but noting,

The issue is he is not an expert and he wants to take a clause out of the agreement. But if he does, then I will have to stand down, because I can't support it based on my professional ethics. Going forward, we should just have a standard contract (Committee meeting).

So, Simon represented the valuing of the elite Olympian, embodying a form of charismatic leadership. This links to Weber's idea of the charismatic leader who is a leader by virtue of valued qualities – in this case Olympic success. This provides a useful example of how the ethos of Olympianism shaped some elements of the decision making of the club's members. For example, if the charismatic leader is unable to meet the needs of the organisation; they may jeopardise the running of the organisation, cause conflict or recede into the background. The leadership qualities embodied by the charismatic leader also differed from the leadership qualities valued by the elite coaches. Therefore, the use of Olympianism by the general club membership and those running the club was about valuing charismatic authority of people with Olympic success and differed from the endeavours and work ethic of the HP group. It is interesting that the club members seemed to want to be connected to elitism while missing out the blood, sweat and tears, and attached importance to decisions and actions based on value rationality.

Weber sees charismatic leadership as a pure type of legitimacy. When the followers cease to believe in the leader, his authority is annulled. Parkin (2002) makes a comparison between the charismatic leader and a sporting hero, in that performance is kept under constant review by his adulators. Faith is voluntarily invested in him. It is because the legitimacy of charisma lies solely in the faith bestowed in the leader, and cannot be coerced, that it is not a stable system of rule. The attempt to routinise charisma into the service of routine ends leads to its dissipation. Charisma cannot be preserved or passed on (Parkin, 2002). Charisma is thus a revolutionising force on other established orders in organisations, such as patriarchalism or bureaucracy. Despite its

revolutionising action, Weber thought bureaucracy would bring the demise of charisma, that “it is the fate of charisma...to recede with the development of permanent institutional structures” (Weber, 1968/1978, p.1133).

#### **5.2.4 Summary**

This section has used the concept of organisational culture to understand the process of Running a Voluntary Organisation, and thus to start to understand Bethany as a sports club. This highlighted the world view of the importance of being an Olympian, held across the club. Kalberg (2004) suggests that world views are a precondition in the understanding and development of culture. The world view of Olympianism was illuminated in who the volunteers chose to run the club and the importance attached to being an Olympian for the general members. This world view is also used to understand the Professionalisation of coach and athlete roles in section 5.3, and as thread through the discussion in the remainder of this chapter, and chapter 6.

This section also introduced the notion of Bethany, not as a single organisational culture, but as plural sub-cultures. Three organisational value spheres were identified: the grass roots sport-for-all organisational values of the ordinary members; the HP coach and athlete group’s scientific routinised means-end value focus; and the value-rational decision making and charismatic values of the club management. This provides multiple understandings of Bethany as an organisational culture and identifies why there was sometimes conflict between the different member groups.

### **5.3 Professionalisation – iron cages and liquid modernity**

*The ‘art of the possible’...the possible is often reached by striving to attain the impossible that lies beyond it. (Weber, 1949, p.23-4)*

One of the elements of organisational culture introduced in the previous section was the idea of a HP coach and athlete sub-culture of scientific and rational practice. This section focuses on the process of professionalisation of the coach and athlete roles, in order to add to the understanding of the HP group developed in section 5.2. This deepens the knowledge of the HP group and of Bethany as a sports club. First examined is the on-going professionalisation of coaching and how this was influenced by the world view of Olympianism. The section then presents the elements of culture arising from the professionalisation process: the notion of the coach as expert; the ethic of

responsibility based on the moral imperative of being a professional coach; the constraints on coaches as they try to manage their professional career; and the liquidity of the athlete career. These build a picture of the instrumental scientific organisational sub-culture of the HP group. The section concludes with a discussion of the tension between the resulting rational, means-end organisational sub-culture and the more fluid nature of professional careers, to further add to the understanding of Bethany as a sports club.

### **5.3.1 Professionalisation of the coach – winning medals**

Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) argue that it is essential for nations to adopt a systematic and strategic approach to developing elite athletes, in order for sport national governing bodies to gain a competitive advantage over rival countries. This has encouraged sports coaching to move from a voluntary occupation to a professional role under the governance of national sporting and coaching bodies (Taylor & Garratt, 2010). Amateurs and goodwill have been replaced by standards, accreditation and structure. UK Sport has identified coaching as a key element of the high performance system in the UK. Coaching is seen as crucial to the success of British athletes (UK Sport, 2011). Ritzer (1975) explains that a profession is an occupational category and professionalisation the process by which occupations becomes professions. The shift to professionalism in this field has sought to increase knowledge and overcome concerns over a lack of guidance on moral and ethical responsibilities in sport. Professionalisation of sport organisations has also brought an increase in specialisation and standardisation in organisational processes, particularly relating to technical expertise in the organisation (Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1991). This has been found to create tensions with the historically voluntary culture in sport organisations (Colyer, 2000; Thibault et al., 1991). At Bethany, such a systematic and strategic approach encapsulated the professionalisation of coaching practice.

Taylor and Garratt's (2010) examination of the professionalisation of sport coaching further identified the commitments that coaches comply with in enacting their role, including obligation, piety and other elements embodied in professional behaviour. At Bethany, there was no evidence of coercion on the part of the club or governing body to expect the coaches to undertake their professional duties in this way. Rather, as Taylor and Garratt (2010) argue, the coaches took responsibility for their actions as professionals. The internalisation of this behaviour as a professional was actively and

not passively undertaken. Foucault (1977, p.203) claims the individual becomes “the principle of his own subjection”. Thus the coaches were “simultaneously masters and slaves of their own professional practice” (Taylor & Garratt, 2010, p.128). At Bethany, the coaches’ aim was to ensure athletes were selected into the national squad, which would enable them to have the opportunity for Olympic success. As discussed in section 5.2.1, this world view acted as a precondition to the professionalisation of coaching and rowing as activities at the club. Mary explained the urgency of the work, “And also I suppose in rowing you only ever have one time a year to properly deliver, I think people get you, what you’re doing, but you know, the hard core gold medal results ... that opportunity only comes once a year” (Interview, Mary).

The next sections discuss the impact of the on-going professionalisation of coaching, commencing with the coach as expert.

### **5.3.2 Being the expert**

Expertise was one aspect of the professionalisation of the coach. At Bethany, for the three paid coaches, the creation of their role as a professional coach positioned them as expert. They presented an image of expertise in how they dressed each day. For example they wore specialised kit for water sports e.g. Musto sailing dungarees, thick boots, and national squad jackets. Mary took a ready packed water proof bag into the coach launch each time, full of hats, sun cream, sunglasses, first aid materials, dry clothes, basic tools, and a pair of gloves in a special pouch, which when worn, signalled the onset of particularly cold weather. Bob had special goggles for days when the rain would otherwise mist up his vision. The image of expert coach was solidified as they used Bethany as their professional work space. Each coach had access to a computer each day in the cubby that was the coaches’ office, with its cramped space and sloping roof, squeezed in a corner of the crew room. The door closed when the coaches wanted to afford athlete and coach some privacy when discussing personal or performance issues, and opened to demonstrate the accessible face of coaching. The designation of the space and the thin door served to separate the coaches from the melee of the crew room.

Each of the coaches had athletes with varying rowing expertise. Some were in their first year of the sport, needing to be watched throughout a session in case they capsized or could not row safely, whilst others could be sent upstream to complete a 16

km session with little supervision. The age of Bob's junior athletes meant that he or another qualified coach was required to supervise every session, on land or on water. Athletes were also at different stages in their rowing career: Harry was preparing for the trial process for selection to the national squad, Heinrich was working towards a medal at Henley Regatta and Leyla aimed to move to a more skilled group at the frequent talent camps. The rowers relied on the coaches' expertise. Gaby explained:

We learnt everything from Mary. I honestly don't know how she has done it ... we were so shit ... we couldn't even sit in a boat. She's taught us everything from scratch, like literally everything. And, God, it must have been the most infuriatingly ... I cried in sessions because I just didn't understand. (Interview, Gaby)

The size, length and geography of the river, with its islands behind which a rowing boat might not be seen, added to the complexity of coaching all the athletes in every session. The result was that the three coaches felt they needed to make contact with each athlete *every* day, leaving them often unable to take a day off from work. A governing body official confirmed this:

You know they are present for every session, whether it's on the water or in the gym, and you know if I just look at that objectively from the outside, there is absolutely no reason that the coaches need to be there for every single session, observing, participating. (Interview, Governing Body official)

The coaches demonstrated expertise daily through their technical knowledge. For example, the coaches guarded the detailed competence of how to rig the boats. This was done by adjusting the span, height and pitch of the metal riggers and gates on the boats or through changing the position of the collar on a blade to change the gearing of the oar. This ensured it was optimal for every athlete to achieve maximum boat speed for efficient effort. Mary called rigging "a black art", as there were so many variables to consider, such as the athlete's height and arm span, flexibility, or power. She explained "rigging tables exist, which I might use, but they're only a guide!" In addition, she observed the athletes as they rowed, to identify what adjustments were needed. This expertise was reinforced as a black art when, one day, Mary changed the pitch on the pin of a boat. She went to look for a "persuader", even though that turned out to be a metal tube from the vacuum cleaner, and not a scientific or complicated tool (Fieldnotes, 10 May).

The expertise of the coaches conferred authority over the activities of the athletes. Weber uses the term "authority to command" simultaneously with that of

“domination” (Weber 1968/1978, p.212). Domination is defined as “the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (Weber, 1968/1978, p.53). The authority to command arising from coach expertise, and the obedience of the athletes was demonstrated by a junior rower, saying “Bob’s the coach. He says that if you are not quiet, you are not focussed on your exercise, so we’re quiet. He does allow us to chat if we’re stretching” (Fieldnotes, 15 January).

Other examples of how the expertise of the coaches legitimised their authority over athletes included:

(In preparing for a race) Mary calls all the crew into a circle and gives them very clear instruction on what they need to do in the race, including making it clear that the cox will lead them once on the water. (On race day). All the crew sit around the table with Mary in the centre. Mary is going through the race plan. All the crew are watching her intently and listening. Silent. (Fieldnotes, 8 March/19 March)

He’s now coach Dan, and I think that’s quite an important distinction for me to make because obviously I kind of come into it with a lot of knowledge of the sport and everything else, but I need to, subservience is not the right way, but he’s the coach, I’m the cox, we have to work together, but he’s the boss. (Interview, cox).

This suggests that authority stemming from the coaches’ expertise facilitated a culture of coach domination, particularly in relation to the relationship with athletes. (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Jones et al., 2005). Jones (2011) argues that authority can become legitimised through the role as expert coach, and individuals may acquiesce to this authority if they feel the hardship of compliance is outweighed by the benefit of subordination. Such subordination is described in the literature as dichotomised to the dimensions of active/passive or powerful/powerless (Surrey, 1991b). This is discussed further in section 6.1.1 in chapter 6.

In summary, the realm of expert knowledge provided the coaches with an impersonal form of rule (Gane, 2004). The ensuing aspect of Bethany as a culture was one of coach authority over athlete, of “domination through knowledge” (Weber, 1968/1978, p.225). Weber goes on to say, “This consists on the one hand in technical knowledge which, by itself, is sufficient to ensure it a position of extraordinary power. But in addition to this ... the holders of power who make use of them, have the tendency to increase their power still further” (p.225).

### 5.3.3 The moral imperative of supporting athletes

The second area of professionalisation of the coach role came from their realisation of the moral importance of their professional capability. They understood the value of their coaching in enabling their athletes to succeed. For Bob, the moral imperative of being a professional coach required him to recognise the importance of his coaching in supporting the aims of his athletes. Bob explained:

You are seeing people, seniors, juniors, who want to get into the national rowing team, which is on top of the world ... And people are trying to get into the team from this club and to not put everything that we can do that in place is to me, criminal and negligent and failing those people who move..... their entire life or put on hold, they move geographically to come and do something in the faith, belief that it's going to be put there for them to do, or the environment is going to be right for them. And then they quickly discover that that is not entirely the case. And that's infuriating. (Interview, Bob)

The coaches spent a considerable amount of their working day supporting athletes. For Dan, this could include sitting down for 15 minutes with Adam reviewing an outing, his technique, ergo scores or video analysis, and then spending a further two hours with six more of the HP group. At competitions, the support ranged from towing boats, briefing crews, fixing boats and techniques to calm athletes' anxiety, to the examples of extreme practicality. For example, at the Women's Head of the River Race, Mary manoeuvred blades through the melee of boats waiting to launch, to her crew. The rowers waded into the river to get into their boats. Once seated, Mary then deftly collected nine pairs of wellies flung from boat to bank, sweeping them into a big washing basket before placing them on the bankside ready to return them to the athletes once the race finished. After one of the selection trials, Dan explained, demonstrating that support might also be strategic,

I told them to put their all into this, as the water session might be cancelled on the Sunday, and if so, they would have had to leave without performing well. Actually, what happened was the water conditions changed during the water trial, so those going first, who pulled the weaker ergo, got an advantage. (Fieldnotes, 4 November)

Taylor and Garratt (2010) state that for coaching to become a profession, it must not only incorporate the acquisition of new knowledge and training and be capable of forging new networks and relationships but also be morally compliant with a responsibility to a core moral code. The coaches lived the ethic of responsibility through having a clear focus on getting their athletes onto the national squads using calculated

and specific means to achieve this. Esther outlined the rational approach that her coach took in ensuring that she performed well:

We know the session before we go out on the slip. She knows exactly what we are going out to do. She's just so on top of things and so organised. And I've never had a whole training plan that makes so much sense. And that gives you confidence because you know what you are working towards. I think that's really important, for me. (Interview, Esther)

Weber links the ethic of responsibility with action which takes account of the prospects and consequences of action and the means with which to achieve those ends (Gane, 2004). The moral imperative of the coaches facilitated a culture of calculable coach actions to enable their athletes to achieve their rowing goals of getting into the national team and beyond.

#### **5.3.4 Managing coaching careers**

The shift to professionalism also enabled the three Bethany coaches to view their role as a career. However, the process of having a career set the coach in a circular process of dependency between coach and athlete and coach and employer. This dependency and the impact on the organisational culture are discussed below.

To manage the demands of their athletes, the coaches devoted most of their available time to the role. Depending on individual competition, testing or athlete demands, they worked between 30 to 60 hours each week, sometimes for seven days in succession. The typical day started at six or seven a.m. and could continue until ten in the evening if needed for sessions with juniors, athletes with a day job, meetings and travel to other locations. This left little room for holidays. For example, Dan managed both the HP men and the club group. He ran the water session with the HP men first thing in the morning. The athletes often managed the second morning session themselves to allow him to complete his administration tasks and plan for the training session later in the day for the evening club men. He found sometimes that, although the men trialling for the national squad did demand most of his time on their performance, they did not always receive it, as he was too busy with the other areas of work. He explained,

I have to look at the trialists *and* the club athletes. Ideally you would look at one or the other, because it's too much for one person. Two people could. If you had everybody here at the same time, it would be a

bit different, but it is so fragmented, you just can't do it that way.  
(Interview, Dan)

As discussed in section 5.3.2, the coach's perceived expertise attracted athletes to the club; however, it required the coach to help those athletes to be successful, in order for the coaches' perceived expertise and reputation to be maintained. Jones et al. (2003) reported the pressure this put on a coach to get results in order to maintain a reputation and a job, "I love trying to help players to improve and all that, but if I don't get results, I won't have a job" (p.225). Thus the Bethany coaches' careers partly depended on the performance of their athletes.

Demands from employers also impacted the coach career and their relationship with athletes. The coaches' employment was short term and low paid. Mary's contract for 18 months prompted her to take some time away from her role to enrol on a masters level sports science programme in an attempt to maintain her ability to find work. Both Bob and Dan had fixed term contracts. Bob said, "I've not been happy for a while. My contract runs for another year and a half, but I'd think about taking a rowing master role at a private school. I'd get about £14k more than I do now and have people working for me!" The coaches had moments of disenfranchisement.

Dan was partly funded by Bethany and the national team. Bethany's desire to win at Henley Royal Regatta (HRR), and the fact that he received a bonus based on this, eventually forced Dan to shift his focus from the delivery of athletes to the national squad to the Bethany club members in the Henley crew. This was also true for Bob, who said:

We are penalised because we didn't win Henley for the club, although we did lots of other stuff e.g. get people into the national squad, develop athletes, win schools events, win HRR etc. The club is run by amateurs who don't understand our role and ...who know nothing about elite rowing. (Fieldnotes, 14 November).

Similarly, Mary was asked to coach a national crew over the summer, and she accepted it as she felt it influenced her credence with her manager at the governing body. This opportunity, even at junior or under 23 level, had a status attached to it that might open the possibility to work in a US College programme or elsewhere in the national squad. Mary found herself shuttling backwards and forwards between the national training centre and Bethany, keeping tabs on her regular athletes. She described how she felt:

And like this week or two now, where you're running a lot of athletes, I get, I wind myself up and I'm not thinking right because I've so many people to think about. I'm just like aagh, and I don't feel I'm doing things right, and that winds me up a little bit. (Interview, Mary)

Mary found it hard to maintain the connections with her athletes. Explaining,

I find it very hard to switch off, but I think because that's because it's human. It's not a job, like I worked with computers before. It's very easy to leave them behind. I was very good at switching off when I left, but not with the personal dynamics that you kind of leave behind, and I think that's sometimes for me, I think I need to be careful or else I get swallowed into it too much. (Interview, Mary)

Thus managing the conflicting demands of athlete and employer to maintain a career as a rowing coach entrapped the coach in a culture of dependency. Weber (2011, p.177) uses the metaphors of a "coat" made of "steel-hard casing" to describe a style of life that becomes "a grinding mechanism" and cannot be thrown off. He contrasts the image of hardness with a "lightweight coat", which might metaphorically describe coaching as a role before the advent of the professionalisation of careers. This positions the work culture for the coaches as a complex mix of dedication, authority, dependency and attention to the tiny details that might make an athlete row faster, mixing passion and disillusion in a cocktail of containment.

### **5.3.5 Having a career as an athlete**

Not only did the process of professionalisation initiate a career for the coaches, but the athletes also viewed their role as a HP rower as a career, particularly when they first came to the club or joined the talent programme. Harry explained that he was rowing full-time, although he had another job from October until early January working six days and twenty hours a week. He chose to leave the paid role and forwent the income to concentrate on rowing, because, "It was an absolute nightmare and I was absolutely exhausted the whole time. And I was losing a lot of the benefit of my training through being exhausted" (Interview, Harry). The lucky ones received some funding from the governing body; others eked out benefit money and supplemented with casual employment; a few balanced a professional rowing career with part-time work in another professional role, such as accountant or management consultant.

In a business career, progression is often measured by being promoted to a higher level role. The HP athletes measured progression by results from the trials, competitions and ultimately selection to the national squad. Sometimes the process of

testing an athlete's performance provided complete certainty. The outcome of one of the systemised series of trials could brutally end a rowing career. Malcolm's performance at one trial signalled the end of his rowing career. The rowers discussed this a few days later in the crew room as Luke told the other rowers "You know, Malcolm's not going to continue to train seriously now." He went on to explain that Malcolm had joined the national squad very quickly after he started to row, but had not had a coach who developed the underlying skills to support his rowing. Through poor technique he became injured and was removed from the team, finally ceasing to compete and train seriously after his performance in the national trial (Fieldnotes, 22 February).

However, the athlete's perspective was that it was not just your performance that got you selected, but also whether "they" liked you. Damien felt that "they" were the governing body chief coach and performance director plus the coach of the group you might be in (Fieldnotes, 26 April). One example came later in the season for Adam and Damian. Their performance at trials had not enabled them to be selected to the main squad, who competed in world level events; however there remained the possibility they would be asked to represent the country at the European Championships. When asked when and how they would know this, they replied with a shrug, saying "We've just got to wait in limbo, putting life on hold for a bit. We're not sure what really we're training for, until 'they' decide what the crews are going be". The final process of selection appeared secret and somewhat shrouded in myth, a contrast to the rationalised method of testing and trialling potential squad members.

The coaches were not always cognisant of this career uncertainty for athletes. After one set of national trials, Luke waited patiently to see Dan to discuss the implication of his performance on his selection. Dan told him that he could not talk that day, despite Luke's clear agitation, "When we want to speak with him, Dan always says 'We'll speak tomorrow,' but tomorrow never comes. I know he needs to focus on the Henley crew as he gets rewarded by the club for this, but where does that leave what we want to do?" (Fieldnotes, 4 May). Luke was aware that Dan controlled a line of communication about his performance and selection with the national coach and other selectors, through his expertise as a coach and his personal relationships. A few unsupportive remarks by Dan could make all the difference to whether or not Luke was asked to join the squad.

However, compared with the coaches, the athletes were much freer to take their

labour elsewhere, and there was a slow turnover of athletes joining and leaving the HP group. Purdy et al. (2009) presented evidence that the success of an elite rower enabled him to have control over how and when he trained. Just as the athletes chose to join Bethany based on an evaluation of the benefits to themselves, so they could also choose to leave the club and take their labour with them, like contract labourers, to another club. This liquidity resulted in sometimes new, more frail forms of social relations and more fluid solidarities (Clegg & Baumeler, 2010). This resulted in a culture of transience, beginnings and endings, where there was pervasive insecurity for both coach and athlete which influenced how they related.

### **5.3.6 Steel-hard casing or liquid modernity?**

Weber examined the nature and impact of professions. He used the example of the priesthood as an ideal type of profession, to highlight that a professional has the “distinguishing quality ...in his professional equipment of special knowledge, fixed doctrine, and vocational qualifications” (Weber, 1968/1978, p.425). The beginning of this section presented Bethany coaches who had constructed a role which was a specialised fulltime occupation, with a clientele, salary, professional duties and a distinctive way of life (Ritzer, 1975). The Bethany coaches were moving from a craft occupation to one which had become rationalised through systematic teaching, with emphasis on theory and science of the sport and from the input of the national governing body. Arising from this expertise from their professional way of life was a moral imperative to do their best to ensure that their athletes succeeded in achieving their national and Olympic aims. This focussed them on using instrumental calculable means to achieve these ends, demonstrated by the power over nature of the coach-athlete relationship. Weber describes the ensuing constraint on daily life as “a steel-hard casing” (Weber, 2011, p.177) of rationalisation which “traps the individual within an ‘iron cage’ of subjugation and containment” (Gabriel, 2005, p.11). The dependency of the coach on the daily need to deliver athlete performance to enable them to keep their jobs and their professional expertise, simply added to the organisational culture of entrapment where “the performance of each individual is mathematically measured, each man becomes a little cog in the machine” (Mayer, 1956, p.126).

However, in contrast, the professionalisation of athletes’ careers enabled a much more fluid organisational culture and resulting relationships. Transience of the athlete rowing career caused a shift in the metaphor. Bauman (2001) charts the rise of liquid

labour and markets and states “Transience has replaced durability at the top of the value table” (Bauman & Tester, 2001, p.95). Clegg and Baumeler (2010) suggest the organisational metaphor of liquid capital is one where the organisation is more flexible in relation to market forces. The semblance of solidity from the image of a steel-hard casing is replaced with an essence of organisational fluidity at the club. This section has thus added to the understanding of Bethany, developed in section 5.1 and 5.2, through using the lens of organisational culture.

#### **5.4 Identification – living the club identity**

*All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify. (Goffman, 1959, p.78)*

The section examines the process of Identification at Bethany. The cultural practices of how athletes and coaches interpreted and realised the norms of being an athlete or coach in this club are explored. These are discussed, along with an understanding of the rituals and artefacts associated with belonging to Bethany Boat Club, to better understand what it means to be part of Bethany as an organisation. The section then goes on to identify one way in which the organisational culture is stratified - based on status. This new element of organisational culture further enlarges the understanding of Bethany as a sport organisation.

Hatch and Schultz (2002) hypothesise the link between culture and identity, arguing for a dynamic process of reflexivity whereby organisational members understand and explain themselves as an organisation. Not only are subjects “constituted through a number of rules, styles and conventions to be found in the cultural environment” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24), but organisational identity is reinforced through the process of reflecting on identity in relation to other cultural assumptions. Jenkins (2008) defines identity as “the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’ (and hence ‘what’s what’)” (p.5). He argues that to live routine lives as humans we continually enact a process of identification i.e. knowing who we are and who others are. For without this, we cannot relate to each other meaningfully or consistently. Hatch and Schultz (2002) claim that identity is formed through interaction with others. Further, in this process of identification, the individual and the collective are entangled with each other. Identification can be drawn from an analysis of the social and the personal identity. Thus identity is constructed by individuals in three ways: the

world as made up by individuals and what goes on in their heads; the world constituted relationally through what goes on between people; and the world of pattern and organisation in the established way of doing things. At the club, these three ways of constructing identity fed into the process of identification through their experience of identity as a rower, as coach and their experience of being a club member at Bethany.

#### **5.4.1 Being a rower**

Identity was partly formed from people's individual perception about being a rower or a coach and this was internalised and embodied in their actions. Clothing was one way in which athletes chose to assert their individuality, yet still presenting themselves as a rower. In general, practicality and the weather dictated the function of what was worn. So on a chilly October morning, athletes on the water for the first early morning session, had on hats and leggings, along with long-sleeved training tops. None wore club kit; choosing instead to sport a mixture of garments. Heinrich stood out wearing a bright long sleeved top, all in one, leggings and a shocking pink hat with sunglasses – and an incongruous pair of slides on his bare feet! (Fieldnotes, 21 October). At races, athletes were required by governing body rules to wear club kit, yet still sometimes made a statement with their clothing e.g. at the Head of the River Race, one athlete complemented his club kit with distinctive Boat Race wellington boots; at one of the frequent testing sessions, Adam shaved his head and donned a national vest. Both athletes used their clothing to make a statement about their status as rowers and individuals.

Being a rower also included participating in the daily collective activities. Eating was one collective activity, with much of the same food stuff of cereals, bread and beans consumed by every athlete, although Adam often brought along neat foil-wrapped sandwiches which railed against the “hard man” image he liked to portray. Sometimes an athlete purposely adjusted their behaviour in order to fit with their perception of what it was to be a rower. Goffman (1959) assumes that individuals consciously pursue goals and interests in order to be and to be seen to be part of the accepted social order. Ben was a young rower on the talent programme. Quite soon after he joined the club he attempted to fit in with the more experienced heavyweight rowers at the club, through adjusting his eating habits. Ben's actions merged with the organisational culture when he changed from eating cereal after the early morning training session to eating soup, as it was, he said, “the in thing” that the other male heavyweight rowers were eating.

