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Expert Premier League soccer managers' use of transformational leadership behaviours, and attitude towards sport integrity: An intrinsic case-study.

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Abstract. The present study is the first to examine transformational leadership behaviours [1] and integrity attitudes [2] of expert, Premier League and International level football managers. To provide a rich, detailed exploration of the expert managers' experiences, a qualitative approach was adopted utilising holistic content analysis. Constructed narratives revealed the key behaviours demonstrated were inspirational messages or team talks (i.e., inspirational motivation), empathy (i.e., individualised consideration), introducing new training methods (i.e., intellectual stimulation), using exemplar players (i.e., appropriate role modelling), and goal setting (i.e., high performance expectations). However, the use and effect of such behaviours varied greatly between managers. Each of the managers also claimed to have been willing to "bend the rules" as a player and frequently used euphemistic labels [3] to describe such behaviour. However, upon entering management, all three managers claimed to have adjusted such attitudes without providing an explanation for this.

1. INTRODUCTION

Becoming an expert sports manager[2] requires a great deal of time, dedication, and skill [4]. Within association football (also known as soccer, futbol or simply football), the vast majority of expert managers started their sporting careers as players; eventually beginning a career in management or coaching at the conclusion of their playing career [5]. While coaches within other sports may also experience similar challenges [6], it is fair to say that as the Premier League is a global product at the apex of international attention. This creates added pressures and financial rewards to those involved within the competition. Although comparable to other top international competitions, at a domestic level, the challenges faced by top-level football coaches are incomparable. Therefore, due to its

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[2]In this instance, the term Manager encompasses all roles from the traditional perception of the manager as responsible for multiple facets of the club's running through to the more contemporary term of Head Coach.

progression pathway, relatively insular nature, and its position as the dominant domestic sport, the Premier League offers a unique environment to study coach transformational leadership behaviour and integrity.

Over the past decade, sports leadership scholars have increasingly turned to transformational leadership [7] in an attempt to better understand leadership behaviours in sport [8]. However, much of the present literature has focused on either student [see 9; 10; 11) or amateur populations [see 12; 13; 8; 14]. To date, only Din et al. [15] has explored transformational leadership behaviours in coaches operating at a similar level of competition (i.e., Olympic). However, the expert status of the coaches was not established nor were integrity attitudes discussed within the aforementioned study. Furthermore, although arguably a similar competitive level, coaches of Olympic athletes are less likely to experience the type of financial rewards and public pressures that expert football managers experience.

Before discussing how transformational leadership behaviours and integrity are applicable to sport, it is important to first provide an overview of the concepts discussed. The first concept to discuss is transformational leadership, which along with transactional and laissez faire leadership falls within the full range leadership model [16]. According to Avolio and Bass [16] laissez faire leadership represents the absence of leadership whereby the leader avoids making decisions and abdicates their responsibilities. Next, transactional leaders set objectives, distribute rewards, and monitor outcomes. Lastly and unlike the previous two forms of leadership, Bass [7] proposes that transformational leaders use four key behaviours to inspire, motivate, understand, and stimulate their followers. Burns [17, p. 20] adopts a broader perspective and defines transformational leadership as "a process where leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation". Like Burns, Bass [7] suggests transformational leaders build relationships with their followers; using personal, emotional, and inspirational interchanges, which motivates followers to exceed performance expectations. However, it is worth reemphasising that Bass disagrees with Burns' assertions regarding morality, with Burns [17] suggesting that immoral characters could not be transformational leaders. In contrast, transactional leadership behaviour focuses on an exchange process between the leader and follower.

According to Podsakoff et al. [1] and latterly Callow et al. [12] transformational leaders raise performance and motivation by adopting the following six behaviours: (1) inspirational motivation, (2) individualised consideration, (3) intellectual stimulation, (4) high performance expectations, (5) appropriate role modelling, and (6) fostering the acceptance of group goals. In sport, managers high in inspirational motivation are likely to use both words and actions to challenge their players to achieve the team's shared vision; creating an enthusiastic team environment in the process [18]. For example, current Swansea City manager Garry Monk, discusses how his former manager (while Monk was still playing), Brendan Rodgers, inspired him to enter management:

He's a great guy, someone I look up to. He's a fantastic manager and a person. He's someone I speak to regularly – we have chats, not just about football but about everything. He is someone to try and aspire to. Look at what he's done in his career, from where he was at Reading and Watford and within a couple of years of coming here he was managing Liverpool, so he's definitely an inspiration to someone like myself. [19].

In the aforementioned quote, Monk discusses how Rodgers demonstrates inspirational motivation (i.e., the leader's ability to motivate and inspire his or her followers to perform) through his openness to and by discussing his pathway as a manager. Managers may also attempt to intellectually stimulate their players; testing their ability to creatively find solutions to problems [7] in order to achieve high performance or behavioural excellence [18] on the pitch. Similarly, managers who take an interest in their players to make them feel valued (e.g., as in the quote), both as players and as human beings are likely to be individually considerate. Likewise, managers who foster the acceptance of team goals and team-work will encourage the players to share responsibility [20] and work together for shared goals [21]. Football managers who demonstrate such behaviours are likely to be deemed an appropriate role model by their players; especially if the behaviours are desired [21] and deemed to be congruent with the manager's core beliefs [18].

