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# **Sporting experiences and coaching aspirations among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups**

A report for Sports Coach UK

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## **Supporting Partners:**



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## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1. A Sports Coach UK introduction: Purpose and use of the research**

The under-representation of coaches from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups has been identified in previous research by Sports Coach UK but little has been done to understand why. Therefore, in 2013 we commissioned Leeds Metropolitan University to examine the sporting experiences and coaching aspirations among BME groups in an attempt to dig deeper into the issue. The research has produced important findings and we hope that governing bodies and other organisations will take the time to read it and examine how they can apply the recommendations.

As a Research Team we are keen to maintain the momentum created by this report and commit to the following in 2014:

- Sharing this report with other interested bodies and working towards the dissemination of results in multiple formats.
- Developing guidance to help governing bodies collect data from BME coaches and how to turn this data into useful information.
- Promoting data sharing among sports.
- Sharing good practice on initiatives that have successfully addressed the issues raised in this report.

We would like to thank the team at Leeds Metropolitan University for their work and the four governing bodies of sport who agreed to take part in this research.

### **1.2. Background: Identifying the Scale of the Problem**

Despite numerous policies and initiatives aimed to support UK sport organisations and NGBs in diversifying their participant base and sport workforce, existing statistics and research suggests that diversity within sport and sports leadership remains low. One area that particularly lacks diversity concerns the number of individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. Members of these groups are underrepresented in all positions, not

just sports coaching, but also in the organisation and governance within UK sport organisations and national governing bodies. Never before has the issue of racial and ethnic diversity within the UK's body of sporting participants, coaching workforce and sports leadership been so documented or debated in the public domain. Recent stories that have dominated the media include the demoralisation of Black coaches (The Guardian, 2013); the lack of Asian footballers (Sanghera, 2013); the racist abuse by European fans of Black footballers (Ziegler, 2012; Rich, 2013), and the lack of opportunities for Black coaches (BBC, 2013). Within the UK, the most recent results from sports participation and coaching surveys highlight the under-representation of BME groups:

- 14% of England and Wales population are BME (Census, 2011).
- 15% of English participants (1 session a week (at least 4 sessions of at least moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes in the previous 28 days)) are BME (Active People Survey 7 Q2).
- 3% of individuals who coach in the UK are BME, 1% of qualified coaches in the UK are BME (Sports Coach UK, 2011).

According to the latest Sport England survey, BME groups have just over average representation among sports participants (though this will vary considerably between ethnic groups) at 15%. However, this participation in sport is not being converted into participation in coaching with around 3% or less of the sport coaching workforce being BME. Nevertheless, these figures appear to mask a more complex situation:

- Lower participation rates by BME groups have been reported in the Sports Equity Index (Sport England, 2005) and in the systematic review by Sporting Equals (Long, et al., 2009).
- Exploring sport participation at a higher performance level, UK Sport estimated that only 10.3% of their funded elite athletes were from BME communities (Long, et al., 2009).
- Long et al. (2009) found that racism was experienced in grass roots and elite level sport and in both men's and women's sports. Racism evidenced in sport is one reason for some BME groups preferring to participate in physical activity than in organised sport.

- The existing research suggests BME groups to be under-represented in all positions of organisation and governance within UK sport organisations and national governing bodies.
- Members of BME groups and in particular women have been reported to be under-represented in sport coaching positions (Norman, 2010).

### **1.3. Explanatory Research**

Research exploring the relationship between ethnicity and sport participation and sport coaching has alluded to its complex nature, and the often unsophisticated treatment of it by previous research. For example, Burdsey (2004) points to a kind of ethnic reductionism (that only focuses on race or ethnicity as an explanation) when the issues concerning participation are often a more complex inter-relation between race, class, generation, cultural capital, and gender. Burdsey (2004) also highlights the different individual and structural conditions which impact on different ethnic groups, contrasting for example, the very different experiences of British Asian and African-Caribbean groups in English football. Research into such conditions and possible barriers by Sporting Equals suggests that though there is a strong interest among BME groups in sport coaching, the constraints in becoming a coach remain limiting (Sports Coach UK, 2012).

Many of the barriers are typical of those experienced by all groups wanting to access coaching, for example, access to information on courses and development opportunities; discernible professional pathways; the amount of time available to coach, and finally, the cost of courses and expenses incurred. However, research suggests there appears to be a number of issues related specifically to BME groups. These can be split into structural and individual. Such barriers include:

- Structural barriers:
  - Lack of coaching role models
  - Exclusionary recruitment practices
  - Restricted access to social networks in coaching
  - The glass ceiling and other barriers to progression to more senior roles
  - Cultural and/or religious barriers related, for example, to the need for female only environments
  - Lack of access to certain sports, e.g. golf, tennis, swimming etc.
  - Previous patterns of participation which are self-reinforcing.
- Individual barriers:

- Language difficulties for non-English speaking BME groups
- Employment opportunities have a higher value than volunteer roles
- No/little support from parents.

Survey research reaffirms the view held by many former BME male and female players/athletes that the coaching and management of sports is a space for white players and in particular a space dominated by white men (King, 2001; Jones, 2002; King, 2004; Scraton et al., 2005). Hylton and Morpeth (2012: 10) suggest that such evidence has exposed “a hierarchy of participation symptomatic of a public sports development system that reinforces patterns of inclusion and exclusion on the intersecting issues of ethnicity, class, gender and disability”.

#### **1.4. The Policy Context**

Though there is no explicit mention of equality and diversity issues in sport in the Department for Culture, Media and Sports’ (DCMS) ‘Creating a sporting habit for life: a new youth sport strategy’ (DCMS, 2012), these issues feature strongly in the strategies and activities of the main sport and coaching agencies. For example, UK Sport is committed to achieving equality in sport and has established/adheres to policies that ‘will not tolerate discrimination either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of race, disability, class or social background, religious belief, sexual orientation, ethnic or national origins, gender, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, age, colour or political persuasion’<sup>1</sup>. Sport England considers equality and diversity to be one of its main work areas<sup>2</sup>. This includes (1) developing a culture that enables and values everyone’s full involvement (2) creating an environment in which all have opportunities to play and compete, officiate, volunteer and run community sport (3) responding to diverse needs, capabilities and preferences by ensuring appropriate levels of challenge (4) overcoming potential barriers for those wishing to get play sport, particularly where they are from currently under-represented groups. Sport England has even recently provided Sporting Equals - the only national organisation working to increase ethnic diversity across sport and physical activity - with £1 million to invest in increasing the participation of BME groups in sport in the four year period from 2013<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the Equality Standard for Sport (updated in 2012),

1 <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/pages/equality/>

2 <http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/equality-diversity>

3 [http://www.sportingequals.org.uk/press\\_release\\_detail.php?news\\_ID=67](http://www.sportingequals.org.uk/press_release_detail.php?news_ID=67)

owned by the Sports Councils, is provided to inform and assess sports organisations' activities concerned with widening access and reducing inequalities in sport and physical activity from under-represented individuals, groups and communities. Sports organisations need to show they are committed to improving diversity within their workforce and in the services they offer. In the case of coaching specifically, The UK Coaching Framework makes 'a more diverse (coaching) workforce' one of its central strategic objectives (Sports Coach UK, 2012). Sports Coach UK has noted its achievements around 'inclusive coaching guidance produced to cover disability, women and girls, race and ethnicity, disadvantaged communities and sexual orientation' (Sports Coach UK, 2012). In commissioning this research, Sports Coach UK has clearly identified the BME composition of the sport coaching workforce as an important issue for further exploration.

The agendas of national governing bodies demonstrate an acknowledgement and commitment to develop and enable a more positive contribution from all members of the sporting community towards making sport and coaching more inclusive. However, despite a greater recognition of the importance of racial equality policies within sport, current research still questions whether racial equality is a high enough priority for many sports organisations (Long, et al., 2005; Swinney and Horne, 2005). Understanding then, what are the views and experiences of such stakeholders involved in shaping practice in sport coaching should be a key component of work to understand the issues surrounding BME entry and progression in coaching. These perspectives should be collected along with the experiences and opinions of BME participants and coaches to add to the existing literature to contribute more in-depth knowledge into the issues that lie at the heart of the under-representation of BME groups in sport and coaching.

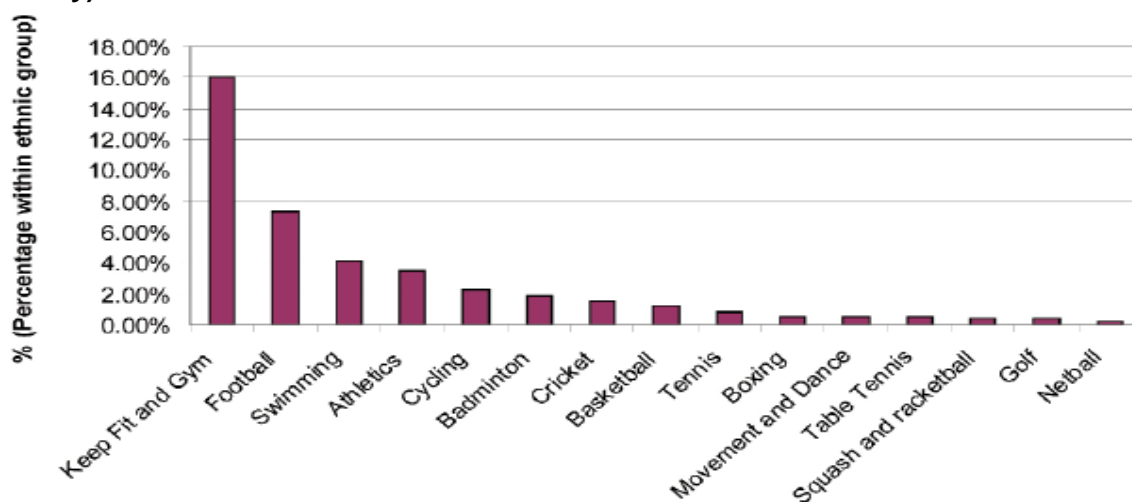
## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1. Context**

The research focused on four sports with a high level of BME participation but where anecdotal evidence suggests there are different policies and practices toward the recruitment of sport coaches with different conversion rates. According to Sporting Equals' analysis (2013) of Sport England's Active People 6 survey (2012), the most popular sports for BME communities in the UK are currently keep fit and gym followed by football, swimming and athletics (similar findings to the previous Active People surveys [Figure 1]):



**Figure 1: Most popular BME sports once a week participation (30 minutes moderate intensity)**



Source: Sporting Equals (2013) Active People Survey 6 & Taking Part Survey BME Groups & Sport

For eight of the most popular sports for BME participation, five sports are generally regarded as having a higher level of connection with sport coaching - football, athletics, badminton, cricket and basketball. Keep fit and gym are typically associated with instructors, swimming with instruction and teaching (coaching occurs at the 6 higher levels of performance), and cycling with activators (again, coaching occurs at higher levels of performance). Given the current work being undertaken by The Football Association, it was decided that the present study would focus upon four sports which demonstrated high levels of BME participation: athletics, badminton, cricket and basketball. For this, partnerships were established with the National Governing Bodies of these sports: British Athletics, Badminton England, England Basketball, and the England and Wales Cricket Board. Support for the project was also offered by Sporting Equals in disseminating recruitment advertisements for the study.

