An exploration of game-strategy efficacy beliefs in UK youth sport coaches

Matthew F. Fiander¹ᵃ, Martin I. Jones², and John K. Parker³

¹Middlesex University
²University of Exeter
³University of Gloucestershire

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ᵃ Corresponding author: Matthew F. Fiander. Psychology Department, Middlesex University, Hendon, London, NW4 4BT. 020 8411 5555. MF670@live.mdx.ac.uk.
Abstract

Overview: In the sport domain, game-strategy efficacy is the belief that coaches can lead teams or athletes to a successful performance in competition. Developmentally focussed youth sport coaches, however, may define success differently to those working in other contexts. Researchers suggest that if youth sport coaches define successful performances in terms of winning only, the psychosocial development of young athletes could be hindered. Therefore, scholars and practitioners need to understand how developmentally focussed youth sport coaches cultivate their game-strategy efficacy beliefs to improve coach education and personal development programs. The purpose of this study was to explore UK developmentally focussed youth sport coaches’ development of game-strategy efficacy beliefs and to examine the sources and outcomes of perceived efficacy. A secondary focus was the generation of practically relevant and useable findings that developmentally focussed youth sport coaches could utilize. Method: Data was obtained by interviewing 10 male youth sport coaches and analysed using an interpretive description methodology. Results: Results are presented as a representative bricolage from the perspective of two fictional coaches who either have high or low game-strategy efficacy. These results highlighted sources of game-strategy efficacy within the UK developmentally focussed youth sport context, including acknowledgement, playing experience, relationships with athletes and peers, results, self-image, and success. Additionally, two outcomes of game-strategy efficacy included releasing control and self-evaluation. Conclusions: The findings offer coaches a chance to explore their own game-strategy efficacy beliefs against others in similar positions while opening a dialogue between research findings and those in the field.

Key words: game-strategy efficacy; interpretive description; coach; developmental; youth sport.
Introduction

For almost two decades, researchers have investigated coach efficacy (Feltz, Chase, Moritz, & Sullivan, 1999) and reported key findings that apply to coaches and those involved in the coaching process (e.g., Malete & Feltz, 2000). Feltz and colleagues (1999) defined coach efficacy as “the extent to which coaches believe they have the capacity to affect the learning and performance of their athletes” (p. 765). Coach efficacy comprises motivation efficacy (i.e., the belief that coaches can affect the psychological skill and states of athletes), technique efficacy (i.e., the belief coaches can instruct skill and diagnose faults), character building efficacy (i.e., the belief that coaches can influence the personal development of athletes), game-strategy efficacy (i.e., the belief that coaches can lead teams of athletes to a successful performance in competition), and the more recent addition, physical conditioning efficacy (the belief that coaches can prepare athletes physically for sport; Myers, Feltz, Chase, Reckase, & Hancock, 2008).

Several studies have identified sources of coaching efficacy, including: coaching experience/preparation, prior success, perceived skill of athletes, school/community support (Feltz et al., 1999), perceived ability of the team (Myers, Vargas-Tonsing, & Feltz, 2005), and coach education and training (Malete & Feltz, 2000). Specifically for youth sport coaches, playing and coaching backgrounds, perceived skill of athletes, and coach education affected coaching efficacy (Sullivan, Paquette, Holt, & Bloom, 2012). Researchers have also shown that improvements in coaching efficacy, as a combination of four or five dimensions, can positively influence coaches’ behaviours and practices (Feltz et al., 1999; Feltz, Hepler, Roman, & Paiement, 2009; Sullivan & Kent, 2003), athlete performance (Chase, Feltz, Hayashi, & Helper, 2005; Myers et al., 2005) and athlete behaviours and attitudes (Chow, Murray, & Feltz, 2009). Researchers have, however, rarely studied the four (or five) dimensions separately, even though self-efficacy, and by association coach-efficacy, is the
personal belief that one can organize and execute a course of action to attain a specific outcome (Bandura, 1977). In the case of coaching efficacy, researchers need to study the dimensions separately as efficacy beliefs regarding each dimension are likely to be mutually exclusive (see Feltz et al., 1999, for demonstration of exclusivity).