As Bauman [22, p.1] states any discussion of the moral character and behavior of leaders must eventually discuss the concept of integrity. However, as Palanski and Yammarino [23] rightly argue, the problem with such discussions is the lack of agreement on how integrity is defined. While the broad nuances of defining integrity have been discussed at length [see 22; 23], for the purpose of the present research, Becker's [24, p. 157-158] definition of integrity is modified as follows: Integrity is a commitment in thought and action to a morally justifiable set of principles and values. In this instance, the morally justifiable set of principles described are based on those set out by Bass and Steidlmeier [2]. For Bass and Stiedlmeier [2, p. 197] true transformational leaders differ from imposters (i.e., pseudo-transformational leaders) by their virtues of authenticity, truthfulness, and credibility. Building upon Burns' original theory and the work of Ferris et al. [25; 26; 27; 7], Bass and Steidlmeier [2] argue that true transformational leaders are identified as morally uplifting [17], liberating [26], trustworthy [26] and altruistic [28]. Although true transformational leaders are also thought to demonstrate integrity [29], high moral and ethical principles and, authenticity [30; 21], doing so is not a requirement of transformational leadership [2].

Given the extraordinary power authority figures are able to exert [see 32], it is unsurprising that coaches have a highly influential effect on the integrity and behaviours of their players [see 33]. As someone who is meant to model appropriate behaviour [18; 1], the manager, as team leader has a responsibility to guide his or her players both through their words and actions. While transformational leaders are able to support their followers to perform beyond expectations [7], the outcomes exceeded may not be shared by all. Should the coach manipulate their followers and use their transformational leadership ability for their own egoistic [2], manipulative, abusive, self-aggrandising, exploitative, and controlling gains [34; 35; 36; 37] Bass and Steidlmeier [2] would describe them as pseudo-transformational. In contrast, if the coach uses transformational leadership behaviours altruistically for the moral advancement of the players or the team, then Bass and Steidlmeier [2] would categorise them as truly transformational [17; 28].

The coach plays a key role in developing the ethical culture within the group [33]. Somewhat worryingly, however, it appears that many coaches model immoral behaviours. For instance, based on a sample of youth players, Shields et al. [38] reported 36% of coaches had yelled at a player for making a mistake, while 8% had encouraged their players to injure an opponent. Shields et al. [38] also reported 4% of the coaches they had assessed had hit or kicked one of their players. Given such figures are gleaned from youth sport, reported instances may be even more frequent within the pressurised

environments of professional sport. While such reports highlight the presence of abusive leadership in sport, they do not explore the processes involved with such behaviour or the integrity of the leaders themselves.

Due to the paucity of existing literature examining transformational leadership behaviours and integrity in sport presently, an exploratory approach has been selected. With this in mind, only a narrow, homogeneous subset of expert football managers operating at arguably, the highest levels of English, European, and International competition were selected. The aim of such a specific approach was to facilitate a greater understanding of the types of leadership behaviours presented and integrity attitudes held, while also collecting rich data [39], from those with first-hand experience [40].

2. METHODS

2.1. Methodology

The present study uses collective stories generated and adopts an intrinsic and ideographic case-study approach [41]. While there are many forms of more commonly adopted case study designs [42], intrinsic case-studies tend to be exploratory in nature and focused on a perceived interest in the case itself rather than in extending theory or generalising across cases [41]. For the purpose of this exploration, interviews were conducted with three expert football coaches [c.f., 4] with the aim of enhancing our limited understanding of coach leadership behaviour and integrity attitudes at arguably the highest level of professional sport. Patton [43] suggests that when the aim is to explore dynamic, intricate career reflections case studies and qualitative interviews more generally are deemed to be appropriate methods.

While such an approach is not without criticism [see 44], a critical realist stance was adopted throughout the study; with participants' experiences considered real for the individual, while acknowledging the derived data was subject to the participant's and researcher's perceptions of the cultural, social, and historical context in which they occurred [45]. Further, although the participants were encouraged to introspect, it is also acknowledged the reflections presented here are likely to have been influenced by the way the participants experienced, made sense of, and recounted the phenomena discussed [46]. That said, in an attempt to reduce such issues and negate the potential use of self-presentation, each of the managers were assured, to the best of the researcher's ability, that their identities would be kept confidential.

2.2. Participants

Given the specific nature of the target sample, purposeful sampling was used to recruit expert coaches, who had held professional managerial employment with elite adult teams, at the top-level of domestic or international soccer [cf., 4]. Further, to aid recall and access the experiences of contemporary managers, only those who had exited their most recent management position within the last decade were included (i.e., 2003-2013). The sample was comprised of three unemployed expert managers who ranged in age from 52 to 68 years. The three managers had a combined total of 48 years professional management experience and spent an average 2.8 years in each position at a total of 17

clubs [3] (two of which were the participants' respective National teams). Each manager interviewed had achieved their Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Professional Coaching License and had played professionally for a number of years before entering into management.