## 2.2. Research Aim & Objectives

The aim of the present study was, as follows:

‘To explore BME sport participants’ and coaches’ motivations, enablers and constraints on entry and progression in sport coaching, with reference to the experiences and opinions of participants, coaches and coaching stakeholders’.

To meet this aim, the objectives for the study were to:

- Understand BME participants’ experiences of the four different sports

- Examine BME participants' coaching aspirations and experiences
- Integrate BME participant and coach experiences within the context of a particular sport/governing body
- Evaluate whether there is a relationship between playing experience and coaching ambitions

## **2.3. Participants**

### **2.3.1. National Governing Bodies**

As part of the partnership with the four NGBs, the research team interviewed a representative on behalf of each organisation to discuss how their organisation framed issues concerning race and ethnicity with their coaching workforce, and how they approached improving diversity and representation. To contextualise the coach interviews we interviewed each NGB representative to gain an understanding of how they approached their racial equalities policy. We also explored the actions or initiatives taken to address the representativeness of their coaching workforce. The four organisational representatives interviewed had one of two roles within their NGB, either as equality manager or as coach education manager. In total, three equality leads (two women, one man) and one coaching lead (one man) were interviewed.

### **2.3.2. Coaches**

Four participants from each sport were included in the study (total 16). The sample of participants were recruited through advertisements placed on the four NGB websites, generic sporting equality agency websites, as well as disseminated through the four NGBs and Sports Coach UK to their network of coaches. Individuals were also approached to participate through the research team networks. We aimed to recruit as diverse a group of participants as possible, including different ethnicities and a balanced sample of men and women. However, given the (ethnic and gender) imbalance, this was not possible across all of the sports. Table 1 profiles the participants that were included in the study. Some of the participants were current athletes as well as coaches within their sports, and the other participants were former players who had now made the transition into coaching. Due to the lack of BME coaches in these sports, it was important to fully anonymise the data to prevent the participants being identified in any way. Coaching experience is described as

the highest level of, or equivalent of, the UK Coaching Certificate at which the participant has coached. Ethnicity was self-defined by each participant.

**Table 1: Coaches' profiles**

<b>Athlete/ Coach or Coach</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity (self-defined by the coach)</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Coaching experience and highest level of coaching achieved</b>
Coach 1.	Female	Black British	40-50	UKCC Level 4 High performance level
Coach 2.	Female	Black British	40-50	UKCC Level 2 High performance level
Coach 3.	Female	Black British Caribbean	40-50	UKCC level 2, County level
Coach 4.	Male	Black British	30-40	UKCC level 2
Coach 5.	Male	Asian Hindu	40-50	UKCC level 3, University level
Coach 6.	Female	White Mum, Dad is Caribbean.	20-30	UKCC level 2, National junior level
Coach 7.	Male	Asian Indian	30-40	UKCC level 2, Beginners and advanced level
Coach 8.	Female	Indian	40-50	UKCC level 2, County level
Coach 9.	Male	Black Caribbean British	40-50	UKCC level 3, Academy level
Coach 10.	Male	Black	40-50	UKCC level 3, Schools and colleges level
Coach 11.	Male	Black	40-50	UKCC level 1
Coach 12.	Male	Black African	40-50	UKCC level 2
Coach 13.	Male	British Indian	50-60	UKCC level 2, Club level
Coach 14.	Female	British Muslim	20-30	UKCC level 2
Coach 15.	Male	Caribbean Black	60-70	UKCC level 3, Club level
Coach 16.	Male	British Pakistani	50-60	UKCC level 2, Club level

## **2.4. Method**

An important feature of the work was to conceptualise BME participant sporting entry and coaching progression as more than a matter of individual motivation in order to understand broader processes, norms and values. To do this, the study was carried out using a qualitative approach in order to explore how NGBs conceived issues of equity,

equality and diversity, and to centralise the coaches' voices and experiences. To understand these stories, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with individuals from each of the four governing bodies whose role within the organisation was to improve equity, equality and diversity or coaching development / education, and the sample of coaches. In total, 20 interviews were carried out: 16 coaches (four from each sport) and four NGB equality leads or coach education managers.

The interview guide for the discussions with equality leads and coach development lead from the four NGBs focused upon three central themes: Challenges for the recruitment, inclusion and progression of BME groups; ethnicity data and coaches; and initiatives that address the under-representation of BME coaches. For the interviews with the coaches, the interviews focused upon current or previous playing experience within the sport, how they had made the transition into coaching, and asked the participants about how they felt towards progressing through the coaching profession. This was in order to connect playing to coaching experience. Specifically, the interview guide included seven central themes: Personal background; getting into the sport; playing and coaching context; enablers and barriers to participating; getting into coaching; enablers and barriers to coaching; ideas for improving recruitment of BME groups and diversity.

All participants completed a signed consent form and interviews were digitally recorded using a Dictaphone. Following this, interview summaries were written for all 20 interviews and the interviews with the coaches transcribed verbatim. Data was thematically analysed by each member of the research team and then cross-checked by other members during team meetings in order to share and agree upon the main findings. This also ensured rigour in the data analysis and interpretation stage of the research.

### **3.0 Findings: Interviews with the National Governing Bodies**

The following chapter discusses the pertinent findings from the interviews with the NGB leads for equality and/or coach development. The chapter is structured around the key discussion points of the interviews with the leads, starting with what they considered to be the challenges for the recruitment and retention of BME groups into coaching. This leads onto a discussion of the use of data monitoring within the four NGBs. Thirdly, the approach towards and examples of initiatives to address the under-representation of BME coaches

within the four NGBs, is presented. For the purpose of anonymity, the identities of the participants are not described in relation to their specific sport or organisation.

### **3.1. Challenges for the Recruitment, Inclusion and Progression of BME Groups**

#### ***3.1.1. Differing degrees of understanding diversity***

From an analysis of the interviews with the NGB leads, it was evident that there were differing degrees of understanding around the issue of diversity and related to the challenges for BME groups in getting into and progressing through coaching. These differences were demonstrated when NGB leads displayed a lack of awareness of the racial 'make-up' of the coaching profession in their sport. Often participants failed to recognise the existence or significance of a 'diversity gap' in the representation of coaches. This was because either the organisation was unaware or was content with the current (but unequal) profile of their coaching workforce. This appears linked to the monitoring of coaches' ethnicities that will be discussed later and the effective use of these figures. On occasions, it was asserted that there was equal representation of different racial and ethnic groups, and it was difficult for all of the NGB leads to report the precise representation of coaches from BME groups in their sport. For example, a couple of participants conceded that the recruitment of coaches in their sport is a process conducted often through diversity blind eyes; where the active recruitment of a diverse workforce is not a priority for most coach recruiters. Instead, coach recruiters rely on familiarity as a basis for recruitment:

"I think it's getting the people that recruit coaches into the mind-set that they are looking at diverse groups ... You get the same people that are recruited time and time again because you know who they are and it's not really looking at different groups who are under-represented in the sport really... I think basically the people who go out to recruit coaches they know who they are looking for to begin with and it's the same type of people that are being recruited over and over again, rather than actually going out and looking for more diverse group of people."

"Well it's really hard to say because I spoke to [our head of coaching] and I spoke to one of our Coaching Coordinators as well and we couldn't really come up with any [challenges] because we think in terms of figures that we have in terms of players and coaches we are a very inclusive sport anyway and I don't think we go out of our way to do that, I think it just automatically happens... A coach is a coach and there is not any consideration given to their background or anything else, they are just a coach".

BME groups are therefore often minoritised groups, overlooked for progression. A more open recruitment procedure would ensure that those outside of 'inner circles' and networks do not miss out on new opportunities.

There were occasions in which some participants responded with slightly more knowledge and understanding of what the challenges are for recruiting and retaining BME groups in coaching. This was evidenced by the responses that highlighted the awareness that: belonging to a BME group may mean different challenges for participating in sport and coaching; that organisations were supportive of initiatives to attract more BME groups into their sport (often driven by external BME-focused organisations); and some NGBs were conscious of the importance of having a more diverse sporting and coaching population. Nevertheless, there was the tendency to conceptualise diversity as an organic process; that as a consequence of having a greater participant base and through establishing more generic drives towards increasing participation, inclusivity will occur naturally without special action. A lack of understanding towards diversity showed itself in the lack of detail within the responses to what precisely, are the challenges for BME groups getting into, and progressing through, coaching. It was very difficult for organisations to name specific barriers that present themselves in the recruitment and progression of BME groups in coaching. Consequently, this lack of knowledge meant NGBs appeared to show a sense of contentment or resignation with the current representation of their coaching workforce. Gender blindness also revealed itself in the interviews; the lack of in-depth understanding towards gender issues and BME women coaches was a recurrent theme.