Game-strategy efficacy (i.e., the belief that coaches can lead teams of athletes to a successful performance in competition) is a valid dimension in the conceptual model of coach efficacy (Feltz et al., 1999); however, the concept of a successful performance may be different depending on which context coaches find themselves (Miller, Lutz, & Fredenburg, 2012). For example, for performance-oriented youth sport coaches, successful performances likely reflect winning (Cumming, Smoll, Smith, & Grossbard, 2007), whereas for the developmentally focused youth sport coach, a successful performance may represent proficient execution of skill, demonstration of effort, or psychosocial development. The nature of game-strategy efficacy is therefore potentially convoluted (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006).

Although it would be naive to say that winning is not important to coaches and athletes in all levels of sport (Bortoli, Bertollo, Comani & Robazza, 2011), in the developmental youth sport context (i.e., a formal competitive structure with an increased commitment from athletes and coaches, a stable relationship between athletes and coaches, where athletes are selected on skill try-outs, with specialized sport-specific training for athletes, and for some, the primary context for talent identification to elite levels of sport performance; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006), it is not necessarily the primary focus, but a consequence of the athlete’s physical and psychological development (Martens, 2004; Smith & Smoll, 2002; Thompson, 2003). It is necessary, therefore, to examine how coaches working within the developmental youth sport context develop game-strategy efficacy beliefs because of the unique nature of what may and may not be considered a successful performance. To this end, the purpose of this study is to explore developmentally focused youth sport coaches’ perceptions of their
game-strategy efficacy beliefs, and to examine the sources and outcomes of perceived
efficacy. A secondary focus was to provide developmentally focused youth sport coaches
with pertinent and applicable findings. We employed an interpretive description methodology
(Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997) because of its focus on the coherence
between applied research questions and the generation of practically relevant and useable
findings (Thorne, 2008). Within sport, interpretive description has been used to examine, for
example, physical activity experiences among adolescent girls (e.g., Clark, Spence & Holt,
2011) and the benefits and challenges of sport participation in low-income families (e.g.,
Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011).

Methodology

Interpretive Description

Interpretive description is an applied, disciplinary methodology that is inductive and
aims to create clinically relevant and applicable findings (Brewer, Harwood, McCann,
interpretive description (Thorne et al., 1997) for nursing practitioners in the 1990s, and since
then researchers have applied this methodology in sport, exercise, and physical activity (e.g.,
Clark et al., 2011; Holt et al., 2011). Interpretive description has a philosophical alignment
with interpretive naturalistic orientations (Thorne et al., 2004) and is informed by key axioms
of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), including: (a) there are multiple constructed
realities that can only be studied holistically, (b) the inquirer and the “object” of inquiry
influence one another to co-construct knowledge, and (c) no \textit{a priori} theory could encompass
the multiple realities encountered, instead, theory will be grounded in the data. The aim of
interpretive description is to generate knowledge relevant for the context of applied
disciplines so people can apply it in situations that arise in real world practice (Thorne, 2008).

Participants
The sample consisted of 10 male coaches (see Table 1), aged between 22 and 59 (\(M=37.10, \text{SD}=12.57\)), who had been working or volunteering within developmentally focussed youth sport contexts for at least five years (\(M=14.80, \text{SD}=8.40\)). The participants had all undertaken formal education courses offered by their respected sporting governing bodies. Following ethical approval from the researcher’s Institutional Research Ethics Committee, the first author approached the participants via email and invited them to participate in the study. We sent participants an information sheet that explained the purpose of the study and what their involvement would entail. Once participants agreed to take part, we agreed a convenient time and place to conduct the interview.

**Procedure**

The first author conducted semi-structured interviews (\(M=42.20 \text{ minutes}, \text{SD}=16.00\)) at locations determined by the participants. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim immediately after each interview. We used semi-structured interviews because they provided a guiding framework whilst allowing the participants to move the interview in the direction they chose, allowing participants to report on their attitudes, experiences and knowledge (Rowley, Jones, & Vassiliou, 2012). We devised the interview questions from extant literature, thorough discussion amongst the research team, and by reflecting on previous interviews. All the interviews started with a discussion to facilitate rapport. The first author asked the participants about coaching (e.g., what were your best moments?) and then shared his own experiences and informed participants when he had similar experiences\(^b\).