2.3. Procedures

Once written informed consent was given and familiarisation completed, semi-structured interviews were conducted. An interview guide (see appendix one) was developed after a review of the literature [43] and distributed to participants to aid introspection and enable trust to develop between the interviewer and interviewee [47]. During each interview, the researcher took a facilitative stance, acting as an active listener in order to let the participants control the conversation and tell their stories in their own words [47].

2.4. Data Analysis

The three interviews ranged in duration from 40 to 79 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. Once the data were transcribed the author undertook holistic content analysis [48]. To achieve this, each career history was initially kept intact rather than identifying commonalities or themes across the raw data from participants. As the focus of the study is to examine transformational leadership behaviour and integrity attitudes, by preserving the chronological order of events and the fragmented nature of the stories, the results are able to first discuss the individual, before tentative connections between the collective stories can be made in the discussion. As Smith and Sparkes [47] state "[While] other analyses, such as content analysis, provide a way in which researchers may conceptualise all independent themes that are present in a narrative; they do not, however, provide a way for researchers to link those themes in relation to an evolving story".

Following Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber's [48] protocol, the author first immersed himself within the stories, before initial narrative summaries for each participant and collective global impressions were written. Through this process, the focus of each story was then identified and key events highlighted. The individual stories presented were then written and re-written with consideration given to the representation of the individual's behind the stories. The author then further examined the stories for contradictions, overlaps, and to understand how they contributed to the emerging narratives, before integrating the analyses [49]. Once the inductive element of the analysis was completed, the author then adopted a deductive approach by identifying tentative theoretical connections within the existing literature [50]. On completion, the transcripts and summaries of the results were sent to each participant to test the credibility of the enquiry, establish whether participants believed they had been fairly represented, and that the analyses were accurate. The results are presented below using direct quotes to enable readers to better understand how the transformational leadership behaviours were employed and the integrity of expert soccer managers formed [51].

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[3]Details of the leagues managed in have been excluded to maintain confidentiality.

2.5. Credibility

As in this instance, the researcher is the primary instrument through which the data were collected [43], information regarding the author's background should be disclosed so the credibility of the findings can be appropriately judged. As previously stated, the author conducted all of the interviews and analysed the data. He was a 31-year old, male, Ph.D. candidate in his third year of postgraduate study. His academic background was in psychology, and his professional background was in amateur, youth and semi-professional football coaching. As such, the interviewer had some background knowledge of the demands of football management, and the terminology used by the respondents. This prior experience assisted with the initial access to, and also in building a rapport with, the participants (e.g., each interview began, without the author's control, with the participants conducting their own interview of his background). Both his previous qualitative and sporting experience were also of assistance during the analysis process, as he was able to consider the situations discussed from the participant's viewpoint [52; 53].

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Leading at the apex of professional football: The 'case' of Fergus, Simon, and James[4]

The following participant reflections (i.e., sub-units) progress through a chronological order of events [54] to facilitate an holistic understanding of the individual experiences discussed [55]. Using the participant's career histories as a framework, the reflections presented here explore the types of transformational leadership behaviours each of the managers adopt and the integrity attitudes presented within a range of football related contexts and situations.

3.2. Fergus: The inspirational leader.

Having started his career in the lower leagues Fergus "fought his way up to the top divisions" as a player and was rightfully proud of his achievements in doing so. As a player he classed himself as an "observer" on the periphery, rather than inside the group. As his playing career drew to a conclusion, he began to consider going into management as he had worked under good role models as a player and wanted to see if he could replicate the successes of his mentors. He completed his coaching qualifications while still playing and eventually took up a player-manager position at a club within a lower level foreign league. Having enjoyed his first foray into management, he was asked to return to the club where he had experienced the most success as a player to manage the club's reserve team. After a brief period he made the step back up to first team manager within the lower echelons of English football. Like he did as a player, Fergus worked his way up to the top-flight as a manager, eventually landing an international managerial position and a job in the Premier League. However, events did not go as planned and he found himself becoming disillusioned by the lack of "loyalty", constant need to "spin plates" and loneliness. As a manager he had carried forward the distance he had felt

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[4]Pseudonyms are used throughout.

as a player, which led him to feel lonely when managing. Despite having a team of support staff around him, he discussed how on one occasion a coach had walked out of a meeting, stating ultimately the decision was Fergus's. This seemed to have an effect on his view of management and the responsibility he felt for the team; believing the coach was right and that the ultimate decision rested on his shoulders. Although he stated football management was a lonely profession, he was quick to point out the loneliness he felt was only due to the profession and not his personal life.

Fergus states his integrity may have been influenced by his playing career. While a member of a particularly famous team of underdogs, he recalls feeling justified in using any means to "level the playing field"

> As a player we would push it... we would bend the rules as far as they could be bent. And we thought that was fair game to be frank. We thought it was fair game because we weren't paid as much as them. They had all the flaming equipment we never had, they're massive clubs and we weren't and therefore anything that levelled it up we considered fair game. You know we played loud music in the corridors at rooms, we did things that bent the rules, didn't break them but bent them as far as they could be bent. You know if a player went down injured we were all around the referee trying to get the player sent off or such like – you know all the stuff that would be frowned upon now.