Jenkins (2008) claims that it is not enough simply to assert an identity, as “the assertion must be validated by those with whom we have dealings” (p.42). Signals that an individual sends about their identity are received and interpreted by others. At Bethany, coaches, athletes, officials and club members continuously constructed and deconstructed identities based on their perceptions of the meaning attached to other people’s actions. An example, towards the end of the season, demonstrated how an interaction between Nathan and Gaby created and challenged their identities as rowers and provided the prospect of connection. Mary entered Gaby into Women’s Henley, one of the most prestigious women’s events. This butted against Nathan’s view of Gaby as a “beginner” rower. He questioned how she could be good enough to race in this competition as she was still in her first year of rowing. Gaby proved her readiness in the race by performing to Mary’s expectations and reaching the quarter finals. Mary was attuned to both Gaby and Nathan’s new sense of identity and empathetic to their inner experience of self. She explained, “I think that Gaby competing at such an event may have knocked Nathan’s view of himself, as he is far more experienced as a rower compared to her, but he’s not competing at the same level that she is now competing at, and that bothers him”. Thus her support for Gaby’s development as a rower gave her the opportunity to respect and enhance Gaby’s identification as a person (Jordan, 1991a).

#### **5.4.2 Being a coach**

Being “seen to be” the coach was also evident. Dan confirmed this in his choice of crews and boats to enter into Henley Regatta. The results from the recent Metropolitan Regatta were equivocal and he was unsure whether entering a four or an eight in HRR would give the club the best result.

Towards the end of an outing with his eight hopefuls, Dan decided to ask for some input from the athletes. Once he and the crew landed he addressed the eight men, telling them the outing was good, “A good platform to build on”. He asked them for their thoughts on which crews would be most effective at HRR and told them they could tell him now or come and see him in his office in the next 30 minutes. Angus spoke up immediately, “I think the eight has the best chance”. Dan did not hesitate to reply, “I think so too”. The other rowers nodded in agreement, but this was not surprising, as otherwise the club would only take a four to HRR, and therefore some such as Archie would not get a seat in a boat at HRR. (Fieldnotes, 7 June)

This routine of interaction allowed Dan to maintain face and be co-operative in doing so. Dan and Angus cooperated in building each other’s self image. Goffman

(1959) states that social interaction is a circular process in which everyone gives another an ideal self and receives back their own self from other people. This is front stage action. Dan performed in character as coach, “some kind of image, usually credible, which the individual on stage and in character effectively induces the others to hold in regard to him” (Goffman, 1959 p.223). Dan acted enough of the coach role to seek input, but not be seen to give away the decision and maintain his identity as coach. Goffman (1959) states “ To *be* a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one’s social grouping attaches thereto” (p.81).

The process of maintaining the standard of conduct and appearance as coach challenged Dan’s ability to represent himself fully in relationship (Miller et al., 2004). Authenticity is ever evolving, “a process in movement...as a consequence of the relational dynamics” (Miller et al., 2004, p.73). In an attempt to stay in connection with his athletes, Dan momentarily loosened the “power over” vested in his role and expertise, by giving them the option to decide on which boat would race at Henley. Yet in maintaining face, he felt unable to trust them with the internal dilemmas about crew selection that he had wrestled with. Miller et al. (2004) explain that we are constantly working with such dilemmas in relationships, deciding when to reveal something difficult that may hurt or grow the relationship.

### **5.4.3 Belonging to Bethany Boat Club**

The influence of identity stretched further than simply actions to assert an identity as a rower or coach; additionally, a collective identity of belonging to and being part of Bethany as a club was continuously reinforced and challenged. Jenkins (2008) defines organisations as “organised and task-oriented collectivities: they are groups. They are also constituted as networks of differentiated identities which bestow specific individual identities upon their incumbents” (p.45). The following discusses the process of collective identification at Bethany.

**Rituals.** Rituals are one of the most commonly studied cultural forms which provide an insight in to organisational culture (Martin, 1992). At a simple level, the organisational ritual of new athletes adopting the club rowing identity shaped the collective identity of belonging to Bethany. To represent the club at competitions, the governing body rules required athletes to conform to a number of practices, such as

previously mentioned, the wearing of club colours. An additional rule made it obligatory that all blades had to be painted in the club colours and boats were required to display an identification number signifying the rower's club. Not all the rowers wanted to adopt this collective identity. Just prior to the first set of trials in the year, Dan produced two cans of spray paint and some boat identification numbers, instructing the athletes to put the club registered number on their private boats and paint the spoon of their blades the club colours. He was unequivocal in his instruction. Harry refused to change his blades from their distinctive livery of his previous club, so he was forced to use some blades belonging to the club for the trial. Others acquiesced quietly and adopted the club identity. Ben resisted in order to maintain his previous identity. He wanted to keep the gold lettering of the identification number of his previous club because it matched the gold custom stripes he had on his boat – the new Bethany letters were black – as it “ruins my image”. The process of painting blades and re-numbering boats acted as if to erase all traces of a previous allegiance to a competing club and made a statement that now they were a Bethany person. It was almost, as Gergen (2009) suggests, that the you and the I of athlete and organisation ceased to exist, so they “were not discrete ‘forms’ but continuous ‘forming’” (p. 30) and the individual was mortified into the collective (Goffman, 1961).

**Social status – Henley.** The club made a statement about its social level in the world of rowing through the artefacts festooned around the club and outside. Social identity can be revealed by signs and marks, such as gender, age or class, which place the individual according to social categories (Denison, 2011). The artefacts at Bethany included a huge wooden board in the main staircase detailing all the club's Henley wins, a list of the people who died in the two World Wars, Head of the River wins and Commonwealth Games (Empire Games) and Olympic victories. The board was surrounded by a bright array of national flags and blades. In the main room, dusty blades from Henley wins were slung from the black rafters and the walls were plastered with fading photographs of different crews in the Head of the River event and HRR. The crew room sported a colourful display detailing the long history of the club and contrasted with recent photographs of junior squad and current club national successes. Unremarkable until you noticed it, was the large sign on the outside of the clubhouse recognising the Olympic win of decades ago by some members.

The daily presence of these artefacts enabled members to engage in a reflective process of identity. Hatch and Schultz (2002) explain that this process enables identity to become part of the organisational culture as members understand and explain the club as an organisation. These artefacts became symbols by virtue of the meaning attached to them by different groups of members. In the high performance group, the artefacts were symbolic of what they might achieve through their hard work and training. When asked what impact the flags, blades and photos had on him, a high performance cox replied:

I like it, I think there's something I like about rowing clubs, the more established ones is when they have pride in their history because it will say to all the people who walk up the stairs, here's a sense of where we've come from and maybe where we could get to, some other person in this club actually could do it, wow, fancy that. You know it makes it a bit more real to you. (Interview, cox)

These symbols helped to reinforce the importance of what the rowers and coaches did each day and to enable them to see there was a purpose for the training, an "end".

For the general members of the club, these artefacts represented the prestige of being a member of such a historically successful club.

(Mikey) Ordinary members join Bethany because of the club's reputation and expect that just by joining they will become a good rower; and it is a wake-up to them that they still have to work hard to improve! (Fieldnotes, 9 October)

Whilst prestige was adjudged to come from the breadth of the club's successes, there was a particular identification with victory at Henley Royal Regatta (HRR). The subject of Henley and the preparation of athletes to represent the club at this event were discussed at each committee and rowing sub-committee meeting. Identification with HRR was evidenced in interviews with individuals:

I think he's (Dan) concentrating much more on Henley on the sort of high performance club side, or the club side of the high performance group, which is necessary because you know like I said half, you know a lot of how Bethany's viewed within the rowing world will be judged on its Henley success, and you know it's done well in the Eights Head and done well in the Fours Head and all this sort of stuff. But people tend to forget those results pretty quickly if you do or don't win Henley. (Interview, Adam)

And I've won Henley twice as well, which is probably on a par with Wimbledon in sports like that, except when you're within rowing you don't realise the significance of winning at Henley, and I suppose because it's not publicised as much, the traditions aren't broadcast, but if you compare it to Ascot, Wimbledon, Henley, Polo, it's all about the same. (Interview, Mikey)

And through observation:

He is wearing a pale blue Remenham Club sweater. He asks briefly what I am

doing here, and then tells me all about the history of the club. He joined in 1982 when there were no women allowed. He has won Henley a few times and tells me he can get me tickets next year, patting the logo on his jumper to affirm his status in doing this. (Fieldnotes, 25 September)

Dan talks a lot about Henley. He was attracted to take the coach role here by the club's ability to win Henley and attract new athletes. (Fieldnotes, 13 September)

There are posters on the walls advertising a social event this weekend to raise funds for athletes to attend Henley Regatta, Henley Women's Regatta and National Schools. (Fieldnotes, 7 June)

Success at Henley was part of the club identity, perceived as necessary to maintain the status and honour of this long standing club. As Adam said, "If you win Henley, you know from a club point of view, gives you bragging rights over if you haven't won Henley essentially" (Interview, Adam). Collins (1986, p.134) calls this a process of legitimation, "a cloaking oneself in claims of honourableness" based on the prowess of the club.

#### **5.4.4 Stratification of status – status groups**

The focus at the club on success, both internationally and at Henley Regatta provided the members with a common outlook, and a rationale for the attitudes held and behaviours of prestige by club members. However, within the club, all members were not created equally in terms of prestige, as there was a stratification of status amongst different groups, from those who had significant perceived success in rowing, down to the adult learn to row group who had little experience in the sport, and received little coaching or access to the best equipment. Weber's (1948/1991) model of stratification is framed around the combination of economic advantage, prestige and power. It is used here as an analytical device to understand the different strata of status, or status groups, operating at Bethany.

**Olympians and Henley winners.** Weber (1968/1978) places store on the prerogatives heaped on those who possess property or productive wealth. "Property and 'lack of property' are, therefore, the basic categories of all class situations" (p.927). Weber groups people who tend to act in the same way and have certain attitudes. Members at Bethany did not have physical property in terms of bricks and mortar or other symbols of wealth; but they did have productive property in the form of their physical body and its capability to be a successful rower or coach e.g. to win at Henley and beyond. Thus those with several Henley and international wins/medals or even Olympians, were paralleled to Weber's highest status group. Collins (1986) says rituals

and proper formalities are valued by this group of people. At Bethany, rituals and formalities relating to Henley came in the format of membership of the prestigious Stewards' Club and Remenham Club, both of which gave ringside access to the Henley course. Membership of the Stewards' Enclosure is limited to approximately 6,500. There is a long waiting list (almost 1,000) to join, from which preference is given to those who have competed at the Regatta. The Remenham rules for membership restricted access to this privilege to:

Full Members shall be those who are Members of their Founding Club and who have competed for that Club at Henley Royal Regatta or Henley Women's Regatta or in such events as to indicate to the Committee a proficiency in oarsmanship. (Remenham Club, 2012)

A status group is one basis for staking claims to material and symbolic rewards (Parkin, 2002). Thus for these members of Bethany, wins at Henley and other prestigious events provided them, as a status group, with a means to maintain their prominence over other groups, such as the general membership or the aspiring high performance athletes (Parkin, 2002). Further, according to Weber (1948/1991) specific status honour rests on distance and elusiveness. This was maintained, for example, in the stylisation of dress at Henley, through wearing the Henley blazers and caps, or Remenham branded shirts, which identified individuals as members of the status group. "Honorific preferences may consist of the privilege of wearing special costumes." (Weber, 1968/1978, p.935). This served to strengthen the club's belief in the existence of its own might. The outcome for the club was a slightly irrational focus of attention and resources on the prestige arising from Henley. As Weber (1948/1991) explains, "The prestige of power, as such, means in practice the glory of power over other communities; it means the expansion of power, though not always by way of incorporation or subjection." (p.160). It provided the opportunity for social discourse and arranged liaisons. Prestige gave Bethany the opportunity to be considered a high performance club and to access governing body and commercial sponsorship and funding.

**HP coaches and athletes.** The coaches and the HP athletes who were not yet in the national squad had less status in the rowing world. As part of the second tier of status at Bethany, the coaches perceived a lack of influence. They held a view that the club did not work in a manner that enabled them to succeed as coaches e.g. through inadequate equipment, funding or working environment. They felt there was little they

could do to influence those making organisational decisions at the club. One governing body official termed the Bethany coaches' view of their ability to influence decisions as the "eeyore" narrative of learned helplessness. Similarly, the coaches decreed that the general members were not real rowers and took equipment and resources from the HP athletes. Bob explained his frustration with other members:

Say a session is 90 minutes long and it loses 20 minutes because equipment has to be adapted because someone else has used it or I can't get out on the water, then I am losing a significant percentage, I am losing kilometres...it's either that you get three loops (of the river) in or you don't. And when you are winning and losing races by fractions of a second and we are supposed to be a performance centre which is uncompromising, it's unacceptable. (Interview, Bob)

However, this group occupied a vulnerable status position in the organisation. The status of the HP group related simply to their *potential* to win medals, and if they were not able to achieve the status of winning Henley or above, their own HP status was diminished. For example, like Weber's conception (1968/1978) of the status impact of an economic downturn for the small businessman, an injury or illness had the effect of removing the athlete from the sport and relegating status to that of a lower status (Collins, 1986). They no longer had the potential to win medals.

**Club and recreational rowers.** In terms of status at Bethany, the general members were identified near the bottom of the social structure. Many had little physical capital to reach the status of an Olympian or win Henley. Their link to such heights was intermittent, and consisted of single festive occasions such as Henley, where they could attend as a member of the public or as a guest at Remenham or Stewards. For example, I observed "When the big name national squad crews are at the club for HERR there are loads of people down at the club and no spaces in the launch. I am again relegated to the bottom of the pile as I am seen neither as adding value nor one of the great and the good" (Fieldnotes, 26 March). Collins (1986) extrapolates from the working classes and their rituals in modern secular society to the collective identities associated with spectator sports. The general members at Bethany could only become spectators in the lives of the aspiring and actual Olympians. Collins (1986) suggests that spectating is for emotional release. The members' perception of rowing at this level was connected with miracles and magic, and front stage performance (Goffman, 1959). The general membership had little idea what was required to win Henley or get an Olympic or World Championship medal. This was not surprising given that the HP group trained

during the daytime, when most members were working. One parent explained their lack of exposure to the detail of performance rowing, saying,

I remember dropping our daughter off ... on Saturdays, Saturday afternoon sessions, and it was literally a case of walking to a corner where the fence is and then waiting till she walked up to the coach and registered. And then we'd leave and I think go away. And then we came back at 4 o'clock... to pick her up. (Interview, parent)

The boundary for the club and recreational members was more closed to the wider world, even to other general members of other local clubs; so their view of HP rowing was mostly limited to a mystical understanding of the aspiring squad athletes who trained in the daytime each day at Bethany.

#### **5.4.5 Living the status**

The organisational culture was stratified based on status and honour as a rower. Both coach and athlete privileged this status. The most successful athletes were revered. For example, for 51 weeks of the year the Bethany national squad athletes trained and competed away from the club. For one week, they based themselves at Bethany as they prepared to represent the club at the Head of the River Race. The HP athletes training regularly at the club acted to privilege this group:

I squeeze into the crew room, as the three talent squad girls and the national squad guys are there. It seems very subdued. One of the national squad guys even turns the TV volume off – Beth is annoyed as she was watching Jeremy Kyle, but there is some reverence towards the national squad guys. She doesn't tell them to turn the sound back on. (Fieldnotes, 29 March)

Other examples where deference or honour was given, in talking about Olympians and national squad athletes, included:

(Gaby): Adam's spent about half an hour with us on the ergo and my times have come down as a result. I really, you know, respect the fact that he has been to the Olympics. And Luke, apart from his stories, you know, I like that he has been in the Boat Race several times. He's got a great wealth of knowledge. (Leyla nods agreement). (Fieldnotes 25 November)

I can remember the guys who I rowed with in a coxless four...and all four of them were wearing GB kit, so I was very intimidated by that. Two are 6ft 8 and one is the same as me but more muscly, and so I was thinking I was way out of my depth (Interview, Nathan, HP rower).

Prowess as a rower, predicated by the social and physical attributes that the

coach or rower possessed caused tensions as groups scabbled for access to scarce resources such as coaching, funding or equipment. Weber terms this social closure, describing the process by which groups seek to improve their lot by restricting the access of other groups to rewards and privileges (Parkin, 2002). Weber states, “such closure, as we want to call it, is an ever-recurring process” (1968/1978, p.342). The coaches worked continually to secure resources for their athletes. This was evidenced, for example, when an injured HP athlete, funded by the governing body, was unable to row. Dan arranged for a special watt bike to enable him to continue training at the club. This shiny black and red bike was kept solely for the HP athlete. It was dismantled each time he used it and the parts stored in the coach office, so that the ordinary membership were not able to use it. Further, the boat house sported a list of all the club boats and who was allowed to use them, separating their usage into the various status groups. The Rowing Sub-Committee maintained this list. The boathouse was similarly segregated with one boathouse designated exclusively for the elite boats and equipment. Other examples of how the coaches utilised status to protect resources for their athletes included:

The cox is outside with the boat for the four who are doing the HERR. He uses the impeller in other boats, so has to tape the wires with masking tape, so that they can be removed. (Fieldnotes, 9 November)

There is sometimes competition amongst the coaches for who gets what boat. Mary gives the example of Mollie. An ex member of the club has donated her yellow Empacher single to Mollie for her sole use, as Mollie was the best woman at the club. At this time of the year, particularly when the men are going out in single sculls, there is competition for these boats at some times. (Fieldnotes, 16 September)

Mary has three blue white and red chevroned boats on trestles. One is brand new and she is taking the riggers out of their plastic wrapping. They are solely for the use of the talent group athletes that she coaches. (Fieldnotes, 22 September)

Having a strata of equipment protects the top level of equipment. At Bethany Boat Club, if I had a car, and I do have a car, and I only use it for a small amount of time, I would not want another person to use it, particularly if someone was worse at driving, for the other 23 hours in a day. (Interview, Bob)

This led to Bethany as a socially stratified organisation, with structured forms of inequalities as part of the organisation of everyday life (Coakley & Pike, 2009). In Weber’s sociology, status was a distinct aspect of power, as each status group used this as a basis for staking claims to material and symbolic rewards. Weber argued that status groups were agencies of collective action (Parkin, 2002). Each status group at Bethany

aimed to improve their lot. The HP coaches and athletes worked to a common goal to squeeze a few seconds out of an athlete's performance to get them into the national squad. Membership of the highest status group created wealth and economic benefit in terms of membership of the national squad or some funding from the governing body; thus they aimed to secure resources for themselves, at the expense of the general membership who paid their membership fees and volunteered their labour to run the club. The general membership became the outsiders, with the least status and privileges.

It is worth reflecting on this finding together with the picture of the scientific rational sub-culture of the HP group discussed in the previous section. Considering the two findings together illuminates the sense of discord in how such a diverse club operated. Weber believed that organisational stratification by status was favoured when economic and technical conditions were relatively stable, as "Every slowing down of the change in economic stratification leads, in due course, to the growth of status structures and makes for a resuscitation of the important role of social honour" (Weber, 1968/1978, p.938). Thus the conditions for status groups to be *sustained* were those of organisational stability, where technological innovation and economic transformation were negligible. Yet the HP group were continually looking to push the boundaries of what it meant to be a professional athlete and coach, in order to succeed. An entry from my ethnographic diary expressed this organisational discord:

*I am surprised by the seeming high quality of most of the members of the committee, but their inability to run an effective meeting... yet the meeting runs without clear actions and accountabilities; everything is discussed and nothing decided. I am amazed about the vacillation on such minor issues as a bracket to put the defibrillator on the wall, when no access to the machine means someone could die.*

*I reflect that this is how it has always been done when the committee was running a gentleman's club, not a high performance rowing centre.  
(Diary, 6 April)*

Therefore this section has used the process of identification and the existence of status groups based on honour and rowing success, to identify power differentials, organisational discord and hierarchy as key elements of the organisational culture and of Bethany as an organisation.

## 5.5 Maintaining the traditional gender order

*Organisations, like most of society's structures, are based on masculine models of growth that are antithetical to connection, models that privilege separation and independence rather than interdependence and collectivity. (Fletcher, 2004, p.270)*

The concluding section in this chapter provides the final emerging aspects using the lens of organisational culture to comprehend Bethany as a sport organisation. The previous section highlighted the power differentials and hierarchical culture at Bethany, based on a coach or athlete's competitive status. This section examines another form of stratification within the organisational culture, one based on gender. The gender order of male over female identified in the club is presented. This is followed by an analysis of the impact on women's experiences through the privileging of men's rowing, and secondly in the covert separation of men and women at the club.

### 5.5.1 Tradition – a men's Club

The previous section Living the Club Identity acknowledged the club had a long and successful history. This was evident from the photos of Henley, national and international crews, national flags and Henley, head and national winning blades on the walls of the club. Bethany had a reputation in the UK rowing world as a place that "delivered Olympians" based on the number of Bethany affiliated rowers in the *men's* national squad. The club website claimed "We have recent wins at all levels - Olympic Games, Henley Royal Regatta, World Championships, Tideway Heads and at good regattas and head races on the Thames and in Europe." Section 5.3 examining Professionalisation highlighted the attraction of the club's competitive history. Dan, the men's coach, explained how this had drawn him to Bethany, "It was the fact that Bethany has its internationals and it had won the Thames Cup and I could see the progression to win the Ladies Plate\*... It was clear that Bethany has done some good stuff." [\* Ladies Plate is a men's race at HRR]. This account did not include female athletes or female coaches.

Based on its history, there was a general assumption that Bethany was a men's club, even though there were women members. This assumption was based on a number of factors. Firstly, the club's heritage was as a male only establishment; women had only been allowed to row at the club in the last twenty years. Secondly, the national governing body focused resources on certain clubs to support men's and women's

heavyweight and lightweight high performance rowing. Bethany was designated a national high performance centre for male heavyweight rowers only. This determined national governing body funding for coaching the male HP rowers at the club. Thirdly, the notion that Bethany was a men's club came from the focus on the club's standing based on its performance at Henley Royal Regatta (HRR) each year.

HRR was a significant influence, not only on the dynamic of status at the club, discussed in section 5.4, Living the Club Identity, but also on maintaining the traditional gender order. HRR, started in 1839, excluded women from rowing at the regatta for over 150 years. Since 1884, it has been organised by a self-electing body of Stewards; currently there are 53 men and three women Stewards, most of whom are well-known and successful rowers and scullers (Henley Royal Regatta, 2012). The regatta was exclusively for men until 1975, when female coxswains of male crews were permitted; 1993 was the first year women rowers competed over the course in a full Regatta event, when a new event for women single scullers was inaugurated. In 2000 an open event for women's eights was introduced, whilst in 2001 the women's quadruple sculls was added (Henley Royal Regatta, 2012). During a visit to HRR, this heritage was evident from an exhibition in the main Stewards' Enclosure. I noted:

I go in the tent with all the large silver trophies. There are medals and photos of men's events. Old paintings of old events. There is a picture of the 1962 mud festival. There is a display at one end of the exhibition of some initiative to get people into rowing and at the other end a big blurb on women joining the event. I interpret this as condescending to women amidst the huge history and trophies for men, but perhaps it isn't.  
(Fieldnotes, 29 June)

This presented an image of the event organisers paying lip service to the needs and experience of women in the sport.

The Bethany club committee, the rowing sub-committee and some of the members had a particular spotlight on the Club's performance at Henley. This was evidenced at one committee meeting, where the discussion on forthcoming rowing events centred on potential men's crews at HRR; there was no mention of Women's Henley or the national rowing championships, events in the same months as HRR where the club subsequently had success in both men's and women's races. Nor was there mention of the two Bethany female athletes who would go on to row at HRR that year as part of a composite women's crew, reaching the semi-finals. The club emphasis on

male crews at HRR was exacerbated by the fact that the two club paid coaches received a bonus based partly on the club's Henley performance.

Categories such as "women" and "men" are on the large scale constructed historically. Content is given to these categories, establishing a particular contrast with and distance from other social categories, and maintaining an interest around which identity and action can be instituted (Connell, 1987). The club's history reproduced and maintained the traditional practices and norms of being, which focused a quasi-religious attention to male rowing at the club, in privileging "how we have always done things" over a more contemporary approach, including the experiences of women at the club. The symbolic manifestations of these traditional practices were vested in the flags, blades and photographs adorning the clubhouse, the club's website detailing the high performance group as "a squad of around 30 men aged between 18 and 30", as well as the club's pride in maintaining the heritage of its name.

Connell (1987) believes that "gender is institutionalized to the extent that networks of links to the reproduction systems formed by cyclical practices. It is stabilized to the extent that the groups constituted in the network have interests in the conditions for cyclical rather than divergent practice" (p.141). The actions to maintain traditional practices were carried out, not just by the rowers in their daily actions, but more prominently by the elected Committee and Director of Rowing, by their control of resources (e.g. boats, coaches, bonuses), control of the symbolic displays of the club's history and ultimately control of the dominant discourse of "men" at the club. Maintaining the established gender order impacted the experience of coaches and athletes at Bethany in two key ways. The first effect was a privileging of men's rowing over that of women, which focused the limited resources of the club on coaching and boats for male athletes. The second influence of sustaining the traditional normative practices was the veiled separation of men and women at Bethany. This was evident in the lack of support for and opportunity for women at important competitions, the dominance of idolised masculine behaviours in everyday life and a discourse that women were different from men. These are discussed below.

### **5.5.2 Privileging men**

The club's focus on men's rowing, and in particular on winning a men's event at Henley, combined with an on-going concentration on enabling the male athletes to win key races. Rowers need boats, called shells in the sport, in which to train and compete.

The best make of racing shell for eight rowers is generally considered an Empacher; at Bethany there were four Empacher eights, all allocated and sized for men's crews. The women's best eight was a Janosek racing shell, a more usual boat for club sides, not elite rowers. At one race, the Women's Head of the River, the most prestigious domestic winter event for women's crews, Mary pointed out the boats that she hoped the HP Bethany women could one day have to race in – a silver Hudson, or a yellow Empacher. She said, "The women have an old Janosek and this, I think, is worth about 10 seconds in time that they lose" (Fieldnotes 19 March). At this race nearly all the crews who finished in the top twenty places rowed the course in an Empacher shell.

Similarly, Bethany's coaching resources were also focused on the male athletes; there was no designated coach for the women club rowers, unless they were part of the six or seven men and women on the governing body talent programme, coached by Mary. This resulted in a lack of development opportunities for the female athletes. For example, one day a female club rower approached Mary and asked if she should do the five kilometre session set by Dan, or the two kilometre piece set by Mary in the training schedule. As Head Coach, Dan set a programme for the men, but her only opportunity to row in a crew boat was with some of Mary's athletes. She was neither a man nor one of Mary's talent squad. Mary recognised this and discussed it with the Club Captain. His view was that Mary should concentrate her resources on developing young men to come into the club's male heavyweight programme. Mary too felt conflicted - she now had a good group of HP, talent and high calibre club women, but no resources or recognition from the club with which to develop them (Fieldnotes, 15 March). The female club athlete was neither coached by Dan, the men's squad coach, nor part of Mary's coaching for the talent squad. Through the withholding of resources, Mary was forced to comply with the subordination of women at the club, to accommodate the interests and desires of the men (Connell, 1987). The needs of both the club rower and Mary were "disappeared" into an organisational no man's land (Fletcher, 2004). No value was placed on the women's efforts to be co-operative to develop rowing for women (Jordan, 2004), nor on their need to have access to resource (Pike, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity has been used to describe the ascendancy of men in the play of social forces on the organisation of cultural practices (Connell, 1987). Further, hegemonic masculinity can be constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women, so that "The interplay between different

forms of masculinity is an important part of how the patriarchal social order works” (Connell, 1987, p.183). Not all men were considered equal at Bethany. With a touch of irony, Luke laughed that the national squad had a training camp in the winter for heavyweight men; there was a separate camp for women and lightweight athletes, which the rowing world termed, “women and children”. At Bethany, the men in Mary’s talent squad were considered “children” in the traditional gender order. They had not won any national or international medals. For example, despite Ben’s obvious size, power, strength, stamina and developing technical rowing capability, as a talent group athlete he was relegated to the 4<sup>th</sup> eight in the HORR, behind all the other HP men and many club athletes. Similarly, a young lightweight male athlete who arrived at the club in the spring, was not accepted into the group of heavyweight men. He left after two months and went on to be very successful at the national championships. Neither athlete was part of the dominant group of successful male rowers, and found themselves subordinated as result. The group norm was not written down or openly discussed, yet had a powerful and consistent influence on the group behaviour (Feldman, 1984). Ascendency was achieved within the state of play.