Following these opening questions, the interviewer directed participants towards key questions (e.g., what strategies do you use to maximize your athletes’ strengths during a

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\(^b\) Note, the experiences shared by the first author were in broad coaching terms and not about the topic of study specifically (i.e., game-strategy efficacy beliefs).
game/match?). Key questions changed across interviews as the coaches’ stories unfolded and analysis progressed.

We employed an iterative cycle of data collection and data analysis (Corbin & Straus, 2008), in which we conducted data analysis of an interview immediately after data collection (once interviews were transcribed verbatim) and prior to the next interview. Thorne (2008) stated that the researcher must remain sceptical of initial conceptualisations and begin to use data collection as a way of challenging, rather than reinforcing, these notions. The iterative process strengthened the data because interview questions were refined and changed to challenge emerging concepts (Thorne et al., 1997), and we could identify and rectify possible threats to methodological rigor (e.g., assumptions on the nature of success and its impact on interview questions). Iterative data collection and analysis also provided evidence to inform the point of data saturation (i.e., no new trends or themes are elicited by new participants, meaning a thorough understanding of the phenomena under study is achieved and data collection is ended; Kuper, Lingard & Levinson, 2008).

The interviewer took notes while interviewing to highlight concepts that warranted further investigation and followed up the interview and data analysis with periods of memoing (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative methodologists encourage memoing because it allows the researcher to “immerse themselves in the data, explore meanings that this data holds, maintain continuity, and sustain momentum in the conduct of research” (p.69). Furthermore, memoing in interpretive descriptive allowed data to be sorted into themes that were less rigid than traditional codes (Thorne, 2008).

**Data Analysis Process**

Generating new constructions through data analysis is the most crucial element in producing a credible interpretive description study (Thorne, 2008). Morse (1994) described several steps in the analytic process that researchers can adopt within an interpretive
descriptive study. The steps included comprehending data, synthesizing meanings, theorizing relationships, and re-conceptualizing data into findings. The first author read each transcript and tentatively identified relevant passages. Memoing allowed the first author to comprehend passages while keeping a record of initial thoughts on what these passages meant. These thoughts also lead to relationships between passages being identified, meaning the first author could begin to build what eventually became the final themes. If needed, the first author could challenge emerging themes by reviewing memos, to ensure a coherent, logical, and rich interpretation (Thorne et al., 2004).

Thorne et al. (2004 p. 15) stated that the “credibility of the findings will derive largely from the way the specific analytic decisions are presented and contextualised within the larger picture.” Researchers have suggested that credibility occurs when the research process - especially the analytic process - and all its complexities, are made visible and transparent while articulating an openness that acknowledges a certain hesitance regarding the final research outcomes (Emden & Sandelowski, 1999). To provide a visible and transparent description of data analysis, we have provided an example in Table 2. The first author also recorded his analysis in tables that included sources and outcomes of coach’s game-strategy efficacy, an inclusion criterion for the source or outcomes, and an exemplar quote. The first and second author then used the tables as a basis for discussion and refinement of the data analysis.

As with all qualitative research, the researcher must be honest and prudent (Emden, Hancock, Schubert, & Darbyshire, 2001) and take a risk by committing to, and taking ownership of, interpreting the data in the analytic process (Sandelowski & Barosso, 2002). As the ultimate outcome of interpretive description is applied knowledge that practitioners can use, the presentation of data should be clear to practitioners (i.e., coaches). Practitioner focussed knowledge is not necessarily the outcome of existing qualitative methods, so
presentation of an interpretive description may not follow discipline conventions (e.g., visual coding frameworks). We present our results, therefore, as a diagram and a representative bricolage. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined a bricolage as a complex, interpretive structure of interconnected representations, describing a bricolage “like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole” (p. 6). Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) suggested that a bricolage “implies the fictive and imaginative elements of the presentation of all formal research” (p.168). In other words, a bricolage allowed us to present results in a clear way that both researchers and practitioners (i.e., coaches) can find understandable and relatable because without this, the central principle of interpretive description (i.e., understandable knowledge that is applicable in real world practice) could not be achieved. The stories represent a composite of all participants and were constructed by taking the clearest examples of each result to craft easily readable, coherent stories that demonstrated the differences between the two extreme positions of coaches high and low in game-strategy efficacy.