However, he sees such issues differently now as a manager and states he "would not bend the rules now" and has "never discussed" diving with his players. Instead he "ignores" such issues and even though he has managed some players "who would go down at the drop of a hat" he believes "it is for the referee to sort out". Again, he appears to believe moral issues should also be sorted out by others and suggests such attitudes should come from the team:

> Suarez is a great case. You would have thought one or two of your team mates would have told you in no uncertain terms that he was right out of order [for biting an opponent], but you know the whole club tried to defend his actions. His team-mate has written in the paper defending him saying he's a great character. Well he obviously isn't because he's a racist and a serial biter. If somebody in your office was to bite people regularly they wouldn't be considered a great character would they?

From the interview, it is clear he develops/selects players from a similar mould to what he was himself (i.e., an underdog):"I want them to be honest, honest on the field, honest off the field and I will be, within the scriptures of being a manager, as honest, as I can with them. The way I treat them with respect, I expect to be returned". He also discusses that he tries to behave authentically with the players and avoid giving a "false impression". He states he has "distanced myself from the players because my own personality is of that ilk and I think that if I'm suddenly gregarious with my players it would look false and therefore it wouldn't work". Despite giving the impression throughout the interview that he was genuine with his players, when directly asked if his players got to see the real him he stated that the players did not get to know the "real" him. However, it was clear from the interview that he felt his identity, as a person, was directly linked to that of a football manager.

As a leader he believes his main strength is the ability to "hold players up" (e.g., inspire and motivate players to perform to their highest capability).

> I always used to think it's a bit like a priest on a Saturday sermon. You know you'd sit and you'd talk before a game it's like a sermon, you've got to get into the players, you've got to get them on board... I like to think obviously that I can do the tactics but I could [also] motivate parts of people's brains so that they saw there was something in it for them... I try to motivate them, raise their level a bit but you're very rarely going to take a player that's useless to a player that's brilliant. You've just got to raise them up to the highest they can be and that's basically my philosophy. I don't expect miracles I just believe that if you follow what I'm doing and do as I ask that we can perhaps achieve more than if you didn't.

While he attempts to motivate players primarily through team talks and other inspirational messages, he was keen to point out that he tried to create a motivational culture within a club and gave an example of how a club's structure can hampen player motivation:

> I said to the Chairman this [the fine sheet] goes to two pages and your bonus sheet goes to one page... you know, you're de-motivating the players when there's two pages of what they can be fined for and one page of what they can possibly win.

However, during the interview he demonstrated his concern that he could not maintain this function over a sustained period of time. That said, his approach is to try to:

> ...raise them [the team] up to the highest they can be – that's basically my philosophy. I don't expect miracles I just believe that if you follow what I'm doing and do as I ask that we can perhaps achieve more than if you didn't.

However, towards the perceived end of his managerial career and five years at a club, he recalls a player telling him "he wasn't giving the same [inspirational] speeches before games anymore". Although disappointed, he was aware that he had lost a little of the spark he had previously felt, but felt helpless to halt the decline: "there is nothing new I can say; it's hard work trying to think of inspirational things to say each week".

His most notable achievements were arguably at international level where he transformed a struggling team to one that was highly competitive. He suggests international management suited him due to the limited contact time and number of matches (i.e., he could inspire the players for ten games a year, but not forty or fifty):

> it's hard work thinking every week of something to try and inspire them [the players] you know and I used to work on the basis you had to inspire the team to go out and play. At international level it's better because you only play 10 games a year so you had a theme for that game and you went with that theme so your team talk could be great rhetoric; you could feel the team thinking yeah let's get out, let's get out and really have a go.

After a conflict with a player he showed his adaptability by changing his initial transactional behaviour of passively managing by exception (i.e., waiting for an issue to come up before resolving it), as he felt such an approach was not congruent to modern football.

> ...we're training and one of the players is mucking about when I'm trying to talk to someone else about some aspect of something and I turned round and I bollocked him, as I would do as a lower league manager you know, "fucking listen to what I'm fucking doing" I bollocked him and thought nothing of it at the time. The player

didn't speak to me for the next two days, in fact he never spoke to me again. It changed my philosophy. When I was a player you got bollocked, you fucked up and you got bollocked, you got told in no uncertain terms you were crap. Once you'd finished you forgot it and you went home and the next day you start again. That experience made me think, can you manage by explaining to players where they're going wrong rationally all the time? And that's it... I changed my management theme based on that one incident and I thought just be rational with them [the players] at all stages.

He states when starting out in management "he wanted to do everything", but has since learnt to delegate tasks out to his coaches. As his career progressed he also learnt to be more rational in both his approach to players and his overall behaviour as a coach. He argues to some it may appear that he has lost some of the passion for the job, as he no longer feels the need to run up and down the touchline, but that such behaviour has no bearing on the manager's overall passion for the job. Although his career has been in decline for the past few years, he does not feel he is primarily responsible for his team's failings and instead blames his players and the clubs he worked within. That said, he does acknowledge that he played a part in his team's failures by suggesting he has asked himself why the players had underperformed.