A positive aspect of the interviews with some of the NGB leads was that in understanding that while their representation of BME coaches was 'reasonable', greater work was still needed in terms of different BME groups and recruiting more women from BME groups. Some NGB leads displayed the understanding that BME representation in their sport varies according to other factors, such as gender, age and specific BME groups. One NGB touched upon the cultural issues that may impact participation, and recognised that white male domination within sport and coaching may marginalise minority groups. The challenges for NGBs that were identified in a couple of the interviews included: overcoming the perception held by BME groups that sport, in the UK, is for white men; that clubs and white coaches need to understand and respect the cultural traditions, such as religious commitments, that may prevent individuals being available for coaching

at particular times; a historical lack of engagement between the NGB and BME communities; and a lack of integration between different ethnic groups and communities (including within BME groups and between BME and white populations). However, organisations mostly possessed an outward facing perspective towards the barriers and facilitators that may help or hinder BME representation within their sport, i.e., such issues are external to the organisation and therefore, not part of their 'remit'. However, an 'inward' facing organisation perspective as to the issue of a lack of BME coaches in sport is required and appeared to be the approach adopted in some rare cases; that organisations need to make the initial moves to be engaging, inclusive and proactive in searching for and progressing minority groups in coaching roles.

To summarise, these findings point to several conclusions. One shared finding across the interviews was that there needs to be a greater understanding of the different challenges for the different BME groups; that there was a tendency to group BME populations as one. This appears symptomatic of a lack of evidence as to what are the different BME groups within these particular sports and of the failure of NGBs to collect coaches' stories as to how they experience the profession. Secondly, a shared finding is the urgent need for a greater understanding of the complexity and specificity of challenges for BME groups, namely, how race and ethnicity intersect with gender to create 'double edged swords' for black and minority ethnic women. Across all four NGBs, the participants did not express a clear and comprehensive view on knowledge of how the barriers for coaches may differ for men and women. Yet the participants acknowledged the need for greater understanding of such issues and that extra attention needs to be paid to recruit and retain BME women. Thirdly, a shared conclusion across the four interviews with NGB leads in regards to the challenges for BME groups as coaches is that recruitment and retention of a more diverse coaching workforce is either non-existent or very low on their long term agendas. This is symptomatic of the constraints of the current climate in which NGBs have to operate; that many NGBs have had to focus their limited resources on more general drives to increase their participant base rather than focusing on equality *per se*. Consequently, the NGBs have sometimes 'piggy backed' the equity and diversity initiatives driven by more specialist groups and charities as a means of engaging with partners to increase diversity within their participant and coaching numbers. Given the financial climate in which these NGBs operate, this is perhaps a more realistic method of increasing diversity.

### **3.1.2. Guessing game: The nature of the barriers preventing BME recruitment and progression**

The second theme to emerge from the interviews with the NGB leads in regards to the challenges for the recruitment, inclusion and progression of BME groups, relates to the nature of the barriers cited by the participants. As previously discussed, often interviewees could not give specific, definite or evidence-based responses when asked about what they considered to be the barriers and constraints for BME coaches. Instead, their responses were guesses or assumptions. For example, one NGB leads asserted that no barriers existed at all for BME individuals to start or develop as coaches:

“We don’t really think about it [diversity], it just happens, I have worked with a lot of organisations where people say that and they don’t mean it but generally after being with [my sport], I genuinely do think [diversity] just happens... It’s played a lot by non-Whites, for want of a better word”.

The other NGB leads assumed that the barriers were largely practical in nature, such as: the cost of club memberships; costs of the kits and equipment associated with the sport; costs of the coaching courses; lack of accessibility to courses such as unavailability due to work commitments or no available local courses. For example, one NGB lead cited the clash between the work commitments of possible coaches and the scheduled training courses as a reason for the absence of high performance BME coaches:

“How many black PE teachers who coached [my sport] were available for the national team programme? Not a lot. So it goes back to who’s around”.

One NGB lead demonstrated an awareness that constraints may also be due to cultural issues, for example, unavailability for coaching due to attending mosque at weekends and evenings, or political sensitivities related to different BME communities coming together to attend specific programmes aimed at recruiting more players and coaches. However, this NGB lead also cited language as a possible barrier to BME groups becoming more involved in the sport. This is an example of the participant erroneously linking ethnicity with nationality, connecting Whiteness with Englishness and thus, arguing that information regarding courses and programmes will not be understood by ‘non-Whites’.

While practical barriers may exist and prove to be constraining to BME groups to start and progress as coaches, these assumptions made by the participants lead to two conclusions. **First**, that the danger of believing that practical barriers are the only cause for the under-representation of BME groups in coaching can inadvertently result in ‘victim



blaming'; that BME groups themselves are responsible for their minority status and thus, deflects attention away from possible systemic discrimination. The **second** conclusion is that the assertions that practical barriers are the only possible cause for the under-representation of minority groups demonstrate a lack of evidence and knowledge on the part of these organisations. As discussed earlier, engagement with diversity must go beyond anecdotal data or literature, but must include collecting and understanding athletes and coaches' experiences.

### **3.2. The Need for More Effective Data Management: Ethnicity Data and Coaches**

Collecting and monitoring data on demographic details of participants and coaches was agreed between the NGB leads to be a useful system and was a system implemented by all of the four NGBs. This data informed their understanding of the characteristics of the diversity of their participant base and coaching workforce, within their sport. It proved to be a useful method of understanding, statistically, what the profile of their sport was, how it changed over time, and was a quick and straightforward way of highlighting what areas require attention and action. It was the main method for the measurement of diversity for the four NGB leads for each of their sports. All four of the governing bodies stated that they rely on self-declare from their affiliated participants and coaches to complete demographic details, including ethnicity. For example, this data is gathered when individuals complete evaluation forms after coach education programmes or renew memberships. In some instances, specialist monitoring systems are utilised with the specific aim of profiling their players and coaches. These systems are new and as yet, NGBs have yet to evaluate the gathered data.

A key challenge for the under-representation of BME groups in coaching is making sure that different NGBs 'see' the diversity gap and understand this problem as a legitimate one. As discussed earlier, the four NGBs diverged in their understanding of the racial 'make-up' of their coaching workforce and in their views on the most appropriate solution to this challenge. Clear data, especially comparative data, are crucial in demonstrating to NGBs that a problem with representativeness exists and change is needed. From analysis of the interviews with all four NGB leads, it is evident that more effective management of monitored data is required. Three shared issues arose during the interviews. First, there is a need for greater frequency with which data is collected. This needs to be systematic and longitudinal in order to specifically track the profile of their

participant and coaching base, rather than on an ad-hoc basis. Second, once this data has been collected, it then needs to be utilised effectively and for specific purposes. NGBs need to *respond* to this data, rather than including monitoring just for legislative purposes. Collecting data is a relatively low cost method in the first instance of understanding how diverse a sport is and can provide a baseline for NGBs to start to address which particular groups require greater representation. Monitored data should be the basis and impetus for race-related equity and equality initiatives, and NGB leads understood that demographic data should be used in this way, none of the organisations demonstrated evidence that they utilise the data to its full effect. One NGB noted that this was the case in their sport because research is seen as costly at a time when NGBs have strict and limited budgets. A suggestion to increase NGB responsiveness may be comparative data: encouraging the sharing of anonymous data between NGBs. Data are most effective when they are comparative, allowing NGBs to assess where they stand relative to others and in relation to other standards. This may then 'nudge' NGBs to respond to data to attempt to improve their diversity profile.

A third issue that arose during the interviews was that the NGBs recounted difficulty in eliciting this data from participants and coaches. This appears to be a significant issue associated with data monitoring because it is a process that relies on self-declare and so some individuals were either reluctant or just did not take the time to provide this data when requested by these NGBs. Three NGB leads in particular discussed this limitation with attempting to collect monitoring data, recounting that individuals often questioned why this system was in place. Therefore, to enable a greater collection of data, NGBs need to make explicit to individuals, the reasoning for data collection and monitoring in the first case. The importance for requesting these details and a clear statement of how the data will be used (effectively) needs to be stressed.

### **3.3. Taking the Initiative: Action to Address the Under-representation of BME Coaches**

Similarly to the earlier discussion surrounding how the NGBs framed the challenges for the recruitment and progression of BME coaches and how each NGB had differing degrees of understanding diversity, the NGBs differed in their approach to diversity action. There appeared to be three types of approaches in relation to activity: *laissez faire*; supportive of action; and initiators of action.

Through analysis of the interviews with the NGB equality leads, it became evident that two NGBs did not explicitly seek to address the lack of under-representation of BME coaches in their work and consequently, there were no initiatives to support the recruitment and progression of coaches. This approach is a consequence of misunderstanding diversity: the diversity 'gap' in the coaching workforce could not be seen and if there was one, that more general programmes to increase participation in their sport would inevitably bring in a more diverse group of participants and coaches. Again, as discussed earlier, responses were often hesitant as to what could be done to improve the racial and ethnic profile of coaches. Instead, some organisations expressed contentment with their current workforce, as one of the participants demonstrated:

"I can't, to be honest with you, I can't think of any initiatives... I think the reason for that is because within coaching, we do have a number of, particularly within the elite athletes, we do have a number of BME coaches and on our local coaching development programme we have a number of BME coaches. So I don't know whether the coaching team think it is an issue to be honest."

This lack of intention and action, coupled with different degrees of understanding diversity, can result in laying the initiative at the feet of BME coaches. NGBs sometimes stated that if there was an issue with the recruitment and progression of BME coaches, they would support these individuals if they needed more qualifications or if individual support requests were put to them. However, this puts the onus on the coach themselves to seek support, rather than action being initiated by the organisation. These views are symptomatic of an 'outward' facing perspective to the issue of the under-representation of BME coaches, rather than understanding this issue may be a systemic one.

One NGB demonstrated the intention to improve the number of BME coaches within their sport and described examples of how they have supported initiatives. It was evident through the interview with the NGB lead that the organisation had recognised the need for more diversity within their coaching staff and that they were proactive in supporting some initiatives. The NGB had provided support to specific BME and coaching programmes in partnership with other sporting agencies in order to increase the number of BME women coaches. Within the organisation themselves, they had made a conscious effort to promote coaching opportunities more effectively. Through these endeavours, the NGB lead asserted that the organisation was now viewed more positively and as more progressive by its members, and had learnt many lessons themselves through their work with partners. Thus, this NGB could be described as supportive of action, but not necessarily initiators. Work still remains for organisations to initiate sustained and long-term support for their

own coaches; by their own admission, NGBs do not run any programmes to help BME groups *progress* as coaches and do not run many local-level programmes to target particular under-represented communities. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, this finding must be contextualised within NGBs that often have limited and strict financial budgets, and small organisational workforces.