**Results**

Data obtained from our interpretive description revealed that sources of game-strategy efficacy within the UK developmentally focussed youth sport context included acknowledgement, playing experience, relationships with athletes and peers, results, self-image, and success. Additionally, two outcomes of game-strategy efficacy were highlighted: releasing control and self-evaluation (see Table 3 for inclusion criteria and exemplar quotes from coaches).

To stay true to the practice focussed knowledge aspects of interpretive descriptors, the results are presented as a diagram (see Figure 1) and a representative bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) of two fictional coaches: John, who has high-perceived game-strategy, and Andrew, who has low-perceived game-strategy efficacy.
John

John is high in game-strategy efficacy. He is a 34-year-old youth sport coach working in the developmental context. He has a level two qualification in his sport while working on his level three and, as such, believes he has a high level of knowledge. These qualifications have been obtained over a 14-year coaching career. Together with his long, established playing career, he believes he has a large amount of previous experience that contributes to the confidence he has in leading his athletes to what he refers to as, “success”. However, in this sense, success challenges the common notion of simply scoring more points than an opponent or winning. Although John felt that winning was still important, he valued athlete development more (which is what he calls success).

Throughout his coaching career, John has received various amount of acknowledgement from those around him (such as his athletes, peers, and community) which has added to his game-strategy efficacy. The degrees of this acknowledgement ranged from a simple “thank you” from one of his athletes to his entire community backing him when times were hard during a rift with his employers (i.e., club director) at his club. Another long-term contributor to John’s game-strategy efficacy are the “results” he has witnessed first-hand. More specifically, results in this sense relate to visually observing the outcome of an aim or a goal, which is often his athletes executing a skill, showing an understanding of why they are doing it, or simply developing as athletes.

John has had several affiliations over the years but the two most significant to contribute to the confidence he has in leading his athletes to success are the relationships with his athletes and his peers. Both these relationships are multidimensional in nature, meaning athletes and peers can influence his confidence and vice versa. During his time as a coach, John’s game-strategy efficacy has been increased because of the support and positive feedback he has received from his peers. Although the same increases in his game-strategy
efficacy have happened from his relationships with his athletes, he feels more of an increase in game-strategy efficacy from the support and feedback from peers. The increases in John’s game-strategy efficacy in these relationships are from actual encounters with his athletes and peers. However, John’s self-image affects his game-strategy efficacy through his perception of himself or how he believes his athletes and peers perceive him. In this sense, John perceives himself as a good coach who can lead his athletes to success and believes his athlete and peers feel the same way.

As a result of John’s high game-strategy efficacy, he has two specific coaching behaviours. Firstly, John has come to realise that not everything within his sport and his team can be influenced by him. During a game, for example, John does not try to influence the referee. Instead, he leaves his athletes to win the game for themselves because he is confident that he has prepared his athletes to succeed. John gives his athletes a lot more independence (i.e., independent learning) when it comes to their own training and has decided to accept influence (i.e., feedback from athletes) from the athletes themselves rather than trying to control every aspect of their development. In addition to releasing control, John’s high game-strategy efficacy has allowed him to practice self-evaluation. This means that when something goes wrong with his athletes’ performances, John has chosen to reflect, evaluate, and change his own strategies and tactics, rather than blaming the athletes themselves. In other words, John has the confidence to change the way he is leading his athletes to success, rather than sticking to a coaching practice that is not showing the results he wants and blaming his athletes for the lack of success.

Andrew

Andrew is low in game-strategy efficacy. He is younger than John at 25 and has been coaching in the developmental youth sport context for six years, eight less than John. Andrew has not had an illustrious playing career (i.e., short and at amateur level) which, when
combined with his limited amount of coaching experience, has led him to believe he only has a small amount of quality previous experience. Andrew holds a level two qualification, though he is not pursuing any higher levels or any other qualifications. He believes he has some level of knowledge but because he does not feel it is that high, he questions himself on the decisions he makes. However, even though Andrew is not hugely confident in leading his athletes to success, he also holds the view that “success” is about the development of his athletes and not just about winning games.