The privileging of the male rowers over the women was also evident in decisions made at the national trialling process. On one occasion, the weather meant the two day trial process had to be compounded into one day. This threw the organisation into some chaos. Based on the races earlier in the day, final races were run for all the athletes, based on how fast they had rowed that day. On previous occasions, the women’s races were run first, followed by the men’s. Nonetheless, on this occasion, the men’s pairs and singles finals were all held first. There was then a 30 minute delay before the women’s finals commenced. As a result, some of the women did not get their final race, as their women’s finals were cut out in the gathering gloom of nightfall. Mary conjectured, “Welcome to my world...I’m not at all surprised. That’s typical of how things are. So why don’t they cut some of the men’s lesser finals instead?” There was acceptance that practices prevailed to institutionalise men’s dominance over women in the sport, despite the governing body’s claim that rowing was more balanced in terms of gender and age than other sports (British Rowing, 2009).

### **5.5.3 Separation of men and women**

The second impact of preserving the traditional gender order effected a separation of men from women at the club.

**Crew room domination and banter.** One example of the separation of men and women from the athletes' and coaches' daily lives was the male domination in the crew room. The crew room was the place where athletes recovered from training, and relaxed in between sessions each day. Almost half of the HP athletes who trained during the daytime joined Bethany as the study commenced. The process of crew room dynamic developed over the 11 months' research. Quite early on, the men claimed the sofas, and lounged there to eat food and relax, whilst the women were on hard chairs around the table. On one occasion, the women were watching a TV programme with funny animal clips, but when the male rowers came in they said the programme was "rubbish" and the channel was changed so everyone watched a well-known sitcom about twenty-something aged friends. Nothing was said and the women turned to talk with each other. Another morning a chat show was on the TV. Harry wandered in pulling a face and using a voice "It makes my brain hurt", but one of the women insisted it stayed on; so the men replied by turning their chat to boys' pranks (Fieldnotes, 18 January).

However, when most of the men were absent, the women reclaimed the crew room, turning it from a male bastion to a boudoir. Once, when the men left to attend a male only fixture, at the end of the session I noticed, "The women shower. There is a distinct girly smell about the crew room and Rachel and Mollie dry their hair with a hairdryer in the crew room. This feels rather strange" (Fieldnotes, 8 March).

This claiming of the space by the men extended to the noise, level and content of banter in the crew room. For example, one day:

Slowly the senior men come in and eventually there is Ben, Adam, Harry, Damian, Luke, Nathan and Malcolm. The level of banter increases and I notice it is between the guys and is ignored by the girls. They (the women) talk amongst themselves, although this is hard as the banter is loud. (Fieldnotes, 1 February)

Views were mixed about the impact of the banter. One male rower enjoyed the crew room discussions:

I think it's quite nice to have a bit of banter and it keeps everything light-hearted and it takes your mind off. Yeah, you want to think about your training but you don't want to obsess over it and I think to have that break, and take your mind off it in between sessions, is quite good. (Interview, Harry)

On the other hand, sometimes athletes did not appreciate the banter. Gaby expressed her view after one episode, when a group of the men were teasing Gaby because she relied on state benefits to fund her full-time rowing career:

But they are all quite opinionated people. Some of the stuff they discuss is way over my head, so I just don't bother. So I think that's just a male egos going on a rant with one another and sometimes their male egos get in their conversations but apart from the odd, the odd comment that is made once in a while where, I sometimes don't think they are, I don't think Damian even meant to say that. I don't think he meant to offend me in any way whatsoever, because I don't think he's a nasty person. But I just think he made that comment and didn't quite realise the impact it had all of us girls. Do you know what I mean, like. Obviously, like I had reiterated the conversation to Beth, because she had asked why I was upset. It made her angry as well, because again it is making sweeping statements about somebody, without actually knowing the personal circumstance. (Interview, Gaby)

Sometimes the conversation flipped between the politics and current affairs to more fatuous issues, such as urinating against bars or on floors.

Often the banter amongst the men concerned women and their activities:

The conversation gravitates to Tammy at the local supermarket, who told Archie to tell Nathan "hello". There ensues a long puerile conversation about how she is really a pig with makeup and is kept locked in Nathan's shed so he can sneak out to her at night from his bedroom. They then move onto talking about the forthcoming alternative voting system referendum and the West Lothian question. Archie and Adam battle it out, with Luke chipping in when he can get a word in. (Fieldnotes, 4 May)

At other times the subject of the banter was female attributes, such as whether or not women had underarm hair. Not all the men initiated the discourse on women and their attributes, but they participated in the banter through their involvement as part of the wider crew room conversations. For example, in the crew room one day the male rowers chat oscillated as follows:

The conversation goes on about asylum seekers ... They watch Xfactor Extra on the TV and the conversation degenerates into observations of the participants or the female judges. Females are assessed on looks and sex appeal and participants on how awful they are. (Fieldnotes, 13 December)

One striking example of the emphasis on female attributes occurred in January, when a woman rower capsized her boat after hitting a log. The outside temperature was around six degrees centigrade, but the water was much colder, swelled by the melted

snow and ice. Fortunately, Dan was close by in the coach launch to help her out of the water and tow her and her boat to the club house, two kilometres away. The incident was discussed in the crew room by the men as they ate their food:

There is a lot of banter and the subject of Gaby falling in gets raised. Someone asks if you could see her nipples through her t-shirt, and then there is much laughing. Harry suggests they should have a wet t-shirt competition. This gets approval from the group. (Fieldnotes, 25 January)

This conversation was overheard by Mary as the coach office door was open. I recorded:

Mary comes out and tells the guys sternly not to be so disrespectful to Gaby, and to her; this is her place of work not some bar... The guys hold their breath as Mary walks out and then burst out laughing. They seem perplexed by Mary's outburst and think she is over reacting. Heinrich asks me if they are out of order, as he thinks they are just having some fun and relaxing; they don't mean any harm towards Gaby. I say that I can see two sides to this and ask if they would take the same approach with a guy. They tell me that they would take the Mickey if Luke or someone fell in. I reply that it's not the act of teasing but the gendered nature of the teasing that Mary is raising - it's that the teasing is about her nipples and her gender, not the fact she is an athlete. They shrug their shoulders, not quite understanding my point. (Fieldnotes, 25 January)

This banter happened without Gaby hearing, and Mary chose to protect her athlete by not then telling her about the crew room discussion.

The negotiation of male identities as separate from women has been found in other sports and in organisations (Adams, Anderson, McCormack, 2010; Easthope, 1990; Gregory, 2009; Kauer & Krane, 2012). For example Clayton and Humberstone's (2006) study of male football players talk in the changing room and the bar found that talk of women was one of the three most prevalent topics of conversation. They suggest that through this talk, women are reduced to disassociated objects, by highlighting only the biological differences between men and women. Conversely, rather than being something all women can have, sporting talent is seen as an abnormality. They are seen as deviant from the average woman and thus one way that the male rowers can restore the social order and their understanding of the women at Bethany, is to present the women based on their female characteristics.

**Separation of competition and support.** The separation of men and women was also evidenced in the differing levels of competitive and social support afforded to each gender. The Bethany members were encouraged to come to watch HRR and

support the club boats competing. Socially, HRR is regarded as part of the English social season. My first visit to the regatta generated some observations of the event:

I sit on the green deck chairs. They are so uncomfortable. I am surrounded by Americans again. When a race comes by people politely clap. I sit opposite the quaint timing point. Men in white coats move the wooden signs which tell us what is happening in each race.

The toilets are even posh. Blue and White striped material hangs on the walls. Watching the crowds to ensure decorum are men in black suits and bowler hats. Mobile phones are banned. I sit on a deck chair and the chap next to me snoozes. It is afternoon tea break - how civilised; champagne and oysters or cream tea. The booze cruise type corporate boats go by, when all the racing has stopped. Smaller boats ply up and down, some beautiful long wooden Henley launches, others tacky cruisers hired for the day. Some spectators are moored in dinghies along the outside of the wooden course. One is a blow up dinghy with a chap in shorts and hat with an inflatable duck tied to his boat; it seems so incongruous amongst all the finery. All the men are in blazers and shirt and tie, ladies with dresses below the knee. This is the unstated dress code for everyone on the bank too, even though it is not a requirement. Anyone can walk the bank. Crews go up and down getting in a practice paddle before racing starts again.

It is a film set. It feels like this is the practice run today, when not too many people are watching and maybe it's the version of the show for the old folks' home, rather than the glittering premier. These are the bit part crews, as the big crews don't race until Friday onwards. (Fieldnotes, 29 June)

Over the five days of the regatta, many club members joined in the spectacle from the various enclosures or Remenham Club.

The historic exclusion of women competitors from HRR caused them to set up Henley Women's Regatta (HWR) in 1988. It is held a few weeks before HRR. Despite the small gain in women's opportunities to compete at HRR, even today, HWR is forced to offer over a shorter length course and does not use the HRR enclosures or boat tents (Churcher, 2010). I observed some of this segregation:

Women row part of the main HRR course and finish about 600m from the end i.e. they are not allowed to row past Stewards and the main enclosure – I am not sure why. I could interpret as women not good enough, or that HRR don't want to damage the grass ... I see on the left a sprinkling of green and white tents for officials which line the enclosure. They seem paltry compared with the big blue and white ones being erected further down the course for Men's Henley (HRR) in a couple of weeks' time. (Fieldnotes, 16 June)

At HWR there were no hats or blazers, no special member only enclosures, no sumptuous picnics, no oysters, no exhibition with grand trophies, no deckchairs on which to recline. Simply hundreds of women and perhaps their supporters, in an enclosure crammed full of boats, with some wooden benches on which to sit and drink tea and beer. Crosset's (1995) study of women's professional golf looks beyond the surface statistic of participation, reviewing the impact of a sport, golf, that has long welcomed women, but like rowing, on different terms to men. In golf, these terms have included various forms of gender segregation such as shortened courses and restricted playing times for women. He describes this impact on the position of women as making them "outsiders within". At Bethany, and in the wider sport, the women rowers were viewed as "outsiders within", through their separation from the hegemonic preference for men's rowing.

Whilst many members supported the men's Bethany crews at HRR and HRRR, almost no-one from the club came to watch the female Bethany athletes at Women's Henley, Women's HRRR or proactively support the Bethany women racing at Henley. Mary surmised how much notice had even been taken of the Bethany women competing in composite crews at HRR:

[Interviewer] Yeah, looking at the HRR, the three women's races, two of them, I think two of them had Bethany women in them?

Mary: Yeah, they would have done. Well that wouldn't have been even linked like, I think they'd probably been turning around for another Pimms at Remenham Club when the women passed! That's certainly the feeling I get.

Historically sport has been organised as a male preserve (Theberge, 2000). Pike (2005, p. 205) states that, "While, in recent years, British rowing has experienced a transformation to a more professional approach, with increasing scientific support and lottery funding, the sport remains male dominated." In rowing, the hegemonic preference for male events is illustrated by the difficulties of getting female rowing events included in the Olympic programme. For 80 years there was *no* women's rowing at Olympic Games. The acceptance of women's rowing events was the result of some forty years of negotiations between international sporting administrators (Schweinbenz, 2009). Many individuals, especially those officials governing the Olympic Games, purported to be concerned about the masculinisation of elite female athletes, Schweinbenz describes how a place for women's rowing in the Olympic programme

was secured only by using the ambassadorial role model of Ingrid Maria-Dusseldorp, herself an accomplished oarswoman to promote the femininity of female rowers. The first Olympic women's rowing event was in 1976 in Montreal, around the time that female coxes were first allowed at HRR.

All forms of femininity are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men (Connell, 1987). In the work of being a rower, the dominant actor was assumed to be the man (Fletcher, 1998). The social practice, structure and language privileged the men. Deeply held images of masculinity and femininity functioned to keep patriarchal systems of power in place. This made being a "real rower" at Bethany congruent with idealised masculinity, and something else, if associated with idealised femininity (Bradley, 1993). As one female rower told me,

The boys rip the piss out of us, because we are still doing like, little learning things and doing drills. But do you know, we can take that all in good humour ... our coach pays attention to our training and the finer points, you know, finalising those tiny movements, which is actually making us perhaps, slightly more technical rowers than some of the boys.

She went on to say,

Like, we watch them do some of their technical stuff and think, that's not even right. They might be hell of a fast and hell of a strong athlete compared to others, but they're not actually technically sound. And there have been times when the boys have tried to correct us on certain things in the gym... But Mary is always there making sure we do it exactly right so we can lift higher without getting injured. Whereas they are all about the weight and getting bigger. (Interview, Gaby, 28 January)

Idolised masculinity is viewed as bestowing men, however athletic, with a superiority complex, so "Male athletic talent ... assures them as men of their rightful position in a male dominated world" (Crosset, 1995, p.224).

However, the women learned to fit into this masculinised way of working. Each day, for example, the coach launch had to be lifted out of the water onto the trailer on which it was stored in the boathouse. Mary told me she had suggested the club got a winch to help with this, but no-one thought this was a good idea. Instead, the women worked in threes or more to heave the boat out of the water. There was nothing feminine or glamorous about this activity, as Mary said "There is a lot of lifting and moving and fixing. And as a female, it is unhelpful to be seen to be weak, but I do ask for help from *some* of the guys at the club when I need it" (Fieldnotes, 13 September). This happened mostly when the majority of men were away at training camps or training at different

times. For example, I observed “The club is quiet from 10 onwards, as the men have gone to the tideway to race another crew. Ben is here doing an ergo and Gaby and Leyla doing weights. The women ask Nathan to help them to put the boat away” (Fieldnotes, 8 March). At other times, the women avoided situations where they might have to demonstrate a more masculinised identity. Gaby talked about her participation in the crew room banter, saying, “I have felt sometimes that maybe, sometimes, I would speak up. But perhaps I won't, now I know I'm going to get a massive piss-take about it” (Interview, Gaby). The women’s resistance to a masculinised everyday life was more through evasions from confrontational tactics (Giulianotti, 2005). Gaby went on to explain,

The boys, they never put in their frickin’ weights away and we would have to do it for them. They just assume we'll do it! And it really irritates me so much. And I tell them I'm not doing it, and not going to put them away, they say yes you will, yes you will and I go no I won't. And then it's left there (laughs)

There was a small but observable cultural contestation of the traditional gender order by some of the women at Bethany. However, challenging the gender order remained difficult.

**Women and coaching.** Aside from Mary as a coach, there were no high level competitive women on the club Rowing Sub-committee or the main Committee. The lack of women in positions of authority was evidenced at the National Trial events, and even at women only races such as HWR. There were no women coaching elite men only crews. The governing body recognised that “Only 12% of current L3 coaches are women. More are needed to provide role models and raise aspirations for girls and women to progress to and in the talent pool” (British Rowing, 2009). The National Trials exemplified the situation for women coaches. For example:

Some coaches congregate outside the boathouse, the group getting bigger and bigger. It seems they know it is time to meet like birds returning from migration, and so one arrives and then suddenly they all arrive. They stand in a circle facing each other, some in the inner circle and some outside. I don't know many but I recognise Michael and can hear him. Dan is also there, sort of on the outside of the inside of the group. There are no women to be seen amongst the coaches. (Fieldnotes, 12 February, at a national trial event)

Instead of being with the large group of coaches trusted with timing the event, Mary was given the role of waiting on the bank with a safety launch, in case any rower got into distress. This happened:

In one of the women's semis, a young woman is in distress. Mary coaxes her to the side, and I alert the scullers making their way to the start, so they don't crash into her. We get her out of the boat. She is hyperventilating – Mary recognises this from the episode at Bethany in December. She asks the young woman if she has an inhaler or is an asthmatic. She says no. Mary tries to get her to slow her breathing and to exhale more than inhale, but she doesn't do it, so Mary calls for the truck to take her to the medical centre, as rushing a boat amongst the scullers on the lake would not be helpful. Mary gives her coat to the young woman to keep her warm. The truck comes and takes her to the medical centre. (Fieldnotes, 12 February, at a national trial event)

Fletcher (1998) describes the gendered dichotomy between the public and private realms of work. In the public work realm, the dominant actor is assumed to be male; in the private family realm, the dominant actor is assumed to be female. These socially constructed realms are seen as separate and distinct, where knowledge from one realm is considered inappropriate in the other. Thus, whilst social practice, structure and language in the public realm of work privilege attributes such as rationality, complexity and output of goods, in contrast, private realm attributes include emotionality, caring and relational outputs (Fletcher, 1998; Turner, 1992). At the trials, it appeared that these realms of work were split on the basis of gender. The notion of effectiveness and an ideal worker in the public realm were linked with the idealized masculinity and the technical work of timing and recording. In the private realm, looking after distressed athletes, these same notions were linked with idealised femininity (Connell, 1987).

The perception that women were somehow different and therefore not suitable to be coaches was borne out by Bob's view of Mary as a female coach:

Bob thinks Mary has bitten off more than she can chew and is doing too much. He goes into a verbal tirade about women and women coaches saying that women need an incredibly strong woman to manage them (implying Mary isn't?) or a man. Otherwise women just degenerate into thinking they can't do things and have excuses for things. He goes on to quote Dan as saying that, based on his experience there, they have some of these women coaches in the US and they are the lesbian male sort. (Fieldnotes, 20 June)

And again by a governing body official:

But without getting myself in too much trouble I would just sort of say I think women are probably too sensible to look at the ridiculous amount of work that

goes with it! And just kind of go, you know, I love what I do but not that much. (Interview, Governing Body Official)

Pfister and Radtke's (2009) examination of the culture of the German sports system supports the under-representation of women in senior positions. Despite their similar levels of qualifications, women did not have the same positions and the same status as men. Gender specific barriers such as negative reactions from male colleagues and the particular circumstances of women's lives were highlighted and, on average, women complied less with this ideal notion of a leader than men. Thus the organisational culture impacted on women's career opportunities.

#### **5.5.4 The gender order of organisational culture**

This section has presented a gendered organisational culture at Bethany. Weber (1948/1991) describes traditional authority as one of the "basic legitimations of domination" (p. 78). Traditional domination rests on the appeal of custom and tradition in maintaining the social order. At Bethany, one element of the social order was of men over women, where the privileging of men's rowing over that of women's rowing focused the limited resources of the club on coaching and boats for male athletes and in the shrouded separation of men and women at Bethany. This was evident in the lack of support for and opportunity for women at important competitions, the dominance of idolised masculine behaviours in everyday life and a discourse that women were different from men.

The gender stratification valued being a man and the associated characteristics of achievement. Weber's (1948/1991) analysis of men's power in traditional societies, such as China, observed the privileging of men with certain characteristics and "if one did not belong to this *cultured* stratum he did not count" (p.268). Weber recognised that stratification determined the way of life far beyond the stratum itself. One Bethany official exemplified the impact of women not being in the cultured stratum, as he explained how the club was going to move forward and develop in the next year:

Researcher: ... you will be encouraging more women, then?

Club official: No, this event [HRR] is the pinnacle for the club and winning it is so important. It's the highlight for most of the guys and the club is steeped in the history of this event. It's the most important event for most club members and the pinnacle of their rowing career for most of them. Part of what the club does is to support these guys to achieve this and then they come back and give something back to the club.

Women did not belong to the cultured strata, the in-group, at Bethany and in rowing. This determined their way of life as a high performance athlete or coach by constraining their experience: through lack of access to coaches, development opportunities, competitive opportunities, moral support from the club and access to resources.

## **5.6 Bethany as an organisational culture**

This chapter has used the lens of organisational culture to examine Bethany as a sports club. The discussion has drawn on the literature on sport organisational culture and some of Weber's key ideas. Each section has highlighted a number of aspects of Bethany as an organisational culture which, like strands in a web, have been woven and melded to produce a picture of this rowing club.

Retaining the metaphor of culture as a web of meaning, the chapter commenced with a short vignette of everyday life at the club. This provided a rich contextualisation for the subsequent sections. Running through the organisational culture like a thread, was the importance of being an Olympian. The world view of Olympianism was illuminated in who the volunteers chose to run the club, the importance attached to being an Olympian for the general members, the hierarchy of status and the drive for professionalisation of the coach and athlete roles. Arguably, the exclusion of women from participating in Olympic and Henley Royal Regatta events until the mid-1970s also contributed to the traditional gender order privileging men over women at Bethany.

Unpicking the process of Running a Voluntary Organisation introduced the notion of Bethany, not as a single organisational culture, but as plural sub-cultures. Three organisational value spheres were identified: the grass roots sport-for-all organisational values of the ordinary members; the HP coach and athlete group's scientific routinised means-end value focus; and the value-rational decision making and charismatic values of the club management. These relatively autonomous realms, with their own value-spheres, were differentiated, developing according to their own internal logics. Weber argues that this leads to a proliferation of beliefs and values (Gane, 2004), with the potential result that members at Bethany might find it difficult to understand or legitimate actions in other parts of the club. Hence, conflict ensued between the different groups. In, addition, some understanding of the sub-culture of the volunteer management emerged, illustrating the deference shown to a charismatic leader to whom authority was proscribed based on Olympic rowing success.

The importance of being or coaching a national squad member, who might go on to become an Olympian, acted as precondition for professionalisation. Professionalisation of the HP environment found coaches enacting rationalised practices such as systematic teaching based on the theory and science of rowing, overseen by input from the input of the national governing body; additionally they effected a moral imperative to do their best to ensure that their athletes succeeded in achieving their national and Olympic aims. The dependency of the coaches to deliver athletes to the national squad in order to keep their reputation, trapped them in a “steel hard casing”, focussed on using instrumental calculable means to achieve the performance ends. However, the transience of the athlete rowing career permitted a crack in the HP sub-culture, from the solidity of a steel-hard casing to the opportunity to flex and resist the entrapment.

The last two sections of the chapter introduced the social ordering at the club. The process of identification highlighted the existence of status groups based on honour and rowing success, to identify power differentials, organisational discord and hierarchy as key elements of the organisational culture and of Bethany as an organisation. The gendered organisational culture at Bethany was described in the final section. This aspect of the organisational culture privileged men’s rowing over that of women, separated men and women at the club and focused the limited resources of the club on coaching and boats for male athletes. The result was a lack of support for and opportunity for women at important competitions, the dominance of idolised masculine behaviours in everyday life and a discourse that women were different from men, underpinning separate spheres thinking.

Through the lens of organisational culture, Weber’s sociology has provided a means to understand everyday life at Bethany. Weber (1948/1991, p.350) uses the term “disenchantment” to describe the process whereby the rise of instrumental rationalisation gives way to a world of where ultimate values rationalise and devalue themselves, and are replaced instead by the pursuit of material and mundane ends. Gane (2004) summarises, “the process of devaluation or *disenchantment*, gives rise to a condition of cultural nihilism in which the intrinsic value or meaning of values or actions are subordinated increasingly to a ‘rational’ quest for efficiency and control” (p.15). “Disenchanted” is thus used to describe Bethany as an organisational culture. Moreover, whilst there is no intention to label or box the understanding presented in this

chapter in a neat two by two model, the concept of disenchantment will be used as a heuristic device to start to answer the second research question. Chapter 6 examines how organisational culture can be used to examine coach-athlete relationships at Bethany.

## **CHAPTER 6 RELATING – CONNECTION AND DISCONNECTION**

*The hero in search of excellence must unwittingly undermine the conditions that make heroism possible. (Turner, 1992, p.126)*

*Boat racing is a very masculine recreation and offers no rewards to the weak, the faint-hearted or the idler. Withal it is an art, and the race does not go simply to the strong, but to those who have taken the trouble to learn how to use their strength to the best advantage. (Bourne, 1925/1987, p.376)*

*I am absolutely delighted. It was a phenomenal effort – we really gave it our all and we are so pleased that all our hard work and training has paid off. It is a privilege and an honour to have won the gold medal for Britain. (Peter Reed, GB men's coxless four gold medallist, London 2012)*

This chapter addresses the research question asking how organisational culture can be used to understand coach-athlete relationships. The heuristic of Bethany as a disenchanted organisational culture was presented in chapter 5. The first section uses the notion of Bethany as a disenchanted culture as the framework against which coach-athlete relationships are evaluated, along with key RCT concepts, including authenticity, mutuality, trust, power differences and empathy. Points of connection and disconnection between the athlete and coach are highlighted. However, the second section of the chapter goes on to argue that organisational life at Bethany was not, as perhaps Weber contends, an inexorable slide into nihilism. This was a voluntary club organisation with competing values. Organisational life was lived by human beings. The examples of the kitchen closure, the enactment of the underdog identity and the opportunity to express feelings and emotion are presented. The chapter concludes with a short re-evaluation of the connection and disconnection in the coach-athlete relational process, in light of these findings.

### **6.1 Relating in a disenchanted organisation**

This section examines the coach-athlete relationship in the disenchanted organisational culture of Bethany. Chapter 5 discussed the ongoing rationalisation of practice for the HP group as a result of the drive towards rational science and domination by a controlling and bureaucratic norm of practice on life as a HP rower and

coach. This understanding is used to analyse coach-athlete relationships at Bethany. The process of relating is described using the key tenets of RCT to understand the points of relational connection and disconnection.

### **6.1.1 Power-over relating**

In chapter 5, the power-over dynamic surfaced in many elements of Bethany as an organisational culture – in the Captain’s charismatic authority, the coach as expert, in the steel-hard casing surrounding coaching careers, in the identity of status and in the male-over-female (and lightweight male) gender order. One way this power-over dynamic was evidenced in the coach-athlete relationship was through the adherence of the athletes to the programme prescribed by the coach.

Underlying the aim of making the national squad, was a belief that part of the formula to achieve this was for the athletes to follow the designated prescription for performance set by the coach – “the programme”. “The programme” encapsulated the frequency, duration, nature and intensity of the training that the rowers completed. As one governing body official told me, the training and management of athletes followed well prescribed formulae, “You know actually this works... and we’ll do it with the same intensity and passion as we’ve done it before and we’ll be very confident in it” (Interview, Reece). Mary and Bob particularly put a lot of thought into training programmes and plans. For example, Mary spent three or four hours working on each person’s individual training programmes to make sure she was getting things right.