3.3. Simon: The teaching focused leader.

After a number of years playing within a lower league club, Simon was presented with an opportunity at "a small club" to coach the club's reserve team due to injury when in his early 30s. Having originally considered coaching a temporary way of keeping involved during his rehabilitation from injury, he found that he "quite liked it", which led to him retiring from playing to "focus on coaching". He then spent a number of years as an assistant first team manager in the lower leagues, before moving to one of the largest clubs in world football. After "eight or nine years" working as an assistant, he felt ready to take on the challenge as a first team manager. Based on his vast experience as an assistant, he achieved his initial first team managerial position with a Premier League team and stayed within this position for a number of years. His career then progressed in to international management, before working in European leagues and back in England.

Simon saw himself as being on the inside with the players as a coach, however, he believes he has to be more distant now as a manager. Simon stated that he was a "professional", "systematic" and "adaptable" in his approach to management, which came across within the interview.

I adapt to fit the players. You have to be flexible, but have basic principles and lines in the sand which you can't cross. The basic the foundation will always be the same [though]: attitude, hard work, [be a] hard team to play against, a hard team to beat. Always to bringing the team together.

He is "task-orientated" and places improving the "player and team at the centre of everything" he does. This theme emerged throughout the discussion as he states his primary aim is to make players "better when they leave than when they come in". He tries to do this by creating an "enjoyable and worthwhile" training environment. He also attempts to "motivate [the players] by trying to inspire them".

Researcher: Would you call yourself a good motivator?

Simon: Yes, I would like to think I am a good motivator. I think that's part of the job so I try to inspire them [the players].

Researcher: So what sorts of things would you do to try and inspire players?

Simon: I'd get good staff around me, [that] is one thing. Teach them properly [using] examples of other athletes, other players, [to show] what can be achieved. I very much try to be a goal setter and try and make each player over achieve really. To do what they're capable of.

As mentioned, Simon makes sure to "get good coaches around" and is referent with power; delegating tasks and responsibilities to his staff. Simon not only relies on his staff in a coaching capacity, but also to help to "create and enforce a professional culture" where the players understand their "roles and responsibilities".

Simon believes his players and staff only get to know him as Simon the manager rather than Simon the person. It is only after staff have known him for many years that he shows his true self. This form of controlled self-presentation was also present throughout the interview, as he was somewhat guarded and gave one word answers to questions, which makes it difficult to infer further meaning from his words. However, he was keen to portray his professionalism and his reflectivity. Although he was often guarded, he mentioned he takes "a reflective approach to management" and tries to "assess mistakes and learn from it", before moving on. He sees himself as someone that has "changed enormously" throughout his career and believes this is due to his willingness to learn. As a manager, he believes himself to be a "teacher" and someone who behaves "in the right way"; trying to make sure the players go onto bigger clubs and are better players for working with him. However, should a player not adhere to his "basic principles" and cross the "lines in the sand which you can't cross (i.e., having a poor attitude, both on and off the field)" and is not "valuable to the team then he'll be out". That said, if the player is "valuable to the team" he will "spend time" to "teach", but that it "depends on the individual".

Simon claims that as a player he "was always trying to cut corners with rules and things". He uses the label "craft" to describe seeking an unfair playing advantage, but claims his "philosophy has changed on that" now he is a manager. Again, he was somewhat guarded on this subject, but stated he "likes to win the right way" and he would not encourage his players to seek an unfair advantage. Like many components of his managerial approach, he takes a pragmatic approach to such issues and suggests "it's a thin line" and "every incident is different and very difficult" to judge.

3.4. James: The player centred leader.

James was something of a football prodigy; making his First Division[5] debut at the age of 17. However, after growing "impatient" at the lack of playing time, he eventually moved on to a team where he was "guaranteed first team football". While he had enjoyed his career and was happy to continue playing "as he was addicted to football", he found himself out of the football league in his late twenties. Unexpectedly, he received a telephone call from a former manager who had recommended him for a managerial position. At 28 years of age James felt he was "too young" to be a manager, citing both his age and that

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[5]Now known as the Premier League.

he was "still playing" as evidence he was unsuitable for the role. However, the chairman refused to accept his rationale and instead told him "if you're good enough you're old enough". James spent a number of years as manager of this non-league club, which he terms "his apprenticeship".

Having learnt his trade he accepted a full-time coaching position within a league club and where he eventually worked his way up to become the first team manager. Within this first, full-time managerial position, he led the team to numerous promotions, before eventually reaching the top division of English soccer. James "survived" the challenge of managing the team for nearly nine "wonderful years", before leaving to take over as manager at one of England's most successful clubs. After a number of shorter spells with teams, both within the Premier League and Championship, he eventually slipped away from management and took alternative roles within football (i.e., Director of Football, Scout, Consultant, Pundit, Ambassador, etc.).