During Andrews’s coaching career, he has rarely had any acknowledgment from his athletes and peers. Andrew has seen some results (i.e., visually observing the outcome of an aim or a goal) but not as many as he would have hoped. Throughout his coaching career, Andrew has had several relationships with athletes and peers. Most of these, however, have not always been positive. Furthermore, Andrew has not received the support and feedback from his peers, athletes, and club that he would have liked. Also, because of poor relationships with peers, his self-image is particularly negative. In particular, he feels that his peers judge him when they watch him coaching and talk behind his back (even though there is no proof of this), causing him to question his ability to lead his athletes to success.

A consequence of Andrew’s low game-strategy efficacy is that he behaves in certain ways relating to his coaching. Andrew feels that it is not enough to simply prepare his athletes to succeed through training and matches during a season. He feels he needs to try and influence (or perceive to influence) as much as he possibly can. For example, he shouts at referees and opposition players and coaches to try and influence their decisions to suit him. Andrew believes he must not release control of any aspect of his sport and his team, including mapping every aspect of his athletes’ development (i.e., taking away their independence). In addition, when something goes wrong with his athletes’ performance, either in training or during matches, he immediately blames them. For example, if his athletes
fail to perform a drill as he would like, Andrew would blame them rather than being self-

evaluative and analysing his own coaching practices.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore developmentally focussed youth sport coaches’ perceptions of their game-strategy efficacy beliefs and what experiences have

influenced their perceived efficacy. Interpretive descriptive researchers aim to develop useful

knowledge for those working in applied settings (Thorne et al., 1997). Therefore, it is

important to discuss the findings of this study in light of this goal. Furthermore, although

research to date has highlighted a number of sources and outcomes of coaching efficacy,

most results are restricted to coaches within North America (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006).

Therefore, the current study offers coaches the chance to learn about, and relate to, other

developmentally focussed youth sport coaches within the UK, which could improve their

understanding of the importance of particular experiences.

Before the sources and outcomes of high, or low, game-strategy efficacy are

discussed, it is important to outline the current participants’ views of “success”. As the

common notion in sport is that success equals winning and failure equals losing (Cumming et

al., 2007), the importance of examining coaches’ beliefs of success in developmentally

focussed youth sports is clear. The current participants defined success in terms of athlete

effort, cooperation, learning, improvement, social relations, and a positive approach to

mistakes viewed as naturally associated with the learning process. The coaches felt winning

was an important part of youth sport, but they explained how winning was not necessarily the

most important objective, which is consistent with the literature (e.g., Smith & Smoll, 2002).

One coach gave an example of creating a task-involving climate by reducing the ultimate

importance of winning relative to other prized participation motives (in this case, learning,

and improvement). Coaches’ descriptions of success also corresponded with scholars’ calls to
move away from the “win at all costs” attitude (e.g., Smith & Smoll, 2012) that encompasses players, coaches, and parents alike.

Although results show that coaches have differentiated views of success, they may not understand how to implement coaching strategies coherent with their coaching philosophies (e.g., McCallister, Blinde & Weiss, 2000). Therefore, coaches who define success in terms of positive development might need information to help them create task-orientated environments and build psychosocial competencies. Coach education providers could offer coaches information about differentiated views of success and the associated possible outcomes. Coaches could be encouraged to consider that success is about results and positive psychosocial development rather than simply about winning.

Almost all the coaches stated they felt more confident in their own ability to lead their athletes to success once they had completed formal education courses. While there is evidence that links coach education with coach efficacy as a whole (e.g., Campbell & Sullivan, 2005; Malete & Feltz, 2000; Sullivan et al., 2012), the current results demonstrate a link between coach education and game-strategy efficacy specifically. As national governing bodies primarily offer coach education (Nash & Sproule, 2011), results from the current study have potentially important implications for policy makers and program designers as they have the power and resources to change current coaching provision which, in turn, would influence coach learning. The reasons that coaches felt more confident varied. For example, Coach 6 suggested his knowledge had improved as he completed his coaching courses whereas Coach 10 said he attended formal education courses because he learns from other coaches attending the course, not necessarily the course content itself.