Whilst the coaches invoked a systematic rationalised approach to managing athletes, the athlete simply followed the programme laid down by the coach. Denison (2011) suggests that coaching is a discursive act based on prevailing theories and concepts derived from related scientific disciplines; discourse is used here in a Foucauldian sense to describe the unwritten rules that guide social action, that may remain unchallenged, and shape how we understand ourselves, our bodies and our practices. Markula and Pringle (2006) believe that many coaches regulate the activity of their athletes through management of training activities, rigid training schedules, observation and judgement. Coaching is a modern discipline that is “both an exercise of control and a subject matter” (Shogan, 1999, p.11). At the club, the programme was a taken for granted practice, presented by coaches as “truth”, a technical schema. The taken-for-granted nature of the programme was illustrated by Dan, as he explained the

problems with George last year as “George doesn’t always want to do as I ask him, and even this year wanted to do the Sculling Head and not the Four’s Head” (Fieldnotes, 21 October), and that “So I listen to them, and won’t always act on what they say, but I listen to them” (Interview, Dan). This was reflected in Adam’s view of his relationship with Dan:

I think Dan is quite good in that sense of being prepared to listen to what people say... he’s quite good about sort of saying like, if you don’t do this work then you won’t be fit enough. But I think you know on other times he’s been good about accepting that good athletes tend to have a well-developed sense of what works well... within the more overarching scheme that you’ll have discussed with him as an individual in terms of how to weight your preparation for a particular test, or how important you think that test is. And then you know the conclusion to that will then drive the nuances of the programme. (Interview, Adam)

The general subservience to the culture of expert coach and subordinated athlete became normalised in a hierarchical coach-athlete relationship (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Jones et al., 2005), where the coach was viewed as different from the athlete. Miller (1986) argues that “in most cases of difference, there is also a factor of inequality – inequality of many kinds of resources, but fundamentally of status and power” (p.3). Miller suggests that in relationships such as between coach and athlete, a temporary inequality might exist where the lesser party is assumed to be unequal, and this assumption becomes part of the social structuring of the relationship. The “superior party” has more of something, some ability, knowledge or quality which they impart to the “lesser” person. The terms “superior” and “lesser” do not relate to a holistically lesser person; rather the “lesser” is a situated element where the “superior” is simply able to help. For the coach and athlete, this help is knowledge of rowing, techniques for getting fitter, mental capacities and so on. The “superior” person is expected to engage with the “lesser” so that they can be brought up to full parity. This requires agency on the part of the rower as they are helped to become the Olympic oarsperson. The reason for the relationship is of a service to the lesser party, with the ultimate aim to end the relationship of inequality, that is to say the period of disparity is meant to be temporary. Then the relationship may continue, but not as superior and lesser, but as equals.

However, in the organisational culture of Bethany, instead of superior and lesser (but aiming to be equal), the notions of dominant and subordinate became fixed and

enculturated (Miller, 1986). The coaches controlled access to what the athletes desired – knowledge, technique, selection to the squad and crews, attention. For their part, the rowers also felt unable to come to the table as equal – why else keep key pieces of information from the coach such as the management of a medical condition or difficulty in managing weight loss, for fear of the impact upon them and their goals? The coaches needed to continuously be seen to deliver performing athletes, and so “there is great difficulty in maintaining the conception of the lesser party as a person of as much intrinsic worth as the superior” (Miller, 1986, p.5). This acted to sustain the dominant-subordinate relationship.

Yet, this normative relational hierarchy did not necessarily suggest that the coaches consciously sought authority over athletes. For example, Mary was a little surprised at the authority bestowed on her by the rowers:

She said you always get people to do what you want. And I didn't know what she meant, because I'd never had that ambition to try and do that, but she was like no you always get what you want... And I was like actually I generally do! (Interview, Mary).

Burke (2001) explains that if a coach is positioned as expert right from the athlete's first sport experiences, then the athlete becomes socialised to rely on that expertise. He adds, “The irony is that the athletes who should be the most independent (because they know the most) are actually the most dependent” (p.233). However, at Bethany, sometimes the athletes took the dominant role in the relationship by taking an active role in determining their training. Harry explained:

There are periods when he tells me what to do and that's most of the time, because he's the guy in the launch with the megaphone and he tells us what we do and who we go out with but there are also times when I can tell him, look this is ridiculous. Like the programme, I'm not agreeing with the programme here and here, and he'll go, all right, fine. (Interview, Harry).

This could be viewed as Harry, not as subordinate, but having “power emerging from interaction” with the coach (Miller, 1991b). Miller and Stiver (1997) describe this emerging power as mutual empowerment. This requires a shift in thinking to unlink the concept of power from the concept of domination. Instead, in mutual empowerment, “the power of people to interact so that *both* benefit becomes unlimited” (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p.47). By suggesting a change to his programme and by Dan working on the suggestion together with

him, Harry's action provided both parties with the capacity to enact change and to mutually benefit from the interaction. Thus occasionally an athlete provided an alternative to the normative social order dominant-subordinate of the organisational culture and coach-athlete relationship.

At times, a power-over relationship was seen in the cultural privileging of athletes who had, or were perceived to have, status or potential to make the national squad. Certain athletes received preferential treatment by the coaches. For example, a governing body funded athlete was barely chastised when he carelessly punctured a hole in an elite club boat. Dan felt there was a hierarchy amongst the rowers based on international medals, Henley wins and even ergo times. When asked about how this impacted his approach to a crew he said, "It comes from respect. All four are at least national medallists" (Fieldnotes, 6 October). This influenced the time coaches spent with groups of athletes. For example, Dan's coaching from September until May focussed on the GB trialists so that in each session the needs of the potential squad athletes and not those of the non-squad club athletes took priority. The talent programme run by Mary was more calculated in its treatment of athletes who faltered in their progress towards squad selection; so once an injured athlete had a rehabilitation plan, Mary devoted her limited resources to the other athletes. This was understandable given all three coaching roles were funded wholly or partly by the governing body, with the intention they deliver athletes to the national squad.

Sometimes, the impact of the culture of status went further than privileging one athlete over another. It overturned the norm of dominant/subordinate in the coach-athlete relationship. On one occasion, for example, Dan acquiesced to the demand from the most successful athlete in the HERR crew to boat for the race from Hammersmith and not Putney, which they used for the other similar major head races on the Tideway. Another time, Dan experienced this negotiation of roles when an ex-Olympic cox stepped into one of the crew boats. The cox took charge of the four as soon as it went onto the water. This left the coach with a bit part from the side-lines of the launch, muscled out of the lead role and of being seen to be the expert. The status of the coach or elite rower was not one which could be subject to formal ratification; standards of competence were not objective (Goffman, 1959). Instead, like Purdy and Jones (2011) who examined the impact of a rower with "a background which gave him a certain standing", the status of the athlete put at risk the respect of the athletes and Dan's status

as coach (Potrac et al., 2002). This was supported by Girginov et al. (2006), who state that the position of members in the organisational hierarchy shapes and conditions their perspectives on culture.

Whilst there was some recognition that athletes had a role in determining the programme, or asserting their status, often the coach had the last say in the relationship. An internationally experienced cox explained the power-over nature of the coach-athlete relationship, “I kind of come into it with a lot of knowledge of the sport and everything else, but I need to, subservience is not the right way, but he’s the coach, I’m the cox, we have to work together, but he’s the boss” (Interview, cox). The expert power of the coach came through a continuous process of demonstration (Jones et al., 2002) and resistance, but ensured the maintenance of the power-over dynamic in the relationship (Purdy & Jones, 2011). Thus the understanding of the power-over dynamic of Bethany as an organisational culture illuminated one aspect of the coach-athlete relationship.

### **6.1.2 Distance and impersonal relations**

Weber posits that a reduction in values from the rationalisation of organisational life causes a pursuit of ends resulting in an impersonal social world (Gane, 2004; Schroeder, 1992). The rationalisation of practice at Bethany was discussed in chapter 5, in the enculturated drive to use calculated means to ensure athlete performance and coach success. Rationalised practices included the micro-management by coaches of the daily functioning and lives of rowers in their squad, such as ensuring that athletes had enough sleep, recovered after sessions, and ate enough food to produce fuel for the next session. The athlete’s body was the tool to achieve the coach and athlete’s goal. It was recognised that it was the disciplined management, rather than unplanned management of the body that was important (Chapman, 1997). Understanding the physical capabilities of the body helped coaches to modify individual rower’s training and targets.

The disciplined use of food was used as a means of preparing bodies for success. Most athletes knew the nutritional value of the food they ate. They planned meals around their schedule. Nathan explained that:

Diet and food between sessions is more important, you do have to look after yourself and make sure you’re getting the right nutrients and carbs and everything else, the amount of calories you burn, like if you’re not

replacing them then it's going to be detrimental ... and there's no point in training harder than you can recover from. (Interview, Nathan)

For those unaware of how to discipline their body through food, the coach stepped in. Mary felt the need to intervene with one athlete attending university, to check he was eating correctly. She observed him having seven Weetabix for breakfast with a pint of milk, followed by Uncle Ben's wholegrain rice in the microwave and some pop tarts for sugar, but still losing 5kg in weight. They agreed that he was not getting enough food in the university halls in the evening, so she decided to intercede and speak to the manager there, to allow him to swap his lunch for his dinner or find somewhere for him to cook enough food (Fieldnotes, 13 and 18 October).

The word "diet" comes from the Greek *diata*, meaning a total mode of life (Turner, 1992); it is also derived from the Latin *dies*, meaning day, where political life was regulated by a calendar. These two combine to provide the sense of a dietary regimen that was policed by the coach to regulate the body and the body politic. Turner (1992) states that, "In both religion and war, human bodies need to be trained, restrained and disciplined by diet, drill, exercise and grooming" (p.119). Historically, the rationalisation of diet as a form of energy was necessary to mobilise enough men in war, to use diet to improve health and to reduce economic costs of supporting large numbers of people in armies and prisons/asylums. The rowers generally acquiesced to the coaches' control over their bodies. Those that tried to escape this control, found themselves brought back into line by the coach. For example, at a training camp, Leyla became ill with food poisoning. Her coach was cross with her, as she had not taken any medication, had eaten curry the night before, and sushi during the week. She was told that both her and her coach's career depended on her being accountable to looking after herself. Similarly Ben succumbed to "fresher's" flu and had to be sent home. He refused to go to the doctor to get treatment. On hearing that the infection had gone to his chest, Mary was exasperated that through Ben's poor management of his condition, he would miss a further week of training (Fieldnotes, 5 October).

The connection between coach and athlete was submerged as athletes were assets to be managed. The coaches sought obedience to a disciplined life as if they were managing an economic activity, and a calculation of optimal profitability for each individual was made, in the same way one would calculate any material means of production in a for profit company. Weber (1948/1991) captures the essence in stating:

The individual is shorn of his natural rhythm and determined by the structure of his organism; his psycho-physical apparatus is attuned to a new rhythm through medical specialisation of separately functioning muscles, and an optimal economy of forces is established corresponding to the condition of work. (pp. 262-3)

Heikkala (1993) believes that coaches are encouraged to view their athletes as productive bodies whose purpose is to produce results. For the Bethany athletes, this limited their self-determined choices about how they went about the work of being a rower (Blustein, 2011). The reality for the athlete was an impersonal relationship with their coach.

Sometimes discipline was viewed as an end in itself. This added to the distance between coach and athlete. One of the juniors' ergo sessions demonstrated this distancing:

The coach leaves this group in the gym whilst he takes his four top athletes out on the water. Eleven of the juniors are doing ergos – 4 x 10 minutes with 5 minutes between; the remaining six are doing a circuit. One of the coxes sets off the eleven rowers. She is very petite. The boys on the far end ergos rush up and down the slide of the ergo, rating highly, and then settle as a group into their rhythm. They move as if in three groups – five younger lads of around 15, three older athletes and three around 16.

The remaining six younger juniors are doing circuits supervised by another cox. The rowers do the circuit individually and do not chat. This is the instruction from the coach.

The ergo group finish their first repetition and get up off their seats. Some walk around, some go outside. They all take a drink from their bottles – water, squash or energy drink. One girl has a puff of her inhaler. She seems to be struggling to breathe.

The ergo group start again. The cox keeps them on rate 24 by calling loudly to them, just as the coach does. She prowls up and down behind them, a bit like a policeman. Now all the lads have their shirts off as it is hot and stuffy. When they finish after 10 minutes, two girls gasp for air and lie on the floor. The others slowly get up and walk around to recover.

The ergos start for the third time. One girl starts grimacing halfway through and stops. Her back hurts. This happened only yesterday and she lies on the floor with her knees in the air to relax the spasm.

The final ergo repetition starts. The girl with the inhalers drops out and so does one of the older girls. Now, both coxes prowl behind the athletes on the ergos, as the circuit group has finished and is stretching. Two of the girls get up to encourage their friend, and stand to the side of her remonstrating with her to keep to her split. She suddenly lets go of the handle with one hand and coughs, then stops and vomits some phlegm.

She makes for the door and goes outside with her friends. I go out to check if she is OK. She stops vomiting and I send her upstairs to get warm and to change. I ask the procedure for cleaning it up. A young boy goes to get a bucket and a brush. The cox shows me the wipes and, as the only adult in the room I naively set to with the antibacterial spray and wipes to clean it up, tipping the water over the phlegm outside. Later the coach puts me straight, the juniors clear up their own vomit – that's what happens. (Fieldnotes, 15 January)

The junior athletes were instructed to learn the discipline of the session, obey others, and deal with their own bodily reactions to the training, without the support of the coach. Discipline also included managing the daily stretching before and after sessions, and for some squads, work on core strength. Each day commenced in the draughty gym, lying on thin blue mats to stretch limbs and torso. Sometimes these sessions were relaxed with athletes chatting about their previous day's exploits. At other times, they were regimented. For example:

In the gym Bob is sitting writing out a list, with all the juniors on mats, silently stretching and doing core exercises. One junior is telling them when to change exercise and they all follow - it reminds me of a Japanese stretching or martial arts class. Very disciplined and organised, all doing the same thing ... when asked what they felt about this approach, a shrug of the shoulders indicated this was just what they did. (Fieldnotes, 15 January)

Discipline in this context was seen as a product of the puritanical acceptance of exercise as a suitable component of education, believing sport to be a valuable aspect of character formation (Turner, 1992). Relating was absent from this context.

It was several months before I understood how frequently the rowers were on their own on the water, despite coaches endeavouring to work the river to monitor their performance. Between September and December, training was predominantly completed in single sculls, where the rower manoeuvres a boat themselves using two blades. This honed the rower's individual skills making sure any weaknesses were not hidden by the strengths of others in a crew boat. The selection process for the national squad involved two water tests over a 5km course in a single scull during this period, so additionally rowers were keen to practice alone in their boat. Being alone on the river was part of the rower's experience, giving them ample time to reflect on the work they were doing. As Nathan explained:

... like when you've been doing rate 20 stuff you've got, and you've done like 1 second in the water and then you've got a whole 2 seconds of time of just sitting there doing nothing, ... then I, sometimes I think I switch off too much sometimes, I just drift off especially when I was out

on the water, myself, I just try and totally switch off and I get some of my best rowing done then, but I suddenly find that I'm only going like three quarter pressure and I'll have a look at my heart rate monitor and I'm only like in 140s and it's like oh God, keep going, keep going. (Interview, Nathan)

Another example of distancing came from the way that the talent scheme programme was designed. Each of the four rowers joining the talent scheme at Bethany during the year had moved a considerable distance away from family and friends, to be taught the discipline of rowing. They lived in the same house together, training with each other daily and with one coach. Weber uses the army to illustrate how segregation from the outside world and family generates discipline in order to make soldiers into professional warriors (Weber 1948/1991, p.258). The analogy is not lost in describing the governing bodies' approach to managing these talent athletes.

The systematic management of bodies resulted in impersonal relations between coach and athlete. In ensuring that the life of the athletes was disciplined, there was a conscious separation of the life of the coach from that of the rower. Dan said, "I try to keep it a professional relationship, but friendly as well" (Interview, Dan). Similarly athletes partitioned themselves from the coach. Harry explained:

With regards to going and getting drunk with, maybe there's a certain level of formality so that I wouldn't do that. But I am comfortable with the whole coach-athlete thing. You don't go and get pissed together or socialise too much. (Interview, Harry)

Bob explained how a more impersonal relationship with his athletes enabled him to improve performance:

I quite regularly get told I am scary. I don't know how the athletes view me. Do I care? I care that they learn and get better and get results. I am very honest with athletes. Like I said, "If they are not doing what they are capable of I am very honest." Because if I am not, then the outcome of a race will be very honest with them in the summer. So if I play a popularity contest and say well done, that was alright, that's just me being a patronising idiot. (Interview, Bob)

Sometimes it was purposeful to spur a rower into action:

I kind of almost close up a little bit, I almost don't want them to interact with me because I want them to do it, and I think sometimes if I put up that guard, that probably prompts them, they realise, "Oh she's not going to talk now we actually need to do this." (Interview, Mary)

The separation and distancing of coach and athlete fitted a traditional model of human development, which valorises security gained from building boundaries and

being independent (Miller, 1991a). A core tenet of RCT identified in chapter 3 is the notion of “being-in-relation”, where the boundaries between coach and athlete blur and meld, so that a mutuality and emotional availability can be perceived by each party. This provides the opportunity for both to grow and develop. At Bethany, the purposeful action of both coach and athlete to distance themselves, along with the practice of discipline, resulted in a continuing disconnection in their relationship.

### **6.1.3 Caretaking or caring about?**

Chapter 5 presented the steel hard casing or iron cage surrounding the coach role. The culture entrapped the coach in a need to guarantee athlete performance. The result was a daily balancing act between coercion and care in the relationship, as athlete and coach accepted the norm that hard work was required to improve the chance of selection to the national squad. A normal winter day’s training at Bethany might involve rowing around 34km – 16km on the water and 18km on the ergo. Day after day, week after week. Training was on the river, in the gym or elsewhere doing cross-training such as running, swimming or cycling. One of the rowers new to the sport, who had only been rowing for two months, seemed surprised by the volume of work, making everybody in the boatyard laugh, saying, “This rowing is hard,” as if it were the biggest revelation to her, but not to anyone else (Fieldnotes, 18 October).

Whilst solitude in a boat was often entwined with hard work on the river, the ergo was symbolic of hard work in the gym. The ergo was unforgiving, recording duration, speed, distance and stroke rate every time a stroke was taken. The work was visible and palpable:

Six of the men are on the ergos doing 18km in 3 x 6km with 90 seconds between to stretch and take on water. I am taken aback by the athleticism of these guys... They have the three big wall fans on to cool them down, and most of them have stripped down to bare backs and rolled down all-in-one...Already their backs are starting to glisten with small beads of sweat (Fieldnotes, 5 October).

Sometimes the sessions were shorter and more intense, such as three repetitions of 3km on the ergo; during these, none of the athletes could talk whilst working on the ergo nor did they in between each repetition, as they just had enough time to get their breath back before they started the next repetition. It could be interpreted that the coaches’ role in this was one of care. For example, one day Mary was alone in the gym with Rowena as she completed a 5k ergo test for national squad selection. I noted:

Rowena is in the last 2k. Mary is very close to her and says "Keep with me", "Stay on the rate", "Good, good", " I know you have it in your legs". I am very aware of how focussed she is in Rowena alone at this moment. (Fieldnotes, 25 January)

The organisation had no language to describe the idea of care or an interaction that attended to and responded to the other. Fletcher (2004) describes this as a disappearing dynamic, "where relational practice gets disappeared ...through the lack of language to describe it as work" (p. 289). Such language might introduce attributes such as emotionality, caring, growth, empowerment and mutuality into the coaching environment.

The experienced rowers accepted hard work as part of the sport. As a novice rower, Gaby learned that the sport demanded that you were mentally and physically tough, saying:

I think that people who haven't necessarily been an athlete from a young age, sometimes maybe get caught up in the idea of, or the ideal of seeing that athlete winning that medal. But they don't realise what it takes to achieve it. And there's a lot of hard work. (Interview, Gaby)

There was a form of self-policing through individuals' internalisation of expectations and norms relating to the work ethic (Denison, 2011). As Adam voiced, "when you're in a line doing an ergo, whatever the split you're pulling, it's kind of expected that everyone's pulling, or inputting the same perceived effort. And that's just the way it is." Working hard was normative behaviour (Feldman, 1984). Adam went on to confirm that the work ethic at Bethany was similar at other clubs with HP groups:

So certainly within the group I don't think it necessarily needs to be said, because again the whole point of coming to the group for myself, and I'm sure for other guys ...the notion of hard work or determination or discipline or whatever you, you know sharing and so on, is much more organic, and you sort of pick up that that's how things are done, because if it's not how they're done then you'll start to drop out of that group and operate much more along the social lines. (Interview, Adam)

There was tacit knowledge held by experienced and elite rowers that hard work was just something you expected at this level of rowing. This was born out by recent media quotes from the London 2012 Olympiad. For example, the Team GB men's head coach speaking about the record medal haul said "It was a big, big result. There is no recipe to success - it's just hard work, consistency and belief in what you're doing is right" (Barretto, 2012).

The less experienced and more junior rowers, however, had to learn this through observing others, taking part in training programmes set by the coach, being told by their coach and through direct communication by the club committee. For example, the club took a proactive approach to systemising the training and work load for athletes. This was exemplified by a discussion at one of the Rowing Sub Committee meetings (Fieldnotes, 24 November). The junior coach, Bob, reinforced the work ethic in his training sessions for the juniors. They trained for ten sessions a week, over six days, coming down at 6.30am on two weekday mornings and 7.00am on Saturdays and Sundays. Some of the junior boys (under eighteen) were just training once a week. The junior co-ordinator mooted that this was an unacceptably low level of training and gained the committee's agreement to tell them this. He advised these boys that if they could only row once per week, they would be given a reference to move to another club. This was coercion by the coach. The Rowing Sub-committee and Bob, the junior coach, sought to produce normalised individuals who would self-manage against the club's exacting standards of training. Those unwilling to subjugate themselves to this command, found themselves routed from the club.

The impact of enacting the work ethic on the coach-athlete relationship depended on the construed meaning of this practice (Sewell, Barker & Nyberg, 2012). The actions of the coaches to manage their athletes' work ethic might be viewed as a malign form of organisational domination, or a more benign way of organising (Gouldner, 1955). RCT is helpful here. It makes a distinction between "caretaking" and "caring about" another (Stiver, 1991a, p. 265). Chapter 5 identified that the role of coach at Bethany, like other roles such as teacher, physiologist or psychologist, contributed to a more objective and impersonal regard for the athlete and an imbalance of power in the relationship. "Caretaking" is a more objective impersonal approach to giving care, which maintains the power imbalances in relationships. In contrast, Stiver (1991a) presents "caring about" as more egalitarian, where there is an emotional investment in the other's well-being. "Caring about" precludes the distancing described in the coach-athlete relationship in the previous section; it implies that people are listened to and understood, requiring a mutual empathy in relating. The culture at Bethany seemed to support a "caretaking" coach-athlete relationship.

#### 6.1.4 Fragile trust in the coach

Trust has been identified in the literature as an important element of closeness between a coach and athlete (Jowett, 2007; Kilty, 2006; La Voi, 2007a, 2007b). Chapter 5 recognised the organisational culture where expertise was vested in the coach role. This required the athletes to trust in that expertise. At Bethany, the athletes consistently spoke of their trust in the coach. For example:

I think he has the sort of outside eye on things and you have to sort of take a bit of what he says on trust in terms of you know whatever technical aspect you're working on. (Interview, Adam)

I said I think it's a big thing to put all your trust in a coach completely. Like you completely trust them. You are always wondering, am I doing enough? Should I be doing more? ... I just do what she says, or what she gives me, and that's just a different approach. Like, I do trust Mary 100% when it comes to my rowing. (Interview, Gaby)

Also the trust thing. When you shift from one training programme to another, when you've always been successful and it's worked, to then buy into something that someone else is doing, you are thinking, that's a change. (Interview, Esther)

The result of this trust was obedience to the programme. This was evident in adherence to the early morning starts, even from the junior HP rowers; few deviated. The rowers rarely questioned why a coach set a session or argued about its content. Adam went on to explain, "You just do the training, do the physical side of things that you have to do, you know, not so much questioning that unless you're ill or feeling fatigued." The athletes had implicit trust in the coach to manage their training to meet their goals, whether making the national squad or winning at Henley Royal Regatta. Sometimes this was just given by the athlete, shown by Nathan's comment, "I trust him to put together a plan that will place me in the best position I can be at the time when it matters. And I do what he says!" (Interview Nathan).

It seemed that the athlete's trust was actively courted by the coach. Rhind and Jowett (2011) suggest that preventative relationship strategies (e.g. setting out expectations) were used by coaches only when they felt the relationship was not close. This suggests they are not used when either party feels there are mutual trust, respect and appreciation in the relationship. This was evidenced in Mary's newly formed relationship with one of the talent squad athletes, Ben. At the beginning of their relationship, she purposefully made small changes to his technique and approach to training, recognising that his lack of trust in her as coach prevented him from making a

paradigm shift in his rowing skills. Each change was carefully calculated to seem trivial to Ben, knowing that each small change would be significant to his performance some months later. This was evidenced in the change in Ben between October and March. Mary said “Ben’s just taking up too much of my time by not arriving on time and being reliable. But he seems to have taken this on board now and I think he’s started to trust me now, now that he’s had some success in the trials!” (Fieldnotes, 4 March).

Whilst this resulted in an element of closeness in the relationships between coach and athlete, this trust was often fragile. Gaby laughed nervously when she explained how easily the trust she had in Mary could be displaced, “Sometimes I wish she wouldn't tell me this, because she goes, ‘I'm learning from experience’. And I go, ‘Don't tell me that! Just tell me you know everything. Everything is going to be okay!’” (Interview, Gaby). Another athlete, did not want to share with his coach his concerns over the impact of his medical condition saying,

If there were two people, one who had [medical condition] and one who didn't, and the same quality of rower and the same scores, you'd probably choose the guy who wasn't [medical condition]... But Dan is understanding. He listens a lot... and he understands although he doesn't know much about it, so it's difficult to explain to him the difficulty of it.

Relationships flourish in a context of trust (Jowett, 2007; Miller et al., 2004). This requires trust to develop based on a shared history of movement through connection and disconnection. This paves the way for more relational authenticity. The introduction of doubt and an inability to feel able to be authentic in the relationship meant the Bethany athletes’ trust remained fragile.