Good awareness and understanding of the diversity 'gap' within their organisation manifested itself in one organisation being proactive in initiating action aimed at recruiting and progressing BME coaches. The NGB lead stated that it was vital that the organisation understood the need to reach out and had now "physically come out of our NGB organisation and camp". This was evidenced by the initiation of programmes for different BME communities, to become involved in the sport and learn to coach. As well as initiating programmes, the NGB asserted that it was vital to then engage with different communities to endeavour to build strong, reciprocal relationships so that their NGB could tailor their resources and programme to fit the needs and manage the expectations of particular groups. For example, the NGB demonstrated the awareness that before programmes can be established in some BME communities, the organisation needed to build and promote its reputation within such groups. While this drive may be relatively new within the organisation and it remains to be seen whether this approach becomes embedded within the organisation, it was felt that because of an improving and positive climate of inclusion towards not just BME groups, but also disability and women, the NGB would benefit, in the long term, from a more diverse workforce. The NGB understood that initiatives to recruit black and minority ethnic groups were not just about equity, equality and diversity. Rather, these programmes made good 'business sense' and that the sport itself would benefit from more participants and coaches. To this end, these initiatives had become core strategies within the organisation. However, it is evident that, similar to the three other NGBs, that little action is still taken to ensure the progression of minority groups through the coaching profession. Most initiatives are aimed at beginner coaches and there was little evidence of follow up action to ensure that coaches continued their development.

## 4.0 Findings: Interviews with the Coaches

The following chapter discusses the pertinent findings from the interviews with the coaches. The structure of the chapter is based upon the participants' sporting journey, beginning with their first entry into their sport, as athletes. The focus then moves to what they cited to be the key enablers and barriers to remaining and progressing as athletes of their sport. Thirdly, the chapter centres upon their transition into coaching, and from this, discusses what the participants identified to be the main enablers and constraints to staying in, and advancing as, coaches. For the purpose of anonymity, given the small representation of BME coaches across the four sports, the identities of the participants are not described in relation to their specific sport.

### 4.1. Getting Into and Staying in Sport

Many of the key influences on BME participants' entry into sport mirror those of other participants identified in previous research, and include: the importance of family, early involvement in a range of sporting activities as a youngster to develop skills and confidence, the role of physical education (PE) at school, and encouragement of significant others such as PE teachers, coaches or youth leaders. In addition, some factors were more specifically linked to participants' ethnic background, such as the importance of playing alongside, or being coached by, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and playing in supportive spaces which may be those where other minority ethnic players are present. However, these experiences were always mediated by gender and social class; the influence of ethnicity on experience was qualitatively different, depending upon individuals' gender, class (and sometimes religious) backgrounds, and across the different spaces and levels at which they played. It is important to stress, therefore, that there is no *one* experience that describes the BME participants' routes into, and experiences of, sport though there are distinct patterns and trends emerging.

Most of the participants started their involvement in sport as youngsters, either because family members were involved, or through physical education (PE) at school:

“...it was the support that I got from my family, just being interested in the sport and then my school teachers, when I was captain for the school team, they encouraged me to get myself involved (British Muslim, female coach).

“...I used to play quite a lot of other sports so I didn’t really focus ...until I was maybe sort of, I don’t know, maybe 15...I used to swim, I used to do athletics, gymnastics, yeah.. So it was my granddad that actually got me in to playing. ....I think my mum, she was quite sporty when she was younger she’s always just wanted us to enjoy whatever we were doing.” (Black British, female coach).

Family support for their involvement in sport was not always forthcoming, such as with one Asian British Muslim woman who suggested that

“Sport is not something that, you know, is encouraged in the family, it takes a lot...it was difficult for me because I wasn’t getting that support, so I had my coach picking me up and dropping me off to the games” (British Muslim, female coach).

Others also mentioned individuals that had gone out of their way to help them as youngsters to get into or stay involved in sport– a PE teacher who had taken them along to a club session for the first time, or a youth worker that had encouraged them to join in a session at a youth club:

“Yeah, I think the coach [...] at the youth club; he sort of took me under... [...], so he took the two of us under his wing and he taught us how to play alongside being taught at school...” (Black, male coach).

Linked to this was the *quality* of these early sporting experiences which was an important factor in many participants continuing with the sport – and sometimes more significant than the nature of the sporting activity itself. A supportive, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in these early sessions was remembered as significant:

“Basically it’s the atmosphere that I played for; I mean I got to know an old friend of mine. I called him my ‘Second’ and my ‘[sporting] Dad’ sort of thing and that was the type of people you got. You wouldn’t be forced [...] you only got involved if you enjoyed it [...] if you weren’t good enough to play then just come to practice; get better and better”. (British Indian, male coach).

For some participants this inclusive atmosphere was specifically linked to the ethnic mix of the group:

“I think it was important [the ethnic mix of where you first started playing sport], it was very important. For me, growing up in a multicultural church, I was quite unique; my school was multicultural. My best friends were from different cultures at school. It was just an extension of my school...” (Black British, female coach).

“... If a white kid was to walk into [club] now they would be welcome. They wouldn't be ‘Oh my gosh, look, a white person.’ Whereas, you know, a black kid walking into a certain gym you better be able to play otherwise it wasn't a friendly place to be. There were only certain places that players went back in the day”. (Black, male coach).

However, as noted above, several of the participants' stories highlighted the interrelationships between social class, gender and ethnicity. For them ethnicity was never experienced independently of gender, or social class; rather each were intertwined and affected experiences in qualitative different ways for different individuals at different times. For example, for some participants their economic background and having the financial support to play their sport at a low or no cost was highly significant. Youth clubs rather than sports clubs were, for some, important to their early experiences, because of the ease of access to these facilities, and the lower costs involved. Playing in formal club structures was often impossible because of the membership costs involved:

“I never played, when I played at school I never played in the regional set-up, I never represented schools region or anything like that, it's because it was all about membership and we couldn't afford that. The youth club that I played at, it was all funded, we paid a pound to turn up and play and that was it”. (Black, male coach).

“My coach was really good. My parents were divorced so my mum was bringing up five kids and working part time. So getting to and from competitions was really difficult. But he was really good, like picking me up and dropping me off. Me and my brother used to get the bus all the time”. (Black British, female coach).

Although it is important to note there were fewer female than male coaches in our sample, gendered experiences were only raised by the women:

“At the time I was involved in the sport doing sport was seen as masculine and unattractive ... [My sport] wasn't the thing to do as it is now so you didn't get as many girls involved in it as you do probably now. Even now it's acceptable but it isn't acceptable to have muscles and be toned and to be conditioned. I was called a ‘man’! I'm quite muscular so people used to say that “you look like a man”, “why have you got muscles?” I would cover up my arms but didn't stop me competing .... It was hard and I did feel very conscious about my body but I've grown to love who I am and the way I am”. (Black British, female coach).

“It's difficult, I think, [being coached by men] because obviously when you're a girl and you're, I've kind of gone through like all stages of my life ...with different coaches. So sort of when you go through the emotional stages and if you have any girl issues like having period pains or anything like that, you can't really say to your coach look, I'm not feeling very well ....it's sometimes a little bit uncomfortable and, you know, if you're having a bit of an emotional day or training's not going well then all you want to do is cry. And sometimes the male coaches are a bit like ‘oh my God, like what do we do?’ And so yeah, it was nice when I actually was coached by [a female coach]...it was great because she could, you

know, I could say to her how I was feeling and that sort of thing”. (Half Caribbean, female coach).

The male participants were more likely than the female participants to talk about experiences of racism in their early playing days. There was a suggestion that overt incidences of racism were not as common today, perhaps reflecting the fact that 12 of the participants were over the age of 40 and so were youngsters experiencing sport in the late 50s/60s and 70s, when the nature of race relations was quite different. Nevertheless, these incidences had been significant to many of our participants, in most cases ‘spurring them on’ to train harder, to improve their performances so that their selection for teams could not be denied.

“One of the things that we got told by our parents and our uncles and aunties was that we had to be twice as good as or better than our white counterpart... You know, that was to be noticed. So I’m going to say that is what it was back in the day when racism was rife... That was [the] status quo. So what we got told, what was inbred in us was we had to be twice as good if not better, three times better than...” (Black, male coach).

Not all of the participants had felt able to do anything about the abuse for fear of it having a worse effect on their progression through the sport; some suggested that they accepted ‘everyday’ racism as just part of their everyday lives, including sport, and it was something that they had to just bear. One participant recounted his experience of challenging an incident of verbal abuse whilst playing, and the difficulties of getting the [white] officials to take his situation seriously. He suggested that it was as a result of his individual determination as a player that the incident was dealt with seriously that appropriate action was eventually taken.

In summary, many of our participants’ routes into sport mirror those of their white counterparts. Inclusive and supportive early experiences of sport were important, but these were often mediated by ethnicity, as well as gender and class. The spaces in which they were able to play and access sport, the ethnic and gendered backgrounds of players and coaches and the everyday interactions were important to the participants’ early sporting experiences.



## 4.2. The Enablers and Constraints to Participation

### 4.2.1. The enablers to participation

Two particular factors facilitated the participants to play and remain within their respective sports: 1) Diverse environments and, 2) Interventions/schemes for BME inclusion.

First, the participants commented on the value they placed on a club environment that was diverse or reflected people like themselves. This coach remarked at the motivation she received when she was able to train and see people from a similar background achieving at a high level. She stated that it gave her a 'boost':

"I went into actually a really good training group which I had...it was really multi-cultural which probably, in those days, which was the late '70s...was probably quite unusual. My coach was an ex-teacher and he worked in an inner city school. So the group was very much a mix, there was black, there was white, there was high level athletes, people achieving at a high level. So some of the senior athletes, seeing them and seeing the background was very similar to mine, and they were competing at a high level. Obviously that's quite a nice boost as well". (Black British, female coach).

The participant was positive about her mix of club participants because she felt it created the community. Another coach felt that a more diverse coaching fraternity would encourage more people from BME groups to take part, though there would need to be visible changes that occurred at all levels:

"I think there has to be from the top down to see that happen and I think so, for example, if they were to get people from those backgrounds already and have them there, you know, recruit people from those backgrounds already, have them there. It might be more easier for newer people then to come in to access that programme, be easier". (Black British, male coach).