These results indicate that less formal learning opportunities (in this case informal discussions with, and observations of, other coaches during coach education courses) contribute to boosting coaches’ game-strategy efficacy beliefs. Although further investigation
may be needed to understand the true value of less formal learning opportunities and its impact on game-strategy efficacy (and coach efficacy in general), the power of less formal learning opportunities has already been demonstrated (e.g., Gilbert, Gallimore, & Trudel, 2009). Furthermore, coaches in the current study reflected previous issues with formal education courses (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009), re-emphasizing the need for national governing bodies to have a serious review of their coach provision for developmentally focussed youth sport coaches. Although only half of all coaches in the UK have a coaching qualification (and therefore exposed to coach provision; North, 2009), the current study highlights an opportunity for change.

A source not highlighted in previous literature that affected game-strategy efficacy, both positively and negatively, were peers. For example, coaches felt uncomfortable when they believed other coaches were judging them during their coaching sessions. This even occurred when there was no “objective” evidence (e.g., hearing what other coaches were saying) to suggest this. While it is not a new phenomenon that an individual’s self-efficacy can be affected by what they perceive others to believe about their capabilities (Lent & Lopez, 2002), the current study suggests this also happens between youth sport coaches.

Coaches in the current study discussed how they would compare their abilities and skills with their peers and it would have a negative impact on their game-strategy efficacy beliefs if they felt inferior. The effect of peer comparison within young athletes has been a topic of interest (e.g., Smith, 2003), but again, the concept of peer comparison with youth sport coaches has yet to be the focus of any study. Every coach included in this study reported instances of a peer negatively and/or positively influencing game-strategy efficacy beliefs. Researchers and practitioners, therefore, need more research to understand the effects of peers on game-strategy efficacy.
Other interpersonal sources of coaches’ game-strategy efficacy beliefs also emerged. For instance, some coaches explained that their athletes’ behaviour (such as following instructions and acknowledgement) affected their game-strategy efficacy beliefs which later influenced coaches’ behaviour (such as releasing control). This extends previous findings as Erickson, Côté, and Deakin. (2011) suggested that positive environments characterized by a deliberate pattern of coach-athlete interactions might be associated with youth sport settings, producing more satisfied athletes and, according to the current study, coaches. Apart from parents, coaches described examples of situations where they have been acknowledged and felt supported by their clubs and communities. Interestingly though, coaches also discussed what the effect acknowledgement and support from athletes had. Specifically, athlete support and acknowledgement seemed to give the coaches high game-strategy efficacy beliefs by athletes expressing their desire to continue to work with the coach and to identify them as important in their development. These results reflect findings from Chase et al. (i.e., player support was a source of coaching efficacy; 2005) and support the multidirectional conceptualization of coach-athlete interactions (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006) whereby athletes may have more of an effect on coaches’ efficacy, and in turn behaviour, than previously thought. Player support and the coach-athlete relationship, therefore, may be an important source of game-strategy efficacy. Along with a number of sources of coach efficacy, two outcomes emerged that related to coaches’ behaviour. Previous evidence shows a direct link from coach efficacy to coach behaviours (e.g., Horn, 2008), yet no study has linked game-strategy efficacy with specific coach behaviours. The current study found that coaches who reported high game-strategy efficacy beliefs described how they have released some control of their coaching to athletes (e.g., independent learning) and allowed their athletes to be more independent (e.g., free to question the coaches’ decisions). These coaches also believed that they were competent in
leading their athletes to success while at the same time thought that when their athletes were not successful, it was because of reasons outside their control. These coaches simply demonstrated self-evaluative techniques when something, such as athlete performance, went wrong. Rather than blaming the athletes themselves (which low game-strategy efficacy coaches did), coaches described how they would evaluate their own techniques and strategies and refine them to suit the needs of the athletes. On the other hand, coaches who reported lower game-strategy efficacy described the need to control coaching and the athletes learning while at the same time not accepting their advice and opinions. While praise and encouragement are effective (and positive) coaching behaviours with adolescent athletes (Smith & Smoll, 1990), these results show that low game-strategy efficacy can lead to coaches exhibiting negative coaching behaviours (i.e., controlling and close-minded).