Chapter 5 also identified a more liquid organisational culture, where trust had to be developed quickly. Sometimes relationships formed at Bethany only as a coach and athlete joined together for projects e.g. to get an athlete through the development programme, to put a winning crew together. This was evidenced in the considerable amount of time that coach and athlete spent together when they needed to focus on a specific goal, such as a forthcoming national trial. Esther explained how she and Mary worked together, “So it's like every session, it's not what are we doing today? She is very focused and there's a name, a goal, we're building on things.” When people come together for a specific purpose, Clegg and Baumeler (2010) suggest trust has to be built quickly. It is essential for the team or two parties to suspend doubt about the others in the team. Adam summed this up saying,

Trust relies on there being respect or respect relies on there being trust, you know that sort of psychology. No I suppose those are the two, maybe the fundamental words, you know, trust, respect, in their knowledge, their rowing ambitions or aspirations and so on and so forth. (Interview, Adam)

Yet as athletes were selected for crews or the national team, both parties existed in a state of endemic uncertainty, and so relationships were also characterised by underlying uncertainty. As a consequence trust had to be built and rebuilt swiftly and efficiently in the coach-athlete relationship. This fostered the potential for disconnection in the relationship. Miller et al. (2004) suggest that trust is built through the process of reworking connections in relationships, so that they are strengthened and transformed. This allows the both parties in the relationship to “develop a stability and trustworthiness that allows for further growth to occur” (Miller et al., 2004, p.68). The coaches’ approach to the development of trust is analysed in the next section.

#### **6.1.5 Trust in the athlete through surveillance**

The rigorous coach surveillance of the hard work and discipline of the athletes’ bodies brought into question the coaches’ trust in the athletes. Sewell and Barker (2006) define surveillance as the “few watching the many” (p.935). A sophisticated web of measures supported the coaches’ rigorous and rational control of the programme. One way this control of athletes’ activities was enacted was through their presence at nearly every training session at Bethany. This was discussed in the analysis of professionalisation in chapter 5. This ensured that athletes arrived at the club to carry out their role in the programme in completing the allotted sessions each day. At Bethany, surveillance extended to the various minute details of the athletes’ daily lives. They checked their heart rate each morning for signs of illness and fatigue. Rowing technique was scrutinised from the coaching launch, the slip and by video analysis afterwards.

Surveillance occurred as the coach worked with crews or individuals on the river. Mostly, athletes were spread across several different boats doing individualised sessions each day. This required the coach to “work the river” to ensure they operated with all their chosen crews. For example, in a session where a single crew or athlete might row 16km, the coach plied many more kilometres up and down the river in the launch, seeking out all their athletes in a giant game of hide and seek, not leaving the water until their last athlete had landed safely on the slipway.

Mary follows Gaby up the river. Another rower has gone ahead as she is a more experienced rower and will do 16k. Gaby is doing 8k technical. ... Mary circles back, going up the left side of the big island to try and find the other rower. She meets her by Hassard Sailing Club. (Fieldnotes, 6 January)

However, the coach was also responsible for a rower's safety when they were on the water – a single scull is a narrow unstable vessel which may deposit even the most experienced rower into very cold water if it collides with a submerged log or a less hidden, but more mobile, swan or goose. So some of the working the river could also be them discharging their professional duty of care to their charges.

Managing athlete conduct through disciplinary practices which regulated the body, required rational organisation and administration from the coach. Weber noted, "Every domination both expresses itself and functions through administration" (1968/1978, p.948). In Weber's sociology, the principles of panoptic surveillance emerged in the bureaucratic machinery necessary to scientifically manage a group of people (Turner, 1992). However, a fixity of actions and rules can be an obstacle to creativity and development. At Bethany the coaches sought calculability and predictability, where the body was a tool to achieve a performance end. These practices were not contested. Heikkala (1993) proposes that athletes constantly monitor themselves against the normalised behaviours in their environment, understanding that these are the demanding practices of high-performance sport.

On the surface, in spite of the surveillance, the athletes presented an acceptance that the coaches trusted them. Implicit in the athletes' work ethic was the belief that the coach trusted them to work hard, yet also understood when they needed to rest or recover due to illness or injury. Adam explained the view of a coach when athletes were tired, "And they might say oh you've just got to man up, but I think generally, I think coaches at a sort of high performance level trust that, you know, an individual when they get to this sort of level aren't in the habit of trying to avoid hard work" (Interview, Adam). However, a distance was maintained in the process of coach and athlete relating. Neither group allowed the other to get too close, several athletes were coached by one coach, boundaries were placed around roles, and friendship kept out of the relationship; yet paradoxically each trusted in the other to deliver their career expectations. Mary summarised the liquidity in how she related to her athletes:

There's definitely two levels, I do have to switch in and out of mode a little bit. And, but I'm quite careful when I go into mode, like I'll kind of have a clear vision of what we're trying to do, but again I'll have out of mode in a way, out of the kind of ... I think because otherwise if it stays bantery, nothing, you won't get anything done and that, in a way, particularly when you're trying to make changes or make people go faster and stuff, I suppose the relationship differs depending on what you're trying to do a little bit, the human stuff always stays but the coaching relationship probably changes a little bit. (Interview, Mary)

Shogan (1999) proposes that there should be a moral trust in relationships.

Coach and athlete must be aware of what the other relies on to ensure their continued trustworthiness and trustingness. RCT suggests, then, that the coach, for example, might be the active agent of control in the relationship, choosing action that leads to connection. The athlete allows the coach to lead and control. However, this requires a mutual trust based on authenticity, where parties in the relationship have a secure knowledge of self and the other, and feel free to be genuine. This in turn depends on both parties knowing that they have an impact on the other and understanding what that impact is (Miller et al., 2004). The coaches revealed little of themselves to the rowers. Thus authenticity was opaque at Bethany.

### **6.1.6 Concealing emotion**

The disenchanting culture of Bethany analysed in chapter 5 presented a rational form of life where scientific means were chosen to get to the goal, or end, of Olympic and Henley success. Action based on an emotion did not aid this calculability. An emotional orientation was seen by Weber as irrational. Weber (1968/1978) states, "it is convenient to treat all irrational, affectually determined elements of behaviour as factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action" (p.6). At Bethany emotion was not encouraged as it did not fit the rational model of how things were done.

Further at Bethany, not only did emotion and authenticity not fit with the organisational culture, there were few places to be emotional. The organisational location left few spaces where the individual might drop their guard to reveal their feelings. Goffman (1961) provides a sub-division of organisational locations into space that is off limits, surveillance space and free space. For example, the gym was backstage, surveillance space (Goffman, 1959, 1961) where the rowers pushed their body, often to exhaustion, under the gaze of the coach, making tiny technical changes to the movement. Goffman (1961) describes surveillance space for an athlete "where he

would be subject to the usual authority and restrictions of the establishment” (p.204). At Bethany, emotion was restricted.

Surveillance space, in addition to the gym, included the environments where testing took place, training on the water and at the national training centre. A National Coach described the environment at the national training centre, saying, “It’s often a stressful environment for the athletes, as when everyone is there, there is nowhere for them to go to relax or get away from people” (Fieldnotes, 15 March). No mention of the address or location of the centre was found on the governing body website. Unlike Bethany, which was open to the general public, the centre had an 800m drive and was surrounded by high metal fences. It had the aura of new and well kept, and somewhat impersonal. The Bethany athletes called the national training centre, “The Goldfishbowl”, based on the centre’s big windows facing the lake, mirroring Gabriel’s (2005) glass cage metaphor of institutions where the tiniest blemishes are exaggerated and magnified. This was an environment of austere wooden tables and chairs for athletes to eat from, white brick walls and a non-slip rubber easy clean flooring throughout, supplemented by ubiquitous hand sanitisers and notices to use them.

At one of the frequent testing sessions for the HP Bethany athletes at the national centre, I noted:

Damian called it sterile. It has that feel of surrealism; a simulacra. A little world orbiting on its own away from real life, with one aim, to get an athlete on an Olympic podium. Where is the talk of development, growth? Dan and Mary talk about it as a place where athletes are tested to breaking, and their role is to prepare them so that they don’t break. (Fieldnotes, 17 November)

The coaches and athletes questioned what would happen if a rower had an emotional outburst at this centre? It was considered they would not survive as a squad athlete at the national centre. This added to the norm of withholding emotion. Donnelly and Young (1988) described the rock-climbing sub-culture, explaining that an emotional outburst of a young climber which questioned the safety of others was ignored and resulted in him being ostracised from the group. At Bethany, coaches purposely schooled rowers to be emotionally tough. A governing body official explained:

A lot of the reasons that, you know, athletes struggle with confidence is because it’s not OK to say, “You know, is it alright if we have some regular chats about my confidence, so that it’s, you know, as strong as

possible” as they are afraid the response will be, “ What, you mean it’s weak, is it?” (Fieldnotes, 17 November)

Expressing emotion is a key element of authentic relationships. RCT posits that Western society and the workplace ascribes men and women with different ways of working and of the value of relationships (Fletcher, 2004). Men are located in a knowledge of what it means to produce things in the workplace, whereas the knowledge of what it means to relate and grow people is attributed to women (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Chapter 5 analysed the traditional gender ordering of men over women at the club and the elite sporting ethos, where women and their activities and contributions were not valued within the organisation. The disappearing of women in the organisational culture may simultaneously have acted to place authentic relating, and thus emotion, as a minor personal activity, the province of only women.

Thus Bethany as an organisational culture imbued with emotional concealment. Expression of emotion was rare. Hochschild (2012) argues that “Institutions - such as corporations – control us not simply through their surveillance of our behaviour, but through surveillance of our feelings” (p.228). She terms this emotional labour, where feelings are suppressed “to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild, 2012, p.6).

However, to be in relation with others requires empathy; and empathy is not just a cognitive function, but also an affective one (Jordan, 1991). As discussed in chapter 2, mutual empathy is one of the core tenets of relational authenticity in RCT (Miller et al., 2004). Mutual empathy requires both parties to the relationship helping the other to know and express their feelings clearly, whilst stating the boundaries within which the relationship can be conducted (Miller et al., 2004). The suppression of emotion at Bethany made it difficult to have mutual empathy, and further added to the sense of disconnection between coach and athlete.

### **6.1.7 Avoiding conflict – enacting compliance**

In RCT, conflict is seen as an intense form of engagement, and not as the start of separation and disconnection. Thus conflict is a necessary part of relationships. It is an essential fragment of the change that must be made to grow and develop the relationship (Miller, 1986). Conflict has an intense affective component. Given the preceding discussion on the concealment of affect at the club, it is no surprise that conflict was not a common occurrence at Bethany.

The insight given in chapter 5 concerning the demand, particularly on coaches, to deliver athletes to the national squad, illuminates one reason why, at times, coaches purposefully avoided engaging in a battle with an athlete. An example of this occurred one day when Mary, wondering why one rower was not improving, found out that the athlete had not been doing the cross training (swimming) detailed in their programme for at least four weeks:

Mary is controlling her ire, as she explains, “Beth told me a bare faced lie that she had been swimming at the weekend, when I know that is not true”... Mary says she has decided to not go for the “f\*\*\* off route”, but something more moderate. She will clearly lay out the consequences of not training explaining that Beth won’t improve and will be off the programme by the end of the first year. (Fieldnotes, 6 December)

There was an element of restraint in engaging in conflict, as coaches sought to maintain the performance of their athletes. They knew that they themselves were evaluated on the ultimate performance of their athletes, and conflict seemed an anathema to this end.

Similarly, at other times, athletes avoided conflict through the more subtle ruse of compliance. One example of compliance came with the routine medical testing of athletes. Taking lactate seemed clinical, almost like animal testing in a laboratory. As the athletes sat obediently on the ergo:

A physiologist is here to do lactate testing on the senior men. The session is 3 x 6k ergo with a very short rest in between. The physiologist has a box of needles and tubes, latex gloves and wipes. By 11.15 all the guys are down on the ergo. A coach helps him with one latex glove on. The coach occasionally speaks to a rower to adjust their stroke rate and hovers all the time with a clipboard. All the 8 rowers move in time, except Luke, who has a different rhythm and is the only person rowing with his feet out of the bindings on the ergo. The physiologist paces up and down noticing who will finish the first 6k ergo first. Angus is first. The physiologist is on one knee, next to him with his box of phials and gloves. He wipes Angus’ right ear and pricks it. He talks to the athlete, checking he is OK and tells him to drink. Then he squeezes some blood into a tube and caps and shakes it. The coach takes it and puts it into the “lactate” machine and takes a reading. He notes down the ergo time for 500m and then tells the athlete the lactate score and whether they need to adjust their work rate or not. He records everything meticulously on the sheet on his clipboard. This is repeated with each athlete immediately they finish. No athlete complains or says “ouch” or “don’t do this to me”– the physiologist is like a hovering vampire. Oliver finishes at the same time as Harry so is told by the coach to paddle on a little until the physiologist can get to him. It is frenetic. After a short pause, counted

down on the ergo timer, the athletes do the next 6k. The process of taking blood is repeated. (Fieldnotes, 2 November)

The medical testing session was presented by Dan as something that the rowers all knew and understood the benefit of; but from the questions the rowers asked the physiologist afterwards, quietly discussing the implications of the tests, it was clear they chose not to problematise or challenge this practice with the coach. Heikkala (1993) questions the value of “the unquestionable subjection to the rationale of competing” (p.411) and the resulting self-discipline and obedience to achieve performance enhancements. She argues that blindly and compliantly following normative practices, such as medical testing, opens the possibility of “the feeling of power through obedience” (Heikkala, 1993, p.411).

Sometimes, both coach and athlete colluded in their compliance to a higher power, that of the national governing body, GB rowing. Not only did the coaches have their own disciplined programme to deliver to athletes, so did GB rowing. Coach and athlete were expected to obediently comply with the testing and timetable of this higher power. The coaches adapted their programme to accommodate the frequent fixed testing requirement and trialling schedule of GB rowing. The national trialling and testing schedule was relentless in demanding that rowers were monitored every 6-8 weeks. Results were fed back to the national coaches and Performance Director. Both coach and athlete colluded in the “testing” displays throughout the autumn and early spring, although they both knew that the final trials in late spring were the most important in determining selection to the national squad.

As normal training finishes, the head coach calls some 40 coaches and athletes together to encourage everyone to go down to the gym to support and see some “top end” guys performing at the highest level, doing a 5 km test on the indoor rowing machines – the ergo.

And so the spectacle commences. I am reminded of Goffman’s idea of team performance, where the rower, coach and spectator collude to stage a performance (Goffman, 1959). The air is full of tension and sweat. A national coach watches with a notebook and pen. Seven men warm-up on their ergos. One has shaved his head for the occasion. The head coach gives a little pep talk “back yourselves” and then attaches an Ipod to the stereo system. He starts them, cranks up the music and we watch. More of the club members come down until there are about 25 club members plus the coaches watching.

It is quiet. For a while rowers move in harmony up and down the slide and then find their own rhythm, sometimes moving in time in pairs. The coach walks behind then uttering short phrases of encouragement. One

athlete stops with cramp. The main four rowers slide back in sync - It is almost like a wave of movement, relentless, insistent. Adam's breath can be heard above the noise of the flywheel on the ergo. Shuh as he breathes out each time. Their bare backs are dripping in sweat, even though I am cold in ski trousers and down coat. Their faces are contorted. There is no relaxation.

The club members shout out the rower's names. Above the din of the music comes the shout there is only 2 minutes left, and that is 50 strokes. I wonder if they will finish. People bend forward behind each rower to encourage them on. Two finish. Then Luke followed by Harry. Perry is a little way after them. Malcolm lies prostrate on the floor. Luke has his head in his hands. The club and national coach calmly take their notebooks and examine the computer screens on the ergo machines to note down the times and splits for each rower. The rowers get up and move around and the crowd leaves and the tensions disperse, until only the rowers and coaches are left.

And I ask why they do this. And I am told it's just the system and we have to do it for an athlete to remain considered for selection. The outcome of the performance is irrelevant. It is simply, as Goffman tells us, coaches and athletes and onlookers co-operating to stage a single routine – the test – and even though they don't personally believe in the behaviour, they maintain the standard by performing the test, because of a belief they will be punished if they don't (Goffman, 1959, p.87).

The athletes uncomplainingly complied with the testing schedules imposed on them, wordlessly colluding with the coaches in these practices. It was possible that a feeling of power arose, as practice that is unquestioningly followed “causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us” (Foucault, 1983, p. xiii).

Relational settings are not free from conflict nor expected to maintain perfect connection. In fact, “disconnections and conflicts are natural parts of the ebb and flow of relationships found in all settings” (Hartling & Sparks, 2008, p.169). Further, Miller (1986) observed that dominant-subordinate organisational systems simultaneously suppress, or avoid conflict, whilst co-creating the conditions that produce conflict. Chapter 5 identified the hierarchical nature of Bethany, dominant-subordinate, of coach over athlete, of status and of gender. Conflict was indeed suppressed and avoided at Bethany. This lack of conflict and complicity with organisational demands such as testing, challenged the ability of coach and athlete to act in relation. Hartling and Sparks (2008) contend that when coach and athlete “engage in polite behavior without addressing differences or conflicts, the outcome can be an *illusion of connection*, rather than authentic connection” (p.176). The corollary was disconnection.

### 6.1.8 Summary

This section has illustrated how the coach-athlete relationship was enacted within the disenchanting organisational culture of Bethany. From the routinised and systematic daily lives of athlete and coach at Bethany, a picture emerged of a rationalised programme of training, delivered through the disciplined, obedient management of bodies, carefully watched over by the coaches, to ensure delivery of athletes to the national squad. Thus individuals were not treated as ends in themselves but as instrumental means to an end. Weber (1948/1991) says this will create an “unbrotherly aristocracy” (p.355) resulting from the impersonal rationalisation far removed from the Protestant ethic that is its roots. Thus relations were less to a person, than to impersonal functional purposes, because individual values and beliefs were subordinated to rational consideration of organisational demands (Gane, 2004).

The process of coach-athlete relating at Bethany, like the image of organisational culture used in chapter 5, was a web of meaning and interactions. This process could be summarised as one of disconnection, with:

- Power-over relating. This resulted in the maintenance of inequality in the relationship, despite the acts of resistance from the athletes based on their status or attempts at empowerment
- Distance and impersonal relations. The outcome was limited mutuality or emotional availability
- Caretaking rather than caring about each other. This enforced the lack of language at the club to describe care, supporting the impersonal relations and maintaining the relational power imbalances
- Fragile athlete trust. The inability to be fully authentic in relationship and the demand for swift trust constrained the reworking of connections to maintain trust
- Coach trust through surveillance. Despite the athletes believing that the coach trusted them, surveillance, distance and the coaches reluctance to reveal their selves, meant that relational authenticity remained opaque
- Concealing emotion. Emotion was not valued at the organisation, and as a key component of empathy and authenticity, disconnection resulted

- Avoiding conflict – enacting compliance. Both practices presented the illusion of connection. The consequence was disconnection

At the extreme, disconnection at Bethany presented a social world that was drained of vitality and humanness. Weber (1968/1978) described the development of organisational life as, “the more it is ‘dehumanised’, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation” (p.975). This section presented the intersection of organisational culture and relational life. Revealed is the normative way of relating at Bethany. However, there was agency in each athlete and coach interaction, and both parties brought their history, dependencies and preferences to bear. Not only that, but Bethany was a voluntary organisation, not solely a rational bureaucratic enterprise. This has a bearing on relating at the club. This is discussed in the section below.

## **6.2 Re-enchantment?**

Weber’s account of the emergence and development of Western culture describes the process of rationalisation and the accompanying disenchantment of values and the emergence of rational science and the capitalist order. Ultimate values rationalise and devalue themselves and the replacement is increasingly mundane ends (Gane, 2004). The previous section has examined coach-athlete relationships at Bethany, using the framework of disenchantment and found a disconnected form of relating between coach and athlete.

However, organisational life at Bethany for the HP group did not solely consist of means-end actions and ways of relating. There was some hope to resist the total disenchantment through rationalisation of instrumental practices at the club. This hope was vested in the value rationality of the sphere of life run by the volunteer management (e.g. the kitchen incident), how the mutual dependency shown as the identity of the underdog was enacted, and front stage emotions displayed at competitions. The coach-athlete relationship is examined in the light of a re-enchanted organisational culture.

### 6.2.1 Closing the kitchen – value rational relating

Chapter 5, in the section Running a Voluntary Organisation, presented the different value spheres operating at Bethany. The scientific rationalism of means-end HP coaching contrasted with the volunteer management of the club, motivated to act by a more value rational political intent, focussed on the ultimate ends of looking after the members.

One such value-rational action was the closing of the kitchen on the 12<sup>th</sup> May. A committee member wrote to Mary, berating the HP athletes who used the club every day for not keeping the kitchen clean, “There have been constant reminders over the kitchen and many other issues are also being looked at, but we are a club, therefore have to respect everyone else” (Email, 13 May). The kitchen remained closed for several days.

17 May. The kitchen is a hub for the athletes and coaches who train and work at the club during the day. It provides a source of hot and cold water for drinking. It is where athletes store their ample supplies of bread, butter, beans, oats, jam, soup and milk and enables food to be prepared to be eaten. When the coaches arrive at the club on 13<sup>th</sup> May they find that the kitchen is completely locked and no-one can get in to get water, retrieve food from the cupboards or fridge or to prepare anything. Dan hasn't started coaching yet. Before he starts coaching Dan explains why the door is firmly padlocked. He shrugs his shoulders and expounds that Jack, who is on the main committee as well as the Rowing Sub-Committee, has arranged for the padlock on the kitchen door, in response to a committee decision taken late in the evening on 12<sup>th</sup> May. The committee have received several complaints that the kitchen is dirty and there is crockery unwashed in the sink. The daytime athletes are assumed to be the perpetrators of this.

There is nowhere today where athletes can get water or food to hydrate themselves and recover from their sessions, or coaches can sustain themselves in doing their job. It seems that no-one spoke to the coaches beforehand; they were sent an email that morning. So they as workers at the club, and the athletes that came down to train that day had no way of knowing they should bring food, water or extra money to enable them to buy some sustenance.

Dan quietly says that some of the guys actually broke into the kitchen, as they needed food. He did not support them, but nor did he stop them. Mary was the only coach to reply back to the committee. She thinks that Mikey, who acts as a link between the coaches and the committee, takes this as her whinging about her daytime athletes and their needs, implying that she thinks they are special and outside of the normal demands on club members. (Fieldnotes, 17 May)

The committee had a value rational orientation to the problem of the dirty kitchen. Their subsequent decision to close it considered the principle that all members should be responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the club. Gane (2004) argues that a pure value-rational orientation gives rise to a conviction ethic of ultimate ends, one in which values are pursued unconditionally, regardless of the consequences. Weber states,

Examples of pure value-rational orientation would be the actions of persons who, regardless of possible cost to themselves, act to put into practice their convictions of what seems to them to be required by duty, honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call, personal loyalty, or the importance of some 'cause' no matter in what it consists. (Weber, 1968/1978, p.25)

Thus the committee put into place a decision based on the conviction of their duty, without considering the consequences of this action for the HP coaches and athletes who trained and worked at the club each day and who valued access to food and water each day. This exemplified Weber's notion of the separation of the value spheres of these two groups.

Not only that, the coaches' reaction to the incident evidenced their approach to relationships. All three coaches responded in supporting their athletes' needs, however Dan and Mary responded differentially. Dan did not stop his athletes from breaking into the kitchen to get some food, but nor did he engage in chastising the committee or initiating any conflict with them. On the other hand, Mary felt that those using the kitchen should clean up after themselves, but locking the kitchen without the coaches' prior knowledge meant her athletes could not prepare recovery food after their training session. She also took the opportunity to pursue the cause for her athletes, by reminding the rowing sub-committee of several matters that had been raised with them, but not yet implemented: that the club's inability to fix the crew room heating for the last two winters had meant working or training in 6-10 centigrade; that there were no suitable lockers/space for HP athletes to store their training equipment and as most of the daytime athletes cycled to Bethany, due consideration for this would be beneficial to their backs; nothing had been mooted about the unhygienic nature of the women's changing room where upwards of 40 women used a very small space to change. Mary knew that taking a similarly principled stand for her athletes would have consequences. However, she wrote:

Hi Guys,

Thanks for updates ... I don't want to prolong this discussion any more than it needs to and nor do I condone the state that the kitchen has been left in many times this winter (and believe me I have made the point repeatedly). However, I do think it's a bit of a pity that the enthusiasm for locking the kitchen wasn't preceded with a solution like the one mentioned below? What I have never been able to discover is who i.e. what person, actually has responsibility/ownership for the kitchen? 'They' and 'The committee' are bandied about but not a person's name ... (Email from Mary, 13 May)

A committee member responded immediately:

... Solutions with how the club is run are created by members who care and take an interest in providing a club for all rather than just taking for themselves or expecting, we're not appointed or paid ... We all volunteer.

There have been constant reminders over the kitchen and many other issues are also being looked at but we are a club therefore have to respect everyone else.

Hopefully the next RSC (Rowing Sub-Committee) will answer some of the other points you raised and I sympathise with frustrations you feel as a coach, but please remember that the rowers you look after are members of this club and they also need to use their voice and show an interest in how the club is run. If more members got involved life within the club would be better for all.

This exchange of emails exemplified the conflict resulting from the different value positions of the committee and the HP group. Weber believes that the differentiation between the values of different groups can become so marked, that the different spheres begin to make separate demands of the organisation. They may even become irreconcilable as each sphere contains its legitimacy (Gane, 2004; Schroeder, 1992; Weber, 1948/1991). From a relational perspective, the standard approach might suggest that to engage in conflict over the dirty kitchen could only act to increase the separation between the value rational committee and the scientific rational need of the HP coaches and athletes (Kaplan, Kline & Gleason, 1991). Such destructive conflict calls forth the conviction that nothing will change (Miller, 1986). Dan exemplified the futility of trying to change the running of the club, "Where guys like Mikey, they may be hot headed and argue, but they at least try to get things done and that's why they resign, because they hit a brick wall and nothing's happened, and they go, all right, I'm wasting my time." Dan's view of the organisational culture was that conflict was futile and thus might explain why Dan avoided conflict with either his athletes or the committee on this issue.

Section 6.1 discussed that RCT sees conflict as “one mode of intense and abiding engagement, not as the leading edge of separation and disconnection” (Kaplan et al., 2004, p.125). Conflict is a necessary part of relationships to ensure that changes take place that enable each person and the relationship to grow (Miller, 1986). Mary acted to engage in conflict within the organisation on behalf of her athletes, to protect them from the negative impact of the kitchen closure. Her capacity to engage in conflict demonstrated the underlying quality of care and commitment in her relationship with her athletes (La Voi, 2007b; Rhind & Jowett, 2011).

### **6.2.2 Being the underdog – acting mutually**

A second form of resistance to the rational organisational life came through the mutual enactment of the identity and narrative of “underdog” at the club. Humphreys and Brown (2002) suggest that identity, both individual and collective, and the process of identification which binds people to organisations, are constituted in both personal and shared narratives. The identity claims that allow organisational members to talk about themselves may be incorporated into the organisational discourse and “allow organizational members to speak about themselves *as an organization* not only to themselves, but also to others” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p.1001). The prevalent narrative was the espoused belief that Bethany was the underdog, the scruffy cousin compared with the perception of other clubs, particularly the main rival, Kings Club. Coaches, officials and athletes ran the narrative. As the Head Coach told me:

Bethany is quite of an underdog compared with Kings Club. That’s how we saw ourselves at Brown’s University and yeah, that’s kind of why I like it. It was always kind of the dirty and messy and scruffy cousin that shouldn’t do as well as it does. The jumped up kid that should be put in its place. It could do great things. (Interview Coach – Dan)

Similarly, the athletes held the underlying assumption that Bethany was more ordinary than extraordinary. The resulting story from one athlete started:

Bethany has sort of got this underdog reputation ... it's clear that excellence can come from this place. But in the same way it's still a club, and you get club rowers here ... Whereas at Kings ... there's an air of elitism there. They think they are amazing just because they are at Kings. Whereas Bethany, I think you just, you can think of yourself just by your results. (Interview Harry)

The club Captain explained the history behind this narrative.