Some of the coaches felt that having a BME coach or one that reflected its local demographic was a motivator for others to get involved in the sport. One coach felt that having a BME coach or at least one that understands the community is likely to be positive. The coach commented that:

"I think if you've got black and ethnic coaching and you've got a black and ethnic person, it's probably more... for instance I get a lot of Muslim kids in my local area, so if I'm passing the information on, I'd like to think even though I'm Indian, I know bits of the Koran so I'll put that information onto them". (Indian, male coach).

Another coach, from a different sport, agreed when he said that black coaches like himself were role models for younger BME players. Similarly female coaches were conscious of the impact other female coaches could have on girls and women, One coach went on to state that:

“You wish that you had a bit more support or you could look up to another Asian girl. I mean, the only other Asian girl playing for the [national] women’s team was [name] and she’s played for a good ten years for the [national] side and that was one person to say, yeah, there’s an Asian girl played for [national] team, so you can be the next one”. (Muslim, female coach).

This coach had never been coached by an Asian coach as a player herself, but has since been used as a role model to encourage other young Asian girls to take up the sport.

Secondly, the value of interventions or schemes for BME inclusion was cited as enablers to play sport, according to the participants. One coach commented that within his sport there were on-going interventions to include BME groups:

“Obviously I’ve been involved quite heavily with the [regional sport NGB association], ... a number of years ago we set up the Black and Ethnic Minority [sport] Forum, which I’ve been part of for a number of years, and obviously from that it’s moved to look at these sort of things, participation, amongst other things as well... It’s like a natural progress from sort of positive action to making them also sustainable”. (Pakistani, male coach).

However, the participant went on to say that the recent switch of focus away from juniors and local community work might prove problematic in attracting youngsters in the community to start sport. Instead, he argued that the exclusion of under 15s in the funding of these initiatives may be too late to catch potential participants or coaches too, as he has found:

“We talk about community coaches, we’re not community coaches anymore, we also like fighting fires, if you know what I mean? Community coaching means in the community, working in the community, working on Level 1’s, working on Level 2’s, working with the schools and going into schools, you know, that sort of thing”. (Pakistani, male coach).

To encourage BME groups it was suggested that NGBs should run courses in areas with high BME populations to encourage under-represented groups.

#### **4.2.2. The constraints to participation**

The three barriers cited by the participants as constraints to participation included: 1) costs, 2) the lack of diversity in playing environments, and 3) racial discrimination.

The cost of equipment, courses, travel and even playing for the national team were regularly viewed as constraints to playing. The participants also felt this would be prohibitive for young people to join their respective sports:

“As an example, it costs £10 a month to attend a once a month regional development programme. Now the programme’s great, they have coaches from all across the region that attend and it’s all about skill development and betterment of the player in order to get them into the regional teams, but if you don’t have that £10 a month and the ability to travel to wherever that...And I would imagine there are hundreds of kids and they’re almost deselected before selection because of their inability to access the funding to attend or to access the venue because of the geography”. (Black, male coach).

Another coach stated that she has had to rely on her own funding to run events. This restricted access to her sport for other girls and women. Instead, she wanted to see the NGB supporting more community coaching events:

“A lot of the time, we've had to put money in from our own pockets and it's been difficult. I mean, I don't want to be doing that if I'm working and then I'm using my wages just to pay for something, just to make sure we've run that event and it's hiring costs and paying for materials, when it shouldn't be like that, there should be funding available for it. That's been a downfall, so... we've thought, okay, we won't do the next events until we actually get funding, because if they say there's a lot of funding out there for women's sport...events, let's have it then...”. (Muslim, female coach).

Secondly, a lack of diversity in the immediate sporting context was also cited as a constraint to playing. Though coaches commented on the value they placed on a club environment that was diverse or reflected people like themselves, they were also critical of the absence of these factors. Whereas, the presence of a diverse club or coaches was likely to encourage them they were clear that a lack of diversity made them apprehensive about their sport. This lack of presence may mean that their needs are not being met and their voices are not being heard. One participant felt that it would be useful to have a better ethnic mix of coaches. Another coach reflected on the importance of the ethnic and gender mix of coaches:

“I always wondered why there weren't any female coaches, and I also wondered in [named sport], there's a high population of black athletes, why none of them went into coaching? Again, I knew when I started coaching I was probably quite odd because I was black, and

female. Definitely in my club I was the only female... well definitely female coach and the only black coach at that time. It's changed now and there's some good members coming through. But I don't know, I think it just put me slightly off. But that's generally...there's a high population of black people. It's the same with football, I suppose. If you look at other sports. The obviously question, well how come they don't then...?" (Black British, female coach).

The lack of female coaches was commented on further. Even though this participant has a strong relationship with her current coach, she remarked that she sometimes felt awkward, as a player, with male coaches in certain situations. At this point gender rather than race became salient. This absence of diversity in the playing environments, some participants believed, would cause potential athletes to self-exclude, as one participant highlights:

"You need to go into an arena and see somebody [that] reflects you. That makes you comfortable. Some clubs don't do that. I understand it's difficult and getting people with the right skill set. But it's trying to make sure that when you find ... or the club needs to identify good people...Because I've always said if you go into the club as a mother...and the first person at the door doesn't give me a nice reception and make me feel welcome, I'm not going back again. I wouldn't put my son in that position". (Black British, female coach).

Thirdly, racial discrimination was a constraint in some of the playing experiences of the participants although experienced in different ways. It had the effect of impacting upon selection, recruitment, and even media coverage. This coach felt constrained because he was often an isolated Asian player in a very white sport:

"As I progressed I think it was the... because there weren't many Asians playing and I felt that I was always kind of a second class citizen in that situation, you know, in terms of how some of the parents looked upon it or when I was beating their players who had been playing a lot longer". (Asian, male coach).

One participant suggested that racial discrimination had reduced since he began playing [sport], and was also less evident in his multicultural community:

"It's probably maybe in different communities outside of [city] and [city], etc. I have felt uncomfortable; I felt intimidated with the language, if you know what I mean, but that was probably years ago when I was a youngster and it does slowly change. I think it's changed a little bit more". (Indian, male coach).

Another coach was able to recount a number of racist incidents. Some ended in apologies and others resulted in external interventions. He recalled an experience of racism where he demanded that the official do something about it urgently. The official wanted to delay it until the end of the game:

“I was not going to stand for it. So, when the abuse came, I signalled to the [official] and said, did you hear that? He said, yes, but just get on with the game. I said, well, aren't you going to do anything about it? He said, we'll deal with it after, just get on with the game. I said, I want something doing about it now, [or] else this game ain't going to go any further. I said, you must stop it now, else this game stops here”. (Black, male coach).

Another coach experienced racial discrimination in the selection processes operating when she was a player. In a different way in this coach's playing days as selection became a racialised issue. She argued that her NGB's selection processes lacked transparency and that the selection of some of the athletes was based on their attraction to the media as national icons:

“I didn't get to the Olympic Games in 2000 which I should have done because I was one of the fastest women in the country and I felt that was a colour thing...and I was like why did you do that, well because they were more – to me if you look at them they were more appealing on the eye, the British public would get behind them because I don't think at that time we were that palatable to the media...in this case being black athletes”. (Black, female coach).

The following coach has also felt that she has been discriminated against in the past as a player:

“So yeah, as a junior I experienced quite a lot of, not, like not being selected for world juniors and not going, not being able to go to sort of the youth Commonwealth, things like that, which I should have been going to because I was either number two or number three in England at the time but they would say oh well, we see more potential in a younger player or we need to give them more experience”. (Mixed race, female coach).

These are quite ambiguous situations that rely on intuition and experience by the player/coach and are often facilitated through a lack of transparency by the NGBs. Another participant had a similar experience:

“It was interesting how some of the selections over the years and people that were involved, I got screwed over, basically”. (Asian, male coach).

Participants were sometimes reluctant to name racial discrimination as the reason for their lack of selection for teams, but nevertheless, - had 'nagging' feelings that this may have been the case.

### 4.3. The Transition into Coaching

There were a number of reasons identified by the respondents for why they transitioned from sports participation into sport coaching. The reasons cited, included a mixture of individual (agential) and context specific (structural) reasons. From an individual perspective, many of the coaches reported that they wished to continue their engagement in a sport they loved (to be part of the sport, to be part of the sporting community) and were motivated by the idea of giving something back to that community, for example, working with and educating young athletes. This was a common motivation for entry into sport coaching and is illustrated by the following participant:

“My aspiration was to give something back to the community after all my years of playing, I came back and there wasn’t even a local team in the area, I didn’t think that was good enough, I wanted to do something about it”. (Black Caribbean/British, Male coach).

Wishing to continue engagement in the sport and give back to the community occasionally had an inclusive BME community focused intention – in this instance helping out with integration and language:

“[Name] has always been encouraging, he said to me... “what do you want to do for the community?” I mean, we had this one girl and her dad wasn’t too keen on joining our club and then he didn’t speak much English, so [another club member] rang me and he said, “you know, can you speak to this parent and talk about what you’ve done, how you’ve got into it and you will be the one, you’ll support her, you’ll help her out”, and she represented Pakistan and then she came and played for Scotland and then we were like, you know what, we want to get this girl in our club”. (British Muslim, female coach).

In some instances this motivation had a deliberately progressive and challenging dimension related to establishing a BME and/or BME female presence in sporting leadership roles:

“To make a difference I think. I think to be in a position that I was in, which was very unpleasant... I didn’t want the same system [for other players] to be going through, because I think we’ve got a lot of talented players but they get lost in the system.....Well maybe I can make a difference with coaching, and hopefully set up a system that’s as fair as I can make it ... because you’re always going to be banging your head against the system, aren’t you.. and that kind of inspired me”. (Asian Hindu, male coach).

“... it helped me to inspire other people as well, encourage other people, especially people from the BME community, because there wasn’t a lot of officials in the BME community [...] so I try to encourage a lot more people from the BME community to become coaches” (Black Caribbean, male coach).

One female coach suggested her motivation to coach resulted from issues around gender balance “there was a need for a female coach to be involved in the sport” (Black British, female coach).

Other individual reasons cited by the participants for why they made the transition into coaching, included earning money to finance training, competition, travel and general costs associated with still being athlete:

“I got taken off funding so it was a bit like I need to have money, not only just to kind of live off but to help fund my tournaments. And so I did like coaching, you have to have the coaching like sort of certificate, so I did my Level 1 certificate ... it was to help me live and fund tournaments but then I think just to give back to the sport, because obviously if I don't help out or other players that are competing at a high level.” (Half Caribbean, female coach).