James believes his managerial identity was shaped by first-hand experience of "suffering bad management", believing he learnt from the mistakes the managers he had worked under as a player: "when you realise a man's deficiencies you think I wouldn't have done it that way". Unlike the managers he had played for who were "unsympathetic, poor mentors, discouraging and disorganised", he tried to be "patient, listening to their [the players] point of view, and treating everyone similarly".

> It's important to make sure that people realise that you're only as strong as your weakest link. You know? You've got to make sure that everyone is treated similarly and that is the hardest thing to do, no question. Certain players in a team are put not on a pedestal by anyone in particular but some are put in a very high position because of their international caps or whatever, it's very difficult and it hasn't always worked of course, but you've got to try regardless of their player stature.

While he considers his patience to primarily be a strength, retrospectively he "can think of a couple of occasions" where he probably "could have been tougher". That said, overall he was happy with his leadership ability and his skill in keeping "players involved and thinking all the time". He discusses his desire to work with "creative players" and he wanted them to "think creatively" to solve problems on the pitch. Unlike his former lower league managers, he tried to be "organised" and behave a little differently:

> It's a different world lower down, things are often jumbled up, coaching is disorganised and I learnt from all that you know we have to be organised. We have to get people in who give a different thought. I brought a man in who did wonderful things with their [the players] body movement. I also brought a guy in, who I learnt from, who did sessions in rhythmic music.

Within the interview James came across as someone who cares deeply about football and in particular the players he works with. He appears empathetic and suggests he spoke in a way that "players appreciate". While some coaches "hounded players very aggressively", he acknowledged many young players are "very sensitive" and do not need the added pressure.

> It's a way of talking to people which some young players appreciate, they don't appreciate or most don't appreciate the tough manhandled because some of the young players are very, very sensitive. Some players are fighting for a career and they don't want to be hounded by very aggressive coaches.

With this in mind, he "tried to be calm and it's very important for you to try and be calm, in my opinion", while presenting the impression of someone who can be trusted.

As a leader, James placed a huge emphasis on the team's work ethic[6] suggesting that while he wanted to treat each player "equally" it became difficult once he began to work with more well known players with "international caps and bigger wages". However, he was keen to stress to these players that within a team "you need the artists and the artisans". Although a "very difficult" balance, he believes he tried to "give as much criticism or indeed praise, regardless of the player's stature".

> Team spirit is important but it's not easy. It is easy to get team spirit when the team is doing relatively well, but when the cracks appear the player tells the agent he's not happy, the agent tells the press he's not happy and all of a sudden you've got a big story.

James considers himself to be a good communicator and a "fair motivator". He states that he relied on "psychological ploys" such as: "playing for your family and your next contract" as well as "playing for each other" to inspire his players.

> Researcher: So how do you feel that you inspired your players?
> James: I can't tell you, you'll have to speak to the players, but I see quotes from players where they said they'd run through brick walls for me, which I thought was very strange. I had wonderful captains who drove the team, fantastic leaders of men. It was so important to have that type of man in the dressing room. That is a very important point, the captain of the team must be very close to the manager; without showing it too obviously. He's your right hand in that dressing room, he's important he gets in the middle of the players. How I inspired them I can't tell you, but I hope I did inspire them.

Rather than attempting to increase the pressure on his players, he used such statements so they could draw from inspiration in their personal and professional lives. Although he claims he does not know whether he was viewed as inspirational by his players, he "hopes" he was, but admits he relied heavily on his captains to handle a lot of the dressing room. Despite his considerable achievements in football, James comes across as a humble man who is quick to downplay his own impact and praise others. For example, he believes he was fortunate to inherit a number of great captains throughout his career who were "leaders of men", many of whom went on to become successful managers and contact him for advice, which gives him "great pleasure".

In terms of integrity, although he does not consider himself to be a "referee baiter", he recalls an incident where he acted aggressively and was accompanied by "two policeman", off of the pitch after remonstrating with the referee. While "[it was just] a bit of finger wagging, nothing majorly swearing or whatever", he did lose his temper, which required him to explain his actions to the Football Association – although they failed to take any action. He also mentioned one story in which he experienced racial tensions between a group of his players, which resulted in a "bubbling antagonism and jealously" that damaged the team spirit. However, despite observing the issue, he claims he "probably never got that together as well as I should have done". James also described another incident where he made a flippant remark about a player, which was picked up by the

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[6]An ethical principle that places the greatest value on hard work and diligence.

national press. Although he suggests there was no malice to the comment, he suggests the incident "turned very badly against me and the player attacked me in the press the following week, you know, [for being] disrespectful".

When asked whether he felt those within football behaved morally, James answered:

> Certainly the answer on a broad basis would be no, erm, but certain people at certain clubs do things correctly... I'm not saying the game is corrupt, but there is a cynicism that goes on in the game. Some of the bullshit, some of the rubbish we read is frightening to an ex-manager... in my era the managers were more moral, more honest... the people within the game weren't corrupted by the massive financial incentives that are now awash in the game.