Bethany was born of four guys who weren’t allowed to join Silchester Rowing Club. So they went up river and they said bugger it, let’s start a

rowing club and we'll go and beat Silchester ... But ever since then ... in the fifties and sixties, trying to go to the Olympics, it's always had an attitude of we play the underdog. (Interview, Simon, Club Captain)

The Bethany coaches and athletes all portrayed their identification with the notion of underdog, for example, through their self-presentation at a national trial event. The weather was inclement with coaches enmeshed in hats and waterproof clothing. The Kings coaches all donned Kings branded and coloured jackets, whereas both Dan and Mary wore their own clothes. Similarly the Kings rowers competed in their club kit, yet the Bethany athletes sported a variety of colours of racing wear (Fieldnotes, 17 November). This narrative was also played out in the club's expectations – of its crews, its performance, its facilities, how it was run – so it was accepted that the club would play second fiddle, the “scruffy cousin” to Kings in the club ranking in the UK.

One example of how this identity of underdog impacted on the coach-athlete relationship was at one of the major races of the season. Bethany had won the race the previous year, and so were required to lead off a procession of 600 or so boats, where the aim was to chase each other down the river (called a head race) – Bethany were now the favourites to win, no longer underdog. In the week leading up to the race, Dan showed how uncomfortable he was in assuming a different identity – that of favourite – by repeating, “I just haven't got to screw the race up”. He struggled to lead his athletes as favourites, uncertain what to say or what to do.

To compound this, on the day of the race, a Kings rower was ill, and Kings were forced to substitute a lesser rower into their boat. On hearing this, Dan shared his anxiety about trying to compete as favourite. He passed this anxiety to the cox and one of the Olympians in the boat whilst they waited in the clubhouse to boat. The briefing before the race for the first eight went as follows:

They are fairly quiet, with just a couple of quips to each other and some loud explosions of wind. Dan outlines the race plan. It is simple and to the point. No one says anything - they just listen. And then he tells them “You will have the odd duff stroke, try and keep the speed. Go and enjoy it”. Dan hands on to the cox who takes over, “Kings have nothing to lose. You will know people around so you shouldn't pay attention to them. You need to internalise once you get on the river.” (Fieldnotes, April)

It was as if, in accepting that “Kings have nothing to lose”, cox, athlete and coach interacted to enact the underdog identity. Something new was created. Miller and Stiver (1997, p.38) call this “the connection between”, as the identity belongs to no-one

alone; it belongs to coach, rower and cox together. Mutuality is one part of what a growth-fostering relationship is.

Not only was there mutuality resulting from the underdog identity, but the underdog identity was relied upon to support an image of self to which they had become emotionally attached and when challenged, felt threatened (Goffman, 1972). Goffman (1961, pp.171-172) states “When an individual cooperatively contributes required activity to an organisation and under required conditions ... he is transformed into a co-operator; he becomes the 'normal', 'programmed', or built in member ...” There was a flame of humanity in all this.

The mutual adoption of the underdog identity provided a shared acceptance of sameness and a pattern of difference from Kings. Identity is about both sameness and difference (Jenkins, 2008; Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004). Jenkins (2008) states “The formation of every ‘we’ must leave out or exclude a ‘they’” (p.21), in order for us to know who’s who. And in the process, both the coach and athlete worked together in connection in performing the identity. Goffman (1959) cites “Each team-mate is forced to rely on the good conduct and behaviour of his fellow, and they, in turn, are forced to rely on him” (p.88). Relationships characterised by mutuality have positive outcomes and provide meaning (Miller, 1986).

### **6.3.3 Performing emotions - authenticity**

The final challenge to the routinised practice at Bethany came from opportunities for both coach and athlete to represent their true experience. Miller and Stiver (1997) term this authenticity in relationship, and include the ability to respond authentically to the thoughts and feelings of others.

Finding authentic behaviour was not easy at Bethany. Goffman (1959) posits that in social spaces there is a division into a back region where the performance is prepared, and the front region, where the performance is presented. Some of the action at Bethany was held in the region bounded in time and space from which other club members and the public were excluded, such as training on the water during the daytime or in the gym. Goffman (1959) termed this the back region or backstage, “where the suppressed facts make an appearance” (p.114) and where the athletes were away from the public and club audiences. Here the athletes could wear their own rather than club kit. The athletes could be coached, as “here poor members of the team...can be

schooled or dropped from the performance” (Goffman, 1959, p.115). The back region for the coaches was their small triangular office, where they sat with computers and whiteboards, and occasionally allowed an athlete in, often with the door closed. These spaces were closed from the audience. Goffman (1959) would suggest that it was in the back region that individuals were able to act more authentically. However, as discussed in the previous section, whilst closed from the audience, these were still spaces for the coach to observe the athlete, and where the emotional guard was not dropped; this was still work space.

If the back region was the place where the performance was prepared, then the front region was the place where the performance was given (Goffman, 1959). At Bethany the front region was racing, as at races such as the HORR, throngs of people watched the action from the banks and the bridges. Front stage racing brought the athletes alive:

Racing, that’s why we’re all here. Obviously we just raced last week and everything has been all about building up to do that, within the club certainly. (Interview, cox)

One of the things I have tried to do is to teach them how to race. It seems to have worked for the Fours Head ... at the end of the day you do all your training to race, and racing is a test, isn't it? (Interview, Dan)

Luke, he seems to, he enjoys racing. You know he'll always race well. I think Harry always, when it comes down to it he always makes it stand out, Damian loves racing, hates training. Adam will train very hard. Races hard ... That's what it all comes down to. I love race day. I like race weeks. That's what it's all about, no matter who you are racing, Kings or otherwise, they are still there to be beaten. (Interview Dan)

I mean really racing is the be all and end all, we’re not going to do all this training to not race at the end of it! ... And just like as fantastic it is to have a great beach body and be able to move a boat fast, if you’re not doing it to go and prove how fast you are, then there doesn’t really seem any point! And I absolutely love racing. (Interview, Nathan)

However, whilst Goffman (1959) suggests that the front stage was the place where decorum was maintained, racing provided an opportunity to express a range of emotions, from lows and frustration to highs:

So losing when you should have won or losing to someone that you know you should beat, is probably the worst thing about rowing sometimes because it's possible. (Interview, Harry)

We moved to a house in Henley the week before so we could go out on the rowing stretch and that really was a very stressful environment, I mean, because you’re suddenly all living together as well as training

together and you can't get away from anybody, twenty four hours, for two weeks. And the coach had warned us, you know sort of like you guys have got to stay chilled out, like people will be on edge, you've got to stay calm. And the guys were doing the washing up or something and someone flicked me with the tea towel and I went absolutely nuts, I went completely skits on him, people were holding me back and it was ...! But it was fine, like five minutes later it was like oh I'm sorry, give me a hug! (Interview, Nathan)

We notice their faces as they land their boat at the end of the race. They are flushed with jubilation and energy. Esther says "I so enjoyed that." They tell Mary that they fought Browns University off and laugh that Rowena had a battle cry toward the end. (Fieldnotes, 19 March)

Emotion was expressed for the *performance* of racing, where rowers could be authentic in how they felt. Jordan (2004) suggests that being in touch with our own feelings, with emotion, enables relationships to grow. Knowing what represents the other person's real self and what is simply presented for public consumption (Potrac, 2011) opened up the possibility of authentic coach and athlete relationships and the opportunity for connection.

The crew room provided a safe place in which to relax, be informal and to socialise within and across crews and squads. Sometimes relaxation came from catching a nap on the battered sofas or chatting over porridge and baked beans; at others, it came from enjoying the more lively banter. Discussion was viewed as a form of relaxation, as little reading took place, along with the TV for watching mindless daytime TV or scrutinising videos of themselves rowing. Harry thought that it was important to have a nice dynamic in the crew room, to just chat to relax between sessions as "that's what makes the club, makes it fun" (Interview, Harry). Dan also appreciated the informal atmosphere, and talked about a more senior coach who:

... likes it when he comes down here. He likes sitting here and listening to it, chipping in. Now I've got my time a bit more, I know what I'm doing with my time, I can sit there and enjoy it, because I do enjoy it. So, having some good characters does make my life easier because then I can get them to gee everyone up (Interview, Dan).

At the weekend, the rank of daytime group of athletes was swelled by those who had external jobs and the older, junior members. The groups completed a long session from 7 am until 12 noon, truncated with the need to refuel and rehydrate. A small group of parents and siblings provided a voluntary breakfast service to the coaches, helpers and athletes. For a modest charge, there was a spread of tea, coffee, cereals, porridge,

toast and spreads, biscuits, snack bars, bacon and sausage rolls and cakes. This was social time:

There are four tables with 8-10 athletes around them, chatting, laughing, and sitting on each other's knee. One guy had brought down his baby and young daughter of around 2, and she is passed around some of the men and women on one table. (Fieldnotes, 25 September)

Dan and one of the coxes come in looking like snowmen. They are out the latest with the seniors. The cox is frozen and gets Nathan to warm her feet on the sofa. Bob looks like Scott of the Antarctic with his beaver hat and goggles. There is general chat in the crew room about the snow and sleeping at each other's houses. (Fieldnotes, 18 December)

Bob sits with four of the older juniors, who went on the water, as they finish a cup of tea. Bob is writing out another list for the second session. The four girls chat about food and weight, then about "talk rowing" a blog site about rowing. One girl says she read that the Stanton House girls thought the Bethany girls were really big last year. I comment that it's not what I see, and they laugh. The conversation drifts to technology, and Bob calls one of them a Luddite. None of them know what a Luddite is, so he explains. They then get onto films; they like all the more girly films e.g. *Mamma Mia* and *Harry Potter*. Bob talks about the film *127 Hours* and the guy who cuts his own arm off. The girls squirm. Then it's scatter cushions and some other random stuff. (Fieldnotes, 15 January)

Mollie and another girl who are now coaching nearby just arrive. They have sent the girls on a 1 hours run, so come in for a cup of tea and chat. (Fieldnotes, 15 January)

The crew room provided the space to relax and be oneself, away from observation, where people would relinquish their authority. Goffman termed these regions *free places*.

Sometimes ... free places seemed to be employed for no purpose other than to obtain time away from the long arm of the staff and from the crowded noisy wards ... All of these places seemed pervaded by a feeling of relaxation and self-determination, in marked contrast to the sense of uneasiness prevailing on some wards. Here one could be one's own man. (Goffman, 1961, p.206)

Relational authenticity is defined by Surrey (1985, cited in Miller & Stiver, 1997 p.245) as "The ongoing challenge to feel emotionally real, connected, vital, clear and purposeful in a relationship." This describes the ability to be seen and recognised for who one really is. It is a process, as one continuously needs to present and represent one's experiences in the relationship. This provides a further chink of humanness in the coach-athlete relationship. But there was also a more caring approach which put the

element of human back in. Mary described her approach to the relationship with her rowers,

My reactions to them would be as honest as I would be with family or friends really because it, they're friends in a way of the terms of the loyalty and respect I would have for them, but not the kind of intimate closeness or that need to be with each other the whole time, obviously it's not that element of friendship. (Interview, Mary)

Mary negotiated a relationship with the rowers to maintain the sense of respect as coach, alongside a presentation of self that allowed for emotional connection and care. One of Mary's athletes noted how much better she felt the relationship with Mary was, compared with a previous coach:

We'd do the session and he might yell a few things and he might, maybe, yell in the middle of the session. And apart from that we'd come in and have feedback and that would be that. So to go from that to having someone in the launch constantly talking to you, constantly intent on working on technical changes. It was just a bit of a change. (Interview, Esther)

Gaby summed up the relational connection between herself and Mary that arose when she felt able to be authentic:

It's nice to have, well every morning she asks me how I am and listens to how you are. And if you are honest you are going to get accurate feedback. So if I am honest about how I am feeling in the morning, she is going to tame training down a little bit, or make an adjustment. All she will ask is how I am feeling. (Interview, Gaby)

#### **6.2.4 Summary**

This section has sought to demonstrate the resistance to the slide into nihilism, foreseen by Weber, resulting from the rise and spread of rationalism and the accompanying disenchantment of organisational life, which predicated an impersonal and disconnected form of relating. Instead, the voluntary nature of the organisation retained an approach to life based on the importance of values over instrumental reason. This enabled at least one coach to respond to athlete needs and engage in conflict within the organisation. This demonstrated the possibility to have an underlying quality of care and commitment in a relationship with athletes.

Further, in choosing to enact the underdog identity a "connection between" was created amongst coaches and athletes. This created mutuality in the coach-athlete relationship. Not only was there mutuality resulting from the underdog identity, but this identity created a self-image which, when challenged, felt threatened; this permitted

emotion to be present in the relationship and generated emotional action. Emotions were also revealed as the athletes and coaches stepped front stage to compete and perform. This enabled them to represent their experience. Though this came a small flame of humanity as they presented themselves authentically, opening the way to respond authentically to the thoughts and feelings of others. Opening the way to connection.

This chapter has addressed the research question asking how organisational culture can be used to understand coach-athlete relationships. The notion of Bethany as a disenchanted culture was used as the framework against which coach-athlete relationships were evaluated. A process of relational disconnection was found with power-over relating, distance and impersonal relations, caretaking rather than caring about each other, fragile athlete trust, coach trust through surveillance, concealing emotion and avoiding conflict. However, there was resistance to this impersonal existence, with the possibility of a process of relating between coach and athlete which allowed for conflict, values and emotions. The possibility that coach and athlete might act mutually and authentically in relationship opened the way to connection. The final chapter discusses how these findings extend and challenge current understanding, and consider the limitations of this work, together with suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

*First bits and crumbs of the piece come and gradually join together in my mind; then the soul getting warmed to the work, the thing grows more and more, and I spread it out broader and clearer, and at last it gets almost finished in my head, even when it is a long piece, so that I can see the whole of it at a single glance in my mind, as if it were a beautiful painting or a handsome human being; in which way I do not hear it in my imagination at all as a succession – the way it must come later – but all at once as it were. It is a rare feast. All the inventing and making goes on in me as in a beautiful strong dream. But the best of all is the **hearing of it all at once**. (James, cited in Weick, 1979, p.143)*

*Human persons are not accidental mistakes in a pointless perambulation of fundamental particles. They are a window into the inner reality, value and purpose of the cosmos. (K. Ward, 2010, p.8)*

This chapter firstly takes an overview to present the ways this study *extends* the current understanding of how coach-athlete relationships and organisational culture can be researched in sport. In addition, it outlines how the methodology of such research can be extended. The second section summarises the detailed findings from chapter 5 and 6 and discusses how these findings *challenge* the current understanding of organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships in sport organisations. The impact of these findings is considered along with the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of opportunities for future research and practice.

### 7.1 Extending understanding

The aim of this research was not to produce abstractions of organisational culture, coach, athlete or relationships that could be generalised across many organisations. Rather, the aim was to see how a deep and rich understanding of one setting, Bethany Boat Club, gained through the lens of organisational culture, might help to illuminate relational practice in this club, thus extending knowledge in the field of research on organisational culture, coach-athlete relationships and the methodology with which to approach this. This is discussed below.

#### 7.1.1 Extending culture

Chapter 1 identified a “twilight zone” of little researched meso-issues in sport organisational research, existing between macro sport policy and governance, and micro sport psychology research (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009). This research has examined one

of these meso-issues, organisational culture, to understand an aspect of the individual life in sport, the coach-athlete relationship, and link it to the wider economic and social aspects of organisation.

However, the concept of culture is not without difficulty. Chapter 3 discussed the array of ways that culture could be viewed, defined, operationalised and researched. This study has pushed the boundaries of how culture is used in sport research. It is one of few ethnographic studies exploring organisational culture in sport and the first to link these processes to coach athlete relationships. In this study, Bethany is viewed as a dynamic organisation, where culture is something that the organisation “is”. The contrary position, of culture as a variable to be manipulated, a “thing” to be named and categorised or something that an organisation “has”, is avoided. This has made it difficult to present the findings as a series of categories or a hierarchy of artefacts and values. The body of current literature on organisational culture in sport has favoured such a static and schematic definition of culture, where culture can be named and shared by organisational members like a bag of sweets (e.g. Schein, 1990). Instead, this work has aimed to present the forceful, changing and active nature of organisational culture. It is hard to see the separation between Bethany Boat Club and culture, when organisations “are” culture. Thus organisation and culture have been viewed as symbiotic in determining the experience of the coaches’ and athletes’ daily lives at this club. Further, using the web-like understanding of culture, this work has aimed to demonstrate that there are multiple perspectives from which coaches and athletes understand Bethany as an organisational culture. Each thread in the web provides a different perspective. This reintroduces sport researchers to the notion that culture is experienced by coaches and athletes as human beings, as they make, and make sense of, the elite sport experience. There is the prospect of examining other sport organisations using this conceptualisation of culture.

Chapter 3 identified the opportunity to theorise organisational culture findings. Further, Weber’s sociology has been little used in understanding sport organisations, particularly in the last 30 years. By using the ideas of Weber to better explain and understand organisational culture in this sport organisation, the margins of how culture is theorised in sport have been extended. Weber believed people to be cultural beings, with culture shaping social life. Starting from Weber’s switchmen or pointsmen metaphor, suggesting that ideas, in the form of beliefs and values, can point the

direction of organisational life, this research has used a number of Weber's concepts to understand this club's organisational life. Bethany as a culture has been understood using the analytic power of Weber's concepts such as: the notion of world views, the process of the rationalisation of values through the routinisation of charisma, the rise of a scientific approach to life, the differentiation of value spheres, the social ordering of and forms of domination and authority in an organisation, and the disenchantment of daily life. The analytic power of these concepts can be used to extend what is known of other sport organisations. The implications of the detailed findings using these concepts are discussed in section 7.2.

A strength of Weber's work lies in its multi-dimensionality, such that Bethany could be viewed as an economic organisation, an ideological site and as a culture, as simultaneously independent and interdependent (Collins, 1986). However, Shenhav (2003) argues that there are also "unbridgeable contradictions" (p.192) in Weber's sociology. For this research, such a contradiction was seen for example between the constraints imposed on coaches by the iron cage of rationality and their free choice and moral action in how they worked with athletes; or in Weber's explanation of the historical nature of charismatic leadership, such as that held by Simon at Bethany, and the ahistorical nature of the scientifically based rationalisation of coaching practice at the club; and between the impersonal nature of instrumental rationality in the HP group and the personal nature of the value rationality of the volunteer management. Yet it is exactly these contradictions which were fruitful in really understanding life as an elite athlete or coach.

Research using Weber places some limitations on the findings of this study. Weber's theory focuses primarily on the beliefs that legitimate authority, yet neglects to conceptualise thoroughly the structural conditions that might give rise to authority (Blau, 1963). At Bethany, for example, this led to an understanding of coach authority, but not the operational set-up that constructed that authority. Other critics (e.g. Parkin, 2002) note Weber's disregard of the impact that a central power might have in determining the balance of advantage between groups of people. Rowing is currently the best funded British Olympic sport (UK Sport, 2012). A British Government document outlining the legacy of the London 2012 Olympics promised "To make the UK a world-leading sporting nation" (DCMS, 2008, p. 3) with the elite ambition to be 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Olympic and Paralympic medal tables respectively. Given the power

of the state to determine the use, duration and amount of this funding, this may have led this study to neglect the influence of the state in determining the discourse, practice and directions of coaching and rowing at this club. In addition, Weber pays little attention to how and why individuals accept compliance and legitimacy (Parkin, 2002). This has not enabled the dissection of the field of power at Bethany into that which came from a voluntary commitment and one that arose from coach or athletes need for survival. Further, notions such as “hegemony” have no place in Weber’s sociology, as Weber suggests that if subordinate groups accept the domination of another, then that domination is legitimate. Other theorists, such as Foucault, might be better utilised to understand power at Bethany. Foucault’s discussion of power is extensive, taking power to be a network of relations (O’Farrell, 2005). Foucault’s idea of disciplinary power could be used to examine Bethany, and the panoptical surveillance enacted by coaches, including the organisation of space such as the crew room, the organisation of activities such as working the river, the concept of normalisation to bring into line those who deviate from proscribed behaviours and the impact of the disciplinary technique of testing.

A limitation of using organisational culture in the research has been the difficulty of defining the boundaries of Bethany as a culture. Early anthropological studies may have found tribes which existed in isolation from other tribes and societies. Life at Bethany was not like that. It was connected geographically to other rowing clubs, the organisation a microcosm but not separate from the wider culture of the governing body and the general sport, with boundaries that were permeable, fluctuating and blurred. For example, the coaches themselves operated within the culture of the governing body. In the reverse, governing body coaches often worked with elite athletes at the club. This study noted the resulting cross-cultural exchanges. In addition the sphere of work was considered in this research, but the private sphere of family excluded. Martin (2002) contends that there is a cultural influence from what happens at home on work life and vice versa. These artificial boundaries limit the findings from this study.

### **7.1.2 Extending relationships**

Looking at coach-athlete relationships through the lens of organisational culture has revealed a fresh way to consider and research relationships. The use of RCT extends the discourse on coach-athlete relationships in sport and broadens its theoretical study.

As a model, RCT recognises the contextuality and richness of human life. Chapter 2 identified that previous studies have often examined relationships separate from the context in which they are enacted. At this rowing club, Bethany as an organisational culture has been shown to be inexorably entwined with the act of relating between coach and athlete, in a web of interaction and meaning. This suggests that the two cannot and should not be easily separated in research and in practice.

A second way that this study has extended the body of knowledge on relationships is through the idea that relationships flux and change. This study has used the RCT terms of connection and disconnection to signify that relationships are not static; rather as the process of relating takes place, connections are made and broken in a continual cycle of relating. Chapter 2 identified the exchange basis as the theoretical underpinning of contemporary relationship sport research. This study extends that thinking to suggest that relationships may be fluid and that rather than be based on exchange, that relationship may have periods of mutual striving, of power together, where both coach and athlete are truly connected. Mary exemplified this form of relating.

The use of RCT adds a visceral quality to our understanding of relationships. Relating is identified as a fundamental human need and the findings of the study highlighted that this need was not always met in the HP world of Bethany. This adds to the literature, which has assumed a relationship exists which can then be manipulated to increase satisfaction. This study peels away that assumption by identifying the silences and gaps in the athlete and coach experience to reveal an absence of relationship. The findings also challenge practitioners to reconceptualise their notion of the potential that coaches and athletes have to develop their relationships. In RCT growth-fostering relationships are characterised by authenticity, mutuality, trust, power-together and empathy. This form of relationship was not always exercised by coaches and athletes at Bethany and so sometimes disconnection ensued. However, relational competence develops through practice, encouragement and support (Jordan et al., 2004). One practical outcome of this thesis would be to provide education and training to coaches on the basic principles of RCT, to up-skill them and introduce an alternative means of relating in sports organisations. This might require first a direct engagement with the organisational and broader sport power dynamics, and to challenge practices and norms which reinforce disconnection. However, adopting RCT as a way of enhancing

relationships pushes against the tide of existing sport-based models of success and competence which foster disconnection and separation. Jordan et al. (2004) identify that the psychology of connection poses a challenge to the system of competition in sport, where being competent is associated with mastery and mental toughness. To shift this schema requires strength in community, and thus training for psychologists, physiologists and administrators of the sport, so that coaches are supported to learn the practice and psychology of connection.

### **7.1.3 Extending methodology**

Answering the research question has also extended the methodological approaches to studying coach-athlete relationships and organisational cultures in sport. This was done in four ways. Firstly, the study uses both psychology and sociology to understand and explain the research findings. It is argued here that this melding of disciplines is necessary if we are to develop new knowledge and new ways of thinking about issues (Swartz, van der Merwe, Buckland & McDougall, 2012). However, using both disciplines raises the issue of commensurability. Each domain has its own language and its own body of knowledge. For example terms such as sub-culture or power have different meaning and implications in both domains. Nonetheless, by using organisational culture to understand relationships, the expert knowledge of the psychology of relationships has been woven into the framing of organisational culture provided by sociology. Neither psychology nor sociology is the insider or outsider in informing the research findings. Rather, using Miller's (1991b, p.198) definition of power as "the capacity to produce a change", it is hoped that using the two disciplines to understand organisational life and the process of relating for coaches and athletes, resulted in "power together" or "power emerging from interaction" in the findings. Swartz et al. (2012) suggest that when research is inter-disciplinary, this allows "our conceptual worlds to collide and connect meaningfully with others, we open ourselves up to discover something closer to truth; at the very least, a multi-dimensional reality; an expanded awareness"(p.958). Using sociology together with psychology (for example to examine how the inequality accessed through the sociological notion of social stratification could be understood together with psychological notion of relationship) has expanded the awareness of how coaches and athletes relate at Bethany.

Secondly, little research to date has used an ethnographic approach to the study of organisational culture in sport settings, and none for such an extended duration. The

use of ethnography as a process has identified the many layers and strands of Bethany as a culture in an effort to reconstruct the participant's own view of everyday life. These strands and layers, for example, included participants' experience of the different value spheres, the influence of the overarching world view of Olympianism, the cultural experience and the gendered nature of organisational life. This has increased the depth and impact of the information available about this specific organisation. In addition ethnography has been used to investigate coach-athlete relationships, and its use has added to understanding by revealing the connections and disconnections in these relationships at Bethany. The detailed findings are discussed in section 7.2. This has further confirmed the utility of researching ethnographically in sport, adding to the body of related work in sport using ethnography, such as coaching (e.g. Cushion, 2001), talent development (Henriksen et al., 2010a, 2010b, 2011), injury (e.g. Pike, 2005) and sports such as rowing (e.g. Purdy & Jones, 2011) and swimming (Lang, 2010).

Whilst the strength of ethnography lies in unravelling the breadth and depth of organisational relations, there are limits to what can be known (Rock, 2001). The knowledge espoused in this study is provisional, temporally bound and contextually shaped by the experiences and purpose of the researcher and the nature of the encounters with the participants in the field. As Rock (2001) states, "It can lead to only the most modest of extrapolation of form, offered without the assurance that the 'same' forms might not be combined in quite unexpected ways elsewhere" (p.31). The findings have sought to provide understanding of one sport organisation, even though one might tentatively test them in other organisations and other sports. This partiality is also evidenced by the focus of the study on *elite* rather than participation, community, youth or any other such form of sport experience.

A third extension to methodology arises from the attempt to clarify the ontological and epistemological assertions used in studying organisational culture. This need was identified in Chapter 3. The point of commencement for this study was an idealist ontology, where mind determines matter. This shaped the assertion that humans have agency in conducting their lives and those lives have value and purpose. Thus, things come to be known in the research process through a process orientation, a "becoming of things" and through the chains of experience of the participants. Culture is hence socially constructed, as are relationships. The findings from this study therefore depart from the bulk of scholarship in sport organisational culture research, by being

explicit about the assertions made. The outcome is an ideographic approach to organisational culture in sport, where there is focus on the knowledge of the particular and generalisation has occurred within the case under study. It should be noted though, that during the process of writing about Bethany and organisational culture it has been difficult to avoid the epistemological contradictions in sometimes objectifying culture (e.g. describing the culture at Bethany) and holding in tension the subjective notion of Bethany *as* culture.