Another coach suggested entry into coaching was an appealing alternative career pathway, and was encouraged by the positive response his coaching received:

“I think again at that time I was working in retail, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I started to do a bit of coaching, I enjoyed that, so then I quit work and went back to college and then on to university and was coaching throughout all of that, [and] I really started to enjoy it. As arrogant as I guess this is going to sound, I actually thought I was pretty good at it and I've had a lot of positive feedback about what I was doing, and it was far more enjoyable than working in a shop on a Saturday afternoon”. (Black, male coach).

As well as individual reasons, a number of context specific reasons accounted for the participants' transitions into coaching. For example, many of the coaches reported that an opportunity had arisen in their sport/sports club which required an individual, an experienced participant or performer, to step into coaching to mitigate the risk of younger athletes not being able to engage in the sport at all. These context specific factors also appeared to have a BME dimension as individuals consciously sought to address the lack of BME presence in sports leadership roles. However, the following participant described his frustration at the practices of his sport's NGB, which he felt constrained his progression both as an athlete/player and as a coach. In contrast to the interviews with the NGB equality leads (see chapter 4.0), the participants appear less blind to the constraints of this system:

“I think we've got a lot of talented players but they get lost in the system, this push and pull system [...] maybe I can make a difference with coaching', and hopefully

set up a system that's as fair as I can make it ... because you're always going to be banging your head against the system, aren't you". (Asian Hindu, male coach).

In one instance, lack of female sport leaders provided an opportunity for the following participant. The effect was an overload of coaching:

"I think because it's a very male kind of coaching-dominated sport... I think a lot of clubs, they want female coaches and they want young girls to come in and help coach and they want, you know, maybe younger players or people that have already been through the system to go and help play. So if anything I get, I sometimes get asked to do too much coaching and I have to turn things down because I have to kind of think about my own training and at my own time". (Half-Caribbean, female coach).

The coaches' experiences of these transitions into coaching were generally positive. The more negative reactions emerged as the BME coaches attempted to progress to higher levels within their profession (see section 5.4). Nevertheless, as beginner coaches, transition into the profession was typically facilitated by a mentor or role model (often white) within their sporting contexts, who provided the encouragement and support to the participant-coach to progress, for example:

"[My coach] he's sort of put his feelers out quite a bit to see if there's any coaching that I could do and always sort of, he's involved in some of the England juniors, so currently I'm going to be taking two of the under 13 girls that are on the England team". (Half Caribbean, female coach).

"There was a gentleman who at the time was working in sports development in [my city], and he'd provided me with a lot of after school coaching. I worked on the Champion Coaching and Go For Gold coaching programmes back then". (Black, male coach).

For another participant, her positive experiences of being coached and having the consistency of a coach who influenced her aspirations to coach were important. She suggested she felt very well supported by one particular coaching coordinator at her club (a white male) in progressing into coaching. It was this coordinator, a former athlete himself and an international coach, who influenced her coaching aspirations:

"The coach coordinator who has just been a fantastic, excellent support and true to his word, made sure I got the support that I needed and has been as supportive ever since". (Black British Caribbean, female coach).

This was a reasonably common pathway experience for the coaches.



## 4.4. Progression through Coaching

The respondents in the study identified three main elements impacting on their progression in coaching: (1) Day-to-day coaching experiences, (2) opportunities to access coach development, education and qualifications, and (3) experiences of coach development, education and qualifications. These three constituent elements will now be discussed in the following three sub-themes.

### 4.4.1. Day-to-day coaching experiences

Whilst recognising limitations in the research design, the results suggest that those BME participants who chose to become coaches did not experience any significant ethnic and gender barriers to entry at the beginner stage (beyond those experienced more widely through the participant experience). Day-to-day, the coaching experiences of the participants appeared relatively positive and included widely cited activities and issues that face sports coaches. The process of coaching itself appeared a smooth one, as one BME coach suggests:

“Players respect me for what I do ... There has never been a problem. They listen to me; they respect me for what I do for them. It has been a positive experience, there has been nothing negative. [...] the kids I coach are Caucasians”. (Asian Indian, male coach).

There were some coaching situations away from the training ground / pitch/ court, however, though infrequent, were profoundly impactful on the BME coaches that related to their racial and ethnic identity. For example, one coach described two of his experience during and after games:

“I’ve experienced it as a coach from referees, from opponents, from crowds. From the crowd, I have things thrown at me when I am going through that gate ... I mean I’m black, I’m 6’4” ... as far as they are concerned, the referees are concerned, I behave in a certain way...I wasn’t having it because I really knew the stigma that they already thought. This inner city, ghetto team is coming down. So we used to travel smart in a van and we would get our uniforms. And yet from the first whistle I would feel... you are only doing that or talking to me that way because you believe I’m this type of person. To be honest, if I’m honest, at the beginning I was disgusted. I used to give referees a hard time...But I realized ‘You know what? You need to kill them with kindness.’ So over the years of being a coach I went from being real aggressive and passionate to ‘Alright, good call ref. I understand.’ Psychology, I learned the psychology really, really quickly”. (Black, male coach).

“... at the end of the game I went to speak to him. I touched his arm. What I mean by touch his arm, I touched his arm. I took my hand and I touched his arm. I then got a report on Monday morning that I physically abused him and when he got back home... remember he is a policeman. When he got back home there was indentation in his arm proving that I

grabbed him... I couldn't believe it; they banned me for five games because as far as the association is concerned the referee is the association so therefore they are going to side with him [...] That will always stick in my mind. I mean there are a couple more [examples], but that was disgusting. That was a referee abusing his power... he wouldn't have done it if it wasn't me as a black man and it wasn't a black club". (Black, male coach).

There were some occasions in which gender was foregrounded in the negative experiences of the BME coaches, and other times, race and ethnicity became more salient. Nevertheless, the interplay between gender, race and ethnicity cannot be ignored and the complexity of the interdependency of these relations is evident in the lives of the participants:

"Some coaches, they go up to my athletes and tell them what they've done wrong in the race. They go and tell my athlete, obviously it's my athlete and they know it's my athlete and they go and tell them and they go and tell them "this is what you've done wrong, this is what you've done" and it really bugs me because they would not do that to another male coach so why do they feel they have the right to do that to me? I mean it really irritates me, it really winds me up. I say to my athlete don't listen to them but sometimes they catch them because you can't always get to them at first, that's why people say to me "why do you hang around the warm up area?" and it's because I don't want anyone talking to my athlete. I want to tell them what they did right, that's my role, I'm their coach! I don't want anyone else to tell them what they did right or wrong...lot of the male coaches do that. It's quite rude actually, disrespectful". (Black British, female coach).

"One of the [male] coaches came up to me on courtside and challenged me in front of the players and other coaches, which was a bit daunting. So it did create, it created a lot of upset for me ...personally I find people take male coaches a lot (more) seriously and women have to really struggle and stand their ground unless you come in at a really high level. So in this country, I mean, my potential was not recognised in this country, to be honest". (Indian, female coach).

Another woman described the white male coaching culture as a barrier to her professional development: "I don't think they're ready for a female, never mind a black female, to do the job" (Black British, female coach).

#### ***4.4.2. Opportunities to access coach development, education and qualifications***

As with entry into sport coaching at the beginner stage, there did not appear to be any significant issues accessing lower level qualifications if the individual was sufficiently motivated. Indeed, a number of the BME coaches noted the informal nature of the recruitment and assessment procedures at lower levels, (also noted by the NGBs leads - see chapter 4.0):

“I think there’s value in having the qualification, but if there’s no one doing checks and balances then anybody can get them, so there’s another problem, you have people who don’t have the knowledge or the credentials or the passion or the know-how but can fill out paperwork can get coaching qualifications, so that’s also a problem in itself”. (Black, male coach).

The main issues concerning progression appeared to develop when BME coaches wished to access higher level, e.g. Level 3 and 4, qualifications and the more resource intensive development opportunities. Some issues were related to lack of provision or awareness of provision, as these participants highlight:

“If I had a mentor when I was coaching it would be so much nicer, and whatever I’ve learned is basically...it’s nothing to do with any kind of back-up from the [NGB] at all. [There is no support] at all, you get your qualification then off you go...and there’s no mentoring, there’s no structure...there’s just no step up structure at all...I don’t think there’s enough support for coaches in this country at all...I felt that I was just left to just get on with it. Even now, even now, there are times that we’ve said we need some help but there is no help really and we’ve just got to get on with it”. (Indian, female coach).

“It’s like when the coaching course is done you are left on your own to take it up if you are not attached to a club, for those that are attached to club they are okay because they will get the support of other qualified coaches within the club...when I came back to start the actual coaching there was no coach to mentor me, so I just had to go along and do with my own philosophy of coaching” (Black African, male coach).

For others, however, the issue was more one of being able to access opportunities:

“I’ve tried on numerous occasions to get on the [level 3] course and I’ve just given up with [NGB] now. Until I find someone who values me as a coach and thinks that I should do it and will encourage me and help me get on the course, I’m not going to do it yet I’m going to just leave it for now until I can find somebody who can just give me the best course, how to do it and how to move forwards”. (Black British, female coach).

A number of female coaches suggested the male dominated coaching courses they attended were off-putting. One explained she felt “odd” being the only black coach and the only female coach at her club and that discouraged her from progressing through coaching (Black British, female coach).

#### **4.4.3. Experiences of coach development, education and qualifications**

Previous research has reported that for their development, sports coaches emphasise the importance of playing experience, coaching experience, observing other

coaches, mentoring and their own readings and research, compared with more formalised coach development and educational opportunities. These findings were repeated in the present study, in relation to the BME coaches. Lower level courses were seen to be “unnecessary” and “boring” as the coaches already possessed good knowledge of the sport from their playing experience. They learnt to coach whilst actively coaching in practice, learning from mentors, and by talking with more experienced coaches.

“I think they (coaching qualifications) certainly serve a technical and tactical information base, I think they’re prescriptive to the governing body, so they provide you with some element of membership and I guess an element of accountability with the governing body ...so I would say I’m a strong advocate of that. Do I think your Level 1 and Level 2 makes you a better coach? Probably not. I think I’m a bigger fan of the experiential learning, for the actual doing, getting out and coaching”. (Black, male coach).