In reference to his on field behaviour, James suggests he "never spoke about it (i.e., players diving or acting outside of the rules of the game)". Pointing to one example, he suggests were an opponent player on a booking, he would move his most skillful player across to play against him, but noted this action is within the rules, if not necessarily the spirit of the game. While he does not condone breaking the rules he believes "it's down to the referees to make greater punishments and the only real sanction for any team that continually abuses the rules is for a points deduction".

4. DISCUSSION

The qualitative, interviews clustered around the participant's transformational leadership behaviour, self-presentation, and integrity. Each of the participants demonstrated transformational leadership behaviours and discussed motivating the players to perform beyond the level of their normal expectations [7]. However, while this was Fergus's forte, he found he could only "hold a team up" for a relatively short period of time. This is consistent which much of the transformational leadership literature [56; 57], which suggests that while behaviours such as inspirational messages (i.e., team-talks) may have a strong effect on follower's emotions and efficacy perceptions in the short-term, these effects are likely to be temporary and may subside or disappear when expectations are not met.

Two of the three managers (i.e,. Simon and James) instead, primarily discussed inspiring and motivating their players through role modelling using exemplar players. However, the use of exemplar others as an appropriate role model is not, to the author's knowledge, explicitly referred to within the literature. Instead, the role of modelling appropriate behaviour generally falls to the leader. In this instance, both managers immediately referred to playing examples, when discussing appropriate role models which, given Simon's limited playing experiences and James' age, may be unsurprising. Of the behaviours they role model, both of the managers primarily discussed exemplified being organised and disciplined. According to Avolio and Bass [58] such behaviours can be construed as emanating from truly transformational leader integrity in the sense that, disciplined and organised individuals behave in such a manner due to their placing the good of the group beyond their own needs.

In terms of communication, from the discussion it appears that Fergus primarily communicated at a group level, while both James and Simon appear to be more individually considerate. For example, James discusses his attempts to empathise with players, while Simon mentions his use of goal-setting to help each player to over achieve.

Although there is no one correct way of approaching the management of players [18], it is relevant to note that individual consideration can take a number of forms and can be closely related to the transactional behaviour of contingent reward [59]. Based on the discussions, it appears that, coupled with his attempts to intellectually stimulate players (i.e., introducing new training ideas [rhythmic exercise] and asking the players to creatively solve problems; 18), James may demonstrate more positive aspects of individualised consideration (e.g., taking an interest in the person and adapting to meet their needs) rather than the process, goal-driven approach, more akin to transactional leadership mentioned by Simon. While both approaches can be effective, leaders displaying transformational behaviours may be more effective within a time of turbulence and crisis [59].

Each of the managers proclaimed to have changed their attitude towards immoral behaviour in sport upon entering management. However, while playing, Fergus and Simon, in particular, illustrated use of a couple of moral disengagement processes (i.e., euphemistic labelling[7] and displacement of responsibility; see [3]). For example, the phrase for seeking an unfair advantage was renamed bending the rules or cutting corners. Such language is known as euphemistic labelling and involves the individual cognitively disguising culpable behaviours as less harmful [3]. In these examples, both Fergus and Simon attempt to sanitise their language to conceal the true intention of their action [61]. Other euphemistic labels discussed were: diving (i.e., all three), going down at the drop of a hat (i.e., Fergus), and referee baiter and finger wagging (i.e., James). Equally, all three of the managers suggested it was the role of the referee to control immoral behaviour within football. Again, this is also a form of moral disengagement known as the displacement of responsibility [3]. According to Bandura [3] the displacement of responsibility occurs when an individual perceives his or her behaviour as outside of their personal accountability and as a result of social pressure or instruction from an authority figure. In this instance, each of the managers displace the responsibility of controlling immoral behaviour within sport on to the referee. Such an avoidance approach to dealing with immoral behaviour may also suggest the managers assessed lack truly transformational leader integrity.

The notion of transformational leader integrity emerged from each discussion, as did behaving morally. Likewise, each of the managers discussed their awareness of acts that could be construed as immoral (i.e., diving, biting, and racially abusing a teammate). However, none discussed how they had resolved such issues and instead either implied or explicitly stated they had ignored such indiscretions. While the managers did not condone such actions, by failing to act, it could be argued they had implicitly reinforced the behaviour [62]. Fergus in particular discussed an incident involving Luis Suarez; claiming someone from Liverpool Football club (Suarez's employer at the time of the incident discussed) should have attempted to resolve the matter. However, when indiscretions were discussed within his own team (although not to the same level as the example discussed) he intimated he had ignored such issues. This suggests there is an element of in-group bias occurring within the discussion [63]. In this instance, Fergus may have been attempting to increase his own self-image by enhancing the moral attitudes dis-

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[7]Euphemistic labeling involves the selective use of language to cognitively disguise culpable activities as less harmful, while the displacement of responsibility occurs when people view their actions as resulting from social pressures which they are not personally responsible for [60].

played within his own group (i.e., in-group), while damning those displayed within other groups (i.e., out-group).