Finally, this research approached the study of coaches and athletes with a descriptive perspective in mind. The purpose was not to obtain findings that might answer questions aimed at improving, controlling or changing organisational or relational efficiency i.e. to a managerial interest; nor was it to show how some preferences were privileged, to show what could be and thus to an emancipatory interest. It was simply to understand “what is” in terms of relationships and culture in this sports club. Alvesson (2002) argues that the outcome of research from this perspective is a removal of misunderstanding. The organisation is explored as an inter-subjective experience. The knowledge gained from such inquiry is deemed an end in itself. However, there are limitations. Martin (2002) suggests that research with a descriptive interest is not value free. Rather it is a value position, reflecting the interests and values of the researcher. Thus the findings from this study reflect my own values of equality, potential, connection and other worldly purpose. I also acknowledge that my age and experience as a coach will have unwittingly privileged the experience of the coach over that of the rower. This is reflected in my almost consistent hegemonic practice of talking about the coach-athlete relationship, placing coach before athlete, separating coach from athlete, implying that the athlete be compared to the norm of the coach.

This section has highlighted how answering the two research questions has *extended* understanding of organisational culture, coach-athlete relationships and research methodology. These findings have utility for academic study. But if these were the only conclusions to this study, then I would be guilty of disenchanting my own work by remaining value neutral, rational and without emotion. There is a further output from the study which *challenges* the current understanding of coach-athlete relationship and organisational culture. This is based on the simultaneous consideration of coach-athlete

relationships and organisational culture within this research. These are discussed in the following section.

## **7.2 Challenging understanding**

This study has combined research into organisational culture with that examining the coach-athlete relationship. The combination of these two frameworks has yielded new insights. Exploring coach-athlete relationships in the context of organisational culture has allowed the creation of new understandings which challenge and add to previous research.

### **7.2.1 Bethany as an organisational culture**

Bethany as an organisational culture could be summarised as:

A series of competing value spheres, where sport for all jostled with principled value rational behaviour and the tight strictures of scientific and instrumentally rational coaching practices. Woven through this was the world view of the importance of Olympianism and the inequality of a social order which stratified organisational life on the grounds of status and prowess as a rower and on the basis of being male in preference to female. The HP sub-culture comprised rationalised coaching practices, calculable means and ends, a deference to expertise and a moral imperative to support the athlete in being successful, encasing the coach in an “iron cage” of subrogation; although the transience of the athlete rowing career permitted a fissure in the HP sub-culture, from the solidity of a steel-hard casing to the opportunity for athletes to flex and resist the entrapment.

This was a disenchanting organisational life where “the intrinsic value or meaning of values or actions are subordinated increasingly to a ‘rational’ quest for efficiency and control” (Gane, 2004, p.15). Discrete elements of this description echo the findings on general sport culture in the wider literature (see for example Potrac et al., 2007; Shogan, 1999; Taylor & Garratt, 2010). However, this description of Bethany as a culture provides a new and challenging understanding of this sport organisation, as this specific organisation has not been studied before. Further, this provides an insight into a voluntary sports club, and in particular, the delivery of high performance sport in such an environment.

### **7.2.2 The “iron cage” of coaching and its resistance**

The deep understanding of the HP group as a sub-culture revealed the life of a coach as one entrapped in an “iron cage” of subrogation and containment (Gabriel,

2005). The rationalised coaching practices focussed coaches on calculable means and ends, the deference to expertise and a moral imperative for the coach to support the athlete in being successful. The coach thus depended on their ability to deliver athlete performance to enable them to keep their jobs and their professional expertise. This provides a new image of the life of elite coaches, a far cry from the valorised public presentation of elite coaching. This study found the three coaches working long hours, seven days a week, monitoring athletes to deliver performance and themselves being judged on their own performance as “mathematically measured” so that “each man becomes a little cog in the machine...” (Mayer, 1956, p.126).

However, the entrapment was not absolute. For the athlete, although life was similarly controlled and monitored, chapter 5 raised the spectre of resistance. There was agency for the athletes in how they used their bodies and distributed their labour, sometime leaving Bethany to go to another club, or at least flexing how and when they trained, a small deviation from the control of the programme. Similarly, the insight gained in chapter 5 of the plurality of culture at Bethany as a sports club provided a more expansive vista of the elite sport experience than the singular, rationalised and controlled HP environment. The voluntary management’s value-rational approach to running Bethany provided a counterweight to the instrumentally rationalised coaching practices aimed solely on getting athletes into the national squad. It is useful for sport management researchers and administrators to understand the value to be had of practising sport in a voluntary organisation, and so extricating HP groups from the simulacra of elite sport and into a multi-value paradigm.

Whereas Weber offered little hope of escape once life started down the track of instrumental rationalism, Foucault (1977) is helpful to contest and resist these concerns. If we believe that power is exercised through bodies and entwined in the political context, then as Foucault (1977) says “there is no power relation without the corrective constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (p.27). Pringle and Markula (2005) suggest that this requires us to problematise and publicise the “celebrated ways of knowing” (p.492) elite sport and Olympic success, replacing them with a less valorised view of elite sport. Such valorisation is encapsulated in the adulation from the popular press headlines the day after Sebastian Coe won the 1500m gold medal in the Moscow Olympics: “Ecstasy...This is THE moment in Sebastian Coe’s Lifetime...But Coe did

more than win the gold yesterday. He lifted the soul, he ennobled his art, he dignified his country, and he emerged a very great young man” (Wooldridge, 1980, p.1).

### **7.2.3 Modern day stratification**

A further implication from understanding Bethany as a culture came in the explication of the stratification of organisational life at the club on the grounds of status and prowess as a rower and on the basis of being male in preference to female. These findings are not new. Historically, sport and sport organisations have been found to be hierarchical and stratified. (Coakley & Pike, 2009). However, it is surprising that in 2012, given the governing body claim that it is egalitarian in its approach to the sport, that this is still a finding. The governing body of the sport and the wider political community might be challenged to explain this on-going inequality, and in particular the experience of the female rowers and coaches of subordination, less access to resources and coaching, a lack of support and a dominant discourse which precluded the connected ways of relating. A positive impact of the study would be further research to understand the approach to women at this rowing centre of excellence, and perhaps in rowing clubs more generally, to examine women’s experience of the sport, resources and career opportunities.

### **7.2.4 Disconnection in coach-athlete relating**

Chapter 6 applied the findings on Bethany as an organisational culture to understand coach-athlete relationships. The calculated and controlled life as HP coach and athlete ensnared them in a web of surveillance, compliance, and hard work. From this emerged a further relational web of power over relating, distance and impersonal relations, caretaking, rather than caring about, fragile trust by the athlete and trust through surveillance by the coach, where emotion was concealed and conflict avoided. This form of relating constrained both coach and athletes in being authentic, acting mutually, engaging empathetically. This form of relating had the consequence of a disconnection between coach and athlete in their relationship.

It is acknowledged that one case study does not constitute a generalisable finding. However, even if relationships are disconnected at only Bethany, the finding of coach and athlete disconnection at this club should be enough to constitute a call for action, given the implication of disconnection on coach and

athlete well-being. In RCT, the outcome of disconnection is less energy, disempowerment, confusion and lower self-worth (Jordan et al., 2004) and is “the source of most human suffering” (Jordan, 1997, p. 3). Days after winning gold, the multi-Olympic medallist Victoria Pendleton was headlined in a national newspaper saying “It can be dark and lonely at the top” (Rainey, 2012). The sports psychologist interviewed in the report said “Many athletes struggle psychologically because they don’t have anyone to talk about what they are going through. ‘Victoria would have found it difficult to express her feelings within a context of safety, understanding and confidentiality’.” Perhaps Victoria Pendleton and Bethany coaches and athletes are not the only ones to experience disconnection in their sport relationships. It is incumbent on sport administrators, those running clubs, psychologists, coaches and athletes to confront this disconnection and redress coach and athlete well-being in high performance sport. Lessons can be learnt from the experience of raising the well-being of young people in sport (see for example Malkin, Johnston and Brackenridge (2000)) by providing individuals with confidence to raise the issue of relationship, provide coaches and athletes with knowledge of how disconnection occurs in relationship and the outcome on well-being, and developing a systemised approach to embedding growth-fostering relationships in the culture of high performance sport.

### **7.2.5 Reconnection in coach-athlete relating**

In addition to highlighting the disconnection in relationships at Bethany, the study offers a way for coaches and athletes to re-connect. Weber’s solution to a disenchanting form of life was to embark on the pursuit of rational, this-worldly vocational work (Gane, 2004), perhaps by further training coaches in “How to be more professional coaches”. This would not free coach or athlete from the constraints of modern life, but simply clarify the nature of their ordered existence – a continuation of disconnection in relationship. Instead, the option of re-enchantment at Bethany opens an understanding of how connections between athletes and coaches can be developed and grown. Bethany, as a voluntary organisation, provided the opportunity of resistance to the technical and calculable life described above. For Bethany was more than just an instrumentally rationalised modern organisation. It comprised members and

volunteers whose values and interests lay in a different sphere to those of the elite HP group. This opened up the possibility for coaches and athletes to act and relate based on their values and with an emotion that exposed their humanity. There was an opportunity to protect values and beliefs at the club from instrumental reason, including the importance and value of growth-fostering relationships. Not only that, but enacting the underdog identity shared around the club sparked a “connection between”, a mutuality amongst coaches and athletes. Being the underdog fostered an image of self that had an emotional element and this was expressed as the athletes and coaches stepped front stage to compete and perform at regattas and other competitions. Through this emerged a small flame of humanity as athlete and coach presented themselves more authentically, and this has the potential to create a space to grow in connection with each other.

Without the vista of re-enchantment, it is hard to imagine why elite coaches and athletes would get out of bed every morning, to dedicate their very existence to a calculable, scientific way of life. Weber tells us that living the disenchanted existence means that man cannot be “satiated with life” (Weber, 1948/1991, p.356). Sport policy makers might benefit from considering that only the possibility of re-enchantment could engender delivery of the vision of the 2012 London Olympiad, described in a simple book of stamps on sale before the games,

London’s vision is to reach young people all around the world, to connect to them with the inspirational power of the games, so that they are inspired to choose sport.

### **7.2.6 Finding a language of relationship**

A final relational implication of the research is that, like Fletcher’s (2004) study of engineers, Bethany had no language to describe relationships. The language of work at Bethany revolved around pieces, times, speed, performance and the programme. There is an opportunity to introduce attributes such as emotionality, caring, growth, empowerment and mutuality into the coaching environment. Coaches and athletes could talk about “power-with”, for example, as part of a goal-setting exercise when planning for the season or specific competitions; this would facilitate a mutual approach to sport success. Speaking of “authenticity” might help athletes and coaches to discuss problems

and issues in the coaching environment. Using the word “conflict” as a positive behaviour, rather than something to be avoided, would facilitate a deeper relational understanding. Further, there is an opportunity for athletes to claim spaces in the organisation to acknowledge that they are human and have emotions. The book *The Chimp Paradox* by Dr Steve Peters, psychiatrist to the British Cycling Team, identified that people are emotional beings, who at times may think emotionally and use impressions and feelings. His advice to the reader is to nurture and manage their emotions, but not to try and control them. This study has recognised the value of authentic emotion in fostering connection and relational growth. The language of relationship, of conflict and of emotion could be introduced into the coach education programmes in rowing.

This section has highlighted six key findings which challenge the current understanding of organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships. These are: Bethany as an organisation, the “iron cage” of coaching and its resistance, the modern day stratification of an organisation, disconnection and re-connection in the coach athlete relationship, and the potential to introduce a language of relating into the organisational environment. The next section presents some suggestions for future research.

### **7.3 Future directions**

The key findings in this study relate to the matter of coach-athlete relationships and organisational culture, and in particular those in an elite sport environment. Future directions of research are most pertinent in relation to this. There are several potential directions for this research to take.

The utility of RCT in illuminating relational practice has been highlighted in this study, although it has been little used in a sport context to date. One direction for future research might be to use the key concepts such as mutuality, empathy, and authenticity, as part of an action research project involving coaches and athletes to understand the points of connection and disconnection, in order to develop strategies in the workplace for improving relational growth. An alternative would be to develop Liang, Tracy, Kenny and Brogan’s (2008) study examining relational competence, to conduct a training intervention with coaches or athletes aimed at improving communication, working out conflict and building stronger relationships. This would provide an

alternative way to conceptualise coach-athlete relationships than the frequently cited 3+1 C's model of Jowett and colleagues (Jowett, 2007).

A second direction for research might be to build on the findings relating to organisational culture. One direction might be to use the concatenation of organisational culture and relationships to examine other sports, different organisations and with a variety of populations such as young people or recreational club members. More fruitful might be research using disenchantment as a lens for exploring other elite sport organisations or even PE, to see how young people might be impacted by the valorisation of elite prowess and the increasing focus on talent and performance. Further, using Weber's depiction of disenchantment as

The increasing intellectualization and rationalization... means that there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. (Weber, 1948/1991, p.139)

might stimulate a study of Olympianism as a world view in a diversity of sports such as fencing, swimming, beach volley-ball and athletics, to determine its role as a precondition for the rationalisation of these sports.

A further development in research would be to take a postmodern rather than a modern view. To do so would not then be a matter of searching for underlying patterns and fixed rules but also seeking the superficial secrets hidden in the multitude of small changes and details in the organisation (Schultz, 1992). Schultz (1992) describes culture as two-faced, where "one face seems to regulate, limit and direct the actions of organisational members by serving as a meaning frame of reference; another seems to license individuals and groups to act autonomously and spontaneously in the seductive game of cultural forms, free of the tight webs of meaning" (p.32). The work of Baudrillard on the symbolic order might be used to challenge rationalism, using his principle of seduction to resist and dispel knowledge and celebrate ambiguity (Baudrillard, 1990 cited in Gane, 2004). By revealing diversity and difference, research can show practices that had until now been relatively "invisible", because the concepts and discourse that could make them visible were marginalised and suppressed. Calas & Smircich (1999) suggest that future research from a postmodern perspective must pay attention to the absence of voice, incorporate undecidability of meaning, challenge

representation and the impact it has on power relations. This might produce research where there is no grand narrative of the organisation or of relationships. Instead, as Schultz (1992) describes, it is “the small narratives that in the organization win the battle of how ‘the simulacra’ are to be presented on the organizational scene” (p.30). This might highlight the hidden discourse of weakness in less than perfect bodies, of the plurality of relationships within the sport organisation, or the unconscious forming of relational connections supporting but outside of the coach-athlete relationship.

Finally, the study of both organisational culture and relationships as a release from constraint can be used to broaden the way in which these subject areas have been approached. For example, Alvesson (2002) points out that culture “is a necessary condition for coordinated human life, and thus organisation” (p.118). Culture can provide group members with a shared understanding, clarity and meanings within which to relate. However, when individuals subordinate themselves to existing cultural forms, values and patterns, there is a danger that this prevents them from critically exploring alternative ways to form relationships. As previously discussed, there is scant knowledge of the negative, constraining aspects of organisational culture and coach-athlete relationships in sport and therefore the emancipatory potential for athletes, coaches and managers alike. Research might include diversity in the field of study or seek to remove oppressive practice. For example, the culture of sport organisations has typically been one in which members are expected to adopt relational practices reflecting the values and assumptions of the dominant group of heterosexual, able-bodied, White males (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004). This can be found in rowing clubs and in the sport governing body in Britain. An understanding, in such organisations, of culture as a counterforce to hierarchic and disconnected relationships and the acceptance of all rules and objectives, might challenge accepted profiles of coaches, athletes and sport managers and broaden the pool from which they are selected (Potrac & Jones, 1999) or release athletes and coaches to enjoy a more equitable partnership in their relationship. Similarly, an understanding that culture may not always be the consensual and collective, but also interpreted in terms of contradiction, conflict, dominant ideologies and class and gender bias, for example, may help the ongoing discourse in such cases as abuse and mistreatment, by explaining why grievances do not exist, why demands are not made,

and why certain individuals may appear as authorities to whom people voluntarily obey in sport organisations (Alvesson, 2002; Brackenridge, 2004).

#### **7.4 Final remarks**

I am not sure what I expected this journey to be. I commenced my study with a desire to know more, to understand. Now, I know there is further work to do, findings to share and a purpose to my research agenda. There are other ways for coaches and athletes to experience and enjoy growth fostering relationships in elite sport. Perhaps, Weber has the last word:

You will recall the wonderful image at the beginning of the seventh book of Plato's *Republic*: those enchained cavemen whose faces are turned toward the stone wall before them. Behind them lies the source of the light which they cannot see. They are concerned only with the shadowy images that this light throws upon the wall, and they seek to fathom their interrelations. Finally one of them succeeds in shattering his fetters, turns around, and sees the sun. Blinded, he gropes about and stammers of what he saw. The others say he is raving. But gradually he learns to behold the light, and then his task is to descend to the cavemen and lead them to the light. (Weber, 1948/1991, p.140)

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Analysis of sport organisational culture articles

Author, article name	Interest	Qual/Quant or Theory	Instrumentation	Theoretical approach to study	Perspective on culture	Org has culture or org is culture
Aicher & Cunningham (2011)	Managerial	Quantitative	2 vignettes of proactive and compliant organisational culture based on Fink & Pastore (1999) and Cunningham (2009)	Positivist?	Integration	Org has
Choi & Scott (2008)	Managerial	Quantitative	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument II (OCAI II) (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991; Cameron & Quinn, 1999)	Not specified	Differentiation	Org has?
Choi & Scott (2009)	Managerial	Quantitative	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument II (OCAI II) (Cameron & Quinn, 1999)	Positivist?	Differentiation	Org has
Choi, Martin & Park, 2008	Managerial	Quantitative	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (Quinn & Spritzer, 1991); Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman and Oldham, 1980)	Positivist	Integration (and acknowledges differentiation)	Org has (though not explicit in article)
Choi, Seo, Scott, & Martin (2010)	Managerial	Quantitative	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument II (OCAI II) (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991; Cameron & Quinn, 1999)	Positivist or functionalist??	Differentiation	Org has
Colyer (2000)	Practical	Quantitative (and qualitative, but data not used)	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (Quinn & Spritzer, 1991); and 3 open ended questions	Positivist	Differentiation	Org has (Culture is an internal variable - it contributes to overall org effectiveness)
Cresswell & Eklund (2007)	Practical	Qualitative	Semi structured interviews; behavioural observation training sessions	Not specified	Integration	Org has
Doherty & Chelladurai (1999)	Emancipatory	Theory	N/A	Not specified	Integration (and acknowledges differentiation and fragmentation)	Org has ( although not v clear)
Doherty, Fink, Inglis & Pastore (2010)	Emancipatory	Qualitative	Interviews	Not specified	Integration	Org has
Frontiera (2010)	Managerial	Qualitative	Interviews	Positivist	Integration (and acknowledges differentiation and fragmentation)	Org has
Girginov (2006)	Practical	Theory	N/A	Interpretive (symbolic interactionism)	Integration, differentiation, fragmentation	Organisation AS cultures
Girginov, Papadimitriou & López De D'Amico (2006)	Managerial	Quantitative; Qualitative	Dilemma methodology using structured questionnaire (modified for sport managers); ethnography	Interpretive	Integration, differentiation (but acknowledges fragmentation)	Org has??
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2010 b)	Practical	Qualitative	interviews, participant observation and analysis of documents (does Not state ethnog)	Not specified	Integration	Org has
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2010a)	Practical	Qualitative	interviews, participant observation and analysis of documents (states - ethnog)	Constructivist (use ethnog but functionalist defn of culture)	Integration	Org has
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2011)	Practical	Qualitative	interviews, participant observation and analysis of documents (states - ethnog)	Constructivist (use ethnog but functionalist defn of culture)	Integration	Org has

Author, article name	Interest	Qual/Quant or Theory	Instrumentation	Theoretical approach to study	Perspective on culture	Org has culture or org is culture
Kaiser, Engel & Keiner (2009)	Practical	Quantitative; Qualitative	Structure dimension analysis (SDA) (Lander & Huth, 1999); interviews with experts and focus groups to identify cognitive units	Positivist	Integration	Org has
Kent & Weese (2000)	Managerial	Quantitative	Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire (OCAQ) (Sashkin, 1990)	Positivist?	Integration	Org has
Pfister & Radtke (2009)	Emancipatory	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews	Constructivist gender theory	Integration?	Org has
Schroeder & Scribner (2006)	Practical	Qualitative	Interviews and documents (case study)	Interpretive	Integration	Org has
Schroeder (2010a)	Managerial	Qualitative	Interviews	Not specified	Integration	Org has
Schroeder (2010b)	Managerial	Qualitative	Interviews and documents (case study)	Not specified	Differentiation	Org has
Scott (1997)	Managerial	Theory	N/A	Critical?	Integration (but acknowledges differentiation)	Org has ...an internal variable
Smith & Shilbury (2004)	Practical	Qualitative	Interviews	Interpretive (symbolic interactionism)	Integration (but acknowledges differentiation)	Org has ( sport has unique cultural characteristics)
Smith (2009)	Practical	Qualitative	Interviews	Interpretive	Integration?	Org has
Southall & Nagel (2003)	Practical	Qualitative	Content analysis of documents	Not specified	Differentiation	Org has
Weese (1995)	Managerial	Qualitative and quantitative	Culture Strength Assessment (Glaser & Sashkin, 1989); Culture building Activities (CBA) ( Glaser & Sashkin,	Positivist?	Integration	Org has
Weese (1996)	Managerial	Quantitative	Culture Strength Assessment (Glaser & Sashkin, 1989; Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire (Sashkin, 1988); Target Population Satisfaction Index (Weese, 1996)	Positivist	Integration	Org has
Westerbeek (1999)	Managerial	Theory	N/A	Not specified	Integration?	Org has
Zevenbergen, Edwards, & Skinner (2002)	Emancipatory	Qualitative	Ethnography	Interpretive (Bourdieu)	Integration	Org has

Author, article name	Defn culture	Operationalisation of culture
Aicher & Cunningham (2011)	Not defined	Two vignette's "describing the athletic department's organisational culture" as either a proactive culture or a compliant culture.
Choi & Scott (2008)	Champoux (1996) - the deep and complex set of norms and values of an organization that strongly affects organizational members. Schein (1985) - widely shared values and assumptions that are deeply rooted in an organization. Zammuto and Krakower (1991) - the patterns of values and ideas in an organization that shape human behaviour.	Competing values
Choi & Scott (2009)	Champoux (1996) - the deep and complex set of norms and values of an organization that strongly affects organizational members. Schein (1992) - widely shared values and assumptions that are deeply rooted in an organization. Zammuto and Krakower (1991) - the patterns of values and ideas in an organization that shape human behaviour.	Competing values
Choi, Martin & Park, 2008	Champoux (1996) - the deep and complex set of norms and values of an organization that strongly affects organizational members. Schein (1992) - widely shared values and assumptions that are deeply rooted in an organization. Zammuto and Krakower (1991) - the patterns of values and ideas in an organization that shape human behaviour.	Competing values - questioned on employee perceptions of core cultural elements, such as dominant cultural type, leadership, management of employees, organizational glue, strategic emphasis, and criteria of success.
Choi, Seo, Scott, & Martin (2010)	Basic pattern of shared values and assumptions governing the way employees within an organization think about and act on problems and opportunities	Competing values
Colyer (2000)	Siehl & Martin (88) - shared values and interpretations; Gregory (83) - learned way of coping with experience. Wilkins & Ouchi (83) - socially acquired understandings.	Competing values .(Quotes the three level of culture of Schein (1985) artefacts, values, underlying assumptions).
Cresswell & Eklund (2007)	Schein (1990) - observable artifacts, beliefs, values and assumptions widely shared by members that shape the identity and behavioural norms of the group.	None (although use player attributions about cause of burnout e.g. Heavy training and playing load, competitive rugby environment, as a means to discuss differences in NZ and English rugby culture)
Doherty & Chelladurai (1999)	Adler (1991); DeSensi1994); Robbins (1994) – unique sets of values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations, as well as language, customs, and behaviours, that individuals possess by virtue of sharing some common characteristic(s) with others.	Values and assumptions. Manifestations include communication, performance appraisal, reward and promotion system, decisions making, group membership
Doherty, Fink, Inglis & Pastore (2010)	What leaders pay attention to and reward, and what members accept as "how things are done" (cites Schein (1992) as an example of this)	Don't specify. State that asked questions informed by Schein, 1990, 1992) and Doherty & Chelladurai (1999)
Frontiera (2009)	Schein (1992) - a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems.	Behavioural norms
Girginov (2006)	Morgan's (1997) notion of enactment of culture - organizations enact their environments as people assign patterns of meaning and significance to the world in which they live; an on-going, proactive process of reality construction	Values (e.g. mission statement), behaviours, beliefs, norms (e.g. Training practices) policies, hierarchy in organisation, organisational routines, rules; artefacts (myths, sagas, heroes, language and rituals), environment of organisation (e.g. relation to world governing body) .
Girginov, Papadimitriou & López De D'Amico (2006)	Groeschil & Doherty (2000, p. 13) - aimed to identify common human problems which are shared by all human groups, but which are measured in different way. Hofstede's (1991 p.12) contention that nations can be regarded as the "source of common mental programming of their citizens".	7 basic valuing processes from dilemma theory - Universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, analysing vs. integrating, neutral vs. affective, achieved vs. ascribed status, time as sequence vs. time as synchronisation, inner-directed vs. outer directed orientation.
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2010 b)	Not specified	Not specified - although use base assumptions
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2010a)	Consists of three levels: cultural artefacts, espoused values and basic assumptions (Schein 1992) - talent environment's success (i.e., effectiveness in producing senior elite athletes) is a result of the interplay between preconditions, process, individual and team development and achievements with organizational culture serving to integrate these different elements	Doesn't specify - although results present summary of cultural artifacts, values and basic assumptions
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2011)	Consists of three levels: cultural artefacts, espoused values and Basic assumptions (Schein 1992)	Doesn't specify - although results present summary of cultural artifacts, values and basic assumptions

Author, article name	Defn culture	Operationalisation of culture
Kaiser, Engel & Keiner (2009)	Schein (1985, p. 19) - a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.	Assumes that culture related knowledge is conceptually structured and represented hierarchically in cognitive units. Uses Schein's (1985) three tiers of culture to identify cognitive units - artefacts e.g. logos, espoused values e.g. criticism, basic assumptions e.g. tradition.
Kent & Weese (2000)	Deep rooted assumptions, beliefs and attitudes which are shared by members of an organisation, which shape and reflect the identity and actions of the members of that organisation.	Factors (culture strength and culture building activities(managing change, achieving goals, customer orientation and co-ordinated teamwork)) measured in the OCAQ (Sashkin, 1990) - no details specified
Pfister & Radtke (2009)	Not really defined - talk about values and symbols, communication and interaction in org	Not specified - use open ended interviews and describe mix of elements/processes of culture such as time, recruitment.
Schroeder & Scribner (2006)	Schein's (1992) conception of organizational culture as the pattern of shared assumptions that guide behaviour in orgs	Artifacts, values and base assumptions
Schroeder (2010a)	Schein's (2004) views organizational culture as a pattern of shared assumptions that guides behaviour in organization. Represented by artifacts, values and base assumptions	Vision and values of 10 coaches (not of anyone else)
Schroeder (2010b)	Schein's (2004) views organizational culture as a pattern of shared assumptions that guides behaviour in organization. Represented by artifacts, values and base assumptions	Don't specify - ask questions about values, symbols, artefacts and base assumptions (thought if these are unconscious, you aren't going to get assumps through interview)
Scott (1997)	Wallace and Weese (1995, p. 183) – deep rooted beliefs, values and assumptions widely shared by organizational members that powerfully shape the identity and behavioural norms for the group. Robbins (1996) – system of shared meaning held by members of the organisation. Hawk (1995, p.32) – what it's like to work around here.	Focus on values, supported by understanding of the business environment, heroes, rites and rituals, cultural network, who makes organisational decisions, degree of risk taking, attention to detail in the organisation, what is expected of employees, degree to which management focuses on outcome rather than processes, meaning of success, informal structures.
Smith & Shilbury (2004)	Ogbonna & Harris (2002a); Pettigrew (1979) a collection of fundamental values and attitudes that are common to members of a social group, and which subsequently set the behavioural standards or norms for all members. Waters (2004) - the operating system of the organisation.	Observable aspects of culture as they were described by organisational members (e.g., symbols, jargon, heroes, rites, rituals and ceremonies); assume that these can be interpreted at both a superficial level, where observable aspects of culture were seen to reflect overt representations of cultural meaning, as well as at a deeper level, where they were considered symbolic manifestations of thought and value systems.
Smith (2009)	Ogbonna & Harris (2002); Pettigrew (1979) - a collection of fundamental values and attitudes that are common to members of a social group, and which subsequently set the behavioural standards or norms for all members .	Observable aspects of culture such as symbols, jargon, heroes, rites, rituals and ceremonies, where they reflect overt representations of cultural meaning, as well as the description and interpretation of respondents' behavioural patterns and thought systems - focus on the symbolic elements of belonging to a sport organization.
Southall & Nagel (2003)	Schein (1987) shared values	Artifacts (public documents and/or ritualised traditions designed to communicate an organisation's purported values) including department athlete handbooks.
Weese (1995)	Multiple definitions including - deep-rooted values and beliefs held and practiced by members of an organization	Factors measured in the Culture Strength Assessment and Culture Building Activities form (Glaser & Sashkin, 1989)
Weese (1996)	Deal & Kennedy (1982); Hatch (1993); Martin, Feldman, Hatch & Sitkin (1983); Schein (1990); Smircich (1983), (1985) - deep-rooted values and beliefs held and practiced by members of an organization	Factors measured in the Culture Strength Assessment (Glaser & Sashkin, 1989)
Westerbeek (1999)	Not clear	Manifestations of culture = Hofstede (1991); mechanism's to manage culture = Schein (1992)
Zevenbergen, Edwards, & Skinner (2002)	Bourdieu's (1979, p. vii) definition of habitus - The habitus is a system of durable, transposable dispositions that functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices *	Rituals. Assumes, based on Habermas' (1972) thesis, that speech acts to convey messages not only about the formal structure of language but also about the patterns of culture that organise thought and social interaction.