Some participants commented on the value of assessment, including the following participant:

“It (assessment) doesn’t mean anything; I’m being honest with you. If I get a level 5 it doesn’t make me a better coach but it’s a piece of paper I’ve got that means no one can say ‘you’re rubbish!’ or ‘you shouldn’t be training at this level because you haven’t got that...’”. (Black British, female coach).

The volume of ‘paper-work’ involved with the higher level qualifications put off one coach from progressing in coaching. His opinion of the level 2 was that:

“It was too complicated, too much paperwork involved... and I think it was off-putting in terms of wanting to progress to the next level...The fact of having to complete all of those criteria, it was just a lot...and when you evaluate it, it wasn’t value for money. Okay to do those courses, you had to be either retired or unemployed to be able to fit it all in”. (Black British, male coach).

Moreover, one coach hinted at tensions between some potential BME leaders and traditional approaches to formal coach education and assessment:

“Sometimes there are a lot of people, especially in black and ethnic, who are very good coaches, but maybe don’t do a lot of good paperwork/admin work, so what do you call them? Do you say, ‘Right, you’ve got to go down to a Level 2 because you can’t do that admin work?’”. (British Indian, male coach).

A female coach shared a similar story and suggested that her gender was the reason for her intimidating and poor experiences of coach education:

“The male coaches got fast tracked to level 3 coaching but I never [was]...At the time I was coaching quite elite people but...I used to go on the course and people would speak to me like I was dumb... I’ve studied to a higher level but I’ve never told anybody because nobody’s ever asked me. Nobody’s ever asked me what my qualifications are and they just made assumptions that I’m dumb so I thought okay I’ll just carry on doing my reading and my research...I’ve done my own training and my own teaching. [The NGB] hasn’t done anything, everything that I know I’ve read in books”. (Black British, female coach).

Another female coach reported a similar experience in which she was held back from completing a higher coaching qualification due to the assumption that she was only an assistant coach. These coaches suggested a kind of embedded prejudice and social and cultural generalisation of BME men and women, which left them feeling unsupported in their coaching and unable to progress. Thus, despite the initial access into the coaching profession, many of the coaches felt increasingly excluded when attempting to climb the coaching ladder.

#### **4.5. Progressing to Higher Levels of Coaching**

This section examines the issues BME coaches faced progressing to higher levels of coaching in terms of recruitment, deployment and employment practices. For some coaches the normal structures of volunteering and time were an issue:

“If I had more time I could coach more but my time is limited because all of the coaching I do is all voluntary. I don’t charge anybody for the coaching I do. I think that is my contribution to the sport, whatever time I can spend. I spend about six hours a week coaching which I don’t charge for...I am not a professional coach in the sense that I only do coaching for a living. I have a full time job, I have a family so coaching is kind of... it’s not the focus area of my daily activities...I just don’t have the time [to coach in my local community...at this point in time I don’t think I can commit more time to coaching”. (Asian Indian, male coach).

However, for many of the coaches, the barriers to progress through coaching also become racialised and gendered, as these two participants describe:

“I’ve applied for a couple of jobs and...I was told the guy who actually got the job, well he’s currently there, it’s pointless applying because he’s going to get it...it’s a very closed shop...if you’re white...you’re going to get more opportunities”. (Asian Hindu, male coach).

“Well, I think because I’m a woman, I think some of it’s to do with race but I think some of it’s to do with being a woman... So I’m not sure if it’s racism, sexism... do you know what I mean? I think it’s all of it. They think I’m not capable of doing it, I’m not good enough, I haven’t had the experience even though I have and I’ve had it so much but I think I’ve had it because I’m

everything that they don't want to be in the sport. I'm not a part of the old boys that were there". (Black British, female coach).

Another coach suggested that he was discriminated against when he tried to get involved in higher levels of his local sport:

"I'm going to say [I was discriminated against] indirectly. I made a couple of attempts to get into the regional structure but it was again in [city], it was a very strong white presence in the administration of the sport, and for whatever reason I clashed with that, so I never really got on". (Black, male coach).

There was a sense from many of the coaches that there was a limit on how far they could progress with many destined to stay at beginner, recreational or lower talent development/performance levels. It was when the participants attempted to climb the coaching ladder, that their racial and gendered identity most impacted their coaching journeys. Access to more prestigious high performance positions were seen as unobtainable. The main explanation offered by the participants for the lack of progression opportunities was not agential i.e. time or motivation, but rather *structural*, such as organisational practices and networks. Practices, such as informal coaching appointment processes, were raised in the interviews with the NGB leads, and with some of the coaches:

"If I wanted to further myself...in terms of if I wanted to go on to manage a district team or a county side and so on, I feel there would definitely have been barriers there...I think it would have been more difficult for me to progress because, having been involved in the system, I know there are people there in certain positions who have been there for a number of years and probably will be there for a number of years, and obviously they belong to certain groups and certain clubs and certain organisations, and if you're outside that grouping then it makes it more difficult for you" (British Pakistani, male coach).

"I mean, it is a lot, I think, of who you know and...knowing the right people and being in the right place at the right time" (Half Caribbean, female coach).

The recruitment processes for coaching roles appears to be informal, closed with access reliant on working with the 'right' networks and on a 'who you know', 'restricted' basis:

"If you don't have strong relationships with the governing body you're not going to get on. There are a lot of coaches that just work in isolation, I think the first part of my coaching career I worked in isolation, not because I wanted to but because I didn't realise the role of the governing body back then... and I've tried to engage over a number of years. In fact, I think in the last 15 years I've applied for a job at

the governing body three times and three times I've not gotten the job. Now not that that's got anything to do with coaching, but I do think it reflects the very insular nature of the governing body and this little club that only a certain amount of people get in. I certainly felt like that... And, as I said, in the last five years I've felt like I've managed to chip away at some of the wall and I've got probably good relationships with six or seven different officers from different areas or different roles within the governing body that have supported me in improving my coaching, in getting into tutoring, working at a regional level and working at a national level. So I've certainly come a long way and I guess the last hurdle is to get into a GB level of work" (Black, male coach).

"If I reflect on the last 10 years, it's very difficult to break into leading on national coaching, and unless you've [...] played at the very highest level, or unless you are, I don't know, an international of some description, or you have some status, some label that sets you aside from the rest, it's very difficult to get in. So the last three years I've worked on a national programme as a Team Manager/Assistant Coach, and whilst I've fully enjoyed that I'm now hungry for more, but the likelihood of getting a coaching post at the national level is slim to none. At a regional level, I did under-17s assistant role last year, under-15s assistant role this year, so I'm getting closer, but it's a long battle; (a) because there's a lot of good coaches out there, but (b) it's that old cliché, 'it's not what you know, it's who you know'" (Black, male coach).

There was also an overall perceived lack of opportunity to work at the highest levels with national coaches:

"Well most of them, most of the coaches at the lower level, who are not getting paid, who are scraping the bottom of the barrel, are blacks, are from minorities, it's just a fact, you know? The problem for this coach is, the higher you go up the less [fewer] they become..." (Black British, male coach).

A key issue it appears for understanding BME progression to higher levels of sport coaching appeared linked to their identity and profile, and how that identity and profile played out notably within NGB norms.

The progression of BME coaches to the higher levels of sport coaching was limited by the white masculine ideas and values amongst governing bodies, often implicit in the latter's selection, recruitment and resourcing decisions. One participant reiterated the belief that BME groups are considered to be less intellectually able in regards to the level of paperwork and decision making required within high level coaching:

"I think there's a feeling that you can't do paperwork...I felt that people were trying to maybe suggest that, that this is why the black coaches are not there,

because of the paperwork and the admin, so I saw a little bit of that". (Black, male coach).

In relation to experiencing racism, he went on to say:

"I would say yes and no, and yes because you feel like you want to contribute towards [your sport] but your views are not taken on board when it comes to strategic meetings, so that's where you feel like my views here, you feel like there is some sort of discrimination because your views are not taken on board". (Black, male coach).

In some instances this led to a passive acceptance of the values and judgements of sporting structures - an acceptance of 'everyday racism':

"I think because you daren't say anything because it could affect your selection...I've just kept quiet and kept an open mind, and it's difficult sometimes, the experiences you've had as a player, and you think 'Well okay, I'll just carry on, they need coaching'. It's the same old story, that you think 'I'll leave it', and you just get used to it, 'I'll just get on with it', because it's a massive thing, isn't it". (Asian Hindu, male coach).

For others it meant having to work harder to increase their profile in order to just fit in and get known:

"I do think a lot of the governing bodies are still adrift...I do find myself having to, I guess, redesign myself to fit in, you know, to meet, I don't know, prescribed ideals of what coaches are and who they are, which sometimes I struggle with...I think what I find is sometimes my background doesn't quite measure up to the background of somebody else, and that seems to be identifiable. So if I was to look at all the national coaches, they would all be either top level players at some point or from a different country, anybody else just doesn't seem to get in". (Black, male coach).

Opportunities to progress for the following two coaches were also connected to their racial and ethnic identity:

"I still think though it's going to be limited to how far you can progress, because I think you'll be only used for what's really... I don't know, like [...] second class coaching, if you know what I mean, to put it harshly I guess, you're not going to be working with any of the top players. I still don't think there's going to be that progression.....I think regardless of ethnicity, I think first of all regardless, you've got to look at how qualified the person is and the experience ... [But] ... the impression I've got in terms of talking to players and parents and just looking round the system itself, if you're white in terms of you're going to get more opportunities, and I still feel that". (Asian Hindu, male coach).

"Yes, that's when the barriers start coming up [Moving from player to coach]...when you're a coach out there with the rest of the coaches, yeah, there's barriers...Race, you know, that can be an issue. You've got opportunities...that's always a problem....You know, you've



got proper paid opportunities are hard to come by in this country. So there's a lot of barriers to being a coach, you know, a lot of coaches want to be coaches but they can't afford it..... (Black Caribbean British, male coach).

When asked if discrimination was an issue, the participant went on to say:

"It's not going to be outright discrimination in your face where you can see it, it's just subtle. You know, most of the coaches you've got at the higher level jobs, there's not many minority coaches coaching or getting the opportunities, you know? There were very few black international coaches, I've been one of the only few to coach, and that's just at schoolboy level, so there's always barriers. You know, you can look at it as discrimination or you can look at it as the right people didn't apply for the job, depends how you look at it, but when you see that there's lots of positions going and they're all white coaches, no black coaches, but all the players are black, you've got to ask questions". (Black Caribbean British, male coach).