While each of the managers may have claimed to have adapted their attitude towards immoral behaviour within sport upon entering management, this may not be the case. Instead, as none of the managers offered an explanation for why their attitude had altered, it is likely they were simply offering what they perceived to be a socially desirable response [64]. As they appear to be aware of their willingness to break or bend the rules as a player, it is likely they will have introspected, at some point on their behaviour; even if only to cognitively restructure their conduct through the moral disengagement mechanisms previously mentioned [3]. While within some industries leaders claim to avoid introspection [3], due to the frequency of moral decision making, public interest, and massive pressures within the elite levels of sport, it is unlikely such an avoidance strategy would be possible. This also leads to the possibility that the expert managers presented here were selectively choosing to conceal their current attitude towards transformational leader integrity. That said, of the two managers that discussed self-presentation (i.e., Fergus and Simon) only Simon consistently gave the impression he was self-presenting to his players and staff. While Fergus mentioned his players did not see the real him, he had previously argued he does not impression manage, as he does not want to suddenly "appear gregarious".

Price [36] suggests pseudo-transformational leaders may deliberately attempt to conceal their beliefs, as in doing so, they can adopt the behaviours and resultant outcomes associated with the presentation of transformational leadership. While this may be the case for some sporting leaders, given the perceived honesty demonstrated about their own playing career, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the cases presented. As each of the managers were considerably more willing to describe their actions as a player than as a manager, it may suggest some form of bracketing of the phenomenological self is occurring. In this instance, this may lead to it being easier for the managers to discuss indiscretions of a past self rather than those of the current self. Additionally, it may also be considered as socially acceptable to discuss prior indiscretions once the managers claim to have adjusted such attitudes.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The emergent findings should be interpreted with the limitations of the work in mind. First, due to the homogeneous sample selected, the results of this study are specific to a select group of top-level, expert football managers – as was the intention. While a purposefully sought homogeneous sample, such as the one presented here, allows for focused, rich, detailed data collection, it does limit the relevance of the findings to a narrow subset of expert football managers. Second, as participants were interviewed after varying times away from management, the process could be criticised for the potential risk of bias or poor recall. Third, the triangulation process utilised within the present study was limited to member checking alone. While member checking is deemed an appropriate strategy [65], additional triangulation techniques such as additional data collection methods (e.g., interviews from former players/staff members or the media, questionnaires, video analysis of training sessions [where possible] or competitive situations) could have facilitated greater confidence in the interpretations [66].

As the managers within the present study claimed to have changed their attitude towards transformational leader integrity on becoming a manager, future research may wish to investigate this process further. Further, as two of the managers claimed their followers (i.e., players and staff) did not see the real them, the attitudes presented here may not be wholly accurate. Instead, the managers may either be unwilling or unable to report their true feelings. Therefore, in contrast to what was deliberately disclosed within the interviews, the managers may not have altered their attitudes towards transformational leader integrity and may instead be disclosing what they believe to be a socially acceptable response. Therefore future research may wish to examine the implicit social cognition of managers using an indirect measure of transformational leader integrity. Once such an instrument is developed, the implicit social cognition of sports managers can be assessed and importantly, how such attitudes affect players can be examined.

6. CONCLUSION

In this article a single case study of three expert football managers has been presented with the aim of exploring the types of leadership behaviours adopted and integrity attitudes held at the apex of professional football. In so doing, a dominance on inspirational motivation was highlighted as key transformational behaviour. The transformational behaviours of intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration were also discussed. However, it is worth noting that the application of these behaviours varied greatly between the managers. Each of the managers also discussed adjusting their integrity attitude upon entering management, but as none of the managers could articulate why this change had occurred, it was interpreted that this may be a case of them reporting the types of integrity attitudes appropriate to managers (i.e., social desirability bias) rather than their core values.

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Appendix: Interview guide

1. Describe your management experience.
2. How did you get into management?
3. Describe a typical day at a football club you've managed.
4. Who has influenced the way you manage and how have you incorporated their behaviours into the way you manage?
5. What do you think your previous players and coaches would take from you?
6. What is your coaching style? Do you like to get involved and demonstrate or would you prefer to observe?
7. Would you consider yourself to be a good motivator and if so, how do you motivate your players?
8. How do you motivate yourself? Who inspires you?
9. Do you feel that you inspired your players?
10. Do you have a approach that influences the way you manage? Has this changed during your career? If so, do you share this with the players directly? How do you deliver this information?
11. How much would you say your approach shapes the way you manage?
12. How much autonomy do you allow your players?
13. How do you like the players to treat you (the boss/one of the lads)?
14. Do you challenge the players to find their own solutions to problems?
15. If a player were having difficulties in their personal lives, would you get involved?
16. What is the role of humour in your management style?
17. How do you manage big characters within your teams?
18. How about youth players?
19. Have you worked in an environment where the players didn't believe they could achieve their goals? How do you combat this?
20. What do you expect from your players?
21. How do you communicate and implement this?
22. What do think about diving, shirt pulling etc?
23. How far would you go to win?
24. Where do you believe gamesmanship stops and cheating begins?
25. Do you think people act ethically in football?
26. Do you think other industries are better worse? Why do you think this is?
27. Do you feel your views on authenticity have changed throughout your career? If so why?