Coaches high in game-strategy efficacy though demonstrated positive coaching behaviours (i.e., relaxed, flexible, and self-evaluative). Coaches both high and low in coach efficacy displaying different behaviours is not a new phenomenon (e.g., Sullivan & Kent, 2003), yet the notion that game-strategy efficacy is specifically linked with these behaviours is. Further research, however, would be needed to examine this link.

A Message for Coaches

There are two key points the authors wish to convey to coaches working within the developmental context. The first being what is, and is not, considered success. Although all the coaches felt that winning is an important aspect of sport, they also suggested that it is not the only characteristic of a successful performance. According to these coaches, athlete success meant displaying effort, cooperation, learning, improvement, social relations, and a positive approach to mistakes viewed as naturally associated with the learning process.

Secondly, the authors offer coaches a list of sources and outcomes of their game-strategy efficacy beliefs. Coaches can use this list to identify situations occurring both inside and
outside of their coaching duties that can potentially influence their game-strategy efficacy.

Furthermore, situations that negatively affect game-strategy efficacy can then be avoided (or at least recognised).

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although key results emerged, it is important to consider the limitations of the current study. For instance, coaches occasionally found it difficult to distinguish between general coaching efficacy beliefs and game-strategy efficacy beliefs (i.e., differentiate between beliefs formed in and out of competition). While the interviewer was careful to keep coaches discussing beliefs formed in competition, results should be interpreted with this in mind.

Although well-grounded as a methodology within the nursing discipline (Thorne, 2008), the use of interpretive description in sport is relatively new (Clark et al., 2011; Holt et al., 2011). The current study contributes to the literature by adding to the small number of studies that have successfully utilized the interpretive description methodology within sport. We also understand the presentation of a bricolage is not the discipline norm for coaching or sport and exercise psychology, but we hope that an alternative presentation of qualitative results provides the reader (both academic and practitioner) with an easily digestible account of the research that is comprehensible by individuals who may not have advanced research skills (e.g., coaches). Most participants interviewed were highly experienced, both in a practical and educational sense. Therefore, recruiting less experienced participants may have revealed a clearer picture of when and where the sources and outcomes of game-strategy efficacy came from. Furthermore, as previous research highlighted the differences in game-strategy efficacy between genders (Marback, Short, Short, & Sullivan, 2005), the inclusion of female coaches could further highlight and increase our understanding of key differences.

Future researchers may wish to investigate the four other dimensions of coach efficacy and the sources and outcomes. Based on our current findings, there could be a conceptual
overlap between game-strategy efficacy and character building efficacy. These two constructs may not represent mutually exclusive factors if a coach defines successful performance in terms of the acquisition and maintenance of positive psychosocial values (i.e., character traits). Furthermore, existing measurement models of coach efficacy (in developmental contexts) might need refining if conceptual overlaps emerge, considering the participants’ views of success.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore coaches’ perceptions of their game-strategy efficacy beliefs and what experiences have influenced their perceived efficacy. Although other ways of measuring and evaluating game-strategy efficacy may have been available, the applied nature of coaching and the purposes of this study led the authors to interpretive description as the most relevant research methodology. Data obtained from our interpretive description revealed that sources and outcomes of game-strategy efficacy within the UK developmentally focussed youth sport context included acknowledgement, playing experience, relationships with athletes and peers, results, self-image, and success. Additionally, two outcomes of game-strategy efficacy included releasing control and self-evaluation. This study provided a unique contribution to the literature on coaching by analysing game-strategy efficacy with a novel and unique methodology, highlighting sources and outcomes of game-strategy efficacy within the UK developmentally focussed youth sport context, and demonstrating coaches’ views on the relationship between winning and success.
References


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1  Table 1. Summary of participants

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sport(s)</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Qualification(s)</th>
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<td>10 years</td>
<td>UKCC Level 2, RFL Level 2</td>
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<td>Soccer</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>FA Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White British</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>UEFA B Goalkeeping, UEFA B Outfield, FA Youth Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White British</td>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>RFU Level 3, Swimming Level 2, UKSCA Accredited S&amp;C Coach,</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asian Caribbean British</td>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>RFU Level 2, Currently undertaking UKCC Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White British</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>FA Level 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Example of Analytic Process

...and let them get on with it. so I think I’ve got a lot more confidence...I think as my abilities as a coach has got better and I think I’m a much better coach than I used to be uhh as I progress umm I think I have much more confidence in the guys who are playing the match than I did have before...does that make sense? Yeah so I tend not to try and influence or be a part of it in a big way, I just think ‘right let them do it, they know what they’re doing let them get on with it’

Comprehending data
There are five important parts to this quote: (1) the perception of his abilities improving, (2) his confidence increasing as his abilities improve, (3) more confidence in his athletes, (4) he is not trying to influence the game as he used to and as a result, (5) lets his athletes get on with it.