Other coaches spoke of similar frustrations regarding the lack of support from their NGBs to progress and the lack of opportunities to reach higher coaching levels. In this way, the quotes above and the experiences of the coaches describe a perception of a 'glass ceiling' for BME coaches.

Those who had managed to break down these structural barriers had more success. For example, one coach noted that she had got all the support she needed and had many training opportunities (Black British Caribbean, female coach). Yet the coaches who felt "well supported" also noted that they had competed to a high level as participants in their sport and had gained a certain status because of this. This status meant that they could be fast-tracked through coaching qualifications and it also meant that they felt they were considered as "insiders" within sport networks.

## **5.0 Conclusions and Future Directions**

### **5.1. Interviews with National Governing Bodies: Concluding Thoughts**

#### **5.1.1. More action directed at increasing the representation of BME women coaches**

Across the four NGBs there remains a significant under-representation of BME populations. This imbalance becomes more acute for BME women coaches who are the least represented of coaches within the four sports profiled. A pertinent finding of the study was how the coaches framed their experiences: the male coaches tended to discuss their stories through a race and ethnicity lens but all of the female coaches spoke of their experiences as gendered and racialised. This finding highlights the need to address issues of gender alongside race and ethnicity when addressing the lack of BME representation in sport and coaching. The under-representation of BME women coaches was also the least understood issue by the sporting organisations, with only one NGB demonstrating some understanding of the complexity of the issues. More action is required to target, attract, recruit and retain BME women coaches. However, before this can occur, greater knowledge and understanding is needed about the factors that facilitate or constrain different women. This should begin with the compilation of comparative data across sports that consider ethnicity alongside gender in order to profile the coaching workforce. Supporting this should be research aimed at capturing the experiences and voices of BME women.

#### **5.1.2. The recognition of diversity amongst BME groups**

For the NGBs that have actively sought to promote increased representation and progression of BME men and women coaches, they believe their organisation has undergone a deeper cultural change, making them more inclusive and perceived by its participants to be more progressive and positive. Nevertheless, further action is required across sport and coaching towards targeting *different* BME groups, rather than just adopting a 'blanket' approach. Through the interviews with the NGB leads, BME groups were often discussed as a homogenous group. Targeted action to recruit different ethnic groups into coaching was less common. In addition, there was no evidence that any specific initiatives or programmes were in place to ensure the continued development of coaches from different ethnicities. However, to achieve this, NGBs need to move beyond

their current colour blind approach to recognise the advantages of a more diverse coaching workforce.

### **5.1.3. *Sharing of good practices amongst NGBs.***

Sharing of good practice is one way that NGBs can work to improve the increase of BME coaches across sports. To understand the underrepresentation of BME groups as a broader issue that often transcends types of sport, the sharing of successful initiatives and programmes may be an effective method of implementing more successful schemes, raise the quality of these initiatives, and reduce costs through greater productivity and efficiency. A starting point for the sharing of good practice may be the sharing of data so that NGBs can work together to increase the diversity of their coaching workforce. This data should also be examined from an intersectional lens in order to fully understand patterns of representation and to identify the social groups that are often absent in discussions of positive action (e.g. BME women coaches).

## **5.2. Interviews with Black and Minority Ethnic Coaches: Concluding Thoughts**

### **5.2.1. *The importance of a representative coaching workforce: Diversity can attract diversity***

BME coaches play an important role in their club and / or sporting contexts as role models, as 'bridges' that connect their clubs to new BME participants, and as advocates of the potential abilities and the contributions that BME groups can make to the coaching profession. The worth of BME coaches should therefore, not be overlooked, but rather valued, recognised and 'seen'. The lack of in-depth knowledge and understanding towards diversity was evident in all of the interviews with the NGB leads. The experiences of the BME coaches however, demonstrate the potential risk of this lack of understanding: sporting organisations are in danger of rendering the contributions of BME coaches invisible. The coaches interviewed, also appeared to have a strong consciousness of oppression in that they were aware that their minority status was part of a broader underrepresentation of BME groups in coaching. Therefore, many of the participants used their role to promote their sport and to increase the participation of BME individuals. This is further evidence of the importance of having a diverse workforce: diversity has the potential to attract diversity.

### **5.2.2. The difficulties of progressing and developing as coaches: Evidence of a glass ceiling**

For the participants, entry into their specific sport as athletes and as beginner coaches was not particularly problematic. Certainly, these early experiences were mediated by gender, race and ethnicity, and social class. Importantly, these relations were not experienced independently of each other; ethnicity was not experienced separately to social class or gender. However, in the early stages of the coaches' careers, gender was more pertinent for the women interviewed and yet, racism was more overt in the early playing experiences for BME men. To overcome this, all of the men and women interviewed spoke of the importance of inclusive and supportive sporting spaces in helping them to remain and progress in the sport, as athletes to become coaches. The barriers to participation were as follows:

- Costs
- Lack of diversity in the sporting context
- Covert, everyday racial and gendered discrimination

When playing sport or making the transition into coaching, the participants cited the following enablers to become players or to make the step from playing to coaching.

- Diverse playing environments with a variety of different coaches (including different racial and ethnic identities, and men and women coaches)
- Specific BME-targeted initiatives or interventions
- Mentors / Supportive senior coaches within their club
- Supportive organisational practices such as coach development programmes

Nevertheless, rather than enablers, for the participants it was more about *incentives* to start coaching that drive them into the profession and to initially train as coaches. Such incentives included:

- Money received for coaching (in some cases, to support the participants' playing careers)
- Opportunities to travel (as coaches of teams)
- To give back to / promote the sport within their BME community

The participants did not cite many barriers to becoming coaches, rather, the barriers presented themselves more frequently and more powerfully when the participants

attempted to *progress* and *develop* as coaches. Precisely, as the participants climbed the coaching ladder and sought more high profile or more highly qualified coaching positions, or opportunities to access training courses or qualifications, they encountered more obstacles and their coaching experiences became more racialised and gendered. Race and ethnicity and gender were described as being central to the most salient barriers, and these included:

- Lack of a supportive organisational structure evidenced by: the lack of mentoring; lack of consistent, continued professional development alongside the one-off training courses; lack of support for coaches not connected to a club (resulting in isolation of coaches); inaccessible and infrequent training courses.
- Format of assessment for coaching qualifications: The participants asserted that mentoring, peer-observation, and experiential learning to be the best methods of learning. However, the opportunities to practice as coaches were limited for some of the participants.
- Lack of other BME individuals or for the female participants, the lack of other BME women, on coach education courses resulting in feelings of intimidation and isolation. For some female participants, this discouraged attendance at courses.
- The questionable value of one-off, ad-hoc coaching qualifications that appeared to have no relevance or impact on opportunities for more senior coaching roles. This is connected to the following barrier.
- The informal, closed, unclear coaching appointment process. Opportunities were often only made available to those coaches within inner circles and networks within the NGBs. Due to their minority (and marginalised) status (BME and/or women), this excluded most of the participants from inclusion in such networks and consequently, they were unaware of new opportunities. These networks were often racialised and gendered, meaning job opportunities tended only to be available to white men and thus ultimately, preventing the progression of BME coaches.
- Prejudiced assumptions of white trainers, other coaches, and NGB representatives towards the capabilities of BME groups and in particular, BME women to undertake coaching qualifications. Stories included one woman coach who was prevented from attending a training course on the assumption she was an assistant coach, a woman coach treated as less intelligent at training courses and so has had to take personal responsibility for her own professional development, or the men and

women coaches treated as intellectually inferior and unable to complete the necessary paperwork as part of higher coaching qualifications.

- The nature of the job of coaching itself: The profession was often described as a lonely job, with little financial rewards, and in the case of voluntary coaching, a role that makes great demands on the individual's time.

The interplay of these powerful barriers served to construct what could be described as a 'glass ceiling'. Often these barriers were subtle, rather than overt, and can be described as 'everyday discriminations' in that they appear so trivial and small that they become difficult to identify and eventually, normalised. Nevertheless, these barriers have connected to successfully prevent the progression of most of the BME coaches interviewed in the present study. Furthermore, these enablers and constraints to BME entry and progression in coaching run deeper than was considered by the NGBs. The coaches' stories are testament to the complexity of the possible enablers and barriers, and go beyond purely individual factors.

### ***5.2.3. The differences in how the system is experienced by organisations and coaches***

A final conclusion is the observation of the differences in accounts between the NGB leads and the coaches themselves. Diversity, race, ethnicity and gender were not often problematised by the NGB leads interviewed, and the (un)representativeness of their coaching workforce was not acknowledged by all of the NGBs. For two of the NGBs, the issues of equity and diversity were not seen or considered. Yet, race, ethnicity and gender were at the foreground of all of the experiences of the coaches interviewed and were pertinent aspects in their everyday professional and personal lives. To the NGBs, race, ethnicity and gender were considered in statistical terms, understood as percentages. However, for the coaches, these aspects of their identity went further than 'number crunching': their racial, ethnic and gendered identity influenced and in some cases, even constructed their coaching journeys. To these individuals, race, ethnicity and gender were played out in their relations with others; in the assumptions made about their coaching, intellectual and leadership abilities; prevented them from progressing as professionals; constructed them as the 'other'; and for some, left them feeling isolated and unsupported by their NGB.

How the coaching system was considered also varied markedly between the NGBs and the coaches. To the organisations, the coaching pathway was conceived as one that is open to all, meritocratic, fair, and available. To the coaches however, the pathways were seen as closed, informal, frustrating, 'loose', unclear, and at certain levels, racialised and gendered. This suggests a change of perspective is required by sporting organisations towards how they conceive equity, equality, diversity, race, ethnicity, gender and the transparency of their coaching pathways. After all, (in)equality and (in)equity cannot be challenged and changed if it is not recognised. As one NGB lead suggested, the recruitment and progression of coaches can be an issue approached as: a coach is a coach, their personal backgrounds should not be considered, and they are just a 'coach'. Or, it can be acknowledged, as evidenced by the present study and demonstrated by the coaches themselves, that when there are distinct patterns within the representativeness of a coaching workforce, questions need to be asked and (unequal) structural practices scrutinised.

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