Author, article name	Empirical basis	Subjects studied	Sample	Elite y or n
Aicher & Cunningham (2011)	Field	1US University	270 male and female students enrolled in physical activity at US university	N?
Choi & Scott (2008)	Field	Professional baseball associations in American TAB	12 organisations surveyed, representative sample selected based on geog location, org size and winning percentage. 132 Full-time admin and staff employees (excluding athletes and coaches) from 10 organisations responded	Y
Choi & Scott (2009)	Field	Baseball in USA and Korea	265 administrative staff in USA Triple-A Baseball or Korean Professional Baseball Leagues	Y
Choi, Martin & Park, 2008	Field	Korean Professional Basketball league organisations	137 full-time org members (male - 111, female = 22); 80.5% were staff, 10.5% managers	Y
Choi, Seo, Scott, & Martin (2010)	Field	Korea and Korean Baseball League	33 bilingual Koreans, 133 org members of Korean Baseball league	Y
Colyer (2000)	Field	Sports organisations in W. Australia	5 organisations, 31 ee's, 17 volunteers	?
Cresswell & Eklund (2007)	Field	Rugby union in England	8 full-time professional players from English Premiership League (selected from 345 EPL players who had completed the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire); 4 support staff also interviewed for triangulation	Y
Doherty & Chelladurai (1999)	Non-empirical	Sport Organisations	n/a	?
Doherty, Fink, Inglis & Pastore (2010)	Field	NCAA Division III athletic departments	11 people in athletic departments in 4 NCAA Division III institutions	
Frontiera (2009)	Field	MLB, NBA, NFL professional sport organisations in USA	6 owners who had brought their teams through organisational culture change(evidenced by team results)	Y
Girginov (2006)	Non-empirical	Bulgarian NGB's, Bulgarian weightlifting	N/A	Y
Girginov, Papadimitriou & López De D'Amico (2006)	Field	Sport managers at the Games of the Small States in Malta, 2003	15 Chefs de mission and their assistants	Y
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2010b)	Field	Swedish Track and field	50 prospective elite athletes aged 15–17, m & F, plus coaches and administrators	Y
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2010a)	Field	49er sailing Danish	National team (3 crews, i.e. 6 athletes) and the 'talent group' (4 crews, i.e. 8 athletes). All male. Some coaches and administrators included?	Y
Henriksen, Stambulova & Roessler (2011)	Field	Norwegian Flat water kayak club	16-19 yr old prospective elite athletes who were recognized as 'talented' but who had not yet made it to the senior elite level	Y

Author, article name	Empirical basis	Subjects studied	Sample	Elite y or n
Kaiser, Engel & Keiner (2009)	Field	Sport organisations	12 people in For profit (FPO) and not for Profit (NPO) organisations (n not given)	?
Kent & Weese (2000)	Field	Canadian provincial sport organisations	46 Executive Directors and other personnel in up to 20 provincial sport organisations	?
Pfister & Radtke (2009)	Field	German sport organisation	qual i/v 23 female leaders, quant i/v with 341 men and 72 women leaders	Y
Schroeder & Scribner (2006)	Field	1US College athletic department	19 college members	N?
Schroeder (2010a)	Field	NCAA Division I institutions softball ( 4), football ( 2), men's basketball ( 2), women's basketball, men's volleyball	10 coaches (7 male, 3 female)	Y
Schroeder (2010b)	Field	1US College athletic department	19 college members	N?
Scott (1997)	Non-empirical	N American intercollegiate athletic organisations	N/A	Y?
Smith & Shilbury (2004)	Field	National sport organisations, State sport organisations and clubs in national leagues in Australia	8 sport organisations, . Senior manager, junior paid employee and board member for each organisation. Total of 24 interviews	Y
Smith (2009)	Field	9 Australian sport organisations	3 professional sport clubs in national league competitions, 3 state associations, 3 NGB's - selected for sport and geographic representation; 27 interviews - 3 members of each organisation interviewed - COE, junior employee and member of the board	Y
Southall & Nagel (2003)	Field	US NCAA Div. i-A athletic departments	35 NCAA Division I-A athletic departments whose football or men's basketball teams were ranked in top 20 by ESPN/USA Today coaches poll in 2000-2001	y
Weese (1995)	field	Campus recreation programmes of Big-ten and Mid- American Conferences	8 Directors and up to 120 employees at 4 Big Ten and 4 Mid American Athletic Conferences	?
Weese (1996)	Field	Campus recreation programmes of Big-ten and Mid- American Conferences	Initially measured trans leadership of 19 directors of programmes and 2 subordinates (Big Ten (N= 10) and Mid-American Conferences (N = 9); then took 2 highest and 2 lowest leadership scores and measured culture with 14 employees from each of the organisations, and organisational effectiveness with 375 students in each organisation	Y
Westerbeek (1999)	Non-empirical	Sport organisations	N/A	N?
Zevenbergen, Edwards, & Skinner (2002)	Field	Junior golf cadet programme in Australian golf club	16 cadets age 8-14	N?

## Appendix B

### Interview guide - Organisation culture and coach-athlete relationships in an elite rowing club

#### 1. Context

Coaching is really important in helping to improve performance in sport, getting people to participate in sport and for success at the London 2012 Olympic Games. The interaction between the coach and athlete can have both positive and negative effects, impacting on people's performance and participation in sport.

A key component of this research is to understand the "the way things are done around here" and how this influences the ways people interact with each other, particularly coaches and their athletes.

At the end of the project, the information will be used to enable both coaches and athletes to improve the sport experience.

#### 2. Research aim and questions

The broad aim of this research is to understand how the culture and organisational climate of a sports club impacts upon coach-athlete relationships

In order to address the aim a number of research questions have been developed:

- How can the concept of organisational culture be used to understand a particular sport club?
- How can organisational culture be used to understand coach-athlete relationships?

#### 3. Assumptions

- A social constructionist approach is taken, using an ethnographic methodology. Interviews are used to supplement participant observation.
- Hatch's (1993) cultural dynamics perspective will be used as a framework for conceptualising culture. This has a number of advantages: it provides me with a language to consistently use to ask questions; it enables me to sort my observations into to cultural elements (i.e. assumptions, values, artefacts and symbols); it provides a dynamic conception of culture to enable

me ask questions about the processes that link these cultural elements and thus construct them.

- Symbols are not merely artefacts, but represent a conscious or unconscious association with some wider, usually more abstract, concept of meaning (Hatch, 1993). A symbolic interpretive approach is favoured, emphasising the process and activity by which that meaning is constructed, communicated, contested and changed.
- Through spending time observing, listening and participating in the rowing club, I have identified a number of examples of cultural elements. The focus for the interview is to use these as examples with interviewees to explore and understand the processes involved in linking these elements.
- Participants are likely to tell me their espoused beliefs, cognitions and behaviours, so the questions need to be constructed around practical examples to enable them to express their real beliefs, cognitions and behaviours (reference this?), or ask for real examples in answers.

#### **4. Topics to be addressed in the interview**

##### Culture

1. How is culture manifested?
  - How do participants describe the organisation - “how it is”?
  - How did participants perceive the organisation before they joined it - “how it should be”?
  - What processes act to enable participants to know “how it is/should be” in the organisation?
  - What do participants value about rowing and the organisation?
  - What processes do participants use to align “how it is” with their values about rowing and the organisation?
  - What perceptions, cognitions and emotions are generated?
2. How is culture realised or enacted?
  - How do values get translated into or perpetrate artefacts through behaviours and daily activities?
  - How are values and beliefs maintained or changed through contact with organisational artefacts such as stories, dress codes, greetings etc.?
3. How is culture symbolised?
  - Which artefacts are most meaningful or best provides a metaphor for “how it is” and what is important?
  - What do symbols mean to participants and how do they know this?

- How do participants come to know artefacts as symbols? E.g. how communicated and understood as symbols
4. How is culture interpreted?
- How does symbolic meaning challenge basic assumptions? E.g. how does the symbol of rowing clothing (BETHANY kit, University kit or GB kit) construct and reconstruct assumptions about everyday life at the organisation?
  - How do basic assumptions challenge symbolic meaning?

#### Coach-athlete relationship

1. How do coaches and athletes think, feel, behave and communicate within the relationship?
2. How authentic, engaged, empowered and able to deal with conflict are the coach and athlete?
3. How is the coach-athlete relationship symbolised?

#### 5. Schedule of interviewees

Interviewees will be selected to provide a sample of different club roles (coach, athlete, official/club member, parent) and based on key characteristics to provide a variety of views e.g. duration at the club, high performance athlete, decision maker within the club etc.

Name	Role	Rationale for interviewing
<b>Mary</b>	Coach (Start and high performance women)	Coach, key informant
<b>Dan</b>	Coach (high performance men)	Coach, key informant
<b>Bob</b>	Coach (juniors and high performance men)	Coach, key informant
<b>Simon</b>	Club captain	International rower, club captain, "leader" of club
<b>Mikey</b>	Rowing sub-committee	Gatekeeper between coaches, previous club captain, ex minor international rower, number of years in club
<b>Gaby</b>	Start female athlete	HP, new to club
<b>Esther</b>	HP female athlete	HP, 2+ years in club

<b>Theo</b>	Parent of junior, committee member	Parent view of club, committee member
<b>Adam</b>	HP male athlete	HP, new to club
<b>Harry</b>	HP male athlete	HP, new to club
<b>Nathan</b>	HP male athlete	HP 2+ years in club
<b>Michael</b>	Governing body official	Senior coach, Mary's line manager, gatekeeper to competition/trial settings
<b>Reece</b>	Governing body official	Inside/inside perspective, 10 years' experience

## 6. Demographic information

Age: How old you are (Year of birth)?

Gender: Male / female

Highest educational qualification?

Ethnic origin?

Job: what job? Full or p/t?

Train: number of hours per week, no days per week, % time with coach?

Role: What is your involvement with BETHANY – parent, coach, athlete, official

Rowing involvement: When did you first start rowing/coaching/parent of rower (year)?

What was your first and subsequent clubs?

How long have you been involved with BETHANY?

What is the highest level that you have competed at?

## 7. Interview guide - athlete

### a. Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. A key component of this research is to understand the “the way things are done around here” and how this influences the ways people interact with each other, particularly coaches and their athletes.

[Assumes completed consent form and informed participant that will record and take notes]

But first I'd like to learn more about you.

Can you tell me how you got involved in rowing?

- What factors influenced you {prompt: significant others, perceptions of the sport, school, community centre, social networks... }
- What are you trying to get out of rowing?
- When/why did you decide to make a more serious commitment to the sport?
- What do you enjoy about being a rower?
- Did you ever consider stopping?

#### **b. Bethany**

I am interested in how all the different parts of being in the club work together, so I am talking within with athletes, parents and coaches and also observing. So I just wanted to ask some questions about the different aspects of rowing at this club.

How do you come to be involved with BETHANY?

- What did you consider when choosing BETHANY? {prompt: location, coach, reputation }
- What was the most important factor? Why?
- What do you like about the club?
- How is it different from other clubs?

How would you describe BETHANY?

- What was your first day at the club like?
- What's it like being a rower at BETHANY {prompt: what are the daily activities and things you do; how do you feel about rowing at BETHANY }
- How is that different from the perception you had of BETHANY before you joined?
- How did you know/learn "how to be a rower here" e.g. what clothing to wear, which equipment to use, how to rest between sessions, how much to train, what side of the river to row on? {prompt: other athletes tell me, watch, coach tells me, club communication, committee tell me, induction pack etc }
- How have you adapted what you do or think or feel in order to fit in with this?
- How do outsiders view Bethany?

How do "what is important to you" and "how it is to be a rower at BETHANY" tie up?

- How have you influenced what goes on and daily life at BETHANY?

- How have you had to adapt to being a rower at BETHANY {prompt: how have stories, dress codes, greetings, normal behaviours influenced your view of being a rower here? Prompt? Are you bothered by how it runs here? Are your values a good fit?}

Through being here observing and talking with you, I have noticed some things which seem to summarise to me what rowing at BETHANY is about. {Show them cards that have artefacts observed so far e.g. dress, big BETHANY B, equipment, Kings is a villain, Simon and other Olympians, diet, jargon, early morning training, etc).

- Pick a couple that best summarise how it is to be a rower at BETHANY and tell me what they mean to you?
- What is important about them?
- How do you know they are important?
- What cards are missing that also summarise how it is to row here?

One thing I have noticed is that ... {chose an artefact that they have not chosen e.g. everyone wears GB clothing, some competitions are more important than others, monitoring and testing happens every day}. Tell me how that influences everyday life at BETHANY.

### **c. Coach-athlete relationship**

Thanks for telling me about “the way things are done around here” at BETHANY. I’d like to ask some questions about how this influences the ways people interact with each other, particularly coaches and their athletes.

How long have you been with your coach?

Tell me about how you get on with your coach {prompt: how easy is it to talk to your coach i.e. ability to self express in a way that respects the other; ability to be committed and responsive to the other; inspired and support to be active partner in relationship}

- Tell me about when the relationship is difficult
- How does your relationship with your coach compare with other athletes here with your coach / other coaches you have had?
- How does the relationship compare other situations e.g. at home, with friends, at work/college
- How much time to you spend with your coach ... and where/when is this?
- What would you and your coach change about your relationship

What positively/negatively influences your relationship with your coach?

{prompt: lack of time, not what you do in rowing, trust}

Which of these elements of being at BETHANY most influence your relationship with your coach? {use artefact cards}.

- Explain what makes this important

How do you feel about your relationship with your coach?

## **Appendix C**

### **Consent form**

#### **RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET**

This research project is looking at organisational culture in elite rowing.

#### **The project**

The reason for the project is:

Coaching is really important in helping to improve performance in sport, getting people to participate in sport and for success at the London 2012 Olympic Games. The interaction between the coach and athlete can have both positive and negative effects, impacting on people's performance and participation in sport.

A key component of this research is to understand the "the way things are done around here" and how this influences the ways people interact with each other, particularly coaches and their athletes.

At the end of the project, the information will be used to enable both coaches and athletes to improve the sport experience.

Your rowing club has been chosen as a British Rowing Centre of Excellence. The researcher will spend up to 12 months at the Club, observing training, competitions and social situations, talking with athletes, coaches, and other people involved at the club, and conducting formal interviews and analysis of documents.

#### **Participating in the research**

If you chose to participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in both formal interviews with the researcher, and also informal conversations throughout the year. The benefit of this study for you may be the opportunity to discuss and reflect on your experiences of rowing. We do not anticipate that there is any potential risk or discomfort associated with this study.

Your involvement in this research project is entirely voluntary. You have a right to withdraw at any time from the project. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

General consent for the club to participate in the research has been given by the Director of Rowing. Coaches of elite athletes, elite athletes, and anyone formally interviewed will be asked to sign a consent form. Your participation is confidential and you will not be named in any documentation or published results. Data will be viewed by the researcher and her supervisors only, be kept in a secure location inaccessible to others, and destroyed following the analysis.

#### **The Researcher**

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the researcher, Alison Maitland (Tel: 07870 551560; email: alison.maitland01@brunel.ac.uk) who is a student at Brunel University. She has an enhanced CRB check with British Rowing. The researcher is not receiving any funding in the form of personal payment for this research. The data will only be used to complete the researcher's thesis and publications for a PhD at Brunel University. If you have any questions that you do not wish to raise with the researcher, please contact Dr. Laura Hills, Senior Lecturer, School of Sport and

Education, Heinz Wolff Building, University of Brunel, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH; email [laura.hills@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:laura.hills@brunel.ac.uk) (Tel: 01895267369)

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Research Information Sheet. I agree to participate in this project. I understand that my name will not be used in any reports and that the notes will be destroyed at the end of the project. My involvement in this research project is entirely voluntary and I understand I have a right to withdraw at any time.

**Signature of Research Participant.....**

**Date.....**

**Name in capitals.....**

*(If age under 18 only)*

**Signature of Parent/Guardian of Participant.....**

**Date.....**

**Name in capitals.....**

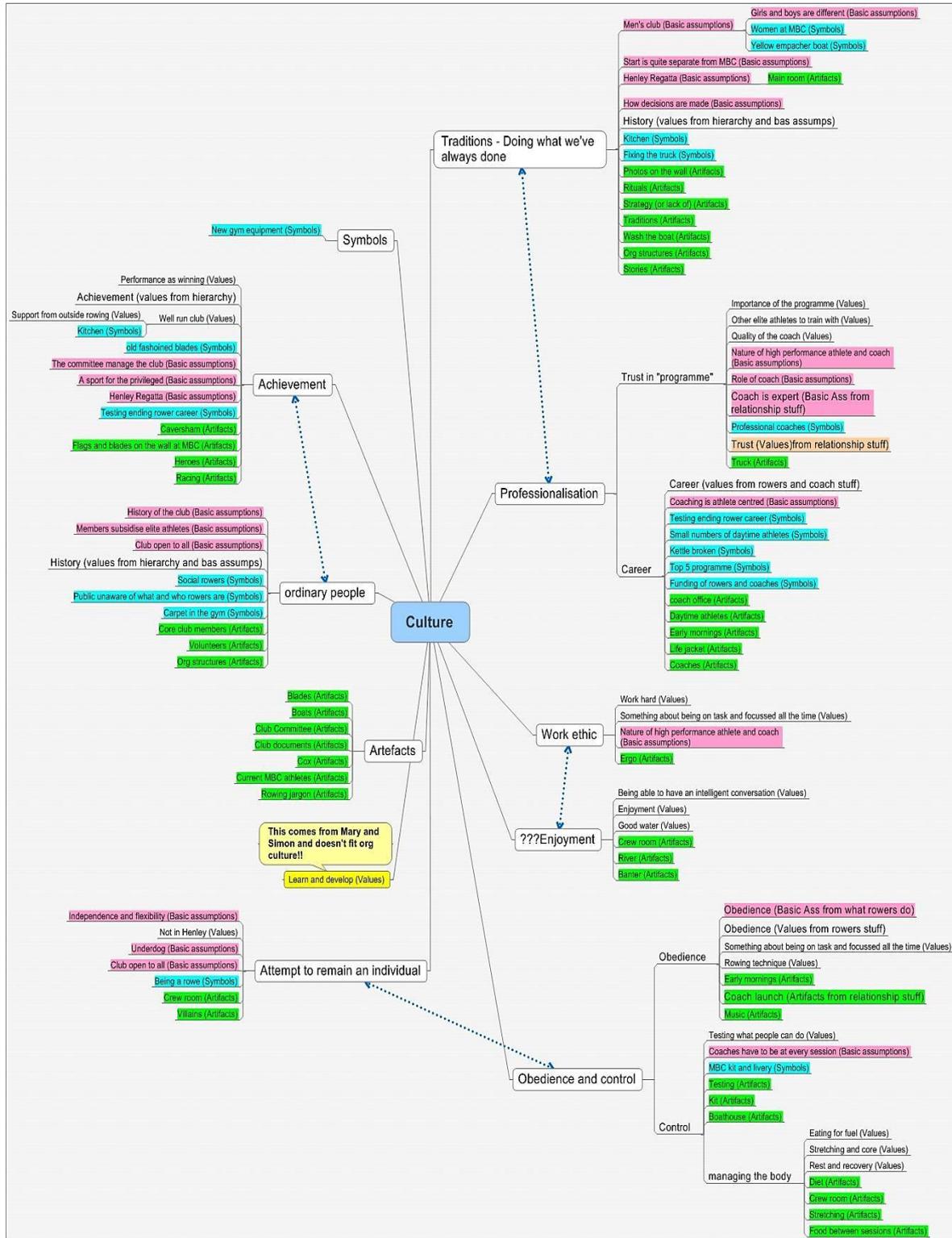
Please complete 2 copies of this consent form.

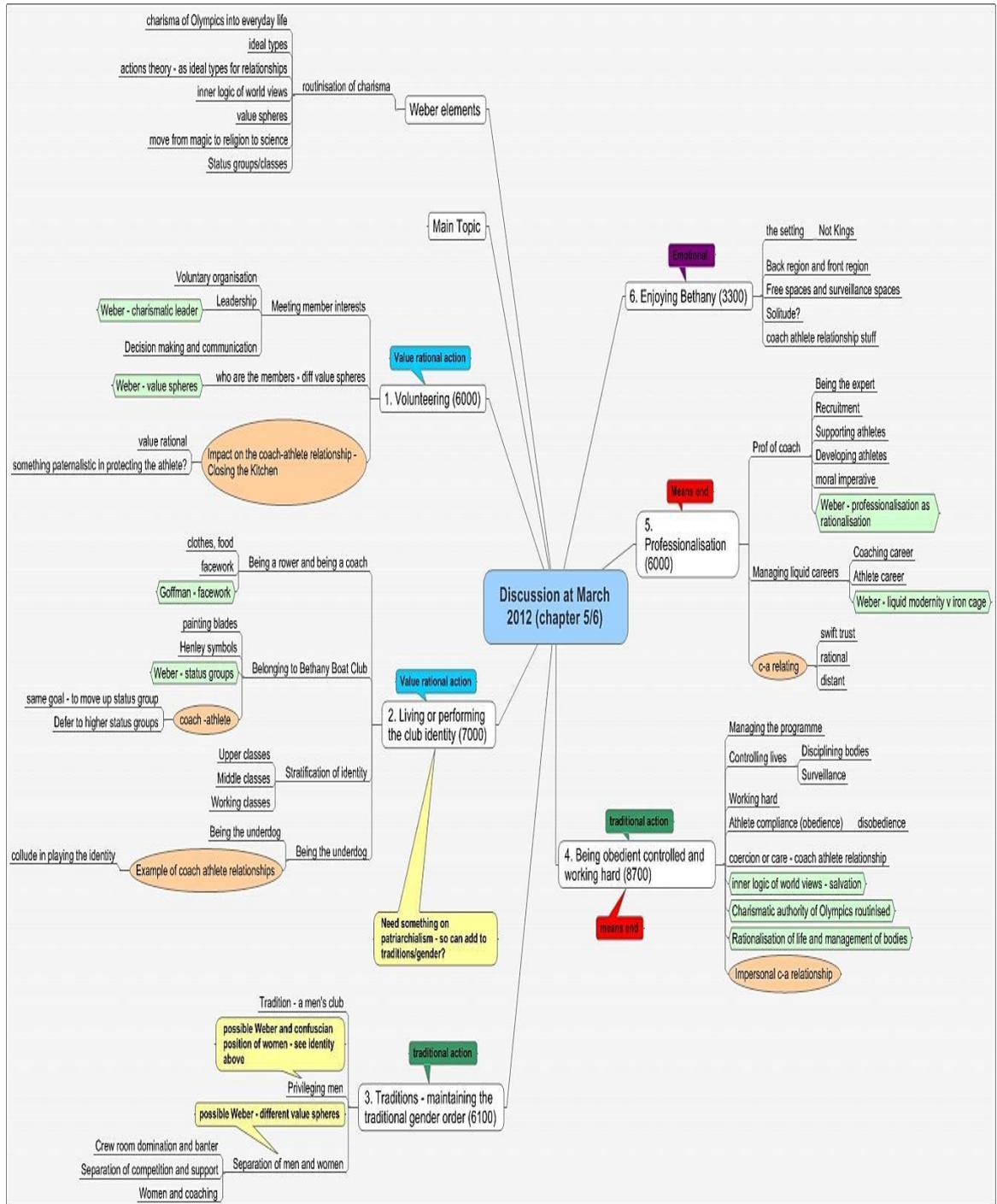
- Keep one copy for yourself
- Give the other copy to the researcher.

Thank you.

# Appendix D

## Analysis – example mindmaps





# Appendix E

## Analysis – example diagram