Synthesizing meanings
As the perception that he is improving as a coach increases, his confidence in his own abilities and his athletes’ abilities also increases. As a result, he reduces the amount of influence he tries to exert onto a match.

Theorizing relationships
There is a relationship between the coaches’ confidence and the attempted influence on a match.

Reconceptualizing data into findings
As a coach’s confidence in his own abilities increases, he releases the amount of control he perceives himself to have.
### Table 3. Inclusion criteria and exemplar quotes from coaches on sources and outcomes of game-strategy efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources and Outcomes</th>
<th>Inclusion Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplar Quote from Coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>A situation where coaches game-strategy efficacy (GSE) is boosted from external feedback or recognition</td>
<td>Coach 1: <em>Acknowledgement, that’s...just to be acknowledged...sometimes that’s all you need...just to be told “you know what...thank you.”</em> Just thank you from time to time does wonders for people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Where any level of knowledge is perceived to affect the coaches GSE</td>
<td>Coach 4: <em>In certain environments it [a feeling of inadequate knowledge] has done in the past. You know in a performance environment within...rugby league at times it does knock you, it doesn’t knock me down here because I know more about rugby league than anyone else in the building.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Experience</td>
<td>Playing experiences that have a direct, or thought to have a direct, effect on GSE</td>
<td>Coach 3: <em>Of course I care about winning...but compared to people in sport I’m not that bothered...and that came from my own personal playing. If I lost I wasn’t devastated if I played well...and I’m the same with my coaching.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Athletes</td>
<td>The perceived effect that athlete management and behaviour has on a coaches GSE</td>
<td>Coach 5: <em>If I wanted to speak to a fighter...and they didn’t maybe want to acknowledge what I had to say to them...I would feel that I’ve lost...the fighter lost confidence in me.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Peers</td>
<td>Any situation where a coaches GSE is affected by the behaviours and actions, both real and perceived, of a peer</td>
<td>Coach 8: <em>Obviously how other people perceive you...like the elite coach department how they view me or how I perceive that they view me...it’s gunna affect my confidence.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>A situation whereby the coaches observes the result of an goal previously made</td>
<td>Coach 9: <em>Things that really boost my confidence are...seeing things that we’ve taught them...execution of skills or...understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Image</td>
<td>The way in which coaches believe they are being perceived by their athletes and peers</td>
<td>Coach 4: <em>I don’t think it [lack of playing career] affects my coaching, I think it affects the perception of my coaching, of other people.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>An athlete developing and demonstrating a newly acquired skill or knowledge which affects a coach's GSE</td>
<td>Coach 7: I think maybe if you've made a difference to that individual umm...so if you've seen someone come in, you've started working with them and they're not so good but then you've worked with them and they've progressed and they're now a good player, I think that's a success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Releasing Control</td>
<td>Coaches empowering their athletes to be more independent while accepting influence from athletes</td>
<td>Coach 6: I think as my abilities as a coach have got better and I think I'm a much better coach than I used to be umh as I progress umm I think I have much more confidence in the guys who are playing the match than I did have before...does that make sense? Yeah so I tend not to try and influence or be a part of it in a big way, I just think “right let them do it, they know what they're doing, let them get on with it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>A situation in which the coach reflects on their own GSE as a result of an athlete’s poor performance (as opposed to blaming the athletes themselves)</td>
<td>Coach 5: It was a silly mistake. However, that silly mistake had happened before, you know, so...from what we had done, I clearly hadn’t reinforced that enough, or I had and it hadn’t worked so I have to change my tack on it and then it’s not just then about me, because they need to change or they wouldn’t move any further. So I think it’s about what you do with it as opposed to...you don’t take it personally, you've just gotta come back, reflect on it and make it right next time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Summary of Results